

The Effects of Food Labelling Information on Traditional Food Purchase Intention Among Young Adults

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the acceptance of traditional food and how food labelling information could influence the purchase intention of multiple young ethnic consumers. One hundred thirty-eight respondents completed a set of questionnaires as the means for data collection in this study. The obtained data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis and the Kruskal-Wallis test. The results showed that most respondents were optimistic towards food labelling (mean=4.00±0.447). The Kruskal-Wallis test showed there were no significant differences in the attitudes toward labelling ($p=0.433$, $p>0.05$) and purchasing intention of traditional food ($p=0.618$, $p>0.05$) among the ethnicities. However, there is a significant difference in acceptance of traditional foods ($p=0.001$, $p<0.005$), whereas the Chinese had the lowest score. This study also showed that the labelling information could influence the consumers' purchase intention for traditional food. This study highlighted the importance of food labelling information in the traditional food industry, which can be crucial in boosting young consumers' acceptance and purchase intention.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Food and culture are two of the most compelling reasons for a visitor to visit a location or hotspot, and food tourism is the act of travelling for a taste of a place to get a sense of place. Food tourism combines the elements of food and culture to provide tourists with new tastes, flavours, textures, cultures, heritage, local culinary cultures, customs, and authentic food and beverage experiences throughout their stay and visit. Adding a cultural value to a food product is a potential development of attraction to a specific destination because food symbolizes appetite and fullness and is also important to one population's historic lifestyle (Karim et al., 2013).

Traditional food and food tourism are inextricably linked because when tourists travel to new places, they also consider the locals' culinary customs and traditions. Thus, especially in Southeast Asia, the acceptance of traditional dishes has increased significantly (Chang et al., 2020). Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant potential for developing alternative culinary tourism using Southeast Asia's traditional cuisine, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia (Raji et al., 2017;

Harmayani et al., 2019). However, given the variety of backgrounds and rising demand for domestic and foreign tourists, development and advertising activities must be stepped up.

Traditional food products have received less attention from the public and tourists, particularly young people when compared to other commercial foods. They find it challenging to accept foods they have never tried and have little knowledge of the origins and ingredients used in traditional foods (Youn & Kim, 2017). Individuals with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds from one place or area demonstrated less acceptance and interest in traditional foods from abroad or elsewhere because they were not exposed to local traditional food, cooking methods, and ingredients (Jang & Kim, 2015). However, information on food product labelling may assist consumers, mainly tourists, gain some insight and information on traditional food products. Those details on food labels may increase people's acceptance and desire to try new foods (Dimara & Skuras, 2005; Costell et al., 2010).

Previous studies have demonstrated that food labelling that details the food's preparation, ingredients, and history can decrease information gaps and increase food acceptance (Jang & Kim, 2015). However, most research is focused on Western nations, as seen in studies on Romanian consumers' understanding of traditional food labelling. The survey results show that one of the three factors customers prioritize when buying traditional meals is knowledge about the components used in their production (Tomescu, 2015). However, studies have not examined how labelling information could affect Malaysian consumers' intentions to purchase traditional foods, especially young local consumers. Such a study is required to evaluate responses and the impact of information on food labels on traditional food purchasing.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Food Labelling Information

Most consumers nowadays choose food products based on their distinctive characteristics, such as local origin, traditional production methods, nutritional content, sustainability, and ethical considerations. Food labelling has become a prominent means of communicating product information to consumers because of the abandonment of knowledge and consideration we now have (Prinsloo et al., 2012). On the other hand, food labelling is also a way of communication between food business operators and consumers, and it plays a significant role in consumer purchase decisions. Several studies have found that food labelling significantly impacts consumer purchasing decisions. Larceneux (2004) proposed three mediating routes via which the label will likely influence the consumer's purchasing decision: perceived quality, distinctiveness, and producer esteem. Furthermore, detailed and well-educated food labels have become essential to today's consumers' purchase decisions, particularly when evaluating food goods and making informed choices (Lidew et al., 2015; Dimara & Skuras, 2005). As a result, food labelling can be a valuable tool for food manufacturers and entrepreneurs to promote their products to the public.

2.2. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is related to consumers' behaviour, perception, and attitude while deciding to buy products. It is an important key information for

manufacturers, retailers and franchisers in considering and evaluating their products' characteristics and information needed for the customers (Keller, 2001). Once the consumers decide to purchase the product in a particular store, they will be driven by their intention. However, purchase intention might be altered by the influence of price, quality, information and availability. In terms of food science, two main factors influence voters' or individuals' food purchase intentions: intrinsic characteristics and extrinsic characteristics. Intrinsic characteristics are sensory properties of food that cannot be changed without changing the original properties of the product, such as colour, taste, and aroma. Information, labelling, brand, price, and logos are examples of extrinsic features (Jover et al., 2004). Interestingly, several studies have shown that extrinsic factors like information and labelling are more essential than intrinsic properties such as sensory properties of food (Hoffman et al., 2020).

2.3 Influence of Food Labelling On Purchase Intention

The impact of the information may depend on the product category and type of information provided (Johansen et al., 2010). Information on food labels may have a positive or negative impact on the purchase of the product. According to Swetha et al. (2013), information on food labels can positively enhance purchase intentions and lead to better food quality, acceptance, and healthier food product selection. For example, a study by Bower et al. (2003) found that the information given in the food packaging could change the purchasing intentions and willingness to pay for two types of healthier margarine options. The study results show that purchase intent is influenced by information such as food content, price, and nutritional value in food labelling. However, several studies showed that food labelling might have a negative impact on consumer acceptance and purchase intention. A study by Jaeger (2015) showed that information on food products can change negative food evaluations in different consumer groups due to terms and descriptions being used in the labelling. Meanwhile, Torres-Meoreno et al. (2011) stated that food product acceptance and purchase intention depend not solely on consumer expectations resulting from information, brand and type of product but also on the product's sensory characteristics. Thus, the information on the food labelling/packaging should be clear and concise enough to attract consumers and enhance their purchase intention.

2.3. Traditional Food and Younger Population

Traditional food is regularly consumed or associated with one ethnic or population's holidays and/or seasons. The knowledge in preparing those dishes is often passed down from generation to generation, and they are unusual in that they are made appropriately by the gastronomic history with little to no processing or manipulation. This food product is commonly called ethnic food since it is well-known among the general public due to its sensory attributes and is associated with a certain area, region, or country. Traditional cuisines are becoming more recognized as an important component of the cultural tourist business, particularly in rural areas (Wondirad et al., 2021). This is due to the possibility of local foods or food products promoting tourism sustainability, adding to the destination's authenticity, boosting the local economy, and supporting ecologically friendly infrastructure.

While tourists' interest in local cuisine has grown over time, young people's enthusiasm for preserving their original cuisine is fading. Several studies have shown that lacking knowledge transfer about traditional food from earlier generations to youngsters is the key problem of decreasing interest among that group (Md. Sharif et al., 2018). In addition, adapting the Western diet and the rise of fast and convenient food consumption are contributing to the decreased appreciation of traditional food. Thus, it is possible that the information on traditional food cuisine on the packaging could help young consumers know about the product and be more willing to try traditional food, particularly among youngsters (Kumar & Kapoor, 2016). Furthermore, this practice could also be a better way to promote local cuisine among tourists and boost the traditional food industries to a better position. Addressing these issues is critical because the local population, particularly the youth, is key to preserving their cuisine and culture for future generations.

2.4. Importance of Food Labeling Information On Traditional Food Acceptance

In the ethnic food literature, two contradicting factors, i.e., authenticity and familiarity, have been discussed as determinants of customers' behavioural intentions. Some researchers have emphasized perceived authenticity as a crucial factor in customers' evaluations of ethnic cuisines and restaurants. Meanwhile, others argue that customers who experience unfamiliar authentic stimuli may ascribe negative subjective meanings to their

experience, such as uncertainty, peculiarity, risk and fear. Information on food labels is one of the external factors that can increase the acceptance of ethnic traditional food because it can reduce uncertainty (Eertmans et al., 2001). According to Liana et al. (2010), the extrinsic characteristics of products, such as food labels, brands, and marketing techniques, can influence the acceptance and selection of consumer food products, whereas Cardello (1994) highlighted that there is a possibility that consumers reject novel foods because they do not know how to prepare certain foods. In addition, Siret and Issanchou (2000) found that information about the use of non-traditional ingredients in pâtés, a type of traditional French food, creates low expectations for consumers and causes a negative effect on the sensory evaluation and acceptance of the traditional food. Therefore, the appropriate labelling of information about the preparation method or the content of a food to consumers could reduce the information gap, increase the acceptance of food and enhance the purchase intention (Conto, 2016; Youn & Kim, 2017).

3.0. METHODOLOGY


	Label A	Label B	Label C
Packaging Image			
Given Information	None	Ingredients and Origins	Ingredients, method of preparation and origins

Figure 1.0 Different amount and types of labelling information

A total of 138 multiethnic respondents aged from 20-26 years participated in this study. This quantitative study involved a set of questionnaires as the main tool for data collection, and a cross-sectional design was applied. The questionnaire used comprises five sections. In part A, subjects were asked about their demographic background while their attitude towards food labelling was measured. Meanwhile, the subject's acceptance and purchase intention towards traditional food were asked in parts C and D. In part E, subjects' purchase decisions on different food labelling information to buy a Sabahan traditional food- The Bosou was tested. The differences in the amount and types of labeling information, as shown in Figure 1.0.

Five Likert scale was used to measure subjects' responses in all parts except for part A. All the data collection was done online via Google Forms. A statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to perform the statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to tabulate data for demographic background, whereas any response differences among the subjects' ethnicity were analysed by using the crucial-walis test, and Spearman correlation was used to measure any relationship among the parameters. P-value of 0.05 or lower is reported as a significant difference.

4.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic Background

Table 1.0 shows the distribution of subjects based on the demographic items. Most of this study's respondents comprised 62.3% female (n =86) while only 37.7% male respondents (n = 52). On average, respondents ranged in age from 20 years to 26 years. As many as (n = 53, 38.4 %) of the respondents were 23 years old, while only (n = 4, 2.95 %) the respondent was 26 years old. In terms of ethnicity, respondents are Malay, Chinese, and ethnicity Indian (n = 63, 45.7%), (n = 41, 29.7%), and (n = 34, 24.6%), respectively. In terms of religion, respondents who are Muslims (n = 66, 47.8%), Buddhists (n = 32, 23.2%), Hindus (n = 28, 20.3%) and Christians (n = 12, 8.7%)

Table 1.0 Subject's demographic and distribution

Demography	Group	No. of Subjects (n = 138)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	52	37.7
	Female	86	62.3
Ethnicity	Malay	63	45.7
	Chinese	41	29.7
	Indian	34	24.6
Religion	Islam	66	47.8
	Buddha	32	23.2
	Hindu	28	20.3
	Christian	12	8.7

4.2. Subject's Attitude Towards Food Labeling

The overall mean value indicates the respondent has a positive attitude towards food labelling. All means value of the items that reflecting respondent attitude towards

labelling had a means score more than 4.0 out of 5.0 except for trustworthy on the labelling information had lower than 4.0 (Table 2.0).

Our findings showed that most respondents have a positive attitude towards food labelling. They agree that they are interested in food labelling information; they will look for food labels when making purchases, and food labels help them make choices when buying. In addition, they fully trust the information given on food labelling.

According to Zafar et al. (2021), the efficacy of food labels positively affects attitudes towards familiar and unfamiliar foods. In the case of traditional food, the labelling information on the product or packaging might increase the interest and trust among the consumers to try the products (Tian et al., 2021). Meanwhile, a study by Moreira et al. (2021) showed that some consumers feel that labelling information is one way to market a product but is often seen as fraud. Thus, the efficacy of labelling information could influence the response and attitude of consumers on the traditional product. Further analysis based on the ethnicity groups found that there are no significant differences among the ethnicities in the attitude towards food labelling.

Table 2: Subjects Attitude and Response Towards Labeling

Items	Means ± SD
1. I can accept certain traditional foods that I know.	3.64±0.98
2. I can accept traditional foods that follow guidelines set by my religion only	4.14±1.14
3. I readily accept all kinds of traditional foods.	3.25±1.16
4. I can only accept traditional food with culinary ingredients that I know in the food.	3.70±1.06
5. I can only accept traditional food and use cooking ingredients according to taste and interest.	3.51±1.05
6. I can accept any traditional food that contains new ingredients for myself	3.75±1.03

4.3. Food Labeling Information on Traditional Food Purchase Intention

In this part, subjects were asked about their purchase intention based on information on the Sabah traditional food, the Bosou, a fermented fresh fish with spices and

condiments. Three different types and amounts of information were given to the respondents, and they needed to respond on purchase intention. Our findings showed that respondents are prone to have higher purchase intention for traditional food with more information on the labelling, particularly on the information related to ingredients and preparation of the food product. Among the three types of food labelling, most of the respondents (81.16%) chose the most amount information included on the packaging (ingredients, preparation method, origins) compared to other labelling information. This showed that consumers are more convincing and attracted to products with more related information and explanations. Our finding was supported by Kempen et al. (2011), who suggested that information on ingredient and product preparation also affected consumer buying decisions. They proposed that nutritional and ingredient information influence the consumers' buying decisions, particularly that information could influence nutritional, personal interest, healthy components, and quality of food products. A similar finding was found by Larcenuex (2012), which is that food labelling information could reflect the quality and uniqueness of a product and build up trust and interest among consumers. Meanwhile, Komariah et al. (2020) also supported the idea that information on traditional food might increase tourists' intention to try the food when they travel. In addition, a study by Kumar & Kapoor (2017) showed that young consumers focus on food quality and consider product specifications during their purchase decisions in India.

5.0. CONCLUSION

Food labelling information on products influences traditional food purchase intentions among consumers, particularly youngsters. Thus, the traditional food industry, particularly traditional food entrepreneurs, needs to pay attention to this issue and take appropriate measures to promote traditional food to the consumers so that these unique and special delicacies can continue to get attention among consumers and tourists, especially the young consumer as this strategy could broaden their market.

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