

Common Acceptable Cuisine in Multicultural Countries: Towards Building the National Food Identity

Mohd Zulhilmi Suhaimi, Mohd Salehuddin Mohd Zahari

Abstract—Common acceptable cuisine usually discussed in the multicultural/ethnic nation as it represents the process of sharing it among the ethnic groups. The common acceptable cuisine is also considered as a precursor in the process of constructing the national food identity within ethnic groups in the multicultural countries. The adaptation of certain ethnic cuisines through its types of food, methods of cooking, ingredients and eating decorum by ethnic groups is believed creating or enhancing the process of formation on common acceptable cuisines in a multicultural country. Malaysia as the multicultural country without doubt is continuing to experience cross-culturing processes among the ethnic groups including cuisine. This study empirically investigates the adaptation level of Malay, Chinese and Indian chefs on each other ethnic cuisine attributes toward the formation on common acceptable cuisines and national food identity.

Keywords—Common acceptable cuisine, adaptation, ethnic, food, identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

FOOD identity formation, especially in the multicultural/ethnic countries besides others, such as religions, politics and economy is one of the recent topics and starts to receive significant attention among the academic scholars [7], [8]. Scholars have argued that having a food identity, a nation can easily be recognized internationally [31] in term of food culture and image, promoting gastronomic tourism [15], social integration [33] and nation building [16]. Clear examples can be looked at France, Italy, Spain, Thailand, Japan and many others. The emerging of French food identity, for instance, not only as the foundation in building the nation, but the cuisine itself is well established, recognized and engaged in line with the development of global culinary and gastronomy realm and world widely acceptable [27].

Malaysia who is comprised of three major ethnic groups, namely Malay, Chinese, Indian and others who embodied their traditional ethnic identity similar to other multicultural /ethnic nation struggling through various initiatives in establishing the country's national identity including nation food identity [21], [12]. This supported by [18] which agreed the image of food is a crucial factor to Malaysia's economy. Yoshino [35] reported that outsiders perceived Malaysian cuisine is still a lack of distinctive identity owing to the limited number of Malaysia

restaurant operate within the global context as compared to the neighboring countries especially Thailand.

Owing to the importance of having nation food identity, this issue is therefore receiving considerable attention from the Malaysian government. The former Minister of Tourism, Dato Seri Ng Yen Yen stressed that;

“The wide variety of culture and food in Malaysia can be an effective tool to demonstrate our nation's cultures and food identity to attract international tourists. The extensive ranges of our local dishes were very much a reflection of the cultural melting pot creating a unique Malaysian identity”

Scholars, [1], [31], [26], [29] posited that the precursor that takes place in the process of constructing the nation, food identity within ethnic groups in the multicultural/ethnic countries is reflecting all the way through sharing a common accepted cuisine. Based on scholars' notation and looking at the context of ethnic relations in Malaysia, it is strongly believed that adaptation of each other ethnic cuisines through their types of foods, methods of cooking, ingredients and eating decorum will lead into the common acceptable cuisine in a country. Anecdotal evidences can be seen that adaptation on types of Chinese and Indian foods, cooking methods and ingredients as long as halal by the Malays and vice versa creates varieties of modified acceptable cuisines. The obvious examples are the char *kway teow*, *spring roll*, *yong tau foo* and *pau* which were originally mild in taste are modified by Malay chefs. Similar to popular Indian food such as curry dishes, dhal, and Roti Canai that have been adapted and consumed by the Malays. The same goes for Malay foods. The tastes have been 'localised' or Malaysianised by the person who directly involved in food such as foodservice operators, cooks and chefs.

This phenomenon raises a critical question. To what extent that the adaptation of ethnic cuisine through type of foods, methods of cooking, ingredients and eating decorum form the Malaysia common acceptable cuisine? With that, this study assesses the information from the Malay, Chinese and Indian chefs in relation to their adaptation processes and their belief towards the formation of common acceptable cuisine. This study also hypothesized that;

H1. The adaptation of ethnic cuisine attributes contribute toward the formation of common acceptable cuisine

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Cuisine and the Three Major Ethnic Groups in Malaysia

Historically, the development of ethnic groups in Malaysia started in the era of Malacca Sultanate around the year of 1400. Within this century, the Malacca Sultanate emerged as

the strategic locations as the meeting point between East and West Asia [20]. It allows Malacca in the Southeast Asia as a trading center specifically for herbs and spices. Continuous trading activities not only attracting various traders to Malacca but indirectly created an expansion of ethnic groups and societies from other countries like Arabs, Indians, Chinese and other Asian nations [32], [30], [3].

Although experiencing several phases of colonization starting from the Portuguese in 1511, Dutch in 1641 to the British in 1824 and Japan 1941–1945 (before surrender to the British due to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), the expansions of ethnic groups in Malaysia were occurring during British era [17]. The British were responsible in bringing Chinese and Indian to support the labor shortages, especially in the farming and mining sectors [34], [17].

The existence of three major ethnic groups in the constitutional transpire on the basis that Chinese and Indian ethnic groups need to be given citizenship as part of the provision for Tanah Melayu to be independence from the British in 1957 [11]. It is worth mentioning that, the dissimilarities of identity between the three major ethnic groups, principally on their cultural background have encouraged the government to come out with various policies and regulations [34]. This is designed to ensure the stability, solidarity and bridge the economic and educational gaps between the ethnic groups. Besides this, the government also hastily strengthening the unity among ethnic groups by introducing the New Economic Policy and the National Cultural Policy in 1971 [23], [34] emphasizing on language, religion, culture and others [30].

According [13] and [12] during the pre-Independence Day of each ethnic group centered their foods to their own ethnic needs. There was also minimal cross cultural in understanding each other ethnic cuisine as well as other traditions and customs. Chinese restaurants, for instance was selling foods exclusively to their community such as pork, vegetables, mustard greens, mung beans, daikon radish, Chinese cabbage and many other [25]. Likewise, Indian restaurants were also set up specifically to sell their own delicacies and savories, including curry, dhal, chapatti, idle and paratha to their fellow Indians, whilst Malay restaurants and food were confined to the individual states or the same geographical location [28].

However, after the post-independence era [25], restaurateurs started to incorporate various selection of menu ranging from diverse ethnic cuisines particularly the Malays, Chinese and Indians [28]. Obvious example can be seen in the concept of *Nasi Campur* (white rice served with various types of dishes). Several typical dishes from the three major ethnics such as *chicken masak merah* (chicken in spicy sauce), *ikan kembung goreng* (fried fish), *asam pedas* (fish in sour sauce) and many others from the Malay ethnics, lemon chicken, sweet and sour fish soup, butter prawn, stir fried mixed vegetables, kailan with soy sauce which represents the Chinese ethnics and mutton curry, tandoori chicken, dhal, Rassam soup and many more symbolized to the Indian ethnics enhancing the concept of *Nasi Campur*. Offering

combinations of ethnic foods gradually created a significant assortment of Malaysian gastronomic products [28], [13].

Incorporation of each other cuisines and menus for celebrating festivals or parties are also apparent [22]. This trend escalated well in the urban and the suburban as intermingling of ethnics are more emerges than the rural area. As a result, foods like nasi lemak, roti canai, char kway teow and many others have been well accepted or could be called Malaysian foods rather than cuisine exclusively stand for single ethnic [13]. Similar movement can be seen at methods in cooking the foods. The popular frying methods Malays were accepted and frequently practiced by both Chinese and Indian and vice versa.

Ingredients that are often used by particular ethnic groups have also been applied for other ethnics in their cooking practices. The most noticeable is the used of traditional herbs and spices. Malay and Indian for instance, appreciate the benefits of '*ginseng*' which previously recognized as the popular traditional medicine for the Chinese ethnics. Parallel with the foods, methods of cooking, certain eating styles from the three ethnic groups are also practiced. The used of banana leaves that was popular among the Indian ethnic group has influenced both the Malay and Chinese eating decorum. They make use of the banana leaves as the base in serving some particular dishes such as rice, fried mee hoon, desserts or sweets [13].

B. Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation is a key that enables humans to understand the other individuals' skills, knowledge, techniques and experiences. This process assists individuals to familiarize and adjust the new knowledge gain, which leads or influence them to practice or develop the acquisition [19], [4]. Scholar also stated the cultural adaptation process is a mechanism in reducing uncertainty and anxiety, especially involving two different cultures and different ethnic groups may face different situations in cultural adaptation but still in control orientation [2].

Looking at Malaysia context, language is one of the cultural elements that best describes the process of cultural adaptation among the ethnic groups. Bahasa Malaysia acts as the language instrument not only in the medium of education and the official language of administration but also in integrating the ethnic groups [9]. In this sense, to force or encourage ethnic groups in Malaysia practicing one religion or one collective culture is impossible because this will be perceived as an attempt to eliminate the identification of certain ethnic groups.

Besides language, it is not harsh to say that cuisine as part of cultural elements representing each ethnic group in Malaysia start receiving the attention among academic scholars for its contribution of the cultural adaptation process [10], [12]. The cultural adaptation of cuisine has typically been discussed in the multicultural/ethnic country perspectives since the differences in culture and customs are more pronounced [8].

C. The Concept of Common Acceptable Cuisine

As the complexity of each ethnic group that represents their collective identities, including the aspect of the cuisine, the nation requires to reach some common accepted food and cuisines that portray the image in the global context. As noted [6] each nation supposed to have its own national cuisine despite the globalization of culinary culture has added complexity to the relationship between food and nation. This idea holds true as any national cuisine have a complex and multiple origins, and not static with one set of identities [6]. The complex culinary history in Mexico for instance has donated to arrays of national identities where the most common culinary symbol for the Mexican nation was mole poblano (turkey with deep brown sauce). In with the notion, the concept of common acceptable cuisine among the multicultural/ethnic nation is considered important as it offers a collective sense of identity which benefits the country in various perspectives.

The concept of common acceptable cuisine in the multicultural/ethnic country represents the process of sharing of it among the ethnic groups [24]. Since each ethnic group embodied their own identity in term of food habits or preferences, some foods or elements in the cuisine that are commonly accepted facilitate the mutual understanding among the ethnic groups. Therefore, the concept of common acceptable cuisine can be achieved through the understanding of each ethnic belief, skills, ethical norms, and the social attitudes that practice within their cultural settings [14].

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling and Instrument

A descriptive research design using a quantitative approach through cross sectional study with self-reported and self-administered questionnaire was applied. The sample population was among the chefs in various foodservice establishments with the age range between 30 years old and above. However, owing to the huge numbers of chefs in Malaysia those who work in Shah Alam, Petaling Jaya and Kuala Lumpur areas were chosen as a sample of the population.

As for the instrument, the questionnaire was divided into three main sections. The first section A dealt with the respondents' demographic profiles. Section B elicits the overall perception of the Malay, Chinese and Indian chefs on the adaptation of ethnic cuisine through the type of foods. The items asking the three major ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese and Indian) beliefs on the formation of common acceptable cuisine were probed in Section C.

In setting up the style and the category of questionnaire format, close-ended questions using a Likert scale ranging from 1 being 'strongly disagree' to 5 being 'strongly agree' was used. The reliability and validity of the items were initially checked and confirmed through a pilot study which was carried out among the thirty selected chefs that were randomly approached.

B. Data Collection

Owing to geographical dispersion and large sample size, the Malay, Chinese and Indian chefs who worked at the various food establishments such as hotel, restaurants and catering services within the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (Shah Alam and Petaling Jaya) were identified and contacted friends, through personal contact, chefs association including social media (Facebook and Twitter). Upon their agreement, the survey questionnaire was personally administered at each chef premises. Two weeks were spent on the survey and, as a result of the positive feedback, 160 responses were obtained.

On top of this, the questionnaires were also emailed to those chefs who unable to take part in the face to face survey. 35 questionnaires were successfully collected through this technique. In sum, a total of 195 usable questionnaires was successfully collected from both techniques.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 195 respondents, the highest are the Malay ethnic which constituted around 57.9 percent (n=113) of the total respondents as opposed to Chinese with 24.9 percent (n=52) and the smallest proportion certainly goes to the Indian which represent around 15.4 percent (n=30) of the total respondents. In regards to age group, similar frequency of 27.2 percent (n=53) was received from respondents in the age range of 35–39 years and 40–44 years and followed by those in the age range between 45–49 years which accounted 17.4 percent (n=34). Nearly to that, respondents with the age range from 30–34 years old made up about 16.9 percent (n=33) and the lowest group were among the 50 and above accounted around 11.3 percent (n=22). 30.8 percent (n = 60) of respondents passed the secondary school level in contrast to 69.2 percent (n = 135) who were graduated from colleges or universities.

A. Adaptation on Types of Food

A descriptive statistic was undertaken looking at the level of agreement of adaptation to the type of food. Table I shows the majority of ethnic chefs/ cooks agreed that easily in understanding each other ethnic types of food (M = 3.75, Tfo_1). They also agree that many types of each other ethnic foods that can be adapted (M = 3.61, Tfo_2). However, moderately agree only type of foods that are accepted by each other ethnic (M = 3.43, Tfo_3) and complying with religious requirements can be adapted (M = 3.48, Tfo_4).

TABLE I

| REPORTED MEAN SCORES FOR THE ADAPTATION OF TYPES OF FOOD ITEMS | | | |
|--|-------|------|-------|
| Items | Code | M | S.D |
| Types of Food | | | |
| Easily in understanding each other ethnic type of foods | Tfo_1 | 3.75 | 1.155 |
| I believe many types of each other ethnic foods that can be adapted | Tfo_2 | 3.61 | 1.001 |
| The only type of foods that are accepted by each other ethnic can be adapted | Tfo_3 | 3.43 | 1.161 |
| Only each other ethnic foods that are complying with religious requirements can be adapted | Tfo_4 | 3.48 | 1.100 |
| Although many of each other ethnic meat dishes available, only those are suitable to a common taste can be adapted | Tfo_5 | 3.38 | 1.079 |
| I believe most of each other ethnic vegetable dishes can be adapted | Tfo_6 | 3.43 | 1.116 |
| I believe most of each other ethnic desserts can be adapted | Tfo_7 | 3.29 | 1.093 |

(Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Moderately Agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) Note: (n=195)

The majority chefs/cooks moderately agree that with these three items;

- Although much of each other ethnic meat dishes available, only those are suitable to a common taste can be adapted (M = 3.38, Tfo_5)
- I believe most of each other ethnic vegetable dishes can be adapted (M = 3.43, Tfo_6)
- I believe most of each other ethnic desserts can be adapted (M = 3.29, Tfo_7)

B. Adaptation on Methods of Cooking

Looking at Table II, most of the chefs /cooks moderately agreed that easily to them in understanding each other ethnic methods of cooking (M=3. 45, Moc1) and moderately believed that many methods of cooking (M=3. 25, Moc_2), dry heat cooking methods (M=3. 24, Moc_3) and moist heat cooking methods from each other ethnic can be adapted (M=3. 29, Moc_4). With this feeling it's not surprising majority of chefs/cooks also moderately all major ethnic methods of cooking can be adapted (M = 3.18, Moc_5).

TABLE II

| REPORTED MEAN SCORES FOR THE ADAPTATION OF METHODS OF COOKING | | | |
|---|------|------|-------|
| Items | Code | M | S.D |
| Methods of Cooking | | | |
| Easily in understanding each other ethnic methods of cooking | Moc1 | 3.45 | 1.167 |
| I believe many methods of cooking from each other ethnic can be adapted | Moc2 | 3.25 | 1.070 |
| I believe each other ethnic dry heat cooking method can be adapted | Moc3 | 3.24 | 1.025 |
| I believe each other ethnic moist heat cooking method can be adapted | Moc4 | 3.29 | 1.074 |
| Almost all of each other ethnic methods of cooking can be adapted | Moc5 | 3.18 | .986 |

(Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Moderately Agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) Note: (n=195)

C. Adaptation on Ingredients

On adaptation on ingredients, (Table III), ethnic chefs / cook again moderately agree easily in recognizing each other ethnic food ingredients (M = 3.38, Ing_1) and many of each other foods ingredients that can be adapted (M = 3.31, Ing_2).

The most interesting result appeared on adaptation of food ingredients pertains to sensitivity in religious practices. Slightly lower in mean score rate indicate that a majority of chefs/ cooks moderately agree with the statements. As such, they moderately agree that food ingredients that are sensitive to religious practices could not be adapted (M = 3.39, Ing_4) therefore moderately agreed that almost all of each other ethnic food ingredients can be adapted (M = 3.35, Ing_5). Again, this sub-section analysis also revealed that the majority of the respondents who took part in the survey are not having vast difficulty in familiarizing of each other ethnic cooking ingredients although a bit sensitive and respects the cooking ingredients that are offensive with each other religion practice.

TABLE III

| REPORTED MEAN SCORES FOR THE ADAPTATION OF INGREDIENTS | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|
| Items | Code | M | S.D |
| Ingredients | | | |
| Easily in recognizing each other ethnic food ingredients | Ing1 | 3.38 | 1.098 |
| I believe many of each other foods ingredients that can be adapted | Ing2 | 3.31 | 1.070 |
| Food ingredients that are sensitive in religious practices cannot be adapted | Ing3 | 3.39 | 1.190 |
| Almost all of each other ethnic food ingredients can be adapted | Ing4 | 3.35 | 1.137 |

(Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Moderately Agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) Note: (n=195)

D. Adaptation on Eating Decorum

Based on Table IV, respondent again moderately agree that easily in understanding each other ethnic eating manners (M = 3.24, Edo_1). This feeling is further supported as they moderately agree each other ethnic eating styles easily be adapted (M = 3.33, Edo_2) and only eating decorum that are accepted by each other ethnic that can be adapted (M = 3.35, Edo_3) thus moderately believed almost all of each other ethnic eating decorum can be adapted (M = 3.12, Edo_4). This scenario could hold true from the observation that a modest cross culturing on each ethnic of eating decorum occurring in this country.

TABLE IV

| REPORTED MEAN SCORES FOR THE ADAPTATION OF EATING DECORUM | | | |
|---|-------|------|-------|
| Items | Code | M | S.D |
| Eating Decorum | | | |
| Easily in understanding each other ethnic eating manners | Edo_1 | 3.24 | 1.188 |
| I believe each other ethnic eating style can easily be adapted | Edo_2 | 3.33 | 1.086 |
| Only eating decorum that is accepted by each other ethnic that can be adapted | Edo_3 | 3.35 | 1.167 |
| Almost all of each other ethnic eating decorum can be adapted | Edo_4 | 3.22 | 1.056 |

(Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Moderately Agree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) Note: (n=195)

E. The Relationship between Adaptation of Ethnic Cuisine Attributes and Common Acceptable Cuisine

The single step multiple regression was used to assess the relationship between adaptation of ethnic cuisine attributes (type of foods, methods of cooking, ingredients and eating

decorum) and common acceptable cuisine. The result is summarized in the Table V.

TABLE V
RESULTS OF ADAPTATION ON ETHNIC CUISINE ATTRIBUTES ON THE COMMON ACCEPTABLE CUISINE

| Predictor | Model 1/Std. β |
|---|----------------------|
| Step 1: Model Variables Adaptation of Ethnic Cuisine Attributes | .515*** |
| R ² | .266 |
| Adj. R ² | .262 |
| R ² Change | .266 |
| F – Change | 69.842 |

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

As can clearly be seen, the adaptation of ethnic cuisine attributes as the predictor variables were able to explain (R² = .266, F – Change = 69.842, p < .000***) of the variance in the common acceptance cuisine. In addition, the value of β = .515, p < .000*** portrayed that the adaptation of ethnic cuisine attributes significantly and positively influence the common acceptable cuisine. It demonstrated that the hypothesis was supported.

F. Adapted Types of Food

The adapted types of food were gathered through the open ended questions fulfilled by the respondents at the end of the questionnaire form. The questions that have been asked by the respondents is “*Could you please state the other two ethnic foods that you are usually adapted?*”. From numbers of food listed by the respondents, there are a total of twenty two (22) types of food which recorded high frequencies (above 70%) as opposed to others.

TABLE VI
REPORTED FREQUENCIES FOR THE ADAPTED TYPES OF FOOD FROM THE THREE ETHNIC GROUPS

| No. | Types of Food | (%) |
|----------------------|------------------------|------|
| Malay foods | | |
| 1. | Satay | 93.9 |
| 2. | NasiLemak | 92.6 |
| 3. | Rendang | 91.4 |
| 4. | SambalBelacan | 89.0 |
| 5. | AyamPercik | 84.1 |
| 6. | MasakAsamPedas | 84.1 |
| 7. | IkanBakar | 82.9 |
| 8. | Kerabu | 76.8 |
| 9. | LaksaAsam | 69.2 |
| Chinese foods | | |
| 10. | Chicken rice | 89.5 |
| 11. | Char KueyTeow | 88.1 |
| 12. | Chinese Mix Vegetables | 86.7 |
| 13. | Butter Prawn | 84.6 |
| 14. | Sweet and Sour Fish | 83.2 |
| 15. | Spring Roll | 83.2 |
| 16. | Chilli Crab | 81.8 |
| 17. | Yong Tau Fu | 79.0 |
| Indian foods | | |
| 18. | Roti Canai | 95.1 |
| 19. | MeeGorengMamak | 90.3 |
| 20. | Dhalca | 83.6 |
| 21. | Tosai | 80.0 |
| 22. | Kari Kambing | 79.3 |

As for the Malay based foods, there are sum of nine (9) popular foods that chosen from the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups which they are usually adapted. Nasi Lemak (92.6 percent), Ikan Bakar (82.9 percent), Kerabu (76.8 percent), Laksa Asam (69.2 percent), Ayam Percik (84.1 percent), Satay (93.9 percent), Sambal Belacan (89 percent), Masak Asam Pedas (84.1 percent) and Rendang (91.4 percent) were the examples of Malay food adapted. The Chinese foods, on the other hand, provides a total of eight (8) popular foods that preferred by Malay and Indian ethnic groups. The foods are Chicken rice (89.5 percent), Chili crab (81.8 percent), Sweet and Sour Fish (83.2 percent), Chinese Mix Vegetables (86.7 percent), Butter Prawn (84.6 percent), Char Kuey Teow (88.1 percent), Spring Roll (83.2 percent) and Yong Tau Fu (79 percent). A total of five (5) popular Indian was normally adapted by the Malay and Chinese ethnic groups, namely Mee Goreng Mamak (90.3 percent), Tosai (80 percent), Roti Canai (95.1 percent), Kari Kambing (79.3 percent) and Kurma Ayam (83.6 percent). With these, it could be said that all the above listed foods were some of the common foods that accepted by the three major ethnic groups in this country.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Previous studies indicate food even in global phenomena influence every facet of human life, including the routines, traditions, rituals, norms and people’s daily activities. The food influences the social- demographic, economic, education and life of the community. Not only that, food is also strengthening the integrative force, solidarity and social bonding and alliances among the communities.

In line with that, this study witnessed of how ethnic food in the multicultural/ethnic country like Malaysia gradually evolves through cross culturing processes. Adaptation processes provide a significant role for the ethnic groups in understanding and learning on each other food and cuisines. In other words, adaptation on types of food, methods of cooking, ingredients and eating decorum of ethnic cuisine as long does not against the religious restriction is narrowing the differentiation that present among the ethnic groups. Most importantly and most remarkable finding is that adaptation on types of food, methods of cooking, ingredients and eating decorum of each ethnic cuisine through the preparations and consumption creates a strong belief on the formation of common acceptable cuisine. This strengthening other researcher notion that the adaptations of food from various ethnic foods by ethnic group in multicultural/ethnic nation will lead to common acceptable cuisines and longitudinally forming what could be called national food identity [5], [8].

Based on a summary of this research findings, a very clear picture emerged that most of the three major ethnic chefs, Malay, Chinese and Indian were having a common view of the process of adaptation of ethnic cuisine attributes (types of food, method of cooking, ingredients and eating decorum) and no doubt believing preparation or practicing of it is giving advantages to the formation of common acceptable cuisine in Malaysia. These optimistic indications therefore are carrying varying consequences and implications for chefs, individuals

who closely associated with food preparation and the relevant authorities.

Perhaps the ethnics' chefs and those individuals without realizing their adaptation on the preparation and consumption of each other ethnic food not only giving advantages for themselves, but directly given significant impact to the social and the nation. In this sense, adaptation not only increase the potpourri of acceptable food among the Malaysian, influence other public to practice, but enhancing the Malaysia food image and gradually be recognized locally and internationally.

Another wider implication is related to relevant authorities, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. As previously mentioned nation identity formation is the main Malaysia national agenda as countless efforts in integrating the multicultural/ethnic population politically, economically and culturally is therefore continuously undertaking in achieving the goal. In fact, education, language and the media are used in speeding up the formation. Besides this National or Malaysian food identity is also part of the agenda. This quantitative result although without supporting with qualitative findings manifestly revealed that food or cuisine through adaptation processes posits the common acceptable cuisine and longitudinally could form the nation food identity. From this notion, Ministry of Tourism and Culture through the Department of National Heritage although currently classified hundred (100) food as national heritage food they should also certify or gazette food like Nasi Lemak, Satay, Roti Canai, Nasi Ayam, Char Kuey Teow, Yong Tau Foo, Spring Roll and many others as common acceptable food in Malaysia. Not harsh to say that having certified the common acceptable food not only lead to the formation of nation food identity, but will also increase the communication, cohesiveness, or social bonding among the ethnic groups in this country, thus helps to prosper, create a peaceful, recognizable and reputable nation internationally and directly boosts the economy.

As conclusion, do not look food or cuisine only from a culinary perspective, but incorporated the elements of gastronomy offers a path towards an understanding of the art and science of food and good eating. In fact, it has great relevance to the society and culture and plays a part in the wider economy and nation construction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was funded by Universiti Teknologi MARA under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) grant, 600-RMI/DANA 5/3 (125/2013).

REFERENCES

- [1] Appadurai, A. (1988). How to Make National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30(1), 3-24.
- [2] Baffoe, M. (2006). *Negotiating Two Worlds: Culture and Cultural Adaptation of Immigrant and Refugee Youth*. Quebec (Canadian) educational context: McGill University.
- [3] Brown, G. (2005). Making ethnic citizens: the politics and practice of education in Malaysia. *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE)*, working paper no. 23.
- [4] Cordes, C. (2004). The human adaptation for culture and its behavioral implications. *Journal of Bioeconomics*, 6(2), 143-163.

- [5] Cozzi, A. (2005). *Eating English: Food and the Construction and Consumption of Imperial National Identity in British Novel*. Tulane: Tulane University Pub.
- [6] Cusack, I. (2004). Equatorial Guinea's National Cuisine is Simple and Tasty: Cuisine and The Making of National Culture. *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, 8, 131-148.
- [7] Epp, M., & Price, L. (2008). Family Identity: A Framework of Identity Interplay in Consumption Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35, 404-427.
- [8] Fox, N. J., & Ward, K. J. (2008). 'You Are What You Eat? Vegetarians, Health and Identity'. *Social Science and Medicine*, 66(12), 2585-95.
- [9] Hamid, Z. (2004). Bahasa Melayu Sebagai Bahasa Penyatuan Dan Bahasa Pemisah Warga Malaysia. *The 4th International Malaysian Studies Conference*.
- [10] Henderson, J. C. (2009). Tourism Policy and Cultural Heritage in Multi-Ethnic Societies: A View of Malaysia. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 2(1), 138 - 144.
- [11] Ibrahim, A. (2010). Nation State Formation in Malaysia (1945-1974). *Jebat: Malaysian journal of history, politics and strategic studies*, 37, 162.
- [12] Ishak, N., Zahari, M. S. M., Sharif, S. M., Muhammad, R., & Salleh, H. M. (2012). Acculturation, Foodways and Malaysian Food Identity. In Artinah. Z et. al (Ed.), *Proceedings of the International Hospitality and Tourism Conference*, (pp. 359-363). Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Universiti Teknologi MARA.
- [13] Jalis, M. H. (2008). Acceptance level of Malaysian gastronomic tourism products among the western tourists. *Unpublished master thesis*, Shah Alam: Universiti Teknologi MARA.
- [14] Kifleyesus, A. (2004). *The construction of Ethiopian national cuisine*, University of Asmara.
- [15] Kivela, J. & Crofts, J. C. (2006). Tourism and Gastronomy: Gastronomy's Influence On How Tourists Experience A Destination. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 30, 354.
- [16] Kwik, J. C. (2008). Traditional Food Knowledge: A Case Study of an Immigrant Canadian "Foodscape". *Environmets*, 36(1), 59-74.
- [17] Lee, H. A., Gomez, E. T., & Yacob, S. (2013). Ethnicity, Economy, and Affirmative Action in Malaysia. In E. T. Gomez & R. Premdas (Eds.) *Affirmative action, ethnicity, and conflict*, pp. 67 - 94. New York: Routledge
- [18] Leong, Q. L., Othman, M., Mohd Adzahan, N., & Ab.Karim, M. S. (2012). A Model Of Malaysian Food Image Components: Towards Building A Sustainable Tourism Product. *Pertanika Journal Social Science & Humanities*, 20(2), 299 - 315.
- [19] Li, Y. (2009). *One life, two worlds: a qualitative comparison of cultural adaptation, relationships and life experiences of Chinese and Colombian College students in the United States*, Unpublished master thesis, Omaha: University of Nebraska.
- [20] Liu, J. H., Lawrence, B., Ward, C., & Abraham, S. (2002). Social Representations of History in Malaysia and Singapore: On the Relationship Between National and Ethnic Identity. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 5, 3 - 20.
- [21] Manaf, Z. A. (2008). Establishing the National Digital Cultural Heritage Repository in Malaysia. *Library Review*, 57(7), 537-548.
- [22] Muhammad, R., Zahari, M. S. M., Othman, Z., Jamaluddin, M. R., & Rashdi, M. O. (2009). Modernization and ethnic festival food. In International Conference of Business and Economic, Kuching, Sarawak.
- [23] Mujibu, A. M., Badrul, A. M. A., Azlan, A. R., Zaherawati, Z., Nazni, N., Jennifah, N., & Mahazril, A. Y. (2012). Ethnic Plurality and Nation Building Process: A Comparative Analysis between Rukun Negara, Bangsa Malaysia and 1Malaysia Concepts As Nation Building Programs In Malaysia. *Asian Social Science*, 8(13), 153 - 160.
- [24] Mugalavai, V. K., Kiama, F. W., & Omutimba, H. N. (2012). Using Traditional Cuisine Contexts as a Channel for Inter-Ethnic Social Integration in Kenya. *International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow*, 1(2).
- [25] Othman, Z. (2007). Service Delivery System and Customer Patronization: A Comparison of Ethnic Restaurants in Shah Alam. Unpublished master thesis, Shah Alam: Universiti Teknologi MARA.
- [26] Phinney, J. (2003). *Ethnic Identity and acculturation*. In Chun, K., Organista P. and Marin, G. (Eds.). *Acculturation: Advances in Theory, Measurement, and Applied Research*. 63-82. Washington D.C: American Psychological Association.
- [27] Pinkard, S. (2009). *A revolution in taste: the rise of French cuisine, 1650-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- [28] Ramli, A. S., & Ahmad, R. (2003). Factors Influencing Customers Patronizing Mamak Restaurants. *Proceeding of the 2003 Tourism Educators of Malaysia Conference*.
- [29] Shalom, U. B., & Horenczyk, G. (2004). Cultural identity and adaptation in an assimilative setting. Immigrant soldiers from the former Soviet Union in Israel. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 28, 461-479.
- [30] Shamsul, A. B. (2011). *Modul Hubungan Etik*. Shah Alam: Pusat Penerbitan Universiti (UPENA).
- [31] Spurrier, C. T. (2010). *Cassava, coconut and curry: Food and national identity in post-colonial Fiji*. Unpublished master dissertation, Aiken: University of South Carolina.
- [32] Suhana, S., Lyndon, N., Selvadurai, S., Sarmila, M. S., Zaimah, R., & Azima, A. M. (2013). Malay Politics and Nation State in Malaysia. *Asian Social Science*, 9(8), 96 – 100.
- [33] Thompson, J. (2011). *Gastronomic literature, modern cuisine and the development of French Bourgeois identity from 1800 to 1850*. History Honors Papers, paper 9. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/histhp/9>.
- [34] Verkuyten, M., & Khan, A. (2012). Interethnic Relations in Malaysia; Group Identifications, Indispensability and Inclusive Nation Hood. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 15(2), 132 – 139.
- [35] Yoshino, K. (2010). *Malaysian Cuisine: A Case of Neglected Culinary Globalization*. In J. Farrer (ed.) *Globalization, Food and Social Identities in the Asia Pacific Region*. Tokyo: Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture.