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A Conceptual Framework for Consumption Satisfaction and Continuous Acceptance of Innovative Traditional Food Products

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Abstract

Since governments recognised the importance of intensifying economies in rural and urban areas, food innovation has taken centre stage in most countries. When compared to other countries, some have achieved significantly greater outstanding success in cultivating an innovative culture in the food sector. However, introducing innovative food products on the market may turn out to be challenging work for marketers. Consumers are often reluctant to accept innovations, especially when they are related to advanced technology. This consequence is more obvious when it comes to traditional food which is fundamentally influenced by lifestyles, socio-demographics, and cultural aspects. The traditional food segment experiences the extra challenge due to the possible contradiction between the idea of traditional food and the idea of innovation which increases the challenge of introducing satisfactory innovations within this food segment to the market. This study reviewed several frameworks and past literature to understand the influence of consumers' innovativeness, uncertainty avoidance, attitude as a personal factor, perceived quality, and perceived authenticity as product attributes factors on consumers' consumption satisfaction acts as a mediating variable, and continuance acceptance as the dependent variable. Therefore, this study proposed a new conceptual framework on consumer continuance acceptance that models the acceptance development process with a stronger emphasis on the consumption satisfaction of innovative Malaysian traditional food products.

Keywords: Traditional Food Innovation, Consumption Satisfaction, Continuous Acceptance, Consumer Innovativeness, Uncertainty Avoidance, Attitude, Perceived Quality, Perceived Authenticity.

Introduction

Process and product growth are critical to the food sector, as they are to any other industry, and are regarded as the lifeblood of sound business strategy (Guiné et al., 2020). According to Stanton (2016), innovation is viewed as a critical driver of economic growth, and developing new food products has become a critical manoeuvre for many international food organisations. The primary purpose of innovation for most food firms is to intensify their production capability, expand product variety, and form a reputation as an innovative

organization that eventually positively impacts their image (Albertsen et al., 2020) Thus, the food sector is required to continuously innovate food products to deal with competition and fulfil consumer demands.

Since governments recognised the importance of intensifying economies in rural and urban areas, food innovation has taken centre stage in most countries. Nonetheless, when compared to other countries, some have achieved significantly greater outstanding success in cultivating an innovative culture in the food sector. Within the Malaysian setting, the food and beverage (F&B) sector is growing significantly and is one of the major sources of revenue for the national account. According to the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (2016), the investment target in food manufacturing industries has been established at RM 24.6 billion in the Industrial Malaysian Plan 2006-2020 (IMP3) period. Nevertheless, the external challenge SMEs face in the food and beverages sector in terms of changes in demand, technological developments, competition, and rising production costs increases the requirement for SMEs to innovate to survive in the industry (Bhuiyan et al., 2016). Sajdakowska et al (2018) proposed that SMEs' inclination to improve processes efficacy by executing process innovation, to distinguish products by employing product innovation, and to capture new markets by performing marketing innovation.

According to Statista.com (2022), revenue in the Malaysian convenience food segment amounts to US\$2.79 billion in 2022. The market is expected to grow annually by 6.83% (2022-2027). Among the innovations that apply are necessities such as prolonging shelf life, enhanced food safety, and minimizing wastage, until the need for special features of improving refined foods, including nutritional value, convenience, and palatability. Ready-to-eat foods, pre-cooked foods, frozen foods, ready-to-cook, packaged mixes, instant paste or powdered foods, canned products, ethnic or traditional cuisine, and retort pouch products are examples of Malaysian-developed innovative food products.

However, introducing innovative food products on the market may turn out to be challenging work for marketers. Talwar et al (2020) argued that consumers are often reluctant to accept innovations, especially when they are related to advanced technology. This consequence is more obvious when it comes to food which is fundamentally influenced by lifestyles, socio-demographics, cultural aspects, or individual neophilia/neophobia. Concerning the Malaysian food innovation industry, there is a vast production of high-quality Malaysian food products produced by Malaysian food producers, including traditional Malaysian foods. Nevertheless, based on Papargyropoulou et al (2019) surveys, many of these products are untouched in many retail stores and hypermarkets. The traditional food segment experiences the extra challenge due to the possible contradiction between the idea of traditional food and the idea of innovation which increases the challenge of introducing satisfactory innovations within this food segment to the market (Ferreiro et al., 2019). Additionally, many food entrepreneurs nowadays are too focused on the production and very obsessive about producing products with their brands (Costa & Monteiro, 2018). Eventually, too many products are very similar even though the market is small, contributing to oversupply, product failure, and company bankruptcy. As a result, this study believes it is critical to investigate the factors that contribute to consumers' consumption satisfaction and continued acceptance of innovative traditional food products to ensure long-term success.

Literature Review

Consumer innovativeness as a Personal Factor

Consumer innovativeness plays a crucial part in the acceptance and distribution of innovative products. For decades, there has been considerable study interest in the topic of consumer innovativeness and has expanded significantly in recent years (Kim et al., 2021). In accordance with Rogers' (2003) theory of diffusion of Innovation, he defines innovativeness as the degree to which a person is a pioneer in the adoption of new ideas and innovation products in comparison to other members of the system. Meanwhile, according to the results of the content analysis by Eryigit (2020) on the consequences of consumer innovativeness, various past studies suggest that a range of dependent variables were focused on buying intention, adoption, repurchase intention, brand loyalty, brand switching, perceived value, evaluation of product qualities, perceived risk, brand extension, and willingness to pay. The effects of consumer innovativeness toward adoption behaviour or intention have received the greatest attention (Eryigit, 2020). Mangafić et al (2017); Wang (2014) concluded that consumer innovativeness is the crucial indicator for the adoption of innovative products. This is due to the acceptance of new products was the effect of consumer innovativeness that was most frequently noted. Consumer innovativeness studies look at a range of new and innovative products for diverse fields, including studies of the impact of consumer innovativeness on the acceptance of sustainable products and services eco-innovations, or green products (Paparoidamis & Tran, 2019), organic foods (Konuk, 2018, Mangafić et al., 2017; Nathan et al., 2021), innovative coffee products acceptance (Barrena-Figueroa & Garcia-Lopez-de-Meneses, 2013), robotic restaurant service (Kim et al., 2021), and functional food (Bekoglu et al., 2016). Given that innovative traditional food products are relatively new alternatives to conventional food products, this study anticipates that consumer innovativeness will be one of the factors influencing consumers' consumption satisfaction and acceptance of innovative traditional food products.

Uncertainty Avoidance as a Personal Factor

Recent years have seen an intensification in studies looking at customer resistance to innovation. This has become a subject of research on innovation resistance from the standpoint of cultural and social norms influencing consumer's food behaviours, since familiarity with food is one of the key elements of acceptance and is, therefore, one of the most vital factors when launching innovative food products onto the market (Jeong & Lee, 2021). The strongest claims made by Minkov and Hofstede (2012) on the importance of national culture in the adoption of technology and innovation is highly related to uncertainty avoidance (UA). According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which members of a society are at ease with the unfamiliar and uncertainty (Basarir & Dayan, 2022). According to Laukkanen (2015), the level of ambiguity tolerance of individuals within society indicates how receptive they are to change and innovation. A higher UA index denotes a lower threshold for risk-taking, ambiguity, and uncertainty. On the other hand, a low UA culture denotes a strong acceptance of ambiguity, risk, and uncertainty. There are fewer restrictions and a greater openness to the unknown. Within the realm of food innovation, Amira & Artinah (2015); Jeong & Lee (2021) have suggested that culture affects consumer behaviour in several ways, especially in terms of food innovation satisfaction and acceptance. From the previous studies, it can be observed that the acceptability of certain food depends on the level of people's uncertainty avoidance of their respective cultures (Prakoso et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2021). It is critical to emphasise that ambiguity may be a key

factor in determining whether consumers will accept a food innovation. Furthermore, different cultures and countries have different customs and food consumption habits, so any uncertainty and unfamiliarity will be avoided, and vice versa. Additionally, different levels of acceptance may typically be found for each food, each innovation, and their potential combinations, based on the nation or culture and the unique features of each consumer.

Attitude Towards Food Innovation as a Personal Factor

Attitude is an individual evaluation of surroundings elements and the effect that results from this evaluation might vary and range from favourable to unfavourable. According to Ajzen (1991), standard assessing categories include good-bad, likeable-dislikeable, and pleasant-unpleasant. The Theory of Reason Action claims that attitudes are the primary factor influencing behavioural intentions (Loh & Hassan, 2022; Nystrand & Olsen, 2020; Rastini et al., 2020). In order to accurately anticipate a behaviour, it is crucial to examine attitudes toward the particular behaviour of interest. This might have a significant impact on the degree to which a person intends to engage in a certain behaviour, which then leads to the actual behaviour.

The concept of attitudes has been widely used in psychological studies as stimuli to explain how people react to innovations and technology (Ng et al., 2022). In the food realm, attitude and intention are frequently most closely related (Basarir & Dayan, 2022; Gârdan et al., 2021; Siegrist, 2007), this includes attitude toward functional food (Bekoglu et al., 2016; Nystrand & Olsen, 2020). Nguyen et al (2020) have highlighted in their study that attitude has proven crucial for the study of food consumption and consumer behaviour. Some research on attitudes has been conducted in the context of traditional food innovation. A study was done by Nystrand & Olsen (2020); Rabadán (2021); Rastini et al (2020) on consumer attitudes towards technological innovation in a traditional food product and showed that consumers with high education, adolescent segment, and the greatest income and have the most positive views toward process and product innovation. The divergence of previous studies' findings has begun to shed light on how attitudes may influence consumer satisfaction and acceptance of food innovation in traditional foods.

Perceived Food Quality as Product Attributes Factor

The concept of food quality is indeed a very subjective issue, a process of interpretation that has different meanings for different people (Al-Tit, 2015). As mentioned by Brečić et al (2017) food quality is not viewed based on attributes of the product but rather on the consumer perception. According to Petrescu et al (2020), food quality is the quality features of food that provide satisfaction to consumers. Presently, consumer decisions to make purchases of food products are constructed through varying trait measures that could be categorized into intrinsic attributes such as taste, appearance, odour, colour, and extrinsic characteristics including the product's image, brand, origin, and labelling of a food product.

The Total Quality Model by Grunert et al (2004) suggested that it is often assumed that customer satisfaction is determined by the relationship between expected food quality and actual quality, and thus, the likelihood of making a repeat purchase. According to the model, time influences how customers evaluate a food product, including before and after purchase as well as before and after consumption. The model's horizontal dimension, which incorporates the predicted quality before purchase and experienced quality after consumption serves as a representation of this. The preceding discussion suggests that the quality perception process is similar to how consumer preferences are formed, implying that

perceived quality and acceptance are closely related concepts. Despite numerous studies of perceived food quality have been done in various contexts, however, there found to be limited research pertaining to the perceived quality of innovative traditional food products. Therefore, concerning this study, the perceived food quality of innovated traditional food products is considered a crucial dimension to be investigated the influence on consumer consumption satisfaction and acceptance.

Perceived Food Authenticity as Product Attributes Factors

Authenticity has grown in importance in today's market due to consumer demand for products with a stronger sense of originality and tradition (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011). The definition of authenticity typically evokes several interpretations representing the genuine, true, original, or natural (Autio et al., 2013). In addition, Hamzah et al (2013) stated that food could be perceived as authentic when it is homegrown, unique, homemade, natural, and has distinct extrinsic product characteristics. Instead, a study done by Amherst et al (2019) indicated that people's nostalgia sentiments may be triggered by authentic food. Over time, more studies have been conducted to analyze the concept of authenticity, particularly in the literature related to tourism, as tourism services are experiential in nature (Amherst et al., 2019; Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011; Zhang et al., 2019). Besides that, several studies also investigated the effect of authenticity on customer purchase intention, particularly in various types of restaurants (Chen et al., 2020; Shafieizadeh et al., 2021; Youn & Kim, 2017).

Although authenticity theories have been extensively studied (Amherst et al., 2019; Autio et al., 2013; Latiff et al., 2020; Shafieizadeh et al., 2021; Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014; Youn & Kim, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019), very scarce academics have offered empirical support, particularly in the context of traditional food innovation. For example, within food innovation, Abdullah & Azam (2021) have investigated the influence of perceived authenticity quality of innovative traditional Malay food products among Malaysian consumers and the result showed that perceived authentic quality had a relatively strong influence on consumer acceptance of innovative traditional Malay foods. Sidali & Hemmerling (2014); Hamzah et al (2013) developed an authenticity dimension in Malay cuisine from an experts' perspective in the qualitative method. The model developed a three-dimension model that determines the authenticity of Malay food including family culture, self-interest, and awareness. However, aspects of food authenticity are frequently overlooked in food innovation and are not explicitly addressed in the authenticity theory. Therefore, based on the aforementioned notion, incorporating this element in this study would be noteworthy in determining the level of consumer satisfaction and continuous acceptance of innovative traditional food products.

Consumption Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a subjective assessment of the results compared to a set of objectives or standards that bring about a sense of fulfilment, including under or over-fulfillment (Choi et al., 2019). As mentioned by Gera & Jain (2020), customer satisfaction has been proven to be crucial in customer post-purchase behaviour in the five-stage model of the consumer purchasing process. In this stage, customers compare products to their expectations after making a purchase, and satisfaction or dissatisfaction are the two possible outcomes. Consumer expectations for a product's performance and characteristics most of the time are the major determinants regardless of whether a consumption experience is deemed to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Guido, 2015). Oh & Kim (2017) described customer satisfaction as an outcome of perceptions from previous consumption, and satisfaction leads to

consumers' repurchase and return. This idea is also in line with the Post-Acceptance Model (Bhattacharjee, 2001) highlighted that satisfaction is the result of a consumer's evaluation deriving from experiences and analysis of past transaction performance. Therefore, from the aforementioned notions, it can be concluded that satisfaction may be derived from the initial consumption or encountered after the first purchase of the products or service. Customers are satisfied when they have a positive experience, individuals become connected to the brand and form an emotional bond (Mumtaz, 2013). Meanwhile, Han et al (2019) established and verified the connection between consumer satisfaction and intention to purchase. Recent studies have shown that satisfaction becomes the main variable influencing the intention to revisit, since the customer's intention to return in the future may be predicted by their level of satisfaction. In line with the above argument, it is observed that the initial consumption of products has greatly contributed to consumers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction. A company must ensure that its customers are satisfied with its products by creating a positive post-purchase experience. This is because their satisfaction will lead to additional purchases and continued consumption of the product. As a result, investigating the effect of consumer consumption satisfaction is critical in determining the continued acceptance of innovative food products and their market viability.

Continuance Acceptance Intention

Continuance refers to a form of post-adoption behaviour. Continuance intention is the customer's response after consuming or experiencing a product. It could be applied to determine whether a product or service has long-term success. To encourage the marketing and adoption of a product, retaining consumers' continuous behaviour after their initial purchase or consumption is more crucial. Besides, behaviours of acceptance and continuation are theoretically and temporally distinctive (Bhattacharjee and Lin, 2015). Acceptance is the first phase after the initial experience with innovation or technology, but other influencing criteria are significant in subsequent experience phases influencing the intention to continue using the technology (Bhattacharjee and Lin, 2015; Kupfer et al., 2016). Instead of preliminary adoption and usage, continuous consumption and acceptance are critical factors in the development of innovations (Bhattacharjee, 2001). As specified by Bhattacharjee (2001) the continual use of a new technological product or service eventually determines its long-term survival and success.

The recent research specifically examined the application of innovations about users' perceptions and behaviour in the post-adoption or routinization phase to identify the trends and causes that encourage the continued use of a specific innovation after it has been widely adopted. As mentioned previously, food innovation is indispensable for today's society lifestyle and crucial for business growth and many past researchers have explored what motivates consumers to accept innovative food products. Previous studies highlighted some of the most important determinants of food innovation acceptance such as perception (Sanmugam et al., 2021), food neophobia, (Lusk et al., 2014), perceived quality (Zakowska-Biemans et al., 2016), naturalness (Román et al., 2017). While previous studies focused on initial acceptance of food innovations, post-continuance acceptance and usage of food innovations, particularly traditional foods, have received less attention. Finally, consistent acceptance is regarded as critical in determining the achievement of a product based on consumers' prior experience and consumption. Even though the acceptance of the products is just the initial response of consumers and is not guaranteed that the products will be continuously consumed or purchased in the future. Therefore, investigating the continuance

acceptance of products need to be stressed for enduring success and to survive in the market in the long run.

Proposed Research Framework

This study represents the initial attempt to integrate several theories, models, and constructs within the consumers' behavioural and marketing discipline within the context of traditional innovative food products to explain the complex process between personal factors and product attributes factor, consumers' consumption satisfaction, and continuance acceptance. This framework is founded on the integration of underpinning theories of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Roger, 2003), Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede et al., 2008), Theory of Reason Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975), Total food quality Model (Grunert, 2005), Food authenticity Model (Hamzah et al., 2013), and the Post-Acceptance Model (Bhattacharjee, 2001) into a conceptual research model within food innovation, marketing, and consumer behaviour fields. The researcher reviewed several frameworks to understand the influence of consumers' innovativeness, uncertainty avoidance, attitude as a personal factor, perceived quality, and perceived authenticity as product attributes factors on consumers' consumption satisfaction acts as a mediating variable and continuance acceptance as the dependent variable. Therefore, this study contributes to developing a new conceptual framework to the current literature on consumer continuance acceptance that models the acceptance development process with a stronger emphasis on the consumption satisfaction of innovative Malaysian traditional food products.

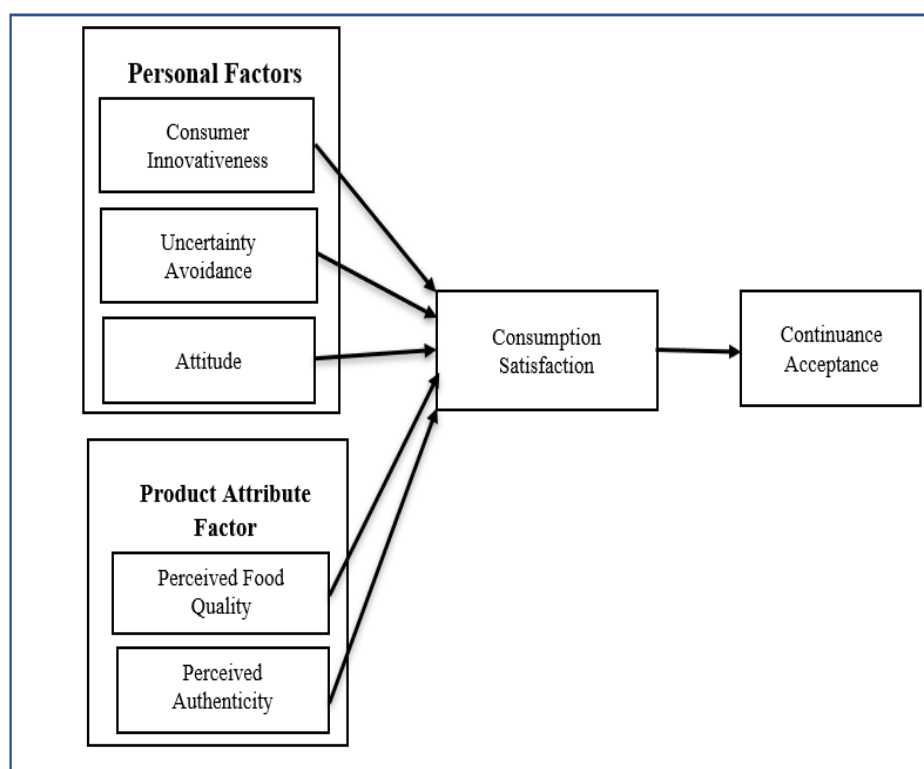


Figure 1.0: Proposed Research Framework

Conclusion

Based on the previous food innovation literature, it is notable that topics on food innovation studies have become more diverse over the years. However, there are still certain areas related to food innovation that has not been explored, specifically the integration of consumer behaviour models within the traditional food innovation context. The lack of traditional food innovation studies in the country that investigate the possible satisfaction and continuous acceptance outcome of innovative products may hamper the development of the overall food industry in Malaysia. To address the gap in previous works of literature in investigating determinants that may influence consumer satisfaction and continuance acceptance of innovative traditional food products, this study aims to integrate several theories, models, and constructs within the behavioural aspect of traditional food innovation. From there, the constructed framework will be able to explain the complex process of personal and product factors, consumer consumption satisfaction, and continuance acceptance. By integrating these theories, this study would provide empirical findings to the body of knowledge by contributing new results and a literature review within this realm and enhancing the knowledge gap within traditional food innovation research, food innovation acceptance, and food marketing in general. The findings of this study would provide an additional theoretical model for future research in the traditional food innovation domain, both locally and globally. The findings should help the food industry, consumers, and government agencies better understand consumers' perceptions and evaluations of innovative traditional food attributes and improve consumers' responses to various food product categories. Furthermore, food sector practitioners can use the developed framework and findings to benchmark their innovation endeavours and strategically develop their innovation plan of action to better organise the scope of innovation categorization. It is also beneficial for food marketers responsible for establishing effective communication and marketing strategies for consumer segments with different motives and attitudes by strengthening the most pertinent product characteristics. As a result, consumers may benefit from receiving high-quality, innovative traditional food products. From consumer perspectives, data from this study will be able to provide them with guidelines and direction on how to make decisions on innovative traditional food purchasing and consumption. Therefore, a few attempts are still in progress to address the relationship between consumers' innovativeness, uncertainty avoidance, attitude as a personal factor, perceived quality, and perceived authenticity as product attributes factors on consumers' consumption satisfaction and continuance acceptance of innovative traditional food products. Performing this study is considered worthwhile and would be strategic to the food industry and Malaysian economy and safeguard the authenticity of traditional Malaysian food in both aspects.

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