

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**INTEGRATION AND ADAPTATION  
OF FOODWAYS TOWARD  
COMMON ACCEPTABLE FOOD  
AND FOOD IDENTITY FORMATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempt to measure the extent to which integration through food knowledge, food media and food for social events of the Malays, Chinese and Indian foods influenced the adaptation of foodways (preparation and consumption) toward establishment of the common acceptable food and Malaysian food identity formation. This study is structured through a self-administered survey with the individual Malays, Chinese and Indian chefs / cooks who are currently working in the medium / large food catering operations / services and had experienced of preparing and consuming the three Malaysian major ethnic cuisines. Fifty medium / large food catering operations / services located at the Klang Valley cities namely Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Kajang, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, and Klang have been chosen for data collection. A total of 402 responses were obtained from the survey processes with 392 were usable. The data collected was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) software program AMOS 22.0. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were executed to validate the scales. Four main dimensions of the overall measurement model were produced and tested in agreement with a rigorous refinement process for the models. The results generated from the structural modeling evidenced that the three dimensions of integration attributes and the formation of food identity is significantly related. Furthermore, the presence of adaptation of foodways capable of modifying the strength of the relationship between integration attributes and common acceptable food. In other word, adaptation of foodways through preparation and consumption explicitly mediate on the relationship between integration attributes and common acceptable food. It is interesting to note that common acceptable food is also having the mediating effect on the relationship between adaptation of foodways and food identity formation. Through these findings, it can be deduced that adaptation of foodways through preparation and consumption of other ethnic cuisine not only help to develop a common acceptable food among the major ethnic (Malay, Chinese and Indian) but, gradually shape the formation of national food identity.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 PREAMBLE**

This chapter is set as a starting point and a foundation on which to begin by introducing the background of the study that specifically touches on the importance of identity formation. The problem statement that relates to the contextual setting and objectives of the study is subsequently highlighted. Next, is the presentation of the conceptual framework based on the underlying theories of identity and acculturation. To support the main purpose and achieve the objectives of the study, the research hypotheses are presented in the following section, followed by the significance and rationalization of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the organization of the study.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

One of the early issues faced by all individuals, particularly during their childhood, is closely related to self-identity formation. At this stage, individuals for example are searching for who they really are and what they want to be. This identity formation continues until adulthood and occasionally the individual is still puzzled or keeps searching for their identity. Levine (2003) argued that issues of identity are central to a person's life and described identity as a collection of characteristics that make the individual self aware of whom they are. As it is a complex concept thus it is essential and critical for self understanding. In other words, identity is a collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which something is definitively recognizable or known, or the set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group. It has also been theorized that, without a firm sense of identity, people tend to be lacking in a sense of autonomy and agency (Cote and Levine, 2002). Erikson, (1994) in the psychosocial theory of development initially elucidated that lack of a sense of identity and a consistent character will cause despair and confusion and lead to an identity