

Do Foreign Food Trends Give Impact on Consumption of Malays Traditional Food Patterns among Malays Centennials Generation?

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Abstract

This study examines how foreign food trends influence the dietary habits of the Malay centennial generation. It explores their attraction to foreign cuisine, the dining experience, and its impact on traditional food consumption. Using a qualitative approach, 50 young Malays were interviewed, and insights were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal a strong inclination toward foreign food, yet traditional Malay cuisine remains integral. Rather than replacing local dishes, foreign food is incorporated into daily meals. Understanding these interactions provides valuable insights for institutions, businesses, and policymakers, helping to balance cultural preservation with evolving food preferences in a globalized culinary landscape.

Keywords: Foreign; Malay; Traditional Food; Centennials

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1.0 Introduction

Undoubtedly, modernization and digitization have had a considerable impact on not only the current generation's lifestyle but also their food consumption patterns (Bene, 2022). Casini et al. (2015) lauded urbanization and a fast-paced lifestyle have caused convenience food to become an important factor in food selection. As a result, younger generations choose meals that are easy to prepare or involve little effort, gravitating towards ready-made meals, frozen foods, and fast-food options that fit into their hectic schedules. This shift mirrors a larger tendency toward efficiency and time savings in daily activities, with an emphasis on convenience and speed rather than conventional cooking methods. Globalization and technological improvements have expanded the current generation's culinary horizons, exposing them to varied cuisines from all over the world. This exposure has increased to international and fusion meals, which combine different culinary traditions to create new, unique flavors. Such trends are especially appealing to young consumers who value innovation and variety in their diets, which are frequently impacted by cultural exchanges and worldwide food trends (Rajan, 2023).

Social media and food delivery apps have had a significant impact on younger generations' food consumption patterns. Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become important sources for learning the latest culinary trends, which influence what is

fashionable and desired to eat (Culty & Pehlivan, 2018; Reddy & Aradhya, 2020). These platforms frequently offer viral food challenges, exotic ingredients, and inventive recipes that encourage young audiences to try new meals. Meal delivery applications like Uber Eats and DoorDash, have changed eating experiences by providing a diverse choice of meal alternatives at the touch of a smartphone (Tarmazi et al., 2021). This has resulted in a surge in home delivery orders, as young people find it easier to try various cuisines without leaving their houses. Nivornusit et al. (2024) emphasize that incorporating technology into food consumption not only meets the demand for convenience but also coincides with the digital habits of the younger generation, who are accustomed to navigating life through digital platforms.

The waves of foreign culinary trends have had a considerable impact on the consumption patterns of Malaysia's centennial generation, often known as Generation Z. With the ongoing process of globalization, younger Malays are being exposed to a broader range of culinary influences, resulting in changes in their nutritional choices. The internet, social media, and global travel have made it simpler to obtain a diverse range of international cuisines. Consequently, the Centennials' eating habits have shifted significantly. Food influencers and bloggers fuel this trend by exhibiting the most recent global culinary trends, pushing young Malaysians to try and incorporate these unique meals into their everyday diets (Tan, et al.2024). The cultural dynamics of Malaysia, a nation renowned for its diversity, have also contributed to this evolution in nutrition. Fusion cuisines have historically emerged from a rich culinary milieu created by the presence of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and other ethnic cultures (Perry, 2017; Zainal Abidin et al., 2020). The Centennial generation is more likely to welcome and try cuisines from other cultures since they grew up in such a diversified environment and are also impacted by the international culinary trends they learn about online and in other countries. The rising appeal of Western food and fast food and beverages is another obvious impact of international culinary trends on the dietary habits of Malaysian Centennarians. International companies such as McDonald's, KFC, Starbucks, Subway and other international restaurants have made a name for themselves in Malaysia by providing trendy and easy-to-eat meals that suit the fast-paced lifestyle of the younger population (Habib et al., 2011). These establishments are often perceived as trendy and cosmopolitan, providing not just a meal, but an experience that appeals to young Malaysians who are eager for a blend of global and local influences. For Centennials, dining at these restaurants is not just about the food itself, but also about embracing a modern and global lifestyle that they see represented in media and online platforms (Seyfi, et.al, 2020).

The attractiveness of these fast-food options is heightened by focused marketing initiatives aimed squarely at the young demographic. Western fast-food restaurants have successfully leveraged social media and digital marketing to promote themselves as not only convenient, but also as part of a hip, modern, and global lifestyle choice. Collaborations with local celebrities and social media influencers increase their appeal because they frequently broadcast their eating experiences at these restaurants, highlighting limited-time discounts, special promotions, and new menu items that combine local flavors with Western cuisine. These endorsements instill a sense of anticipation and exclusivity, making Western fast food even more appealing to the Centennial generation (Mkumbo & Mbise, 2022).

In addition to Western food, Malaysian Centennarians are increasingly interested in international cuisines such as Japanese, Korean, and Middle Eastern specialties. This trend indicates younger Malaysians' rising curiosity and receptivity to new gastronomic experiences that go beyond their traditional cuisine tastes. These cuisines' growing popularity is not only due to globalization, but it is also closely linked to cultural phenomena such as the emergence of Korean pop culture and the global appeal of Japanese culinary arts (Jang and Ha, 2014).

Korean cuisine has experienced a spectacular spike in popularity among Malaysian youth, owing partly to the global expansion of Korean pop culture, or "Hallyu." The great popularity of Korean dramas, K-pop music, and variety shows has had a significant impact on Malaysian Centennials' lifestyles and consumption habits. Korean dishes such as kimchi, bibimbap, and Korean-style fried chicken have become household names, with many young Malaysians eager to sample the foods seen in their favorite K-dramas or music videos. This cultural connection transforms the experience of eating Korean food into more than simply a gastronomic adventure; it also allows Centennials to feel connected to a worldwide young culture that they admire and relate to. Korean restaurants and cafes, often designed to mimic trendy Seoul eateries, are frequently filled with young patrons eager to immerse themselves in Korean culture, whether through hotpot dishes, barbecue, or street food-inspired snacks like toktokkie and kimbap (Zaini, et.al, 2024).

Japanese cuisine has also made a strong mark in Malaysia, known for its stylish presentation and emphasis on fresh, high-quality ingredients. Sushi, ramen, and tempura are three popular Japanese cuisines that have piqued the interest of young Malaysians. The aesthetic attractiveness of Japanese cuisine, along with its health-conscious reputation, makes it particularly tempting to Centennials who are becoming more careful of their dietary choices. Japanese restaurants, ranging from high-end sushi bars to casual ramen cafés, have become urban dining staples, offering a diversified menu to accommodate a wide range of tastes and budgets. Japanese pop culture, such as anime, manga, and J-pop, promotes Japanese cuisine in the same way that Korean pop culture promotes Korean food. Many young Malaysians enjoy dining in restaurants that imitate Japanese izakayas or sushi bars, which exposes them to Japanese culture (Yamato,et.al, 2011).

Middle Eastern cuisine has also made significant inroads into the Malaysian food scene, appealing to Centennials with its rich flavors and diverse offerings. Dishes such as hummus, falafel, shawarma, and kebabs are increasingly popular, often enjoyed as both dine-in meals and takeaway options. The appeal of Middle Eastern food lies in its flavorful spices, variety of textures, and the communal dining experience it offers, which resonates well with young people who enjoy sharing meals with friends and family. The influence of international travel and the growing presence of Middle Eastern expatriate communities in Malaysia have further fueled interest in these culinary traditions (Som, et.al. 2020).

However, as global culinary trends gain traction, a critical concern arises: how does this transition affect the traditional food consumption patterns of Malaysia's Centennial generation? In other words, whether these new choices are causing a decrease in

consumption of traditional Malay meals like nasi lemak, rendang, and satay. Research into the extent of this decline remains limited, especially concerning Centennial preferences in balancing traditional and globalized food choices compared to the inclination toward international cuisine (Ismail et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2021; Abdul Latif & Halim, 2020). Considering these issues and gaps, this study aims to determine the influence of foreign food trends on the dietary habits of the Malay centenary generation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Food Consumption and its Significance

Food consumption is generally defined as the process of utilizing, absorbing, or consuming anything using the terms 'eating' and 'drinking'. Food consumption is the act of consuming food to sustain one's life. This is innate in the human condition and is typically associated with the desire for physical growth, physiological improvement, and overall human well-being. Food consumption has an undeniable impact on individual, family, and public well-being, depending on its affordability and availability (Baker et al., 2020). Bakaloudi et al. (2022) claim that food consumption is dynamic, and influenced by external factors such as economic conditions, demographics, and global crises.

Willett et al. (2019) contend that food consumption is an essential part of human life that goes beyond simply nutrition. It represents the intricate interplay of biological demands, cultural practices, social connections, and economic variables. Food consumption is a potent cultural marker of ethnic identity and heritage, as it allows groups to display their distinct cultural values, traditions, and histories. Food is used by various civilizations around the world to communicate their identity and preserve their cultural history. Traditional cuisines and culinary techniques, for example, are frequently associated with specific locations, ethnicities, and religious beliefs, contributing to a sense of community identity and continuity (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2013).

Food consumption has a huge economic impact since it drives demand for a wide range of products and services. The global food industry, which includes agriculture, food processing, distribution, and retail, is a large economic sector that generates trillions of dollars in annual revenue from food consumption. Food consumption has an impact on economic policies, as governments frequently use subsidies, tariffs, and restrictions to stabilize food prices, assure food security, and assist local producers. These patterns highlight the complicated interplay between food consumption and economic development. Food consumption is frequently associated with comfort, memory, and identity in the psychological and emotional dimensions. Eating can provide emotional consolation, allowing people to cope with stress, worry, or melancholy through a process known as "emotional eating" (Macht, 2008). Furthermore, many cuisines are intimately related to happy memories and cultural traditions, eliciting nostalgia and a sense of belonging to one's background (Locher et al., 2005). Eating with others can increase feelings of belonging and well-being, highlighting food's significance in emotional and social life (Troisi et al., 2015).

Traditional food consumption, on the other hand, entails eating dishes that are strongly based on the cultural heritage and culinary practices of a specific community or region. These cuisines are frequently prepared utilizing local products and traditional cooking methods that have been passed down through generations. Traditional meals are more than just a source of sustenance; they have cultural, social, and historical importance, and are frequently associated with community gatherings, religious ceremonies, and cultural festivities. Foods such as mole from Mexico and miso soup from Japan, for example, are not just culinary mainstays but also cultural icons that reflect a community's history and way of life (Johns & Sthapit, 2004). The intake of traditional foods can foster a sense of belonging and continuity, connecting people to their cultural heritage.

2.2 Malay Traditional Food

Malay traditional food is deeply ingrained in Malaysian culture and society. The transmission of knowledge and practices of Malay traditional food is critical to the preservation of these culinary traditions (Sharif et al., 2016). The making and preparation of Malay traditional dishes have remained substantially constant across generations. These traditional cuisines have distinctive, nuanced, and dynamic flavors that reflect the Malay ethnic group's rich cultural background (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022a). The authenticity of Malay cuisine is critical, as it is distinguished by its uniqueness and genuineness in a variety of characteristics (Hamzah et al., 2013). Traditional Malay cuisine initially used locally accessible cooking items such as tree shoots, tubers, coconuts, herbs, fish, and chicken products, demonstrating the close relationship between food and the environment (Sharif, et al., 2018). Furthermore, Malay traditional food, such as satay, ketupat, nasi lemak, and rendang, to name a few, plays an important role as a tangible national cultural heritage, arousing sentiments of delight and creating emotional bonds among the Malay community (Yusoff, 2019).

The culinary heritage of Malay traditional food embodies a distinctive fusion of South Indian, Malay, and Nyonya cuisines, shaped by historical exchanges with traders from Indonesia, India, the Middle East, and China (Hassan, 2011). This culinary legacy stands as a reflection of the regional identity and cultural importance of the Malay community, actively contributing to the conservation of traditional culture and heritage (Lin, 2019). The consumption patterns of traditional Malay food are intricately intertwined with the adaptation of Islamic principles and the ongoing evolution of Islamic teachings within the Malay community (Yusof et al., 2021). The receptivity of the Malay community to the changing landscape of Islamic teachings has exerted both direct and indirect impacts on the preservation and adaptation of traditional Malay food practices. This showcases the dynamic nature of Malay traditional cuisine, continuously evolving in response to the interplay of cultural and religious influences. The fluidity in the interpretation of Islamic principles within the culinary sphere demonstrates not only a harmonious coexistence but also a mutual enrichment, as traditional Malay food undergoes a nuanced transformation, staying attuned to the contemporary values and beliefs embraced by the evolving Islamic discourse within the Malay community (Yusof et al., 2021).

2.3 Foreign Food and Consumption

Foreign food encompasses cuisine and culinary creations that derive from a culture or nation distinct from one's own. Culinary diversity is represented in a certain region through a range of flavors, ingredients, and cooking methods, as seen by Molz (2007) and Seo et al. (2018). The accessibility of foreign cuisine has greatly expanded in a globalized society, mostly as a result of international trade, migration, and the development of heterogeneous communities (Cwientka, 2000). As a result, international cuisines have become prevalent in numerous countries, enriching the variety of food options and expanding people's culinary experiences. There has been a significant increase in the consumption of foreign foods in the globalized world, as people highly appreciate the quality and diversity, they provide (Peštek & Činjurević, 2014). Within the hospitality industry, there is a noticeable disparity in the perceived worth of local and foreign cuisines (Uehara & Assarut, 2020). Consuming foreign food is frequently considered an exceptional encounter, symbolizing folks' receptiveness to other culinary customs and their quest for top-notch gastronomy (Wang et al., 2018).

Foreign food has a significant influence on consumer behavior and plays a role in promoting cultural integration. Ethnocentrism has a significant role in forming individuals' attitudes toward foreign products, which in turn affects their preference for either local or foreign food items (Riptiono et al., 2020). The incorporation of international cuisine into local markets not only enhances the variety of culinary choices but also fosters a cosmopolitan atmosphere in urban areas (Fournet-Guérin, 2021). The interplay between the consumption and production of foreign food has significant consequences for global food systems and public health. Of particular concern is the increasing consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods that are high in fats, sugars, and salt. This global trend has caused widespread concern and alarm (Hawkes, 2005). The change in dietary habits is a result of factors such as urbanization, changing lifestyles, and increased purchasing power, all of which contribute to a greater demand for imported food products (Rogerson, 2012). Together, these developments highlight the changing preferences of consumers, stressing the increasing importance of international cuisine in not only molding eating habits but also impacting the dynamics of global food production systems.

2.4 Centennials Culture

In general, generation denotes as an identifiable group that is based on their year of birth and age. Smola and Sutton (2002); Smith and Nichols (2015) noted generation is a group of people born around the same time and raised around the same place. There are four types of generation according to Williams (2017) that are; The Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964), Generation X (1965 – 1980), Millennial or Gen Y (1981 – 1997) and Gen Z, iGen, or Centennials: (1998 – Present). The modern world has witnessed the emergence of two distinct generational cohorts, Millennials and Centennials, each with their own unique characteristics and cultural identities. While these two generations share some common traits, they also exhibit notable differences that reflect the changing social, technological, and economic landscapes of the 21st century (Kim & Park, 2020; Ng & Johnson, 2015). Millennials grew up during the rise of the internet and social media, but they also experienced life before these technologies became ubiquitous while centennial generation is characterized by their digital fluency, having grown up in an era dominated by smartphones, social media, and instant access to information. This generation are pragmatic, valuing security and stability, especially in uncertain times. Centennials are socially conscious and place a strong emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

Centennials have been exposed to a vast array of information and cultural diversity, which has fostered a strong sense of curiosity and a desire to explore the world around them. They are known for their willingness to step outside of their comfort zones, whether that means traveling to new places, trying new foods, or engaging with different ideas and perspectives (Graham, 2020). This exploratory mindset is also evident in their approach to careers and education; they are more likely to seek out opportunities that allow them to learn and grow continuously. Centennials have been exposed to a wide variety of cultures and cuisines from a young age. This exposure has made them more adventurous and open-minded eaters who are willing to explore diverse culinary experiences. They enjoy experimenting with flavors and dishes from different parts of the world, often seeking out authentic, multicultural dining options.

This study builds on prior research by analyzing the complex relationships among food consumption, cultural heritage, and generational dynamics, particularly regarding Malay traditional food and its significance in a globalized context. This research extends the findings of Willett et al. (2019) and Sharif et al. (2016), which emphasized the cultural and economic importance of food consumption, by examining the adaptation of Malay traditional cuisine in response to evolving societal and religious influences, as observed by Yusof et al. (2021). This study also examines the rising consumption of foreign foods (Molz, 2007; Peštek & Činjurević, 2014) by analyzing the impact of global culinary trends on the preferences of Centennials, a generation noted for its receptiveness to cultural diversity and culinary exploration (Graham, 2020). This study addresses gaps in the literature by examining the interplay between evolving generational food preferences and the preservation of traditional culinary practices, offering insights into the harmony between heritage conservation and contemporary adaptability in food consumption patterns.

3.0 Methodology

This qualitative study determines the influence of foreign food trends on the dietary habits of the Malay centenary generation. The exploratory approach provides an in-depth view of the Malay centennial generation who have embraced international cuisine. Interviews are more appropriate for this study as they allow for in-depth exploration of participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward foreign food trends, which aligns with the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research followed with ethical guidelines to minimize participant risk. Purposive sampling was employed to select 50 Malay centennial generation, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. The sample included informants from UiTM Shah Alam and Puncak Alam, Selangor State with varied geographic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds, providing a broad representation of experiences and viewpoints regarding foreign food trends. This diversity enriched the study by capturing a wide array of opinions, preferences, and influences that contribute to shaping dietary

habits. A total of 50 informants were selected through interviews conducted until data saturation was achieved. Saturation was reached when no new themes, patterns, or insights emerged, confirming that the collected data sufficiently addressed the research questions. This point was identified as repeated interviews began to produce similar responses, indicating that additional data would not yield further significant information. This approach ensured a thorough exploration of the topic while avoiding unnecessary redundancy in the data collection process. Data collection involved interview design and questions were structured around the study's objectives and pilot-tested to ensure validity and reliability. Data collection continued until saturation, and confidentiality was upheld by anonymizing personal information. Informed consent was obtained with a clear explanation of the study's aims, procedures, and risks. The development of the research guide was based on the study specification and relevant literature search. Table 1 shows a list of the primary questions from the research guide. The questions range from the demographic profile, attraction toward foreign food, elements of foreign food experience, and the impact on consumption of Malay traditional food patterns.

Table 1. Primary questions from the research guide

Topic	Primary Question
Attraction Toward Foreign Food	1. Can you describe factors that have drawn you toward foreign cuisines?
The elements of foreign food experience	2. What key elements do you believe make a foreign food experience memorable and meaningful for you?
The impact of foreign food on consumption of Malay traditional food patterns	3. In what ways has exposure to foreign cuisines influenced your preference for consuming traditional Malay food?

Data were collected through audio-recorded sessions to ensure accuracy, and analysis followed a multi-step process. Recordings were transcribed, capturing vocal nuances and linguistic details, and then translated into English. NVivo software was used for thematic analysis and narrative analysis, focusing on storytelling and meaning construction. Thematic analysis identified and coded significant themes. To ensure research quality, principles of credibility, consistency, transferability, and dependability were adhered to. Findings were organized thematically in line with research objectives. Participants' names are confidential, and they are referred to as "centennials" throughout the study. All interviewees' ages ranged from 21 to 25 years old, and most of them were among the bachelor's degree graduates. Most of them among students and young junior executives.

4.0 Analysis and Finding

4.1 Attraction Toward Foreign Food

Through the description, two elements of attraction toward foreign food; 1). Embrace cultural diversity through flavors and customs and 2). Social Media Influences and Diversity of Global Society

Embrace cultural diversity through flavors and customs

Malay centennials, like other ethnic groups, have been greatly impacted by exposure to diverse cultures through digital media, education, and travel, due to their upbringing in a globalized world. This experience has not only expanded their perspective on the world but also fostered a profound admiration for variety. The majority of Centennial in the study exhibit a greater willingness to engage with and accept diverse cultural manifestations, such as cuisine, as a means to establish connections with and gain insights into the surrounding world. Centennial 1 and Centennial 5 claim that inquisitiveness in the culinary field demonstrates a combination of conventional principles and a contemporary, global perspective, motivating them to explore and value a diverse array of cuisines and cultural customs. Centennial 20 lauded that exploring international cuisine provides a convenient and pleasurable opportunity for Malay centennials to immerse themselves in diverse cultures without having to travel outside their city. This exploration enables individuals to establish a connection with the world by experiencing different flavors and cultural customs from other places. By relishing sushi from Japan, delighting in tacos from Mexico, or experiencing pasta from Italy, according to Centennial 14 one can gain insight into the distinctive culinary traditions and lifestyle of each culture. This gastronomic voyage is well-suited for Malay individuals born in the 21st century, as it resonates with their inclination for exploration and their broad perspective on the world. It helps them develop a more profound comprehension and admiration for the diverse array of global customs and tastes. Centennial 35 and Centennial 12 posit that expressed a strong liking for novelty and tended to be drawn toward foreign cuisines that provide distinctive and inventive experiences. They have a particular inclination towards international cuisines that go beyond the conventional culinary norms. Their cohort is inclined towards innovative amalgamations of cuisine, unconventional amalgamations of taste, and modern adaptations of traditional recipes, mirroring their yearning for novel and stimulating encounters. They held the belief that food serves as a means of self-expression, leading them to actively explore diverse culinary traditions that consistently push boundaries, fulfill their need for new experiences, and broaden their gastronomic knowledge.

Embrace diverse cuisines as a gateway to cultural exploration and connection. They blend traditional values with a global outlook, valuing novelty and innovation in culinary experiences. Exploring international dishes like sushi, tacos, and pasta enables to immerse in diverse cultures, fostering

an appreciation for global traditions. For our generation, food becomes a form of self-expression, offering stimulating, boundary-pushing encounters that deepen their gastronomic knowledge and cultural understanding (Centennial 26)

Social Media Influences and Diversity of Global Society

Unsurprisingly, social media significantly influences the dietary preferences of centennials by acting as a dynamic platform for acquiring, exploring, and experimenting with food-related information. Centennials 44 and Centennial 30 claim that their generation is regularly exposed to a wide range of culinary content through internet platforms, including recipes, cooking tips, cuisine trends, and foreign meals. This exposure drives their inquisitiveness and motivates them to actively pursue novel and distinctive dining experiences. Centennial 10 notes that social media is a potent instrument for educating the centennial generation about various cuisines, ingredients, and ethnic culinary traditions, thereby enhancing their comprehension and admiration of world food culture. They regularly seek out novel culinary options, peruse critiques, and track food influencers who acquaint them with inventive recipes and dining establishments. Centennial 27 and Centennial 16 view that social media offers a platform for individuals to showcase their culinary masterpieces, participate in food competitions, and establish connections with a network of like-minded food aficionados, thereby influencing their developing food tastes.

It is worth mentioning that the preference for foreign cuisine is indicative of one's social identity since culinary selections frequently represent their receptiveness, inquisitiveness, and international perspective. From this perspective, Centennial 18 argues that exploring various culinary traditions serves a twofold purpose: not only does it fulfill one's basic need for nourishment, but it also allows individuals to showcase their unique identities and appreciate the diversity of our global society. By engaging in the exploration of international cuisines, individuals demonstrate a commitment to embracing diversity and fostering cultural awareness. This signifies their readiness to venture beyond their familiar boundaries and immerse themselves in the richness of many cultures. Centennial 19 posits that an audacious approach to eating reflects their broader lifestyle and societal beliefs, where being globally aware and culturally diversified is considered a fundamental aspect of their identity.

Social media plays a big role in shaping what we like to eat. It introduces us to all kinds of cuisines, recipes, and food trends, sparking their curiosity and encouraging them to try new things. For us, food isn't just about eating—it's a way to express who we are. By following food influencers and exploring unique dining experiences, we show their openness, celebrate diversity, and connect with different cultures. (Centennial 29)

4.2 The elements of foreign food experience

From answers received, it could be grouped into two themes which were: 1) visual appeal and taste and 2). cultural aspects of food.

Visual appeal and taste

Undoubtedly, visual appeal and taste have a crucial role in shaping food intake. The assertion remains valid and becomes more robust as the Malay centenary generation embraces the aspects of look, flavor, and culture in their eating of foreign cuisine. According to Centennial 9 and Centennial 19 the visual allure of a meal, also known as "food aesthetics," holds significant significance for this age, who routinely post their dining experiences on social media platforms. A visually captivating dish not only increases the likelihood of being photographed and shared, but it also showcases the ingenuity and genuineness of the cuisine, which is much appreciated by centennials. Centennial 13 and Centennial 21 state that Japanese Sushi, Korean bibimbap, Western cuisine, and Middle Eastern dishes are all excellent examples of visually appealing food. Sushi showcases a meticulous arrangement of vivid sashimi, beautifully rolled nori, and colorful vegetables, creating a visually captivating display. Every individual piece is carefully and precisely created, displaying a perfect balance of colors and textures that accentuate the freshness and high standard of the ingredients. Similarly, Korean bibimbap is visually impressive due to its assortment of colorful veggies, meticulously arranged on a bed of rice, frequently accompanied by a sunny-side-up egg on top. The juxtaposition of vibrant hues and the meticulous presentation not only renders the meal visually appealing but also underscores the meticulousness and harmonious blending of flavors, so showcasing the profound culinary heritage of Korea. The ornamental display of French cuisine offers distinctive and visually pleasant dining experiences, satisfying the craving for visual fulfillment and elevating the whole meal experience.

The Malay centennials prioritize flavor, recognizing the importance of constantly exploring new and distinctive taste sensations that deviate from their regular meals. The wide range of flavors found in international cuisines is an enticing chance to discover and broaden one's taste preferences. The current generation derives pleasure from exploring diverse textures, spices, and mixes that offer a feeling of newness and exploration. The intricacy and genuineness of flavors are crucial determinants that impact their food preferences since they prioritize authentic gastronomic encounters over generic, industrially manufactured alternatives. Middle Eastern cuisine, such as hummus, falafel, shawarma, and tabbouleh, provides distinctive flavors that result from the combination of spices, herbs, and fresh vegetables, which captivate the palates of adventurous eaters.

Visual appeal and taste are key for the Malay centenary generation, who value food aesthetics when dining and sharing on social media. Dishes like sushi, bibimbap, and French cuisine captivate with vibrant colors, precision, and cultural heritage. These visually stunning meals not only enhance dining experiences but also celebrate the artistry and authenticity of global cuisines. (Centennial 40)

Cultural aspects of food

Centennials place significant importance on cultural relevance, reflecting their deep-rooted global awareness and heightened cultural sensitivity. Unlike earlier generations, Centennial 17 contends that their generation actively seeks connections with diverse cultures, striving to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of different traditions, values, and practices. Centennial 25 posit that their often views cultural engagement as a vital aspect of their identity, recognizing its role in fostering empathy, inclusivity, and global harmony. The interest in cultural relevance is evident in various aspects of their lives, from travel and fashion to entertainment and, most notably, food. Centennials approach these elements as opportunities to immerse themselves in new experiences and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. For them, cultural relevance is not just about acknowledgment but about active participation embracing diversity, and integrating it into their narratives.

We value cultural relevance and are more globally aware than earlier generations. We see food as a way to connect with and learn about different cultures. By trying foreign cuisines, we engage with traditions, and techniques tied to the food. This curiosity helps us appreciate the richness of global culinary diversity, fostering a love for authentic and meaningful experiences" (Centennial 4)

The Impact on Consumption of Malay Traditional Food Patterns

One theme could be recognized concerning the impact of international culinary trends on the consumption of traditional food among young Malaysians: 1). Not completely obvious but an optional or alternative choice

Not Completely Obvious but an optional or alternative choice

The growing prevalence of international culinary trends has significantly affected the dietary habits of the centennial generation of Malays, leading to a decline in the consumption of traditional Malay cuisine. Centennial 22 and Centennial 33 accentuate that their generation has been raised in a time of fast globalization, digital connectedness, and cultural interchange. As a result, they have been exposed to a wide range of international cuisines and culinary practices. This change in culinary tastes has partially resulted in a minor decrease in the consumption of traditional Malay cuisine. According to Centennial 7, traditional Malay cuisine, known for its robust flavors, utilization of spices, and dependence on coconut milk, lemongrass, and turmeric, is being perceived as less trendy in comparison to the unique and alluring nature of international cuisines. These customary dishes are frequently linked to homemade meals prepared by elderly relatives, usually saved for special events or family get-togethers. Centennial 6 asserts that those with hectic and rapid lifestyles, a minority of, opt for the ease and uniqueness of international cuisine, which is easily accessible in urban regions and via different internet platforms.

Nevertheless, almost all centennials in the study stress that the impact of international culinary trends on the consumption of traditional food among young Malaysians is not completely obvious. Although there is a clear inclination towards embracing international cuisine, this does not imply that the consumption of Malay traditional food is completely disregarded or that foreign dishes surpass Malay traditional food. Foreign cuisine is typically not consumed daily, but rather considered as an optional or alternative choice. Instead, there exists a dynamic interaction between the two, wherein Malay individuals born in the 21st century may integrate aspects of other cuisines into their eating habits while simultaneously preserving their ties to their traditional culinary legacy. This hybrid approach demonstrates their capacity to traverse and reconcile global influences and local traditions, frequently merging the two to accommodate their preferences and ways of living. During the interview, the Malay individuals born in the 21st century concluded that the influence of international food trends on the consumption of traditional food differs based on socio-economic characteristics, geographical location, and the extent of exposure to global media. Urban Malay centennials, who possess enhanced opportunities to encounter a wide range of food choices and are exposed to global cultural influences, are more inclined to adopt foreign cuisines compared to their rural counterparts. The latter, who may have restricted access to such options and maintain stronger adherence to traditional food practices, are less likely to embrace foreign foods.

Moreover, there is an emerging trend among certain groups of Malay centennials to reestablish a connection with their cultural heritage utilizing cuisine. Driven by a growing consciousness of health, sustainability, and cultural heritage, several young Malays are actively striving to conserve and advocate for traditional cuisine. This is apparent in the increasing popularity of Malay-centric food blogs, YouTube channels, and social media influencers that emphasize the presentation of traditional recipes, cooking methods, and the cultural importance of Malay cuisine. These endeavors are fostering a revived recognition of conventional cuisine, especially among a demographic that is otherwise significantly impacted by international culinary fads.

The impact of global food trends on young Malaysians' love for traditional dishes isn't clear-cut. While many enjoy international cuisines, traditional Malay food remains important. Urban centennials, with more exposure to global influences, are more likely to try foreign dishes, while rural youth stick closer to traditional meals. Often, they mix both, blending global flavors with local traditions to suit their tastes and lifestyles, shaped by access and exposure. (Centennial 43)

5. Discussion

This academic investigation explores the influence of foreign food trends on the dietary habits of the Malay centenary generation. Findings reveal that centennials' attraction to foreign food is shaped by two main factors: embrace of cultural diversity through flavors and customs, and the impact of social media within a globalized society. Centennials are drawn to experiences that allow them to explore and celebrate diverse cultures. Through food, they engage with the traditions and culinary practices of other societies, satisfying their curiosity and fostering a sense of connection to the broader world. This aligns with Smith and Martinez (2022), who emphasize that younger generations, particularly centennials, seek diverse and novel experiences, using food as a gateway to cultural exploration. Social media further amplifies this attraction by providing centennials with access to global food trends that showcase the uniqueness of foreign cuisines in visually engaging ways, sparking interest and normalizing the integration of international elements into daily life (Kumar & Lee, 2023; Chen & Gao, 2022). Together, these factors demonstrate that centennials view food as more than sustenance—it is a means of self-expression, cultural exploration, and connection in an increasingly interconnected world.

We found that visual appeal, taste, and cultural aspects are fundamental elements shaping the foreign food experience. In this sense, visual, sensory, and cultural elements work in harmony, elevating the act of eating from a basic necessity to a meaningful exploration of culture and identity. When individuals encounter cuisine from another culture, their overall perception and satisfaction are deeply influenced by these interconnected factors, which together create a holistic sensory and cultural experience. These factors not only enhance the enjoyment of foreign cuisine but also create a memorable, immersive experience that transcends the boundaries of food. The findings support previous literature emphasizing the significance of visual appeal, taste, and cultural context in shaping food experiences (Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Kim et al.2009). Michel et al. (2014) state that aesthetic presentation and flavor profiles enhance culinary satisfaction, while cultural authenticity deepens emotional and cognitive connections. This harmony of elements transforms dining into a meaningful cultural encounter, supporting the view that food experiences transcend mere consumption (Spence et al. 2020)

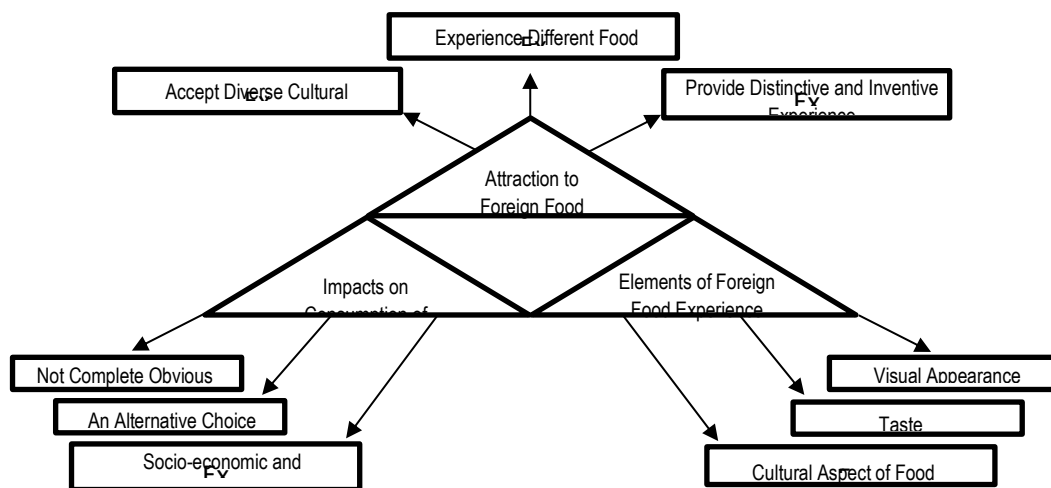


Fig. 1: Factors attracting Malay centennial generation toward foreign food, elements of foreign food experience, and the impact on consumption of Malay Traditional food patterns.

The most remarkable finding is that the influence of international culinary trends on the consumption of traditional Malay food during Malaysia's centennial is nuanced rather than absolute. While foreign cuisines are emerging as an alternative or occasional choice, they have not replaced or overshadowed traditional Malay food. This indicates that Malaysian centennials continue to value and consume their traditional cuisine, which holds cultural, familial, and emotional significance. The findings suggest that international culinary trends might appeal to young consumers due to novelty, globalization, lifestyle influences, socio-economic, and geographical location but they do not necessarily diminish the role of traditional Malay food in their dietary patterns. Instead, traditional food remains integral to cultural identity and everyday meals, particularly during significant occasions or when seeking comfort and familiarity. This dynamic reflects a balance between embracing global food diversity and maintaining cultural heritage. Young Malaysians may enjoy international cuisines as part of an evolving food culture, but this does not equate to the abandonment of their traditional culinary roots. The coexistence of both cuisines highlights a broader trend of food pluralism, where individuals navigate and incorporate multiple food cultures without necessarily displacing their own. This underscores the resilience and adaptability of traditional Malay food in a globalized culinary landscape. The results corroborated well with Ting et al. (2020) that globalization introduces diverse culinary options, but traditional foods often retain their significance due to their cultural and emotional value. Similarly, Sharif et al. (2018) found that traditional Malay food continues to play a vital role in preserving cultural identity, especially during festivals and family gatherings. These findings support the concept of food pluralism, as described by Wilson et al. (2019), where individuals embrace global food diversity while maintaining strong ties to their culinary heritage. Figure 1 shows the summary of the factors attracting the Malay centennial' generation toward foreign food, elements of foreign food experience, and the impact on the consumption of Malay traditional food patterns.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Regardless of our utmost endeavors, it is indisputable that we cannot completely impede the alterations and adjustments that take place in response to worldwide progress and developing social requirements. The growing appeal of international culinary trends, especially among young Malaysians, presents a notable obstacle to the conservation of local food culture. As younger generations are increasingly exposed to and affected by global culinary trends, their preferences may veer away from traditional cuisine and lean towards more modern, cosmopolitan choices. Over time, this transition may result in a progressive decrease in the consumption and admiration of conventional Malay cuisine. If this trend persists without intervention, there is a genuine danger that traditional foods may diminish in their presence in everyday meals and cultural customs, ultimately resulting in the erosion of culinary heritage. Therefore, it is imperative for key stakeholders, such as cultural institutions, legislators, and the food sector, to proactively implement measures to safeguard and promote the preservation of Malay traditional cuisine. Cultural institutions and educational authorities can significantly contribute by promoting the cultural and historical importance of traditional Malay cuisine. One such approach is to integrate traditional food instruction into school curricula, provide culinary courses, and commemorate Malay cuisine through food festivals. By doing this action, they can cultivate a feeling of satisfaction and distinctiveness in the younger cohort, guaranteeing that customary cuisines persist as a cherished component of their cultural legacy.

Policymakers should further bolster local culinary traditions by offering incentives to small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) that actively promote Malay food. Examples of potential funding opportunities could encompass financial assistance for conventional dining establishments, financial backing for initiatives focused on preserving traditional cuisine or backing for inventive projects that combine traditional Malay flavors with modern culinary methods. Implementing such strategies will contribute to the long-term viability of traditional food enterprises and enhance the attractiveness of Malay cuisine to younger consumers who are also intrigued by international culinary trends.

The food business, including restaurants and food producers, has to devise tactics that accommodate the changing preferences of Malay millennials while preserving traditional cuisines. This may entail the creation of fusion cuisine that combines traditional Malay ingredients with foreign influences, providing a distinctive dining experience that caters to the millennials' affinity for diversity and innovation. In addition, utilizing digital marketing tactics and social media platforms to present traditional Malay cuisine in a contemporary and enticing manner might captivate younger demographics and motivate them to integrate these dishes into their daily eating habits. In conclusion, through collaboration in education, policy, and industry, stakeholders may successfully advocate for the ongoing consumption and admiration of traditional Malay cuisine, despite the increasing impact of foreign culinary influences. This will help safeguard a crucial element of Malay cultural heritage.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, through Universiti Teknologi MARA under DUCS-Fakulti:600-UITMSEL(Pl. 5/4)(101/2022) grant.

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