

TRADITIONAL FOOD BLUNDERS: KUIH BAHULU LOSING ITS AUTHENTIC TOUCH

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Abstract

Bahulu, a small traditional Malay cake has successfully made their way into the mainstream local snacks that is available all year round and no longer labelled as a seasonal snack that is only popular during the Eid celebration. Such changes is a positive indication that the younger generations are still interested with this traditional snack. To meet with the current demand, bahulu producers has made certain changes on the formula of this so call traditional snack in order to mass produce this product at the lowest cost as possible. Apart from that, the traditional ways of preparing bahulu using coconut husks as a fuel is no longer feasible as the majority of bahulu today that are sold in the supermarket are freshly baked from the oven. The use of machinery and changes in the formulation in current production has changed this traditional snack characteristics, thus endangering bahulu of losing its traditional identity. Therefore this study was carried out to investigate whether consumers especially the younger generations were able to differentiate between the traditional and modern bahulu. Sensory evaluation is used in this study to test for consumers perception on the characteristics of traditional bahulu based on five senses of smell, taste, sound, touch and sight. A total number of 30 untrained panelists are used in this study using randomized double-blind procedures in order to overcome problem related with artifact due to order presentation. All samples were arranged and labeled in three digits code number from score cards were decoded. Then, the score for each and every sample are analysed using ANOVA to compare their significance mean score, followed with Tukey-HSD test for the post-hoc test. Result obtained was, bahulu in which formula a sponge –like texture were recorded as the highest rank among the other five samples. Bahulu are losing its authentic touch as the

consumer's perception and preferences on bahulu's unique characteristics tend to change overtime.

Keywords: *Traditional Bahulu, local snack, consumer's perception*

Introduction

Malaysian traditional snacks is no stranger towards the citizens of Malaysia. They come in various shapes and sizes and each snack gives off a unique flavour to them that allows people to distinguish one snack from another. But unfortunately, in recent years, the uniqueness of a certain snack is now fading away. The texture of certain snacks are now changing due to people implementing their own little twist to it. So to say, traditional snacks are now losing their authentic touch and thus, is in danger of losing its traditional identity. Take Bahulu for example, producers these days seem to be taking the shortcut way of manufacturing it and not creating it the way it is supposed to be done and indirectly, this will alter the flavour of the Bahulu. Furthermore, the producers do this to suit with the demand of the market. Not to mention, people's taste bud nowadays may differ as time progresses. In addition, the supplier keeps on improving the texture of Bahulu to follow the trend and to create uniqueness of the product in order to capture the existing or potential market. For example, there are varieties of bahulu flavour that can be found in the market such as pandan bahulu, chocolate chip bahulu, green tea bahulu and others. Hence, there is a rise in concern for the upcoming generation that possibly might not know how Bahulu are actually supposed to taste like.

In Malaysia, most Bahulu producers comprises of local entrepreneurs involved in micro enterprises. These are small scale business category in with sales turnover of less than RM250,000 a year. Most of these businesses found difficulty to embark on any sophisticated marketing strategies to sell their products and compete in the nationwide. They rely much on government agencies such as the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) and the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) to commercialize their products.

In pursuit of this, the rest of this paper is structured as follows: first, it highlights the problem statement of this research and followed by the objectives of the study. Then it is followed by the literature review and description of methodology. The outcome is then presented and discussed. Lastly, it concludes with conclusion and suggestions for future project.

Problem statement

The emerging of Malay modern kuih and pastry are escalating among micro small enterprise and small medium enterprise. This phenomenon emerged when a few elements influenced by knowledge, motivation, ways of life, value, family background, and pecuniary (Humairah, 2015). An applied research had been conducted under the program of University Community Transformation Centre (UCTC) in conjunction with "Commercialization of kuih Bahulu" to improve the marketing and manufacturing of traditional Malay kuih especially Bahulu. The researchers found that there is a lot of perception and judgements about kuih Bahulu. Some local people claimed Bahulu should be crusted outside but soft texture inside, some claimed it should be soft and dewy texture just like sponge cake and many other opinions based on their belief and knowledge. Therefore, it is difficult to find the right authentic traditional of kuih Bahulu making this research as timely and warranted.

Objectives:

This research is embarked to fulfil two objectives, which are:

- 1) To identify young generation knowledge on objective quality of kuih Bahulu which already reinforced by modernization.
- 2) To study the preference of authentic local kuih Bahulu by sensory evaluation.

The implication of the finding from consumer perspective is highlighted in this article.

Literature Review

Traditional foods are part of culture, identity and heritage for every part of countries in the world. Heritage food is broken into two categories. The first category refers to common foods of the local people where they live but they are unaware of the heritage value and local delicacies. Second category represents our culture but is slowly dying out such as some of Malay traditional kuih and local pastry (Humarah, Muhammad, Mohiddin, Azimi and Nur, 2015). The main challenge of the twenty-first century is to establish society where nature and heritage of these traditional foods are preserved for future generations. Malaysia has shown that cultural pattern and value among youth are changing due to variety factors including shifting pattern of global culture that is swamping youth through mass media. Due to complex culture and globalization, it dissolving local cultures thus making possible to lose our traditional Malaysian foods heritage.

Since Malaysia cuisine has been associated with different cultures and groups, local delicacy such as kuih/cookies has a significant historical, religious and societal value (Hassan, 2011). Knowledge of authentic Malay kuih is often passed down from generation to the generation through oral tradition and practices are varies among individuals and communities.

Kuih Bahulu is a traditional Malay cakes that is perennial favourite among Malaysians of all ages especially during festive seasons like Hari Raya and wedding ceremonies. It is small bite sized, sweet, golden brown cake that is soft inside, and has a slightly dry and crunchy outside. It is delicious, and it can be eaten either freshly baked or cold.

There are many different shapes of Bahulu. Bahulu cermai (button shape) and Bahulu ikan (goldfish shape) are the two most popular sold by micro food producer. The traditional kuih Bahulu recipe has slowly evolved to meet the modern Malaysian lifestyle. The formulation and process are improved to prolong the shelf life. Besides, Bahulu today comes in many different flavours such as pandan, cappuccino, chocolate chips, and strawberry filling (Nabsiah & Hamdia, 2009).

Bahulu are widely sold in the hypermarkets, such as Tesco, AEON Big, Giant and other micro food producer in hypermarket or mall. Bahulu is a signature represent traditional Malay cake and place in the list of Malaysian National Heritage alongside other Malaysian foods such as nasi lemak, Penang char kuey teow, ketupat, and kuih bulan (Nabsiah & Hamdia, 2009).

Methodology

(a)

Sensory analysis was carried out to determine consumer's preference towards Bahulu texture. Differences in Bahulu texture preference among consumer were tested using five (5) different samples. Five different Bahulu with different formulation were tested with four of Bahulu samples are the one claimed original among the northern people. Meanwhile, another one samples was made with Madeline formulation. The sample with Madeline formulation was made and moulded into the same shape as other traditional Bahulu which using the *cermai* shape mould. Ranking test was conducted among 30 consumer panellists. Attribute assessed was only texture of the Bahulu. Panellists were given samples with score card to record their score. Panellists recorded their evaluation by numbering the samples code according to the ranking with score 1 representing the least score which indicate dislike extremely and score 5 (the highest score) indicate like extremely. Panellists were also supplied with water for mouth rinsing between samples. Preparations of samples were done in preparation kitchen. The Bahulu with the same size and shape were chosen to eliminate bias that may occur due to shape and size variation. Bahulu was cut into four small pieces. The small pieces of Bahulu are wrapped individually in a plastic bag and sealed. Then, it was place separately in container and ready to be served to consumer after labelled with 3 digits random numbers and permuted following the procedure for sample preparation as in Figure 1.

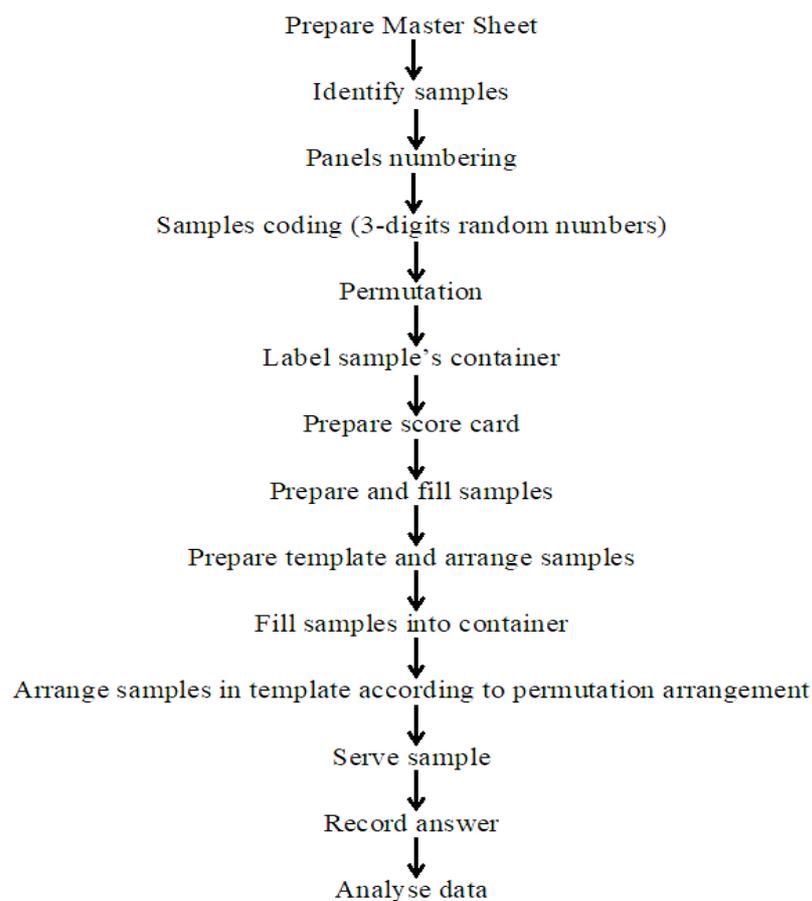


Figure 1: Sample preparation flowchart
Source: Aminah (2000)

After all samples evaluated by panellist, data collected and the three digits sample's code numbers from score cards were decoded according to their three digits code and permutation. All data obtained were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the data gathered. Later, Tukey-HSD test at $p < 0.05$ were carried out for the post-hoc test to differentiate sample means and to detect which sample have significant differences.

Results and Discussion

Based on the questionnaire completed by 30 consumer panelists, the composition of panelist is 96.7% is Malay and 3.3% other races. From these panelists, 16.7% are male and 83.3% are female. Panelist age ranging from 19 to 56 years old with 50% age below 35 and another half age 35 years old and above.

Results of ranking score are summarized in Table 1. Based on the ranking test, Sample E Bahulu reported the highest score (3.40 ± 1.43) and significant compared to the lowest Bahulu sample which is Madeline with a score of 2.37 ± 1.56 at p values lower than 0.05. There is no significant difference on consumers' preference on other samples.

Table 1: Score of ranking test

Samples	Mean of ranking score (Mean \pm SD, N=30)
Brand A	2.80 ± 1.21^a
Brand B	3.23 ± 1.36^a
Madeline	2.37 ± 1.56^{ab}
Brand D	3.13 ± 1.38^a
Brand E	3.40 ± 1.43^{ac}

* $p < 0.05$

*rows with the same alphabet shows no significant difference

However, when the data were further analysed focusing on the age group, Madeline formulation of bahulu reported a low score among panel age 35 years old and above. 20% of panels in the age group of 35 years and above ranked Madeline with a score of two (2) and below. Some panels from this age group provided remark that the texture and taste of Madeline is not similar with the traditional Bahulu. This indicates that the older group of panels are still able to differentiate the taste of traditional Bahulu formulation as compared to other formulations. Therefore, it explains the reason of a low score of Madeline among older age group of panels. Comparison are made towards Madeline and Brand E which claim as the most authentic recipe inherited (Figure 2). Significant mean different are observe between age group of 35 and above, where score of Sample E are significantly higher

compared to Madeline. Interestingly, there is no significant different in score for Sample E and Madeline reported by panels in the age group of 20 years old and below indicating that the younger age panels are not able to differentiate the authentic taste of bahulu.

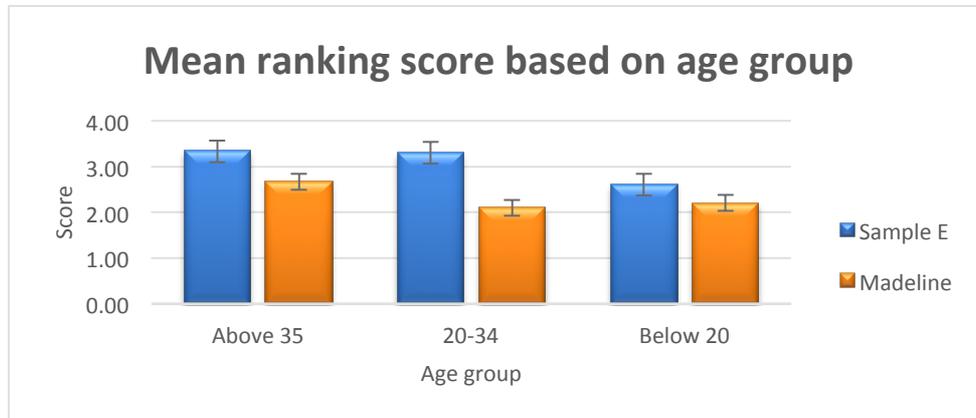


Figure 2 : Mean ranking score of Sample E and Madeline based on different age group

Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the results gathered from the sensory analysis, we can postulate that Bahulu has lost its authentic characteristics among younger generation. In particular, panels in the age group of 20 years old and below indicated that they are not able to sense the different in formulation of bahulu for all samples. In fact, this group of panel are not able to differentiate the taste of bahulu and Madeline. As long as the physical appearance is similar to the traditional bahulu, the younger generation may think that it is bahulu. They may be ignorance of traditional snacks and may not have interest on bahulu. Thus, findings of this study may raise a bigger concern about the sustainability of the traditional cookies in the near future for our country. Stakeholders and related authorities need to draw an action plan to help sustain kuih bahulu for the next generation. Bahulu is all time favourite for different ethnics in Malaysia and educating the public is important to overcome this issue. Future study may look at the perceptions of public for other types of traditional snack or cookies in Malaysia. Also, study on effective ways to preserve bahulu in the near future as a heritage snack can be undertaken.

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