

## Heritage on a Plate: Investigating the Antecedents of Intention to Sustain Malaysian Heritage Food among Young Adults

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### ABSTRACT

Malaysia's rich culinary heritage in today's realm faces challenges in sustainability due to globalisation, urbanisation, and changing lifestyles, particularly among young adults. As traditional food practices gradually decline, understanding the factors influencing young Malaysians' intention to sustain heritage food becomes crucial. This study investigates the role of social media influence, accessibility, and knowledge in shaping young adults' intention to preserve Malaysian heritage food. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected through surveys from young adults aged 18–25, with a total of 142 respondents. The study employed descriptive and regression analyses to examine the relationships between the identified factors and their impact on the intention to sustain heritage food. Findings reveal that social media and knowledge significantly influence young adults' commitment to heritage food sustainability, whereas accessibility alone does not strongly impact their intention. The study highlights the growing role of digital platforms in promoting culinary heritage by enhancing awareness, fostering engagement, and facilitating knowledge transmission. Additionally, it underscores the importance of cultural education in strengthening young adults' appreciation and willingness to sustain traditional food practices. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and cultural institutions to develop targeted strategies for preserving Malaysia's gastronomic heritage. Future efforts should focus on integrating digital engagement with educational initiatives to ensure the continued relevance of heritage food in contemporary society. By addressing key determinants of heritage food sustainability, this study contributes to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and offers practical recommendations for fostering Malaysia's culinary legacy among younger generations.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Accessibility, Knowledge, Heritage Food, Intention, Sustainability, Young Adults

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the discourse on sustainability has gained significant global attention, underscoring the critical intersections between environmental responsibility, cultural preservation, and socio-economic dynamics (Lamoria et al., 2024; Lee & Kim, 2024). As sustainability continues to be a global priority, the United Nations (UN) introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a comprehensive framework to address a broad spectrum of global challenges (United Nations, 2015). These goals serve as a strategic blueprint to mitigate the adverse effects of environmental degradation, socio-economic inequalities, and cultural erosion. One of the most pressing concerns within this framework is the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, an issue explicitly addressed under SDG 11.4, which aims to “strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage.” The recognition of cultural sustainability as a key component of sustainable development reflects the increasing urgency to protect intangible cultural assets, including culinary heritage, which are integral to national identities and historical continuity (Timothy, 2016; Kapelari et al., 2020).

As a fundamental element of cultural sustainability, culinary heritage is a defining feature of nearly every nation. Heritage foods, often passed down through generations, embody cultural values, traditional knowledge, and historical narratives that contribute to national identity. Malaysia, a country renowned for its multiculturalism and rich culinary diversity, faces growing concerns regarding the sustainability of its heritage food practices, particularly among young adults (Mokthsim & Salleh, 2014). The rapid pace of modernisation, globalisation, and urbanisation has led to a concerning shift in dietary preferences among young adults, often favouring convenience and other types of food rather than their own traditional or heritage food (Allman-Ferinelli, 2019). As the younger generation grapples with these evolving lifestyles, the risk of detachment from their culinary roots becomes evident (Hamzah et al., 2015), raising concerns regarding the sustainability of heritage food and what determines it. Based on previous scholars, several antecedents were suggested that could affect the intention to sustain heritage food among young adults, which emphasises the social media influence (Terry, 2009; Thirumalraja et al., 2015), accessibility of heritage food (Bortolotto & Ubertazzi, 2018; Youn et al., 2020) and knowledge of heritage food (Guiné et al., 2021; Horlings, 2015).

Given the gaps in the existing literature, this study seeks to explore three critical research questions: (1) What is the impact of social media on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults? (2) What is the impact of accessibility on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults? (3) What is the impact of knowledge on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults? These questions highlight the need for further exploration into the sustainability of Malaysian heritage food, particularly as research gaps in this area persist. Although this topic has garnered increasing academic interest in recent years, comprehensive studies remain limited, especially within the Malaysian context. Addressing these research questions is essential to developing a deeper understanding of the behavioural and cognitive factors that influence heritage food sustainability.

Notably, existing literature has primarily focused on cultural knowledge (Kapelari et al., 2020), social networking site analysis (Thirumalraja et al., 2015), food choices (McFerran et al., 2009), heritage site conservation (Azizan et al., 2020), and cuisine accessibility (Bulut-Solak, 2021), leaving a significant gap in studies that explicitly examine the antecedents of young adults’ intention to sustain heritage food. By bridging this gap, this study’s findings can provide valuable insights for policymakers, cultural institutions, and food industry stakeholders in developing strategies to safeguard Malaysia’s culinary heritage amidst rapid socio-cultural transformations. As such, this study aims to bridge this gap by conducting an empirical investigation into the determinants of heritage food sustainability among young Malaysian adults. Understanding these dynamics is imperative to ensuring that Malaysia’s rich culinary heritage remains preserved and relevant in contemporary food culture, thus contributing to broader cultural sustainability efforts.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Malaysian Heritage Food Sustainability*

Malaysia Department of National Heritage (2023) reported that more than 500 heritage foods are listed as intangible heritage items. Malaysian heritage food is defined as Malaysia's common food, which can be said to represent the lives, culture, and heritage value of the country's multiracial community (Omar & Omar, 2018). For example, Kelantan, one of Malaysia's states, is famous for its sweet delicacies such as *Akok*, *Cek Mek Molek*, and *Ketupat Pulut*, representing and symbolising Kelantanese people's lives, culture, and heritage values. Although there are lots of heritage foods in Malaysia, more and more young Malaysians are choosing to eat at restaurants that offer other types of cuisines, such as Western outlets, Japanese sushi bars, fusion restaurants, and franchises, rather than queuing up in front of local restaurants or coffee shops (e.g. *Kopitiam*), where they would normally serve a significant amount of unique Malaysian cuisine (Abdullah et al., 2016). Looking at this matter, it is undeniable that it happens because of the world's rapid changes in globalisation in various aspects, including technologies, lifestyles, and infrastructure. But this globalisation, unfortunately, is causing a gradual decline in the consumption of Malaysia's traditional foods, which is a threat to the sustainability of Malaysian heritage foods.

### 2.2 *Intention to Sustain Malaysian Heritage Food*

Sustainability is the capacity to endure, maintain, or support over the long term without compromising the needs of future generations (Becker, 2011). In the realm of heritage food, it is important to note that its relationship with sustainability is interconnected, and understanding their relationship is crucial for fostering a holistic approach to sustainable food practices. By recognising the intrinsic link between heritage food sustainability and an individual's behavioural intention to preserve these culinary traditions, a comprehensive framework could be established for promoting sustainable practices in the realm of heritage foods.

Analysing the relationship between heritage food sustainability and behavioural intention indicates a complex interaction that has a major impact on the continuation of heritage foods. Behavioural intention, as defined by theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour, emerges as a critical factor in the field of heritage food sustainability (Ajzen, 1991). People who are motivated to participate in heritage food consumption due to a strong sense of cultural identity or heritage preservation are more likely to and make sustainable decisions. Encouraging heritage food sustainability requires a shared commitment to maintain long-established practices passed down through generations, exposing and educating people of broader audiences on heritage food knowledge, or even taking the initiative to make heritage foods available to the public across places. All in all, this study emphasises that behavioural intention, in the context of the intention to sustain heritage food, might act as a catalyst for Malaysian heritage food sustainability.

### 2.3 *Social Media Influence*

Between 2000 and 2021, Malaysia experienced significant growth in mobile cellular subscriptions, reflecting an increase in internet usage for virtual communication. In 2000, there were approximately 5.12 million mobile subscriptions, which rose to around 42.34 million by 2017 (StatInvestor, n.d.). By 2020, this number reached approximately 43.72 million (Index Mundi, n.d.). This upward trend continued, with mobile subscriptions increasing to 47.9 million in 2022 and 50 million in 2023 (Statista, 2023). This growth indicates a substantial rise in mobile cellular subscriptions in Malaysia from 2000 to 2021. It is evident that, over time, Malaysians are motivated to participate in virtual communities in exchange for rewards such as friendship, appreciation, knowledge, and many more. For instance, Facebook has been recorded as the largest social networking website, continually increasing its active users by over 3 billion (Dixon, 2023). In this study's context, it is imperative to note that the public uses this platform to create and promote high-quality content, including heritage food-related information, thus boosting the sustainability of

heritage foods (Liang et al., 2020). This is because good, high-quality content may spread positive word-of-mouth to thousands of people through social media platforms in a matter of hours.

The most significant observation regarding social media users is that most of them are young people (Kemp, 2025). Digital platforms serve not only as a space for promoting global cuisines but also as a powerful tool for preserving, reviving, and reinterpreting traditional Malaysian culinary practices. The increasing exposure to global food cultures through the internet, social media, and international travel has expanded the culinary perspectives of younger Malays, leading to notable changes in their nutritional choices (Wan, 2025). These days, the youth are growing up in a connected society where this society can be from social networks, online games, and as simple as instant messaging. Most of the day, young people converse and communicate with their peer groups through a wide range of media and devices. Social media also gives young users enormous amounts of knowledge and data. They often use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok to disseminate and share interesting content with friends and family by leveraging features such as stories, posts, and direct messages to share videos, images, and text updates (Kemp, 2025). They create visually appealing posts, share recipe videos, and engage in food challenges, which often circulate quickly through these channels, contributing to young adults' fast-paced and dynamic nature of content sharing. Memes and humorous food-related content are a few examples of popular ways to connect with friends and family over shared culinary interests.

#### **2.4 Malaysian Heritage Food Accessibility**

Heritage food accessibility, within the broader framework of accessibility, is a critical dimension that influences the preservation and continuation of traditional culinary practices. Accessibility, as defined by various scholars, involves measuring the proximity of human activities influenced by the interplay of transportation and land-use systems (Sun et al., 2023). Initially, Liu and Zhu (2004) elaborate on accessibility, emphasising the availability of diverse transportation options for reaching destinations. In the context of heritage food, Raza's (2022) definition, which intertwines nearness to places and the ease of participating in activities, serves as a fitting lens for this research.

The intrinsic link between accessibility and food choices is undeniable, with consumers often favouring readily available options due to their proximity. However, this generalisation falls short when considering certain culinary treasures, like heritage or cultural foods, which face the risk of being forgotten due to limited accessibility. Bulut-Solak's (2021) observations on traditional Turkish beverages that are slowly being neglected highlight the impact of accessibility on heritage food. In Malaysia, the dropping popularity of *Dodol*, a traditional sweet dish, outside the festive season, signifies a broader trend. Ismail et al. (2021) identify *Dodol* as a vanishing heritage food, attributing its decline to both limited availability and accessibility, particularly among the younger generation.

The gradual erosion of heritage foods underscores a concerning trend wherein these culinary traditions face extinction. The interruption in the continuity of such foods can be directly linked to the challenge of heritage food accessibility. As people explore this multifaceted relationship between accessibility and heritage foods, it becomes evident that addressing the accessibility gap is important for conserving and appreciating these cultural gastronomic treasures.

#### **2.5 Malaysian Heritage Food Knowledge**

Knowledge of heritage food may be viewed as a broad concept that includes aspects of kitchen literacy, nutrition/health literacy, foodways, and food literacy since it empowers people to make informed decisions about their eating habits, including what to eat, how to eat, and where to acquire it (Truman et al., 2017). Food knowledge is a notion associated with customs that encompasses the passing down of food-related knowledge and abilities from one generation to the next (Kwik, 2008). It is seen as one of an individual's knowledge when disseminating information about traditional and cultural cuisines. More often than not, food knowledge is produced by communities and groups and is passed down through practical acts, observation, and word-of-mouth from generation to generation, emphasising the microenvironment in which food is produced and closely linked to cultural customs (Sharif et al., 2013). It is worth noting that

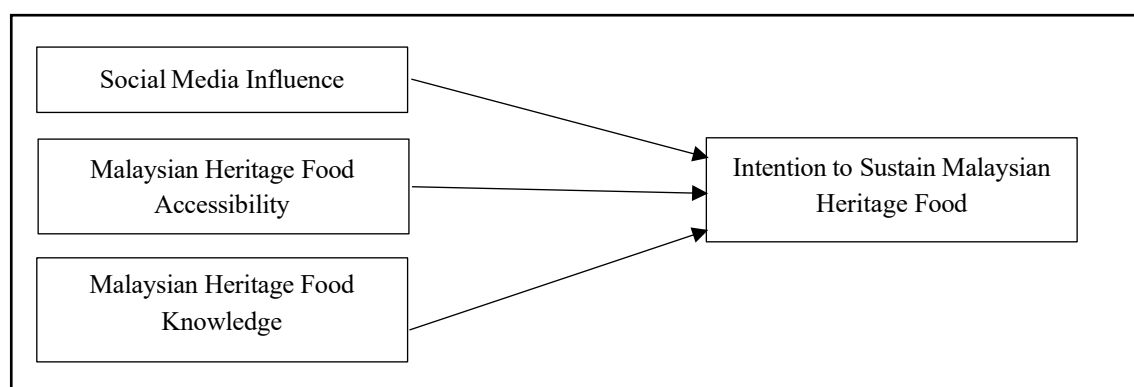
culinary expertise comes into play when preserving cultural customs such as traditional foods, traditions, and community rituals (Kwik, 2008).

The term “ecology of food knowledge” describes knowledge created by ethnic groups and civilisations. These communities often transmit information orally to the next generation using the food microenvironment as a basis (Ledile & Daryl, 2021). According to Weichselbaum et al. (2009), people can learn about food in a variety of contexts, including at home and from other community members. Communities may encounter different eating customs and habits during social gatherings when they share information, sample different meals, and learn about different cultures. Ethnic groups are encouraged to retain practices to preserve their ethnic identity, and knowledge of heritage and traditional food is vital in keeping their traditions and utilisations (Ohiokpehai, 2003).

The connection between sustainability and knowledge of traditional foods is essential to maintaining the integrity of culinary customs. Knowledge of heritage foods includes traditional cuisines’ complex methods, cultural relevance, and skill sets. Heritage food knowledge must be preserved and passed on so that communities can continue to have the skills required for the sustainable production, processing, and preparation of heritage foods. The transmission of knowledge over generations enables the adaptation of culinary practices to evolve environmental circumstances, hence enhancing the resilience of heritage food systems. Furthermore, some knowledge of the cultural and historical background ingrained in past food knowledge cultivates appreciation and a feeling of duty, strengthening community commitment to sustainable practices. Therefore, the sustainability of traditional food knowledge and its interconnection with it provide a crucial basis for traditional culinary practices longevity and soundness.

## 2.6 Study Framework and Underpinning Theory

Figure 1 demonstrates the study framework linking the relationship between the constructs being studied. The components from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) were aligned with the research objectives, such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, while maintaining their fundamental features. First, social media influence is suited to the scope of attitudes as it refers to an individual’s positive or negative evaluations of performing a particular behaviour. In this context, people are exposed to a wide range of information, opinions, and content that can contribute to forming or modifying their attitudes. Next, the adjustment for subjective norms was suited to Malaysian heritage food knowledge. This study will focus on an individual’s surroundings, which entail social norms or culture contributing to their knowledge of Malaysian heritage foods. Lastly, Malaysian heritage food accessibility was linked with perceived behavioural control. In this study context, Malaysian heritage food accessibility is believed to be a factor that allows individuals to control where they can seek, discover, and thus obtain heritage food.



**Figure 1: Study Framework**  
Adapted from The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Population and sample

The determination of the young adult age range (18–25 years old) for this study is based on several demographic and policy references:

- In 2020, Malaysia had 3,380,610 individuals aged 18–23. This age group has been growing at an average annual rate of 2.01% since 1971 (World Data Atlas, 2020).
- The 15–24 age group in Malaysia consisted of 5,532,800 individuals in 2020, growing at an average annual rate of 1.89% since 1971 (World Data Atlas, 2020).
- The Ministry of Youth and Sports revised the definition of youth in 2018, setting the age range from 15 to 30 years old (Khairy, 2015).

Based on these references, the researcher selected the 18–25 age range as a representative group for young adults in Malaysia. This age range aligns with population growth trends, existing youth categorisations, and ensures that participants have reached legal adulthood (18 years) while still being within the broader youth classification. The study will focus on Malaysian young adults using purposive sampling to select participants.

In terms of the sample size, Roscoe (1975) noted that sample sizes larger than 30 and smaller than 500 are appropriate for most research. Tabachnick and Fidell (2019) recommended a sample size of at least 75, where  $N > 50 + 8m$  ( $m$  is the number of predictor variables), while Babyak (2004) suggested a minimum sample size of 10–15 observations per predictor variable. It is worth mentioning that the researchers utilised the G\*Power calculator to assist in determining the targeted sample size, and the number obtained was 116. Based on rigorous consideration, the researchers decided to target at least 116 respondents for the samples since this number fulfils most of the suggestions for minimum requirements for sampling. A sample of 116 may be adequate for further analyses, as the law of diminishing returns suggests that after a certain point, increasing the sample size has little impact on precision (Andrade, 2020).

#### 3.2 Research design

The most suited research approach for this study was the quantitative method since it delved into examining the impact of social media influence, accessibility, and knowledge on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults. This research method was utilised as it included the capacity to identify trends and averages, formulate hypotheses, examine causality, and streamline the outcomes (Bhandari, 2021). Additionally, this research was classified as causal research, which is defined as a technique for determining the cause-and-effect link between two or more variables (Bashir, 2023; Bhasin, 2020). Since this study was constrained to a particular timeframe, its time horizon was cross-sectional, where data was collected once in a specific period. This study employed a non-experimental approach undertaken in a non-contrived setting.

#### 3.3 Instrumentation

This study used a questionnaire to gather data to determine the impact of social media influence, accessibility, and knowledge on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults. The survey was developed in both English and Malay to minimise misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Questions with a 5-point Likert Scale were used to measure people's agreement about different situations about the tested variables. The survey was divided into six sections: screening questions, social media influence, Malaysian heritage food accessibility, knowledge, intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food, and demographic questions. The instruments created for this study were mainly derived and adapted from prior work by Wu et al. (2023), Seo et al. (2023), Ahmad et al. (2015), and Nor et al. (2012).

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29 software package employing descriptive and simple linear regression analyses. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse data from all sections of the questionnaires, measuring consumer demographic data, mean and standard deviation. Simple linear regression was utilised for the research questions and hypotheses to determine if each independent factor affected the dependent variable. This method allowed the researcher to analyse the statistical data and discover the causal effect between the independent and dependent variables. Additionally, the method used was to examine the strength of the relationship between the variables and test the hypotheses, making the study's results more impactful.

## 4.0 FINDINGS

The procedures of analysis were further discussed to address the research objectives and questions. The reliability coefficient is presented to determine how consistently the ratings are given on each dimension used in this study, followed by respondents' demographic profiles. Descriptive statistics are then displayed to further describe the properties of each item's minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. Finally, using simple linear regression analyses, the effect between variables (independent and dependent variables) was reported in response to the study's objectives and hypotheses.

### 4.1 Reliability Coefficient

Before advancing into further analysis of frequencies, descriptive and hypothesis testing to address the research's objectives and questions, a test of internal reliability has been undertaken. This evaluation is detrimental in generating data on how much consistency is present among the answers given by respondents in all the data collected during the pilot study. The reliability coefficient is also vital as it indicates the quality of measurement tools, which is the scale's internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; Bashir, 2024b). The following are the reliability test results that were conducted for the tested sections in the questionnaire, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Each Section's Reliability Coefficient**

Questionnaire	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Section B: Social Media Influence	5	.700
Section C: Malaysian Heritage Food Accessibility	5	.885
Section D: Malaysian Heritage Food Knowledge	5	.910
Section E: Intention to Sustain Malaysian Heritage Food	8	.861

### 4.2 Respondents' Demographic Profile

The study found that most respondents were female (53.5%). Most of the respondents resided within the middle region of Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan), with a percentage of 39.4%. As for their level of education, 51.4% were bachelor's degree holders, thus justifying that the majority of their monthly income was from no income (78.9%).

### 4.3 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 below presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents. Malaysian Heritage Food Knowledge has the highest mean score among other items, followed by Intention to Sustain Malaysian Heritage Food, Malaysian Heritage Food accessibility, and Social Media Influence.

**Table 2: Overall Descriptive Statistics for Each Section**

	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Social Media Influence	142	1.20	5	3.61	.690
Malaysian heritage food accessibility	142	1.80	5	3.95	.734
Malaysian heritage food knowledge	142	3.00	5	4.53	.490
Intention to Sustain Malaysian Heritage Food	142	2.38	5	4.26	.477

#### 4.4 Regression Analysis

The purpose of regression analysis is to support numerical patterns that suggest potential correlations between the variables as well as to look at the functional relationship between variables. This study employed a simple linear regression analysis to describe its objectives and underlying presumptions.

**Table 3: Overall Summary of Regression Analysis**

Hypotheses			<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>p</i> -value	Results
<b>H1</b>	:	Social media influences the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults.	.065	.254	.002**	Accepted
<b>H2</b>	:	Malaysian heritage food accessibility influences its intention to sustain among young adults.	.024	.155	.066	Rejected
<b>H3</b>	:	Malaysian heritage food knowledge influences its intention to sustain among young adults.	.221	.470	< .001***	Accepted

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

Regression analysis for the intention to sustain among Malaysian young adults, which included social media influence, Malaysian heritage food accessibility, and Malaysian heritage food knowledge, showed significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

### 5.1 The influence of social media on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults.

**Table 4: Research Objective 1, Research Question 1, and Hypothesis 1**

Research Objective 1		Research Question 1
To examine the influence of social media on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults		What is the influence of social media on the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults?
<b>H1</b>	Social media influences the intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food among young adults	

The findings of this study confirm that social media plays a significant role in shaping young adults' intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food. This result is consistent with Zheng (2023), who highlighted that social media platforms serve as an essential tool in heritage food preservation, particularly by facilitating its commercialisation, enhancing public awareness, and expanding knowledge of traditional culinary practices. Social media's ability to reach vast audiences instantly makes it a powerful medium for disseminating heritage food-related information, thereby fostering greater engagement and appreciation among younger generations.

The impact of social media on heritage food sustainability can be attributed to several key mechanisms. Firstly, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have revolutionised the way food-related content is shared, making heritage foods more visually appealing and accessible to young audiences.



Through high-quality images, engaging videos, and interactive content, social media creates a digital space where traditional foods are not only preserved but also celebrated. This aligns with previous research suggesting that visually engaging content significantly influences young consumers' food choices and cultural preferences (Bashir, 2024a; Liang et al., 2020). Furthermore, social media facilitates storytelling, enabling content creators, food enthusiasts, and cultural organisations to share the historical and cultural significance of Malaysian heritage foods, thereby strengthening young adults' connection to their culinary roots.

Secondly, social media encourages participatory engagement through user-generated content, online discussions, and food challenges. The interactive nature of these platforms allows young adults to actively contribute to the discourse surrounding heritage food, whether by sharing personal experiences, posting traditional recipes, or participating in online cooking trends that incorporate heritage dishes. Such engagement fosters a sense of ownership and pride in traditional foods, potentially increasing the intention to sustain them in daily dietary practices. As noted by Zheng (2023), the ability of social media to bridge the knowledge gap between heritage food practitioners and younger generations is particularly crucial. By providing compelling and educational content, social media facilitates the transmission of culinary knowledge that might otherwise be lost due to modernisation and changing dietary habits.

Moreover, social media acts as a catalyst for community-driven initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting heritage foods. Digital campaigns, online petitions, and cultural movements advocating for traditional cuisine preservation gain traction through social networking sites, raising awareness and influencing public discourse. Food influencers, chefs, and cultural organisations leverage these platforms to promote traditional dishes, encouraging young adults to engage with and sustain their culinary heritage. This aligns with the growing body of literature suggesting that social media fosters cultural sustainability by enhancing food literacy and reinforcing traditional food consumption habits (Chamcham et al., 2024; García-León & Teichert, 2024).

To conclude, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping young adults' intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food by increasing accessibility, engagement, and knowledge dissemination. Its ability to create visually appealing content, foster interactive participation, and bridge generational knowledge gaps makes it an invaluable tool for cultural preservation.

## 5.2 *The influence of Malaysian heritage food accessibility on the intention to sustain among young adults.*

**Table 5: Research Objective 2, Research Question 2, and Hypothesis 2**

Research Objective 2		Research Question 2	
To determine the influence of Malaysian heritage food accessibility on the intention to sustain among young adults.		What is the influence of Malaysian heritage food accessibility on the intention to sustain among young adults?	
H2	Malaysian heritage food accessibility influences its intention to sustain among young adults.		

The findings of this study suggest that the accessibility of Malaysian heritage food plays a minimal and statistically insignificant role in influencing young adults' intention to sustain its consumption. This result challenges the common assumption that the availability and convenience of traditional foods directly impact their continuity. Instead, it aligns with the argument by Quintero-Ángel et al. (2022) that the sustainability of heritage food is primarily rooted in the intergenerational transmission of food knowledge, practices, and cultural significance rather than mere physical accessibility. Heritage food traditions persist not because they are readily available in the marketplace but because they hold deep cultural and symbolic meaning within communities.

A key factor that may explain the limited influence of accessibility on heritage food sustainability is the evolving food consumption patterns among young adults, particularly in the digital era. With the widespread use of food delivery applications such as GrabFood and Foodpanda, convenience has become

a dominant factor in food choices. Many young adults prefer to order meals through these platforms rather than physically visiting heritage food establishments (Alnasser & Abaalkhail, 2024). While these applications do provide access to a wide range of food options, they tend to favour modern and fast-food chains over traditional heritage food vendors. As a result, heritage food businesses may struggle with visibility and consumer reach, potentially leading to a decline in their long-term sustainability. Furthermore, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered food accessibility and consumption behaviours. During periods of movement restrictions, online food delivery services became an essential part of daily life, further reinforcing the preference for convenience-oriented dining. Even after the easing of restrictions, these consumption habits have persisted, reducing the frequency of in-person visits to traditional food establishments. This shift presents challenges for heritage food sustainability, as the experiential aspect of dining, such as engaging with traditional cooking methods, interacting with vendors, and experiencing the cultural atmosphere of heritage eateries, is crucial in fostering a deeper appreciation and connection to heritage foods. The absence of this experiential component may weaken the cultural significance associated with heritage food consumption, making it less likely for young adults to prioritise its preservation.

Another critical aspect to consider is that accessibility alone does not necessarily drive food choices or encourage sustainability efforts. The availability of heritage food may be widespread in certain regions, yet if young adults lack cultural awareness or interest in traditional foods, accessibility becomes inconsequential. This further underscores the argument that factors such as cultural appreciation, education, and personal values play a more pivotal role in sustaining heritage food traditions than physical availability. Studies have shown that food choices are influenced by a complex interplay of social, psychological, and economic factors rather than mere access (Bulut-Solak, 2021).

What could be said is, while accessibility remains an important factor in food consumption patterns, it does not significantly influence young adults' intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food. The sustainability of heritage foods depends more on cultural transmission, awareness, and engagement rather than mere availability. As modern food consumption trends continue to evolve, it is imperative for stakeholders to adopt holistic strategies that go beyond accessibility to ensure that heritage food traditions remain relevant and valued in contemporary society.

### 5.3 *The influence of Malaysian heritage food knowledge on the intention to sustain among young adults.*

**Table 6: Research Objective 3, Research Question 3, and Hypothesis 3**

Research Objective 3		Research Question 3
To investigate the influence of Malaysian heritage food knowledge on its intention to sustain among young adults.		What is the influence of Malaysian heritage food knowledge on the intention to sustain among young adults?
H3	Malaysian heritage food knowledge influences its intention to sustain among young adults.	

The findings of this study confirm that knowledge of Malaysian heritage food plays a significant role in influencing young adults' intention to sustain its consumption. This aligns with Kapelari et al. (2006), who emphasised that knowledge is a key determinant in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviours toward heritage food sustainability. When individuals possess a deeper understanding of the cultural, historical, and nutritional significance of traditional foods, they are more likely to appreciate their value and actively contribute to their preservation. This suggests that knowledge serves as both a motivator and a facilitator in ensuring the continuity of culinary traditions across generations.

Heritage food knowledge encompasses a broad spectrum of elements, including traditional cooking techniques, ingredient selection, historical origins, cultural symbolism, and the social contexts in which these foods are prepared and consumed. According to Timothy (2016), this knowledge undergoes an evolutionary process wherein individuals either maintain or adapt traditional culinary practices in response to contemporary trends and demands. This adaptation is particularly crucial in today's fast-paced and globalised food culture, where modern influences often overshadow traditional eating habits. By equipping

young adults with comprehensive knowledge of heritage foods, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility in sustaining these culinary traditions.

Moreover, understanding the factors that influence heritage food production and consumption is essential for ensuring its long-term preservation and appreciation (Ramli et al., 2017). The transmission of knowledge about heritage foods can occur through various channels, including familial traditions, educational programs, media exposure, and community engagement. When young individuals are actively exposed to heritage food knowledge through these means, they are more likely to integrate traditional foods into their daily lives, thereby strengthening their intention to sustain them. This is particularly important in Malaysia, where diverse cultural influences contribute to a rich culinary heritage that must be preserved amid rapid modernisation.

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of heritage food knowledge in shaping young adults' intention to sustain traditional culinary practices. Knowledge not only enhances appreciation for heritage foods but also equips individuals with the skills and awareness necessary for their preservation and adaptation to modern contexts. By fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of heritage foods, Malaysia can ensure that its rich culinary heritage remains vibrant and relevant for generations to come.

#### **5.4 Limitation and Recommendation**

This study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing young adults' intention to sustain Malaysian heritage food. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study's sample size was limited to 142 respondents, which, while adequate for statistical analysis, may not fully capture the diversity of young adults' perspectives across Malaysia. Future research should consider expanding the sample size and incorporating a more diverse demographic representation to enhance generalizability.

Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Participants' answers may have been influenced by social desirability or personal perceptions rather than actual behaviours. Future studies could incorporate longitudinal or observational methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of heritage food sustainability trends.

Additionally, while this research examined the role of social media, accessibility, and knowledge, other potential factors such as economic influences, government policies, and family traditions were not explored in depth. Future research should consider a broader range of variables to provide a more holistic understanding of the determinants of heritage food sustainability.

Finally, this study primarily focused on quantitative analysis. Future research could employ mixed-method approaches, incorporating qualitative insights from interviews or focus groups to gain deeper perspectives on young adults' motivations and challenges in sustaining heritage food. By addressing these limitations, future studies can contribute to more robust findings and actionable strategies for preserving Malaysia's rich culinary heritage.

### **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The sustainability of Malaysian heritage food is a crucial aspect of cultural preservation, particularly among young adults who play a key role in ensuring its continuity. This study identified social media influence, accessibility, and knowledge as significant factors influencing the intention to sustain heritage food. The findings highlight that social media and knowledge have a strong impact on young adults' engagement with heritage food, while accessibility alone is not a major determinant.

These results emphasise the need for increased cultural education and digital engagement strategies to promote heritage food among younger generations. Leveraging social media platforms as educational tools and fostering community initiatives can enhance awareness and appreciation of traditional foods. Additionally, improving accessibility through policy interventions and culinary heritage programs may further support sustainability efforts.

Within the realm of TPB, social media influence is viewed as part of attitudes, since it shapes how individuals evaluate the behaviour of sustaining heritage food. Malaysian heritage food knowledge is linked to subjective norms, reflecting how cultural and social surroundings shape what individuals know and value. Lastly, accessibility relates to perceived behavioural control, as it reflects an individual's ability to find and obtain heritage food, which affects their sense of control over sustaining it.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on heritage food sustainability, providing insights that can inform policymakers, educators, and the food industry in preserving Malaysia's rich culinary traditions. Ensuring the continued relevance of heritage food requires a collective effort involving individuals, communities, and institutions working together to uphold Malaysia's gastronomic legacy for future generations.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies**

This work was prepared using Grammarly software for sentence refinement and grammar enhancement. This tool allowed the author(s) to examine and edit the content, ensuring clarity and coherence, while accepting full responsibility for the publication.

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