

THE ACCEPTANCE OF BORNEO (DAYAK) TRADITIONAL FOOD AMONG YOUTH IN SELANGOR

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Abstract. This study looks at the understanding and acceptance of traditional Dayak meals among Selangor youngsters. Sarawak, also known as Bumi Kenyalang, has a rich cultural diversity, with 27 ethnic groups, including the Iban, who make substantial contributions to the state's culinary legacy. Despite growing concerns about nutrition, health, and safety, there has been little extensive research of ethnic foods in Malaysia. The purpose of this study is to explore knowledge and discuss what factors influence traditional Dayak food among youth in Selangor. To discover more concerning this study, qualitative research involving 10 respondents had been interviewed. The study found that, while there is a general awareness of Dayak cuisine, deeper understanding and involvement are limited. Health beliefs, peer influence, social media, and cultural events all have an impact on acceptability, with social media having an especially important role in promoting Dayak food among young. The findings highlight the importance of educational programs, social media involvement, and cultural events in promoting and preserving Dayak culinary traditions. This study provides researchers and stakeholders with useful information into consumer behaviour towards Dayak food and ideas for preserving its cultural importance.

Keywords: *ethnic food, Dayak, Sarawak, Iban*

Introduction

Sarawak, often referred to as Bumi Kenyalang (Land of Horns), stands as one of two Malaysian states located on the island of Borneo. Sarawak is a state rich in culture regarding various races, religions, languages and festivals (Nik Mohd Nor et al., 2020). The population of Sarawak consists of 27 ethnic groups, and the Iban (Dayak) ethnic group is most other ethnic groups such as Bidayuh, Melanau Orang Ulu and others (Bernama, 2019; Nading, 2015). Sarawak is a multicultural state comprising diverse ethnic groups, including Malays, Ibans, Bidayuhs, Chinese, Melanau, Orang Ulu, and others (Nik Mohd Nor et al., 2020; Bernama, 2019; Nading, 2015). Each of these groups possesses distinct culinary traditions, reflecting unique methods of food preparation, preservation, and consumption (Langgat et al., 2011). For instance, the Iban people are renowned for their culinary specialties like tubu, tuak, and pansuh, which are integral parts of their cultural heritage and festive occasions. This rich tapestry of ethnic cuisines collectively contributes to Sarawak's exceptional gastronomic identity (Nik Mohd Nor et al., 2020). Awareness and acceptance of ethnic foods in Malaysia, despite growing concerns about nutrition, health, and safety (Rezai et al., 2012), still lack comprehensive exploration. Knowledge about traditional food is essential for the young generation to maintain and apply traditional food (Mohd Zahari et al., 2011) because it will lose the existence of cultural food if it is not maintained and applied to traditional food. According to Mohd Zahari et al. (2011), this group does not care about the impact of change and lacks interest in learning, preparing and cooking their ethnic food. The purpose of this study is to explore knowledge of traditional Dayak food among youth in

Selangor. It is to know how familiar the youth in Selangor are with traditional Dayak food. To discuss the knowledge among youth, we also discuss the acceptance of traditional Dayak food among youth in Selangor. From here we can discuss what factors influence the acceptance of traditional Dayak food among the youth in Selangor. This study provides some information to give more exposure to traditional Dayak Food generally and gives more information about healthy Sarawakian food. The outcomes of this study can help students or researchers to get more ideas about this topic or related to consumer acceptance in Dayak food as this study focuses on what factors consumer behavior toward Dayak food.

Literature review

The shift toward electronic payments is offering convenience but raising concerns over privacy and fraud (Abu Bakar et al., 2024). In Malaysia, public and private initiatives such as the RHB MySiswa Debit i-Card which aim to increase cashless transactions among youth particularly students at higher learning institutions, making it timely to examine how perceived security risk influences both the intention to use and actual usage behavior of e-payment solutions. In the subsequent section, each variable examined in this study is reviewed. The Theory of Planned Behavior is discussed. It provides the basis for the formulation of the study's hypotheses.

Dayak

The Iban are indigenous people living in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, located on Borneo Kalimantan (Bernama, 2019). Several Iban identification markers have received scholarly attention. Tattoos were a crucial tangible indicator of Iban identity, but only elders in longhouses currently have tattoos with Iban designs. The Iban longhouse is also a distinguishing identification sign, differing from the traditional dwellings of other indigenous Sarawak communities.

Ethnic food

Li et al. (2004) say that while certain traditional food practices are in danger of disappearing, modernity has improved them and benefited the food industry, particularly in underdeveloped areas. They also indicate that many traditional food practices require modification considering the modern world. They were discussing it from the standpoint of good eating habits, however. Bermudez and Tucker (2004) mentioned that food-related practices of older peoples of any ethnic group provide challenges, including increased requirements for essential nutrients. They emphasized that eating habits are influenced by various factors, including cultural norms, knowledge and information, and access to food, which are frequently influenced by economic circumstances, physiological needs, food availability, and choices.

Knowledge

Traditional food made from local natural ingredients such as wild meat, fish, bean sprouts, stems, leaves, roots and other natural ingredients have contributed to the uniqueness of the gastronomic culture of Sarawak and Malaysia (Langgat et al., 2011; Mohd Zahari et al., 2011). These include foods that taste good because of their freshness, foods that are easy and quick to buy and prepare immediately, and ethnic

foods with identifiable ingredients, such as spices and flavors. Even though Malaysia and Sarawak provide a wide variety of food options, people are eager to explore new cultures and a more comprehensive range of culinary styles while making meal choices. They also choose more elaborate dining experiences with solid tastes and unusual textures. Despite being increasingly aware of the use of food from the point of view of nutrition, health and safety (Rezai et al., 2012), how Malaysians see ethnic food and what attracts or motivates them to eat it still cannot be concluded.

Materials and Methods

This study used primary data to collect data through interviews, which can be conducted either individually or in groups and can be structured or unstructured. These interviews may take place face-to-face, over the phone, or online, depending on convenience and accessibility (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). The focus will be on selecting a group of young individuals aged 18-25 who are knowledgeable about traditional Dayak food. These individuals are expected to provide valuable insights into factors influencing awareness and knowledge of Dayak culinary traditions. Secondary data will be gathered from various qualitative sources such as research articles, academic journals, and books. This secondary data will provide a broader context and background information on traditional Dayak food. The target population for this study comprises youth aged 18-25 who are knowledgeable about traditional Dayak food. The relevance of this group lies in their potential to offer insights into the factors influencing awareness and knowledge of Dayak culinary traditions. A non-probability sampling method will be employed, specifically judgment sampling, which is a form of purposive sampling. The sample size for this study will be 10 respondents, chosen based on their knowledge of traditional Dayak food. The data collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis. If the data is in audio form, it will first be transcribed. The researchers will immerse themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts or notes. Initial ideas and impressions will be noted. The next step involves systematically coding the data by identifying segments that are interesting or relevant. Similar codes will then be grouped together to form potential themes. Each theme will undergo detailed analysis to describe what it captures and how it relates to the research question. This detailed analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the awareness and knowledge of traditional Dayak food among the youth.

Results and Discussion

In this research focused on the acceptance of Dayak food among youth, interviews were conducted with a diverse group of participants. It examined a group of young individuals who had specific demographic traits. The participants were mostly unmarried with eight women and two male respondents making up the minority. Their ages ranged from 21 to 24 years, indicating an early adult cohort. Ethnically, all participants identified as Malay, ensuring a consistent cultural setting for the study. Furthermore, all responders were single during the interviews. This demographic profile provides a concentrated view on Malay youth attitudes and opinions of Dayak food, emphasizing the role of cultural identity and culinary preferences in this demographic

category. From this interview, all respondents confirmed that they have heard about Dayak food.

Research Question 1: How familiar are the youth in Selangor with traditional Dayak food?

Where did you learn about Dayak food?

"I learned about Dayak food through conversations with people who have experienced it." Informant 1

"I learned about Dayak food through various sources, including articles and social media." Informant 2

"I learned about Dayak food through conversations with people who have experienced it." Informant 3

"I learned about Dayak food through my friend." Informant 4

"I learned about Dayak food through my friend and social media." Informant 5

"I learned about Dayak food through my friend." Informant 6

"I learned about Dayak food through my friend." Informant 7

"I learned about Dayak food through social media and events." Informant 8

"I learned about Dayak food through friends and social media." Informant 9

"I learned about Dayak food through friends and social media." Informant 10

Themes: Personal connections (friends/conversations), social media, articles and other written sources

Informants primarily attributed their knowledge of Dayak cuisine to two primary sources. A significant proportion, including informants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, indicated that their familiarity stemmed from interpersonal interactions, such as conversations with friends or individuals with direct experience of Dayak cuisine. These findings underscore the potency of word-of-mouth communication in disseminating culinary information. Conversely, informants 2, 5, 8, 9, and 10 credited social media platforms as their primary source of information about Dayak cuisine. This highlights the pivotal role of digital platforms in expanding awareness and accessibility of diverse culinary traditions to a wider audience.

How well do you know traditional Dayak cuisine? Is there a specific name you can name?

"I have some knowledge of traditional Dayak cuisine. One well-known dish is ayam pansuh, which is chicken cooked in bamboo." Informant 1

"I have a fair knowledge of traditional Dayak cuisine. One specific dish I can name is ayam pansuh, which is chicken cooked in bamboo." Informant 12

"I have a basic understanding of traditional Dayak cuisine. One notable dish I've come across is terung Dayak, or Dayak eggplant, which is a variety of eggplant found in Borneo. It has a slightly bitter taste and firmer texture compared to common eggplant varieties." Informant

"I have a basic understanding of traditional Dayak cooking from my studies. One famous dish I can mention is Ayam Pansuh, which involves cooking chicken in bamboo with local herbs and spices." Informant 4

“I have a modest understanding of traditional Dayak cuisine, especially dishes like Umai, which is a salad of raw fish marinated in lime juice and herbs. This dish highlights the use of fresh ingredients and authentic flavors, reflecting the unique culinary traditions of the Dayak people.” Informant 5

“I don't know much about Dayak food. One specific dish I can name is ayam pansuh, which is chicken cooked in bamboo.” Informant 6

Theme: Knowledge level of Dayak cuisine

Participant knowledge of Dayak cuisine varied significantly. A moderate level of understanding was demonstrated by informants 1, 9, and 12, who could identify at least one dish and provide basic context. Informants 3, 4, and 5 exhibited a basic understanding, naming dishes and offering limited details about their characteristics or ingredients. Conversely, informants 6, 7, 8, and 10 displayed limited knowledge, often restricted to dish names without further elaboration.

Theme: Specific dishes mentioned

Ayam Pansuh emerged as the most widely recognized Dayak dish, mentioned by informants 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 12. Described as chicken cooked in bamboo with local herbs and spices, its popularity is evident. Terung Dayak, a unique eggplant variety, was identified by informant 3. Umai, a raw fish salad marinated with lime and herbs, was mentioned by informants 5 and 8, highlighting the use of fresh ingredients. Informant 7 referred to botok, a dish incorporating natural ingredients, while informant 10 mentioned Juhu Singkah, a traditional preparation of young rattan and fish.

Research Question 2: What factors influence the acceptance of traditional Dayak food among the youth in Selangor?

To what extent can the influence of friends contribute to the acceptance of traditional Dayak food among the youth?

“Peer influence is a powerful factor in shaping choices and behavior, especially in social settings such as eating. If young people see their friends enjoying and supporting Dayak food, they are more likely to try it themselves.” Informant 1

“Friends have a big impact on the acceptance of traditional Dayak food among the youth. When friends enjoy and support Dayak cuisine, it encourages others in their social circle to try it and embrace the food.” Informant 2

“Peer influence and recommendations can contribute to the acceptance of traditional Dayak food. The social experience of dining and the pleasure of sharing traditional food can create a positive cycle of acceptance and appreciation among peer groups.” Informant 3

“Friends have a significant influence on youth food choices. When young people see their friends enjoying and sharing these dishes, they are more likely to be curious and open to trying them. Positive peer experiences create a sense of familiarity, trust and encourage youth to explore the food.” Informant 4

“Friends play an important role in shaping youth food choices. When young people see their friends enjoying and recommending this dish, they are more likely to be curious and willing to try it.” Informant 5

“The influence of friends can give exposure to Dayak food.” Informant 6

“Friends play the role of bringing influence to their friends to try the Dayak food.”
Informant 7

“Friends are always influenced by the influence of friends, the influence of friends on the acceptance of Dayak food is high to ensure that they recognize and try Dayak food.” Informant 8

“The influence of friends is very important because it is the influence of friends that encourages us to try new foods such as Dayak food.” Informant 9

“Friends have a strong influence on a person if the friend promotes and shows interest in the food and can attract young people to also try Dayak food.” Informant 10

Theme: Influence of peers on food choices and acceptance

Based on the answer, informant 1,4,5,9 mentioned that peer influence is a powerful motivator. Peer influence emerged as a significant motivator for Dayak food acceptance among the youth. Informants 1, 4, 5, and 9 emphasized the powerful role of social dynamics, suggesting that young people are more likely to try and accept Dayak cuisine when it is positively endorsed and enjoyed by their peers. This finding underscores the importance of social context in shaping food preferences. Informants 3 and 4 highlighted the creation of a positive social environment through shared experiences. When friends express enjoyment of Dayak food, it fosters a welcoming atmosphere that encourages others to participate. Furthermore, informants 4 and 5 indicated that peer influence stimulates curiosity about new foods. Observing friends' positive experiences with Dayak cuisine ignited interest among participants, motivating them to try the unfamiliar. This finding suggests that peer influence is a catalyst for initial exploration and acceptance of novel food items.

How does a social medium contribute to the formation of the perception and acceptance trend of the youth towards traditional Dayak food?

“Social media plays an important role in shaping perceptions and trends especially among the youth. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are influential in promoting food trends through visually appealing content, influencers and viral challenges. This can create curiosity and positive perception among young viewers.”
Informant 1

“Social media plays an important role in shaping perceptions and trends among youth. When Dayak dishes are presented in a stylish and visually appealing way, it creates curiosity and positive perception, encouraging youth interest and acceptance.” Informant 2

“Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube play an important role in shaping perceptions and trends about traditional Dayak food among the youth. Influencers, food bloggers and content creators can showcase these dishes in a visually appealing and culturally enriching way that makes them more accessible and appealing to a wider audience.” Informant 3

“Social media platforms play an important role in shaping perceptions and trends about traditional Dayak food among the youth. Viral food challenges, cooking tutorials, and food travel vlogs can spark curiosity and generate interest among young viewers, leading to a greater acceptance and appreciation of Dayak dishes beyond traditional boundaries.” Informant 4

“Influencers, food bloggers and content creators can showcase Dayak dishes through visually appealing posts, recipe videos and cultural narratives. Viral trends related to Dayak food on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram further increase interest and curiosity among the youth, fostering acceptance and appreciation.”

Informant 5

“Social media plays the role to promote Dayak Food through any platform through their gadgets because the current generation spends more time with gadgets that can easily expose Dayak food to them.”

Informant 6

“Influencing social media plays a role to reveal more about Dayak food by advertising on any application.”

Informant 7

“Social media such as Instagram and Tiktok present Dayak food in the right way, images and content presented in accordance with the acceptance of the current generation, this can arouse the desire of young people to try according to the trend.”

Informant 8

Theme: The role of social media in shaping perceptions and acceptance of traditional Dayak food among youth

The role of social media and content creators in popularizing Dayak cuisine was emphasized by several participants. Informants 3, 4, and 5 highlighted the significant impact of influences, food bloggers, and content creators in showcasing Dayak dishes in a visually appealing and culturally enriching manner. These platforms effectively increase the accessibility and attractiveness of these culinary offerings, especially among the youth. Through visually compelling posts, recipe videos, and engaging cultural narratives, content creators have successfully generated interest and curiosity in Dayak cuisine. Informants 1, 7, and 8 underscored the broader influence of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube in driving food trends. These platforms facilitate the dissemination of visually appealing content, leveraging influences and viral challenges to promote diverse cuisines. Aligning with the preferences of the current generation, social media has emerged as a powerful tool in stimulating the desire to experiment with new culinary experiences, including Dayak cuisine.

Research Objective 1: How familiar are the youth in Selangor with traditional Dayak food?

The study investigates Selangor youth's awareness of traditional Dayak cuisine, demonstrating a varied but typically poor comprehension. Most people learnt about Dayak food from friends, specialists, social media, articles, and cultural events. Many people have tried Dayak food, usually at parties or delivered by friends from Sarawak, but few have helped prepare it due to geographical and cultural limitations. Dayak cuisine is well-known among young people for its use of natural and indigenous products, as well as its cultural relevance. While certain delicacies, such as Ayam Pansuh and Umai, are more well-known, regular consumption and extensive expertise are uncommon. Improving possibilities for direct encounters, such as cultural events and culinary workshops, may help youngsters engage with and understand Dayak cuisine

Research Objective 2: What factors influence the acceptance of traditional Dayak food among the youth in Selangor?

The second research topic investigates the acceptance of traditional Dayak cuisine among Selangor youth. The findings show that younger generations are becoming more interested in and appreciative of Dayak food, indicating a good trend towards conserving and appreciating Dayak culinary heritage in modern culture. Health perception, peer influence, social media, and events/festivals all have an impact on traditional Dayak cuisine uptake.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study provided vital insights into juvenile awareness and acceptance of traditional Dayak food. Key discoveries emerged from qualitative methods including interviews and secondary data analysis. For starters, while Selangor's youth are familiar with Dayak cuisine, deeper understanding and involvement are frequently hampered by modernisation and changing societal standards, putting Dayak culinary traditions at jeopardy and affecting Sarawak's cultural identity and tourism. Second, challenges to Dayak food acceptability include a lack of exposure, concerns about health risks, and the influence of commercialised food trends. However, options for raising awareness and appreciation were found, including educational programs, social media involvement, and cultural events. Educational activities can help young people have a better awareness of the cultural significance and nutritional benefits of Dayak food, while social media involvement through culinary lessons, recipe videos, and behind-the-scenes glimpses can pique their interest. By addressing these issues, stakeholders can collaborate to promote and preserve Dayak food traditions, ensuring their survival and importance among future generations.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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