

UNDERSTANDING THE YOUNG GENERATIONS' PREFERENCE TOWARDS MALAY TRADITIONAL FOOD IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *Every ethnic group in this world have their own uniqueness and one of the key component that contributed in shaping each ethnic group's unique identity is their traditional foods which have been sustained and practiced for generations. Hence, traditional foods are viewed as a symbol of heritage to an ethnic group's culture (Sharif, Zahari, Nor, and Muhammad, 2016b). This is true especially for Malaysia as this country is known for its diversified cultures. Nevertheless, the young generations nowadays do not seem to care about the importance of preserving their traditional foods. They are more likely to choose fast foods and convenience foods over traditional foods. Not only that, most of the young generations today do not know how to cook their own traditional foods anymore. This situation is very alarming as the ethnic groups in Malaysia might face the possibility of losing their heritage and unique identity. This article explores the factors that contributed to the changes of traditional foods consumptions and practices among the young generations in Malaysia within the Malay ethnic and Malay traditional food context. This article also discusses the role of family in preserving the Malay traditional food. The results are expected to highlight the significance of young generations role in continuing and sustaining Malay traditional food in Malaysia.*

Keywords: *Malay Ethnic; Malay Traditional Food; Eating Behaviour; Food Consumption; Sustaining Malay Traditional Food.*

Introduction

Malaysia is famous for being the home to heterogeneous mix of races and ethnic groups which comprises of Malay, Chinese, and Indian, and some other minority groups. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016), Malay holds the highest citizen percentages (68.6%), followed by Chinese (23.4%) and Indians (7.0%). In addition, other minority groups hold the lowest citizen percentages of only 1.0%. In the beginning, Malaysia was known as Malaya and the Malays were the indigenous inhabitants in Malaya, together with Orang Asli and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak. Known as a strategic trading hub, traders from China and India started to travel to Malaya for this purpose and some decided to settle down here. However, the number of Chinese and Indian immigrants in Malaya increased dramatically when there was a mass exodus of Chinese and Indian immigrants in the 19th century. This occurrence was associated with the arrival of British in Malaya where they brought Chinese and Indian workers to supply the manpower needed for tin, rubber, and other industries (Wonderful Malaysia, 2017). As a result, the various races and ethnic groups have helped in the formation of a unique national identity of Malaya, which later known as Malaysia.

Therefore, the diversified races and ethnic groups makes Malaysia as a country that rich with cultures and traditions. This can especially be seen through their traditional foods. Each ethnic group has its own food culture together with its typical dishes and ingredients, dietary taboos and restrictions, dining rituals, structure of meals and symbolic dimensions of foods (Poulain et al., 2015). Sharif, Zahari, Nor, and Muhammad (2016b) pointed out that food is recognized as a crucial component of cultural and heritage. It signifies the cultural identity of particular community or ethnicity, and some elements of the food preparation and consumption. In addition, Muhammad, Ab. Karim, Othman, and Ghazali (2013) also stated that one can visualize the people's traditions, culture, lifestyle and eating behaviour of a country through their traditional foods.

Hence, Malaysia is known as a food paradise where people come from all over the world to this country to enjoy satisfying gastronomic experience. However, Malaysia will face the threat of losing the authenticity of its traditional foods and worse, its heritage and unique identity, if no preventive measures taken to preserve these national treasures. This situation is very serious as some ethnics are reported not only facing the problem of deskilling issues related to domestic cooking skills but the traditional food culture as well because the traditional cooking knowledge that should have been passed down from one generations to another has gradually diminishing (Bowen and Devine, 2011).

Therefore, the young generations play an important role in sustaining the local traditional foods. According to Hamzah et al. (2015), young generations acts as a mediator of culture as well as marketing and branding agent of traditional foods which is essential in producing sustainable business production of local traditional foods. Not only that, young generations is also a critical component in sustaining the traditional foods from rapid modernization. This is quite ironic because the eating behaviour of people today, especially the younger generations, have shifted to fast food and convenience food consumption due to modernization and globalization. Thus, this paper concentrates on the Malay traditional food as well as the factors that contributed to the changes of Malay traditional food consumptions and practices among the young generations. This paper also discusses on how family role can contribute in sustaining the Malay traditional food.

Malay Traditional Food

Malay traditional food is known to have distinctive spicy and aromatic flavours as well as rich tastes in herbs and spices as varieties of ingredients are used in preparing and cooking the food (Amira and Artinah, 2015; Ismail, Ismail, Othman, and Abdul Karim, 2015). The ingredients used are usually described as sharp, spicy and flavourful including *serai* (lemongrass), *pandan* leaves (screwpine), *kemangi* (a type of basil), *daun kesum* (Polygonum or laksa leaf), *kunyit* (turmeric) and *bunga kantan* (wild ginger buds). Traditional dried spices such as *jintan manis* (fennel), *jintan putih* (cumin), *ketumbar* (coriander), *buah pelaga* (cardamom), and *biji sawi* (mustard seeds), are also commonly used in preparing and cooking the Malay traditional food (Abdullah, Muhammad, Zahari, and Sharif, 2013; Sharif, Zahari, Nor, and Muhammad, 2016a).

Amira and Artinah (2015) stated that the Malay traditional food can be distinguished from other ethnics like Chinese and Indians through three aspects. The first aspect is the uses of staple ingredients, especially rice. The second aspect is the flavour principle which is used extensively in the Malay traditional food such as onion, garlic, lemongrass, turmeric, ginger and chilli. These ingredients are combined and made into paste called *rempah*. The *rempah* is then used as a base component in preparing and cooking the Malay traditional food. Not only that, *asam jawa* (tamarind), *belacan* (shrimp paste), coconut milk, screwpine and *kayu manis* (cinnamon) are also frequently used in preparing and cooking the Malay traditional food (Keong and Beng, 2009). These ingredients provide spicy and aromatic flavour as well as tempting fragrance and thus, making the Malay traditional food so scrumptious and irresistible. Last but not least, Amira and Artinah (2015) pointed out that the cooking method which includes sautéing, boiling technique, steaming technique, and many other unique ways in preparing the food as the third aspect in categorizing the specialty of Malay traditional food.

Malay Traditional Food by Region in Malaysia

The characteristics of Malay traditional food are closely related to the geographical region and each of this continent has its own unique Malay traditional food (Omar et al., 2011). For instance, the Malay traditional food is known for its hot and spicy taste on the west coast and the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia due to the strong influence from the neighbouring country, Thailand. On the other hand, the Malay traditional food in the central part of Peninsular Malaysia is famous for the thick and rich flavour, and the Malay traditional food in the southern state of Peninsular Malaysia is recognized by its rich and sour spicy sauces (Sharif, Zahari, Nor, and Muhammad, 2013a). Not only that, the southern state of Peninsular Malaysia also has some elements of Java due to the influence of Javanese immigrants who came to the area in the 19th century (Muhammad, Zahari, Sharif, and Abdullah, 2016). Sharif et al. (2013a) also mentioned that the Malay traditional food is associated with sweet yet rich dishes and glutinous rice in the east coast of the Peninsular Malaysia. Hence, people can travel all over Malaysia and find that each region offers different types of Malay foods with different styles of cooking and taste preferences.

Nonetheless, Sharif, Zahari, Nor, and Muhammad (2013b) stated that the pattern or the taste of Malay traditional food is subjected to the creation and acceptance of the Malay community from particular areas, respectively, even though the structure or the name of Malay traditional food is the same or similar in principle. For instance, *rendang* (dry, dark, heavy coconut-based curry) have variety of versions and it is often influenced by particular regions. In Perak, *rendang* is known as *rendang tok*, whereas *rendang* is called as *kerutup* in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Besides, *singgang* is a famous Malay traditional food in Kelantan and Terengganu but it is known as *pindang* in Selangor, Melaka and Johor. Both of these foods have the same

texture although their appearance is slightly different where *singgang* has a clear colour while *pindang* is light yellow in colour (Sharif et al., 2013b).

Malay Traditional Cooking Equipment

According to Ramli and Zahari (2014), traditional food is related to local product that is originated from a particular regional climate and has been produced using the traditional method of production. Hence, in addition to the use of various herbs and spices in the Malay traditional food, the Malay traditional cooking equipment is also one of the key components that makes the Malay traditional food distinct from other ethnic foods. Some of the Malay traditional cooking equipment includes *batu giling* (stone roller), *lesung batu* (pestle and mortar), and *batu boh* (mill), is used for preparing spices and pastes (Abdullah et al., 2013). This equipment is a type of grinders.

Bakhtiar (2010) mentioned that *batu giling* is made of large stone that was carefully ground into a rectangular shape. It composed of two parts. The first part is known as the *ibu giling* or the 'mother' which is the foundation of the *batu giling*. This is where the food ingredients are placed and milled. The second part is *anak batu giling* or also known as the 'child' which is the stone used to grind food ingredients. The method of using the *batu giling* is very special where the food ingredients will be grinded when both hands are used to hold each end side of the *anak batu giling* by pushing the *anak batu giling* forward and backward. The *batu giling* is usually used to grind herbs and spices, henna leaves, coconut meat to make *kerisik* (coconut paste), and many more. The food ingredients can be finely crushed by using the *batu giling*.

On the other hand, *lesung batu* is composed of *lesung* (mortar) and *alu* (pestle) where this cooking equipment also have the same functions as a *batu giling*. However, the use of *lesung batu* is slightly different from the *batu giling* in a way where the food ingredients is grinded in the *lesung*. The *lesung* is made from trees that have been cut and there is a hole in its middle, whereas the *alu*, or also known as *antan*, is a tool used to grind food ingredients in the hole. The *lesung batu* is also used to crush the paddy and grains. In addition to wood, *lesung batu* is also made from cement (Bakhtiar, 2010).

The food ingredients that is milled using *lesung batu* and *batu giling* is claimed to release a unique taste as compared to the use of modern cooking appliances such as blender and food processor. In the past, grandmothers used to pound their own ground chilly, first the stem of the chillies were removed, then it is washed and later dried under the sun. The chillies had to be very crisp, then it would be pounded to turn it into chilli powder. This chilli powder would be kept for months and used to prepare various chilli-based dishes, such as chicken in red sauce, sambal and various curries. The chilli powder normally could last for several months and it is very handy to have them in the fridge for everyday cooking. When chilly is pounded, it tends to release its spiciness. The blender and food processor are said to only grind the food ingredients into smooth texture without releasing the oils and flavours of the food ingredients, unlike the Malay traditional cooking equipment such as *lesung batu* and *batu giling* that grind the food ingredients more consistently (Ainuddin, 2013).

Current Eating Behaviour and Food Consumption of the Young Generations in Malaysia

However, the wave of modernization have shown significant impact on the food preparation, equipment, ingredients, food processing methods as well as the eating behaviour among the young generations today. Yannakoulia, Ntalla, Papoutsakis, Farmaki, and Dedoussis (2010) defined eating behaviour as a complex series of behaviours that comprises of food choice, meal

patterns (composition of food into meals), eating environments and after eating scenario. At present, the young generations' eating behaviour in Malaysia have relatively changed from eating home-made food to eating outside the home. This is very different from the traditional practice where the women will cook for the household and eating at home after working all day and at weekends is the common norm.

According to Bitter-Suermann (2014), the mothers or grandmothers were responsible for buying and cooking home-made food for their families in the past. The older women described home-made food as food that is prepared from 'the scratch' without using market-made or processed food ingredients (Carrigan, Szmigin, and Leek, 2006). However, the eating behaviour of young generations in Malaysia today have also changed along with the socio-cultural transformation. Socio-cultural transformation is associated with changes in lifestyle and values of an individual which can be seen through the replacement of traditional dishes that were previously prepared from raw products in the household with refined, industrially produced food (Verbeke and López, 2013). Nonetheless, the current eating behaviour of the young generations in Malaysia can be classified into the trend of eating outside the home as well as the consumption of fast food and convenience food.

Trend of Eating Outside the Home

The Department of Statistics (2015) has recorded an increase from RM5, 000 in 2012 to RM6, 141 in 2014 for the mean monthly household income for Malaysian. This shows an increment of 10.3% per annum. In relation to this, the percentage of consumption expenditure for restaurants and hotels also has increased from 10.9% in 2009 to 12.7% in 2014 (Department of Statistics, 2015). The increasing household income can be directly translated as stronger purchasing power. The rising of Malaysian income level has led to higher purchasing power and disposable income to spend on various things that they might not able to afford before, such as eating out.

Eating out can be defined as the consumption of all food that takes place outside the home (Pawan, Langgat, & Marzuki, 2014). Besides, Ali and Abdullah (2012) suggested that the practices of young generations' eating behaviour can be distinguished through dining place, time of eating, type of food and the eateries themselves. Presently, the number of people eating out has increased significantly due to the development of the dining places and it is a common practice for people to dine out. There are variety of dining places such as local food stalls, fast food restaurants and fine dining restaurants (Pawan et al., 2014). In addition to the delicious food served to customers, these food establishments also provide conducive ambiance and services for those who want to enjoy their foods with friends and family in a jovial or relax manner.

Additionally, Ali and Abdullah (2012) also stated that the eating time is also no longer restricted to the normal meal time since the presence of 24 hour restaurants is now easily accessible. This has encouraged the young generations, especially teenagers, late sleepers and night workers, to eat outside the home late at night or early in the mornings. They often patronize the 24-hour restaurants to enjoy eating while chatting with their friends and family. What's more, these restaurants usually provide a large screen that displays sports and movies as well as free Wi-Fi access to attract the customers and thus, frequently visit their restaurants. Moreover, the younger generations often patronize food establishments such as cafe, restaurants or food courts as assortment types of foods both local and international are offered at these places. Last but not least, the younger generations today is accustomed to eating out either individually, in pairs

or in groups on working days, whereas they will take the opportunity to spend time together as a family and eating out on the weekend (Ali and Abdullah, 2012).

Nevertheless, there are various factors that contribute to the practice of eating outside the home. Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, and Aksoy (1996) suggested that multiple income households, more women working outside the home, and the desire for convenience are among the factors that encourage the practice of eating outside the home. The practice of eating out has become a trend among urban workers, students and families because they are unable to go home to eat or simply because there is no food in the house (Ali and Abdullah, 2012). People who work away from home and working mothers also prefer to eat outside the home since they do not have an ample time to cook for their family. They lead increasingly busy lives and this means that the time available for cooking home-made food is being squeezed between work and leisure commitments.

Furthermore, by practicing eating outside the home, they get the chance to spend time with their family, especially on weekends when they go to the mall for a variety of shopping purposes and dining at a nearby restaurant. They also take this opportunity to entertain relatives and friends at food establishments over meals (Habib, Abu Dardak, and Zakaria, 2011). Thus, the practice of eating outside the home has become a trend that makes the younger generations' life more convenient.

Fast Food Consumption

In recent years, the major trend of the younger generations' food consumption in Malaysia has shifted from eating home-made food to eating food away-from-home, and fast food sector has been the fastest growing sector in foodservice industry. Goyal and Singh (2007) pointed out that fast food consumption started with eating outside the home and it is gaining acceptance, predominantly from the young generations and now, fast food has become part of their lives. According to Lim, Tan, and Tan (2013), fast food refers to food that is processed and prepared using standardized ingredients and production technique. On the other hand, restaurants that serve fast food is called fast food restaurants. Fast food restaurant is typically considered as franchised restaurant which offers fast service and the food is served quickly.

Market Access Secretariat Global Analysis Report (2014) reported that the Malaysian fast food sector has shown a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.2% between 2008 and 2012, reaching total sales of US \$ 1.4 billion. There are more than 3,300 fast food restaurant outlets that have recorded 335.2 million transactions in 2012 where the number has grown by a compound annual rate of 6.0% and 8.4%, since 2008. In addition, the fast food sector also has shown sales of US \$423, 772 per outlet, with an average transaction value of US \$4.22. Nevertheless, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonald's, Dunkin' Donuts, and MARRYBROWN is the top chained brand in fast food sector in Malaysia.

Fast food is favoured because it is convenient, quick to serve, readily available as compared to home-made food and it is also fairly affordable. Not only that, fast food is now easily accessible without the hassle of leaving the house because most of the fast food restaurants provide delivery service for the convenience of their customers (Abdullah, Mokhtar, Abu Bakar, and Al-Kubaisy, 2015). Moreover, drive-through and take-away options are another prominent feature of fast food restaurant which promote the consumption of fast food (Market Access Secretariat Global Analysis Report, 2014). The fast food restaurants in Malaysia also have been adapted to the need of Malaysian food requirements in accordance with the Islamic teachings

throughout the process of their food operations (Habib et al., 2011). This is very crucial because the Malay community is the largest population in Malaysia and this means that their food consumption is heavily influenced by the concept of *halal* and *haram*. Therefore, fast food restaurants that are trusted to be *halal* is definitely more preferable by the customers.

However, fast food is also commonly associated with poor diet that can cause chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity and heart diseases. This is because fast food is high in calories, fat, saturated fat, added sugar, added salt, and less dietary fibre (AlFaris, Al-Tamimi, Al-Jobair, and Al-Shwaiyat, 2015; Nondzor and Tawiah, 2015). Despite the adverse effects caused by fast food consumption, a study done by Abdullah et al. (2015) revealed that most of the young generations in Malaysia, particularly among those aged 24 years old or younger, often go to fast food restaurant on a monthly basis. This suggests a frequent consumption of fast food among of the younger generations in Malaysia.

Factors That Influence the Fast Food Consumption

There are various factors leading the young generations towards fast food consumption in Malaysia. Mat, Zulqernain, and Mohd Zaid (2016) suggested that time-saving is the main reason for them to consume fast food. The younger generations prefer fast food because it can be prepared in a matter of minutes and ready to be consumed. They also can eat fast food while doing their stuffs like working, driving or watching a movie. Not only that, fast food is convenient, reasonably priced, and can save them the trouble of cooking. For instance, most of the university students in Malaysia prefer quick meal that can accommodate to their gastronomic need. Cooking is not an option for students whether they live in a college hostel or even if they live outside the college. Therefore, fast food is among the students' top choice because it is convenient, affordable and readily available as a substitute for home-made food (Mat et al., 2016).

On the other hand, Abdullah et al. (2015) noted sociability as one of the factors that influence the consumption of fast food among the younger generations in Malaysia. Most of them frequented the fast food restaurants as a way to socialize with the family members. Young parents are more likely to bring their children to fast food restaurants to meet the demand of their children as most of the fast food restaurants such as KFC and McDonalds provide playground facilities for the children. Finally, fast food is accessible. Fast food restaurants are within reach where they are often positioned in strategic locations that ease everyone to access. It is located in the shopping malls, transport terminals, residential areas, and recently in the workplace. Thus, everyone has the opportunity to consume fast food (Malhan, Dalal, & Khatri, 2016).

Convenience Food Consumption

Convenience foods is often defined as any fully or partially prepared foods in which preparation time, knowledge, culinary skills, or energy inputs needed to prepare the food have been transferred from home kitchen to the food processor or any other food distributors (Daniels and Glorieux, 2015). In other word, convenience food is closely related to time and energy saving as well as the process of transferring culinary skills. It also aims to make the people's lives easier when choosing and preparing food. In addition, Boer, McCarthy, Cowan, and Ryan (2004) also posited that convenience food is often associated with reducing the input needed in either buying food, preparing, cooking or cleaning after the meal. However, the consumption of convenience food is different from eating outside the home. Eating outside the home can be

seen as a social event, whereas convenience food is often related with meals and snacks consumption that provides time and opportunity for the people to do other activities.

Convenience food can be categorized into four classes as posited by Costa, Dekker, Beumer, Rombouts, and Jongen (2001). Firstly, ready-to-eat food is readily to be consumed after being purchased such as take away foods, chilled sandwiches, salads and pies. Secondly, ready-to-heat food only requires mild heating before consumption. Chilled and frozen food like pizza and canned food are among ready-to-heat food. Next, ready-to-end-cook food like chilled and frozen lasagne and dehydrated pasta dish, is slightly different from ready-to-heat food as it requires more than 15 minutes of heating or sufficient heating before consumption. Lastly, ready-to-cook food only requires minimal preparation but some or all of its components still need to be fully cooked. These types of foods usually can be found in the retail stores (Olsen, Menichelli, Sørheim, and Næs, 2012).

In a recent study, Daniels and Glorieux (2015) suggested a constructive food classification that distinguishes between non-convenience, semi-convenience and convenience foods. The former two categories refer to meal ingredients and accessories, while the latter indicates the full meals. On the other hand, Jackson and Viehoff (2016) argued that even though the typology of convenience food helps in classifying the different types of food and identifying their positions in relation to one another, the firm line separating convenience and semi-convenience food which is shown in the Figure 1 below, is blurred in practice as people usually transgress the classificatory boundaries in their everyday lives. Nevertheless, the typology is very helpful in better understanding the convenience food consumption among the young generations today.

<i>NON-CONVENIENCE</i>		<i>SEMI-CONVENIENCE</i>		<i>CONVENIENCE</i>	
<i>Meal ingredients</i>				<i>Full (fast) meals</i>	
(1)	(2)	(5)	(6)		
Preparation meals - single meal components used for cooking from scratch (e.g. potatoes, rice, non-preserved meat)	Partially-prepared and/or preserved single meal components (e.g. processed potatoes or preserved fruit)	Complete fast meals (e.g. soups)	Meals out (away-from-home food or restaurant expenditures)		
<i>Accessory meal ingredients</i>					
(3)	(4)				
Accessory stuffs (e.g. fats and spices)	Ready-made accessory stuffs (e.g. sauce)				
	(7)			(8)	
	'Other' (e.g. Bread, sandwich fillings, milk products and breakfast cereals)			'Ready-to-eat' snacks	

Figure 1: A typology of convenience foods (Daniels and Glorieux, 2015)

Furthermore, it is also important to understand the meaning of convenience that underlying the consumption of convenience food. Convenience does not just comprise of food that is easily available and ready to be consumed. It covers the entire food provisioning. Convenience consists of three key components which are time, physical energy and mental energy that is spent on purchasing, storing, preparing, cooking and consuming the food. Nevertheless, it is crucial to include the element of convenience at all stages in the food consumption process and to determine the significance that people place over time and energy use in obtaining, consuming and disposing the food (Buckley, Cowan, and McCarthy, 2007). In other word, the term convenience is used to describe the elements in food provisioning that can save time, easy to prepare, reduce the pressures and demands of busy lives as well as lessen the physical and mental effort needed in food provisioning (Bava, Jaeger, and Park, 2008). Scholderer and Grunert (2005) proposed a typology of convenience in the meal preparation. Two dimensions which includes the possibilities of saving time, physical energy and mental energy, and the possibilities when deciding what to eat, purchasing, preparing, consuming and food disposal, are briefly explained in the typology of convenience in the meal preparation as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: A typology of convenience in meal preparation (Scholderer and Grunert, 2005)

Consumption stage	What is being saved?		
	Time	Physical energy	Mental energy
Planning	Habitual purchasing, weekly meal plans, intelligent fridge		Products arranged by recipe in shop, space management, intelligent fridge
Purchasing	One-stop shopping, home delivery	Help in packaging and checking out, good parking facilities, home delivery	Known store layout, automated reordering
Preparation	Ready-made meals, eating out, microwave ovens	Blenders and other kitchen appliances	Clear instructions
Eating	One course meals, stand-up food outlets	Pre-cut food, meat without bones	Familiar food, finger food
Disposal	One-way containers	Dish washer	

Factors Influencing the Convenience Food Consumption

In a study conducted by Bava et al., (2008), there are three factors that have been outlined for influencing the consumption of convenience food, especially the young generations. The most significant and frequently discussed in previous studies is the pressure of time constraints. Dual-income households with busy families or couples usually consumed convenience foods because they are too tired and/or do not have sufficient time to prepare and cook home-made food. In addition, while it is common for women today to work in order to improve the financial situation of households, they are still responsible of everyday preparation and cooking for the family. Working households have limited time in preparing and cooking food and hence, they rely more on convenience food to save time (Boer et al., 2004; Daniels and Glorieux, 2015).

Next, Bava et al., (2008) also mentioned that constraints of the unpredictability as another factor which influence the convenience food consumption. For instance, young parents who are working and have small children find it difficult to balance between preparing and cook home-made food while handling the children. Finally, the young generations consume convenience food due to the lack of confidence in cooking skills. It was found that the young generations have limited confidence in cooking skills because they do not participate in the preparation of food as a child. Nonetheless, the lack of confidence in cooking skills do not necessarily make them to rely solely on take away and pre-prepared food. Instead, they consume semi-convenience food which still allows them to add diversity and exotic taste to their food without having to learn to do so (Bava et al., 2008; Buckley et al., 2007).

On the other hand, technological advancements also have led to the consumption of convenience food among the young generations. In a study conducted by Muhammad, Zahari, and Sharif (2013), the advancements of technology can be seen through the use of convenience ingredients, modern eating utensils, and modern cooking equipment. For instance, today's younger generations can simply use food colouring such as green food colouring to achieve desired colour when making Malay traditional food or *kuih* while in the past, the older generations have to grind the screw pine using mortar and pestle to obtain the green colour extract. Besides, the modern eating utensils such as paper and plastic has promoted the consumption of convenience food. *Nasi impit* and *ketupat* (rice or glutinous rice wrapped in leaves) is now easily available in the market as it comes in various packet form and they just need to be boiled before consumption. Not only that, the improvisation of Malay traditional cooking equipment like mortar and pestle, and wooden kitchen, to the modern cooking equipment such as gas stoves, oven, mixer, and stainless-steel pot, has facilitate the young generations in preparing and cooking food for their family. Nonetheless, the advancements of technology described above is mostly associated with semi-convenience food as it makes the preparation and cooking of food easier, without relying solely on RTE or take away food.

Role of Family in Sustaining the Malay Traditional Food

Family is part of social norms that can heavily influence and shape the young generations' eating behaviour as well as their food consumption. Family is the most important social group that can affect a person's decision-making process which includes food choice and food consumption (Foxman, Tansuhaj, and Ekstrom, 1989; Hamzah et al., 2013; Olsen and Ruiz, 2008). In addition, Higgs (2015) mentioned that there are two possible reasons that can motivate people in following the eating norm. Firstly, a person can improve his or her association with a social group and thus, being liked by following the norm. Secondly, following the norm can help a person to have a correct and proper diet.

For this reason, it is crucial that the Malay traditional food consumptions and practices among the young generations to start at home because eating habits and practices formed in childhood are most likely continue into adulthood (Bava et al., 2008; Kimura et al., 2010; Pedersen, Grønhøj, and Thøgersen, 2015; Videon and Manning, 2003). Furthermore, Bava et al. (2008) also stated that children who grow up relying on convenience foods will have high possibility of continuing to do so as adults. When the family no longer consume or practice Malay traditional food at home, the children's eating behaviour and food choice will be affected as well. Consequently, they will prefer other than Malay traditional food even when they make decision to eat outside from home.

However, family, especially the parents, have the power to change and groom their children's eating behaviour since they usually determine the food choices and food availability in the home (DeCosta, Møller, Frøst, and Olsen, 2017; Jenkins and Horner, 2005). Moreover, parents' attitude and behaviour serves as the main socialisation agent and gatekeepers to the children's eating behaviour (Pedersen et al., 2015). According to McIntosh, Kubena, Tolle, Dean, Jan, and Anding (2010), mothers' meal planning and belief will increase the children's participation in the family meals. The children's consumption of pre-processed foods is also influenced by the parental eating habit and their perception of the importance of family meals. This is in line with the study conducted by Muhammad et al. (2013) where the result showed that the children enjoyed Malay traditional food that their parents prepared at home because they feel closer to home.

Not only that, the young generations learn to cook with their family such as mother, father and grandmother in most Malay community (Abdullah et al., 2013). According to Nor, Sharif, Zahari, Salleh, Isha and Muhammad (2012), the transmission of Malay traditional food knowledge between the older generations and young generations comprises of ingredients, preparation, cooking technique, cooking equipment and utensils, as well as cooking skills. In general, the traditional food knowledge transmission refers to a cultural tradition of sharing and passing down the collective understanding of food, recipes, cooking skills and cooking techniques from one generation to another (Kwik, 2008).

Furthermore, the process of Malay traditional food knowledge transmission usually happened through oral communication, observation and hands on where the young generations is actively involved in preparing and cooking the Malay traditional food with their family. Festive season, holiday season and family gathering provide the best platform for involving the young generations in preparing and cooking the Malay traditional food. Muhammad, Zahari, Abdullah, and Sharif (2015) mentioned that the ethnic group customs and religious festivals is the ideal time to transmit the knowledge of cultural and traditional food, including the preparation and consumption of food, from the older generations to the younger generations.

This shows that family involvement in planning and preparing traditional food will affect the children's eating behaviour and food consumption of Malay traditional food. When the family consume and practice Malay traditional food at home, the children will also consume the Malay traditional food as they grow up. They will continue to consume and practice Malay traditional food as an adult and eventually, they will be able to influence their children's food in consuming and practicing the Malay traditional food. This cycle will be repetitive and the Malay traditional food can be passed down to the future generations. Therefore, it is very crucial for the young generations today to learn about Malay traditional food from the older generations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the eating behaviour and food consumption of young generations currently have changed from eating home-made Malay traditional food to eating outside the home (Ali and Abdullah, 2012). Their eating behaviour also is closely related to the consumption of fast food and convenience food. The lifestyle of young generations today that has multiple income households, more women work outside the home, as well as the desire for convenience has led to changes in their eating behaviour and food consumption (Bava et al., 2008; Kaynak et al., 1996; McIntosh et al., 2010). Fast food and convenience foods are preferable to the young generations because they are more hassle-free, easy to prepare, readily consume, easily available and reasonably priced (Carrigan et al., 2006; Mat et al., 2016). Hence, they will have

more time to do other activities and they can spend more time with their friends and families by simply eating outside the home or consume fast food or convenience food.

However, the Malay traditional food holds a high value as an element of cultural heritage and it is a crucial component in protecting the cultural identity of Malaysia. If the young generations today refuse to consume and practice the Malay traditional food, the next generations will probably have no idea about the Malay traditional food that their ancestor highly valued and preserved. In consequence, the Malay traditional food will diminish and the identity of Malay ethnic will be questioned. Thus, the identity of Malaysia as a multi-cultural country which is full of diversified ethnics and cultures will be at stake if no action is taken to preserve and sustain the Malay traditional food.

Therefore, the learning process of Malay traditional food should start at home. In order to ensure the Malay traditional food knowledge can be passed down to the young generations, family especially the parents should play their part proficiently. The parents also need to be exposed about the importance of practicing and sustaining Malay traditional food. When they realize the true meaning of Malay traditional food towards the identity of Malaysia, they will make sure that their children consume and practice Malay traditional food as well. These practices should be nourished so that the future generations can be proud and feel the sense of responsibility to protect their Malay traditional food.

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