

Yap, J. (2010). Sarawak to witness more graduate entrepreneur. Retrieved on January 4, 2015 from <http://www.theborneopost.com/2010/11/30/sarawak-to-witness-more-graduate-entrepreneurs/>

Zakaria, A. (1988). *Perceptions of Industrial Training and Employability Skills: A Comparative Study of the Vocational Schools and the MARA Vocational Institutes students in Malaysia*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh.

CHALLENGES IN SUSTAINING ETHNIC FOODWAYS AMONG STUDENT IN UNITED KINGDOM

Nurul Fariha Kamarul Rashid¹, Rosmaliza Muhammad²

¹Tourism and Hospitality Department Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah

²Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management
Universiti Teknologi MARA

nurul_fariha@psis.edu.my & rosmaliza35@salam.uitm.edu.my

Abstract

This paper qualitatively examines the challenges of Malaysian temporary immigrant such as student to practice ethnic foodways in United Kingdom. Eleven informers who study in United Kingdom. Seven informers who currently study in United Kingdom were interviewed by using semi-structured question. The result revealed that availability of ingredient, equipment, time limitation and creativity were the challenges for them to sustain in practicing ethnic foodways. This study also revealed that by eating and cooking Malaysian food connected them to Malaysian culture and emotional feeling. Despite of living in foreign and different culture, environment and people, Malaysian sojourners, in particular international student able to maintain their ethnic foodways by cooking and eating Malaysian food with traditional ingredient, equipment and eating decorum.

Keyword: Ethnic foodways, temporary immigrant, student, culture.

1.0 Introduction

Food is an essential component in sustaining human existence and as nourishment for human body. Believe it or not, food is a central part of our lives. Not only that, food played in other aspect of human life. It also can construct and maintain the social relationships, gratification of pleasure, a relief from stress, symbolize religious and ritual activities as well as one's ethnic identity (Sullivan, 2004).

Food serves to indicate religious, the belief systems, and practices rules. Furthermore, food also explained the complex ideologies of individual's character or for the whole community or an ethnic. Food is often closely related to religious or cultural ceremony and special occasions such as birthday or festive day. An ethnic used specific food as a symbolic meaning and specific meaning (Moran, 2007). Pursuing this further, food is believed act as the central of life of a specific society and convey symbolic meaning for an ethnic.

2.0 Literature Review

Ethnic foods are foods that are regarded as unique, exclusive and distinctive to a particular cultural group, race, religion, nation, or heritage (Dwyer and Bermudez, 2003). The foodways, physical and social perspective in which food preparation, procurement, purchasing, receiving, storing, serving and eating practices varies for an ethnic. Furthermore, ethnic foods are often sourced from various geographical areas and prepared by combining traditional and modern methods of cooking, specific combination of ingredients, spices and herbs (Waugh, 2009).

The practice of preparing and presenting ethnic food are known as foodways. Foodways are one of the element most of anthropology extensively discovered currently (Gosden, 1999). Foodways refer to the behavior of act involving the preparation, appearance and consumption of food that differentiate a society (Kemmer, 2000). In line with that, foodways associated to food culture, the utensils or equipment, method or technique and ingredient in preparing food according to its custom (Germann Molz, 2007). In addition, Muhammad, Mohd Zahari, and Md. Sharif (2013) revealed that foodways bring up two major element through the aspects of preparation which relate to the ingredients, equipment or tools and cooking methods whilst consumption through their eating utensils, for instance spoon and fork and serving manner. Food preparation and consumption or popularly known as foodways give valuable, precious and priceless insight to the people that perform the acts (Bentley, 2008).

In line with that, Smith (2013) noted that the migrant chooses to perform his or her ethnic identity in one of three ways: by demonstrating a willingness to adopt the culture of the host country; by accepting the pluralism of migrant identities or by maintaining his or her ethnic difference from their country of origin. Furthermore, immigrants may accept food culture and foodways from the host country even food culture, act and behavior are said to be the last culture to adapt in foreign country. According to Perez-Cueto, Verbeke, Carl, and Anne (2009), moved populations are migrant populations who move from the native country.

Malaysian students who study abroad are known as temporal migrant. When people move to a new cultural environment, changes occur in their eating and cooking patterns. Moreover, transnationally relocated people often use food to represent themselves as a group, and to build bonds with one another to form a support system in an unfamiliar environment. The migrant people or refugees like to demonstrate more cultural ability around food. For instance, knowledge of how to grow, prepares, cook and celebrate food.

Pursuing this further, according to Brown, Edwards and Hartwell (2010), international students in a temporal migration situation or sojourners prefer to eat familiar home country food because it associated with feelings of comfort and reassurance. For instance, in Puerto Rico, traditional foods are more prefer by them even in migration situation. Moreover, some people believed that ethnic foods can preserve physical health and avoid weight gain because their perception on English diet typically contains too much fat and sugar.

Migration phenomenon is the mobility of populations groups to a specific place. According to Mansoor and Bryce (2009), migration represents a permanent move for a certain people but for others it is a temporary state before immigrant eventually returning 'home'. Mansoor and Bryce (2009) further

explained that this group moves from their homeland pursuing their study to higher education which may not available at their countries of origin. The enlightenment about international students is also describe by Baruch, Budhwar, and Khatri (2007) that they are among talented group that moves temporarily from their homeland with intent to pursue higher education.

Living within a foreign culture and a new life of students, may abandon native foodways. The move to a new cultural and lifestyle may be most traumatic events for a person and for most sojourners. Alteration and adjustment in their food habits may be made as a deviation from the norm lifestyles (Sullivan, 2004). Furthermore, students make savings from their scholarship. Thus, it is assumed that Malaysian students in United Kingdom may experience constraint to find the right ingredient and equipment to practice ethnic foodways at the foreign country.

However, there has been little research dedicated and conducted on the practice of ethnic foodways for temporal migration population in particular, student. Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the challenges to practice ethnic foodways while cope with different environment in United Kingdom and to identify the roles of ethnic foodways among temporary immigrant, in particular Malaysian students.

3.0 Methodology

Berg (2001) mentioned qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. Moreover, he noted that qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure, give meaning to their daily lives, examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others. Moreover, qualitative methods have been applied to health and nutrition studies assessing acculturation pressures affecting immigrants' dietary choices (Satia, Patterson, Taylor and Cheney, 2000).

In order to get the results from Malaysian student in United Kingdom, interview using social networking websites or known as Skype is more appropriate and used for this study. As mentioned Samure and Given (2010) by using Skype to conduct research interviews has abundant advantages: 1) it is economical; 2) it is geographically flexible; 3) it is user-friendly and easy to install/use; 4) has an instant messaging function, which is a useful tool for managing data collection problems and sharing information among members; and, 5) ease of audio-recording. Therefore, researchers can easily record computer-to-computer and computer-to-telephone conversations.

The researcher also used another tool in order to collect data which is e-mail interviews. As noted by Meho (2006) it is cost significantly less to administer than telephone or face-to-face interviews. Due to different geographical location or time zone e-mail interview also is used for this study. Researcher can eliminates the need for synchronous interview times and allows researchers to interview more than 1 member at a time, because a list of questions can be sent individually to several participants at once. With that, the subsequent sections explain the sampling technique used in this study.

In tracking the practices of ethnic foodways among Malaysian student in United Kingdom, the Malaysian student with the age range from 20 till 40 years old were chosen as the sample as they are believed of having experiences in providing relevant information on subject matters and involved with the food preparation and consumption. However, huge populations and the geographical dispersions unable researcher to collect the desired information throughout the country.

Therefore, for this study seven (7) Malaysian students who are study in United Kingdom were involved for the interviews. The interviews were conducted in the month of Mac and April 2014. In each interview, a set of 16-semi structured questions based on the objectives of the study was posed to the informers. It based on saturation answers or point during the interviews session with regard to the sufficient number of informer for this research, according to Bernard (2011) the ideal standard for qualitative sample size is depend on the process of sequentially conducting interviews until all concepts are repeated multiple times without new concepts or themes emerging. Meanwhile, T. Trotter II (2012) stated that the sample enrollment process is to identify all of the consensus experts (for example, those nominated by multiple other individuals in a community) who have the most wide expertise in a specific area of social or cultural knowledge. Hence, the numbers of informers for this study were justified.

Joppe (2000) in Golafshani (2003) defines reliability as results are consistent over time and a specific representation of the total population under study is referred as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. On the other hand, Patton (2001) in Golafshani (2003) stated that there are two factors which are validity and reliability of any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study.

In line with this notion, to increase the dependability of the findings for this present study, 7 interviewed with 7 informers were first analyzed individually before the findings of each informer were compared. Validity in qualitative research on the other hand refer to the determination of whether a measurement instrument actually measures what it is purported to measure (LoBiondo-Wood and Haber, 1998) in (Long and Johnson, 2000). Hammersley (1992) in Long and Johnson (2000) noted that validity refers to the realities of the world and differing degrees of need for confidence dependent upon the significance of the claim. In this sense, unexpected findings from the information gathered were identified and compared with the existing literatures to increase the validity of this study.

The thematic analysis was used for the data analysis. It is generally recommended that researchers carry out their data collection themselves (for example, conduct their own in-depth interviews) and also transcribe the data themselves. In thematic analysis the task of the researcher is to identify a limited number of themes which adequately reflect their textual data (Howitt and Cramer, 2008).

4.0 Findings

The informers were all Malay women and further their study in Reading University, United Kingdom for 3 to 4 years. It is important to note that all the informers comes from different backgrounds and. Nevertheless, it is quite unethical to reveal their names here. Therefore, the word of 'informer' was used throughout the analysis.

4.1 The informer view on the challenges to sustain traditional food

The question asked the informers the challenges to sustain the practice of ethnic foodways. In respond to the question, all of the informers answered there are challenges to practice ethnic foodways in different and foreign country and environment.

Availability of traditional ingredient

Majority of the informer were agreed that the availability of ingredient and equipment are the factors in encouraging them to practice ethnic foodways. The first informer reported that the availability of ingredient at the nearest shop encourages her to practice ethnic foodways. As for the second informer, she mentioned the freshness of the ingredient in the local shop in United Kingdom is not the same as in Malaysia. Some of the response are as follows:

"...The main factor that encourage me to cook is because the ingredient such as..onion, garlic, ginger, coconut milk, curry powder is available...which can be found at the nearest shop that I mentioned earlier..."

(Malay informer 1)

"...It really encourages me to cook ethnic food. Why? Because...it is easy to find ingredient and halal meat in Reading. At first, I'm very surprised about that. Because, the food at the local restaurant does not give the same taste as in Malaysia. It is very relieved to cook Malaysian food at home. Save our money, time and more fun..."

(Malay informer 6)

However, a deviance from the above notion was arise when third informer noted that some ingredient is difficult to find and expensive such as fish. She points out:

"...Easy to find Malaysian ingredient here...they are available at the shop near to university...halal chicken meat is also available...but...Fish is quite expensive...so we rarely cook fish..."

(Malay informer 3)

Some of the informer conveyed the hardships is because lack of traditional ingredient in Malaysian cooking such as 'belacan', 'asam jawa', 'budu', 'cencaluk', and 'asam gelugor'. Furthermore, some Malaysian herbs such as daun kesom and bunga kantan are difficult to find uttered by them. The following informers stressed that;

"...As for me... the hardship is just that...several ingredients like asam jawa and belacan is difficult to find...I have a busy schedule but still cook every day. That's all..."

(Malay informer 1)

"...Emmmm...Some food ingredient like anchovies are quite difficult to find and expensive...Furthermore...traditional ingredients like asam jawa, belacan and asam keping are quite difficult to find...although we have tough life here due to different culture...high currency change...single income...because my husband take unpaid leave...to accompany me in UK...lack of leisure time...since I'm busy with class and labwork, I managed to cook every day... no hardship...at all..."

(Malay informer 6)

Availability of equipment

Interestingly, the seventh informer used lesung batu or mortar stone frequently instead of using modern equipment such as blender for pounding purposes. Despite all, some ingredient such as fish are quite expensive. However, the informer 7 usually cooks laksam and laksa in spite of expensive main ingredients, fish and lack of steamer as the main equipment in preparing those dishes. The quotes from the informers are further revealed in the table below:

"...The ingredient is easy to find. I buy lesung batu to make my cooking easier (laughed). Sometimes... some food cannot use blender all the time. So... I buy second hand lesung batu from senior. Halal chicken and meat are super easy to get because there are Muslim students studying in Reading. Even though fish is quite expensive...and steamer are hard to find but..I still make my laksam and laksa...(laughed)..."

(Malay informer 7)

In response to the above question, the availability of ingredient and equipment are the factor to encourage them to retain ethnic foodways in practice. It seemed that they conserve ethnic foodways by buying equipment like lesung batu to prepare ethnic food. Pursuing this further, the other factor to encourage them in practicing ethnic foodways is that the taste of Malaysian cuisine in the restaurant around United Kingdom is intolerable. Furthermore, the price is quite expensive compared by cooking ethnic food by them. As has been noted, the authentic of food is important for some informer. On the other hand, the freshness of ingredient becomes the minor issue pertaining to the question.

Time Limitation

Pursuing this further, the informer 4 stated, the effort to practice ethnic foodways demolish and obliterate all the hardship. The informer 6 further divulged, in spite of busy schedule with class and lab work, high currency change, single income because her spouse taking unpaid leaves, expensive ingredient such as anchovies, and confront tough life with totally different culture since she living at rural area (Kuala Kangsar), she managed to cook and consume ethnic food which also known as foodways. As noted by them;

"...there are no hardship to practice our ethnic foodways...Ingredients are available in the local shop here...equipment are available...sometimes we can borrow them from Malaysian student in Reading...well...sharing is caring...yes, we are busy with study and our research but then it is not a big issue..."

(Malay informer 2)

"...Emmmm...Some food ingredient like anchovies are quite difficult to find and expensive...Furthermore...traditional ingredients like asam jawa, belacan and asam keping are quite difficult to find...although we have tough life here due to different culture...high currency change...single income...because my husband take unpaid leave...to accompany me in UK...lack of leisure time...since I'm busy with class and labwork, I managed to cook every day... no hardship...at all..."

(Malay informer 6)

Surprisingly, regardless of their busy timetable and living in a new environment as revealed in response to the earlier question (their ethnic foodways continuously practiced. It seemed that there have no obstacles to not practicing ethnic foodways in such different environment and apart from family.

Creativity

Furthermore, next question investigated their ethnic foodways survival among themselves while cope with different culture. Surprisingly, most of them stressed that creativity is the main solution to practice ethnic foodways while coping with different environment. The quote from all informers showed in the following table below:

"...We must be a creative person to cook Malaysian dish. Actually I cook and eat Malaysian food to cope with different environment in UK..."

(Malay informer 1)

"...Senior student at here always helps me in order to cope in new environment since... I'm came here alone. Not like the other members... who bring their husband... and son. I stayed with another friend at the hostel... and somehow... I have no intention to cook ethnic food. However the ingredients are easy to find..."

(Malay informer 4)

4.2 The informer view on cooking and eating traditional food with culture*Connection to Malaysian culture*

Majority of the informers agreed that by cooking and eating Malaysian food helps them to feel more connected to Malaysian culture. In specific, the first informer quoted that:

"...This is my first time away from Malaysia for quite long time. I feel like in Malaysia by cooking and eating Malaysian food. So... cooking and eating Malaysian food help me feel more connected to Malaysian culture..."

(Malay informer 1)

"...Yes. We miss our family in Malaysia so much. We feel blessed when we discover that ingredient is easy to find and can get it by foot. Cook and eating Malaysian food definitely connect us with Malaysian culture..."

(Malay informer 6)

Majority of the informers agreed that by cooking and consuming ethnic food, they feel connected with Malaysian culture. The practices of ethnic foodways among them validated the direction of the study in

order to strengthen the fact that food reflect to the ethnic's identity. All in all, Malaysian people successfully maintained their practice of ethnic foodways no matter how far they are from their beloved homeland.

Memory of home

Food can be a nostalgic and sentimental object for temporary immigrant or sojourner such as international student (Locher, Yoels, Maurer and van Ells, 2005 and Brown, 2009). Brown (2009) also described in paper on the importance of food during the international sojourn, comfort also described the act of eating national dishes, and it was common to permeate certain foods with the power to ease feelings of homesickness. All of the informers stressed that by cooking and eating Malaysian food brought memory of home. The following notions were quoted directly from them:

"...Yes. I'm alone here. Therefore... by cooking...eating Malaysian foods make me comfort and relieve me from stress... and tension with tight schedule...being apart from family since... I am the eldest children (laughed). By cooking...eating Malaysian food...together with other Malaysian student...reduce my stress...increasing my motivation to do better in my study... and makes me feel at home..."
(Malay informer 4)

"...I miss my family in Malaysia a lot. And also very stressful to complete my PhD in totally different environment. This is my first time away from Malaysia for quite long time. By cooking and eating Malaysian food...make me feel I'm in Malaysia. I'm not far with family. So cooking and eating Malaysian food completely connecting me with Malaysia..."
(Malay informer 7)

As a matter of fact, a deviation from the ordinary life by living in Westernized society somehow transforms common lifestyle and yet food and pertained food behavior remain to stabilize their lifestyle. The above notion supported the informer assertion that they feel connected with Malaysia culture. In addition, the food become associated with homeland culture by relieved and comfort them.

5.0 Conclusion

It is worth to know the unavailability of some ingredients such as *bunga kantan*, *daun kesom*, *belacan*, *asam jawa* and *asam keping*, equipment such as steamer and expensive raw ingredient such as fish are the factors discourage them to practice ethnic foodways. On top of that, regardless of busy schedule, tight financial, tough life in a new and foreign culture, and away from family ambience, they are able to cook Malaysian traditional food every day. The findings of the study are in line with Hartwell, Edward and Brown (2009) who exposed that Asian student studying in South of England confront limited time to prepare their traditional food as the challenge. The data gathered throughout the research, without doubt contribute surprisingly and unexpected result whereby Malaysian student who study in United Kingdom succeeded in preserving ethnic foodways. It is worth to mention their lifestyle particularly cooking and eating retained despite of busyness and hectic schedule. Following this further, tight financial and lack of cooking skill are not the real rival for them to abandon ethnic foodways.

6.0 Recommendation and Implication

All informers are Malay, 26 to 31 years old, and furthering their study at Reading University, Berkshire, United Kingdom. Although this study were focused on Malay ethnic, the participation from other ethnic such as Indian and Chinese in future could insert valuable information for the future research. Second limitation would be on the type of method or approach usage. Although the study was used qualitative approach to find the result, mixed method using quantitative and qualitative might give synergized result and different point of view or perspective compared by using single approach. In addition, the study will gather valuable and worthless data for our ethnic foodways permanence and continuity.

References

- Dwyer, J. & Bermudez, O. I. (2003). Ethnic Food. *Encyclopedia of Food Sciences and Nutrition (Second Edition)*, 2190-2195.
- Moran, E. (2007). The Sacred as everyday: Food and Ritual in Aztec Art. Retrieved from Proquest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3283180).
- Sullivan, Mitchell J. (2004). *Foodways and Identity among Korean Students at Midwestern University*. Master dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia. Retrieved on December 12, 2013 from websites <http://www.proquest.com>
- Waugh E. (2009). *Balancing Flavors, Constructing Identities, and Building A Community: Rethinking Diaspora And Migration Through The Foodways Of A Thai Community In Washington, D.C.* Master dissertation, University of Miami, United States. Retrieved on April 20, 2014 from websites <http://www.proquest.com>
- Kemmer, D. (2000). Tradition and Change in Domestic Roles and Food Preparation. *Sociology*, 34(2), 323-333.
- Gosden, C. (1999). Food: where biology meets culture. In C. Gosden & J. Hather (Eds.), *The prehistory of food: appetites for change*. London: Routledge.
- Germann Molz, J. (2007). Eating Difference: The Cosmopolitan Mobilities of Culinary Tourism. *Space and Culture*, 10(1), 77-93.
- Muhammad, R., Mohd Zahari, M. S. and Md. Sharif, M. S. (2013). Impact of Technology Advancement on the Malaysian Ethnic Festival Foods and its Foodways. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 85, 454-463.
- Bentley, A. (2008). Introduction. *Food and Foodways*, 16, 111-116. London: Routledge.
- Smith I.C. (2013). *Foodways, Families, and Festivities: Ethnobiology and Cultural Conservation in a Rural Missouri Community*. Retrieved on April 20, 2014 from websites <http://www.proquest.com>

- Perez-Cueto F., Verbeke W., Lachat C., and Remaut-De Winter A.M. (2009). Changes in dietary habits following temporal migration. The case of international students in Belgium. *Appetite*, 52, 83-88.
- Brown L., Edwards J., & Hartwell H. (2010). A taste of the unfamiliar. Understanding the meanings attached to food by international postgraduate students in England. *Appetite*, 54, 202-207.
- Mansoor, A. M., & Bryce, Q. (2007). Migration and remittances: Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. World Bank. Europe and Central Asia Region.
- Baruch, Y., Budhwar, P. S., & Khatri, N. (2007). Brain drain: inclination to stay abroad after studies. *Journal of World Business*, 42, 99-112.
- Constantine, M. G., Anderson, G. M., Berkel, L. A., Caldwell, L. D., & Utsey, S. O. (2005). Examining the cultural adjustment experiences of African international college students: a qualitative analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 57-66.
- Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. Fourth edition*. Pearson Education Company, Needham Heights.
- Satia, J. A., Patterson, R. E., Taylor, V. M. & Cheney, R. L. (2000). Use of qualitative methods to study diet, acculturation, and health in Chinese-American women. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 100 (18), 934(7).
- Samure, K & Given, L. (2010). Using Skype as a research tool: Lessons learned from qualitative interviews with distance students in a teacher-librarian program. Retrieved on Disember 12, 2013 from websites http://www.lrsv.umd.edu/abstracts/Saumure_Given.pdf
- Meho, L. I. (2006). E-Mail Interviewing in Qualitative Research: A Methodological Discussion. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(10), 1284-1295.
- Bernard, H.R., (2011). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Fourth edition. Rowman Altamira, New York.
- Joppe, M. (2000) in Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-606. Retrieved on Disember 12, 2013 from websites <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf>
- Howitt, D. & Cramer, D. (2008). *Introduction to Research Methods in Psychology, Second edition*. Prentice Hall.
- Locher, J., Yoels, W., Maurer, D., & van Ells, J. (2005). Comfort foods: an exploratory journey into the social and emotional significance of food. *Food and Foodways*, 13(4), 273-297.

- Brown, L. (2009). The role of food in the adjustment journey of international students. In A. Lindgreen & M. Hingley (Eds.), *The new cultures of food: marketing opportunities from ethnic, religious and cultural diversity*. London: Gower.