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Food neophobia and ethnic food consumption intention: An extension of the theory of planned behaviour

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Food neophobia and ethnic food consumption intention

Ethnic food
consumption
intention

An extension of the theory of planned behaviour

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to serve as groundwork to investigate the determinants of ethnic food consumption intention in the context of developing markets. Using the theory of planned behaviour as the underlying basis, it is aimed to explain the effect of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behaviour control on consumption intention towards Dayak food. Since Dayak food is relatively unfamiliar compared to conventional food in Malaysia, food neophobia is incorporated into the model so as to assess its moderation effect on every postulated relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative approach via self-administered questionnaire was adopted. In all, 300 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to non-Dayak Malaysians, and 211 usable copies were subsequently collected, suggesting that non-response bias was not a major issue. A *post hoc* Harman single-factor analysis was also performed to ensure the variance in the data was not explained by one single factor, thus addressing the common method bias. Structural equation modelling using partial least squares approach was then utilized to assess the relationships of variables under investigation and the moderation effect of food neophobia.

Findings – After ensuring the data have acceptable reliability and validity, structural model assessment was performed to test the hypotheses. The findings show that attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control all have positive effect on consumption intention of non-Dayak Malaysians towards Dayak food. However, food neophobia is only found to have a moderation effect on the relationship between subjective norm and consumption intention.

Research limitations/implications – First, the sample is largely consisted of college and university students in Malaysia who are believed to be more daring to try new things, including new food. Second and more importantly, the dearth of literature and empirical studies on Dayak food and ethnic food in Malaysia might have actually pointed to the limitation in using only quantitative questionnaire in the study. As salient beliefs are the antecedents in the theory of planned behaviour, knowing consumers' specific beliefs about Dayak food would have provided a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of consumption intention and the moderating effect of food neophobia.



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Practical implications – The moderation effect of food neophobia on the relationship between subjective norm and consumption intention towards Dayak food implies the importance of recommendations and favourable word-of-mouth from the significant ones, such as family members and peers, to make people willing to try and consume it. This corresponds to earlier findings pertaining to the collectivistic culture in Malaysia. Unlike countries with individualistic cultures, Malaysians tend to conform to the consumption choices of significant others. This implies that those whom they hold in high regard, are able to influence them both positively and negatively through their advice or opinions.

Originality/value – The present study has not only extended the use of theory of planned behaviour in the context of Dayak food consumption intention in a developing country, but it has also deepened the theory by incorporating food neophobia as the moderator to provide additional theoretical explanation to ethnic food consumption intention. Given the wealth of Asian culture, and its significant role in the global marketplace, the understanding of ethnic food consumption intention of the local and foreign consumers using the extended theory of planned behaviour would contribute knowledge not only to consumer behaviour, but also to food and service industry and tourism.

Keywords SEM, Consumption intention, TPB, Dayak, Ethnic food, Food neophobia

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Food consumption behaviour has been known to be complex since there are multiple factors that could affect the decision-making process (Vabo and Hansen, 2014). However, despite being mostly comfortable with their customary food choices, consumers today are willing to explore different flavoured and culturally diverse food to satisfy their changing preferences. As a result, ethnic food is found to be an evolving trend in recent times and continues to blend into mainstream menus in most of the restaurants in the West (National Restaurant Association, 2015). It has also become part of everyday diet (Hardcastle, 2001), and its demand is expected to increase substantially in the coming years (Howell, 2005).

Although ethnic food in Western countries is receiving great popularity among consumers, the same cannot be said in the Asian context. While Asian countries have become the heart of much cross-border and cross-cultural marketing research (Fam *et al.*, 2009), investigations into Asian food consumption remain relatively limited. Despite the wealth of Asian culture and heritage, and its significant role in the global marketplace in a progressive manner (Eckhardt and Dholakia, 2013; Hong and Kim, 2013; Seo, 2013), literature on food consumption has been predominantly explored in the context of North America and Europe (McDonagh and Prothero, 2005, Seo *et al.*, 2015). Given the emphasis of food within Asian cultures, and the dynamic trends which make Asia an attractive marketplace, it is surprising that little attention is given to local food and its consumption.

Specifically, the awareness and acceptance of ethnic food in developing countries such as Malaysia has yet to be looked into. Despite becoming more aware of food consumption from the perspectives of nutrition, health and safety (Teng *et al.*, 2014), how Malaysians themselves perceive ethnic food and what attracts or motivates them to consume it remains largely unanswered. Being the fourth largest ethnic group and the largest indigenous group in the country (Department of Statistics, 2012), the Dayaks hold Bumiputra (literally means sons of the soil to describe local natives) status and embody a significant part of culture and heritage of the country. They are a riverine and farming people, mostly live in the eastern part of Malaysia. As such, Dayak food not only offers unique dishes, but also represents rich traditions and practices of the people. Despite its magnitude, there is an extreme lack of study done to date to understand consumer's behavioural intention towards consuming Dayak food.

Given the gaps in the literature on the subject matter, the present study serves as groundwork to investigate Dayak food consumption intention using the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) among non-Dayak Malaysians. Since Dayak food is considered relatively unfamiliar compared to the mainstream food offered by the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities, food neophobia is incorporated into the TPB model to assess its moderation effect on the relationships under study.

2. Literature review

2.1 *Ethnic food*

Ethnic food is generally defined as food that is consciously perceived as something related to a specific land or region (Belasco, 1987). It is often used to refer to food from countries other than the home market, hence underlining a different food culture from the familiar cuisines of the home country (Leung, 2010). More particularly, it is described as traditional food that represents the culture of a particular ethnic group (Guerrero *et al.*, 2009). Such description ties in with ethnic identity. Past studies have established that language, friendship networks, religious affiliation, participation in clubs and organizations, endogamy, traditional celebrations and food preference are the seven most widely accepted constructs of ethnic identity (Driedger, 1975; Phinney, 1990; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992). As such, Dayak food epitomizes the identity and culture of the Dayak community specifically, and Malaysia generally in a unique way.

Dayak is a generic term that refers to the non-Muslim indigenous people of the Borneo Island, the eastern part of Malaysia. They are farming people, inhabiting the middle and upper reaches of rivers in Borneo. The jungle resources are essential to their living and activities. Their customs teach them that they are the warden of the land that they live on, thus they need to defend it for future generations. In light of what they are and how they live, Dayak food becomes the best reflection of their culture.

The multi-ethnic and cultural society in Malaysia provides an ideal place for recognition and growth of interest in ethnic cuisine (Ellis, 1990). Ethnic food is the perfect medium for strengthening ethnic identity and country heritage because food tastes can be acquired and transmitted more easily than other types of cultural products such as language and belief systems (Van Esterik, 1982). *Manok Pansuh* (chicken in bamboo), *Umai* (raw fish in ginger and lime juice), *Midin Belacan* (jungle fern with shrimp paste) and *Nasi Goreng Dabai* (fried rice with local black dates) are some of the must-try Dayak food in Malaysia and particularly Sarawak (Sarawak Economic Development Corporation, Tourism and Leisure Division, 2015). Unfortunately, there is an extreme lack of literature and empirical evidence to elucidate the intention of local consumers towards consuming Dayak food, let alone that of the wider communities.

2.2 *Food consumption intention*

Food choice is an intricate matter considering the amount of factors every person has to go through to decide what and where to eat on a regular basis (Vabo and Hansen, 2014). Due to a great variety of food offered, food choice is not always in accordance to the needs of human body. Whether or not a person would be willing or choose to consume ethnic food over conventional food, there is no conclusive evidence. Consequently, ethnic food consumption intention has become a complex phenomenon that hinges upon various psychological factors. As such, it highlights the importance of understanding consumption attitude (Zielinska, 2006). In the Malaysian context, past

research shows that a positive attitude towards organic products will lead to willingness to pay higher prices for these products (Ahmad and Juhdi, 2010). Similarly, attitude is also found to have significant effect on Halal food consumption intention (Alam and Sayuti, 2011; Karijin *et al.*, 2007).

Apart from attitudinal effect, a change in food consumption behaviour is also caused by social influences. It is found that there is a higher level of food choice conformity when people eat in a group, especially when it is composed of familiar people (De Castro, 1995). Family and peer pressure provide a source of reference for consumption intention of certain foods, including willingness to try new food (McIntosh, 1996; Teng and Wang, 2015). Malaysian consumers are found to be likely influenced by the advice or opinions of significant others, particularly those whom that they hold high regard for due to its collectivistic culture (Voon *et al.*, 2011). While parental influence is significant especially among younger generations (Banegas, 2015), it is not always the case. Teenage is commonly conceptualized as a period in which there is a desire to break away from the family and the influence of parents (Dennison and Shepherd, 1995; Ting and de Run, 2015). Thus, there is a change in eating habits when traditional food is rejected, and snacks or fast food become popular among younger generations (Greenwood and Richardson, 1979).

Additionally, self-efficacy is found to be of relevance as it refers to the extent a person's belief in his own ability to complete tasks and reach goals (Ormrod, 2006). Hence, the understanding of perceived ability or control provides more explanation to volitional control in human behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). On the same note, self-control has been associated with adverse consequences of unhealthy behaviours, such as indulging in alcohol and consuming sugary and fatty foods (deRidder *et al.*, 2012; Friese and Hofmann, 2009). Past studies have also shown the importance of understanding control factors that may facilitate or inhibit food consumption intention and behaviour (Conner and McMillan (1999); Sheeran and Orbell, 2000). For example, Malaysian Muslims are found to be willing to put considerable effort in obtaining Halal food (Khalek and Ismail, 2015), which means perceived control is an important factor in influencing consumers to purchase and consume Halal food (Alam and Sayuti, 2011).

2.3 TPB

Given the complexity of food choice and ethnic food consumption intention, the TPB by Ajzen (1991), an extension of the theory of reasoned action, is adopted as the underpinning basis to explain consumer intention to consume Dayak food. Over the years, TPB has been applied in research of various fields, including food consumption intentions (Conner and Armitage, 2006; Cox *et al.*, 1998; McEachan, *et al.*, 2011), thus justifying its use in the present study. In TPB model, behavioural intention is the direct antecedent of behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). Behavioural intention, in turn, is explained by three key variables, namely attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. While attitude is an individual's evaluation of self-performance of Dayak food consumption behaviour, subjective norms are people's expectations regarding the judgment of significant others about them consuming Dayak food. Perceived behavioural control denotes perceived ease or difficulty to consume Dayak food. In other words, it refers to an individual's capacity to consume the food (Yzer, 2007). Since the present study is a pioneering attempt on the subject matter and concerns only those who have not tried Dayak food, intention, rather than actual behaviour, is constructed as the outcome variable in the TPB model of study.

2.4 Extension of TPB using food neophobia

There is a growing interest in studies about consumers' perception towards novel or unfamiliar food (Zielinska, 2006), and it gives rise to studies on food neophobia. Food neophobia is a personality trait, especially regarded as an influential factor affecting consumers' food choice. It is defined as one's reluctance towards trying novel foods (Pliner and Hobden, 1992). It is also described as the fear or avoidance of new food (Birch, 1999). Past researchers have found three factors that contribute to food neophobia, and they are the sensory quality of the food itself, information regarding the food product and consumers' perception or personality trait (Tuorila *et al.*, 1994). Although past studies have found that taste and appearance are the main factors that deter people in the west from trying ethnic food (Verbeke and Lopez, 2005), it remains unanswered whether the same conclusion can be drawn about non-Dayaks towards consuming Dayak food. Food is generally believed to be safe nowadays, but individuals may still feel uncomfortable with new or unfamiliar food (Choe and Cho, 2011; Pliner and Hobden, 1992). As such, food neophobia has been looked into as a moderator to assess its effect on different behavioural outcomes (Chen, 2007; Eertmans *et al.*, 2005). Notwithstanding the efforts, little is divulged about its implication on intention to consume in the context of ethnic food. Moreover, the effect of food neophobia is reported to be different across countries (Frewer *et al.*, 2013), and cultural difference is seen as the driving reason (Tuorila *et al.*, 2001). In light of the aforementioned, food neophobia is therefore adopted as a moderator in the TPB model of study to provide more insights into Dayak food consumption intention (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Akter *et al.*, 2011). Such inclusion to extend TPB is regarded as theory deepening as it provides more theoretical explanation to how existing predictors function to influence consumption intention (Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001).

2.5 Hypotheses development

Previous studies on the issues of food consumption intention in Malaysia are mostly on green food (Teng *et al.*, 2014), organic food (Boniface, 2012) and Halal food (Khalek and Ismail, 2015). Relevant studies, especially pertaining to the willingness to try new food among younger generations, are predominantly about soft drinks (Shahid *et al.*, 2014), fast food (Delvarani, 2013) and Malay traditional food (Muhammad *et al.*, 2015). Notwithstanding the abundance of literature on food consumption, the lack of Malaysian research on Dayak food consumption intention and behaviour demonstrates a huge gap in the literature. Moreover, there is a dearth of knowledge to articulate factors that affect ethnic food consumption intention in the Malaysian context. Utilizing TPB as the underpinning basis, directional hypotheses are developed to test the effect of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control towards consuming Dayak food on consumption intention as shown in Figure 1. These hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H1. Attitude towards consuming Dayak food has positive effect on intention towards consuming Dayak food.
- H2. Subjective norm towards consuming Dayak food has positive effect on intention towards consuming Dayak food.
- H3. Perceived behavioural control towards consuming Dayak food has positive effect on intention towards consuming Dayak food.

Since past literature shows inconclusive results on what affects consumption of unfamiliar food and ethnic food, food neophobia is adopted to assess its moderating

effect on the postulated behavioural relationships in the present study as shown in Figure 1. In spite of the fact that unfamiliarity and fear may cause avoidance to try ethnic food, it is not known how food neophobia would affect the relationships under investigation. Hence, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:

- H4. The relationship between attitude and intention towards consuming Dayak food is moderated by food neophobia.
- H5. The relationship between subjective norm and intention towards consuming Dayak food is moderated by food neophobia.
- H6. The relationship between perceived behavioural control and intention towards consuming Dayak food is moderated by food neophobia.

3. Methodology

Malaysia is a leading developing country in Southeast Asia and is endowed with rich cultural heritage from a multi-ethnic community (State Planning Unit, 2011). Since the Dayaks make up the largest population in Sarawak and is the largest indigenous group in Malaysia, they have brought a huge variety of unique tastes and dishes to the country. Dayak food is not only an important aspect of cultural heritage, it also plays an integral part in food industry and tourism. Given the fact that it is a groundwork study, non-Dayak Malaysians are the target population. A priori power analysis is used to determine minimum sample size to ensure adequate statistical capacity to investigate and explain the variables under investigation.

A quantitative approach using self-administered questionnaire was adopted. All statements pertaining to attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, intention and food neophobia were adapted from past literature (Armitage and Conner, 2001; Mahon *et al.*, 2006; Pliner and Hobden, 1992; Steptoe *et al.*, 1995; Verbeke and Lopez, 2005). All key variables were measured by multiple statements, as this would afford greater degrees of freedom when partitioning the data into groups. It would also allow for adjustment of measurement error, thus increasing their reliability and predictive validity (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Statements were also organized in sections without randomization based on the common objectives and contexts of the statements (Burns and Bush, 2005). A *post hoc* Harman single-factor analysis was also performed after data collection to ensure the variance in the data was not explained by one single factor, thus addressing the common method bias (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Except for demographic information, a seven-point Likert scale where 1 indicating strongly disagree to 7 indicating strongly agree was adopted to measure the statements. Card sorting exercise was administered to secure face validity of the

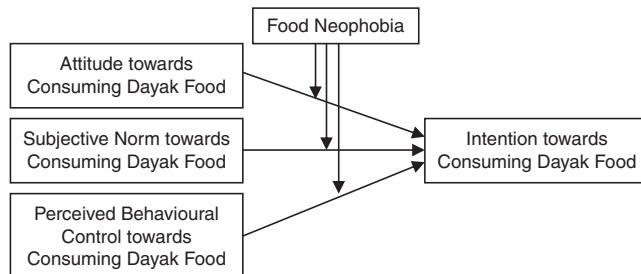


Figure 1.
Research model

questionnaire (Jahrami *et al.*, 2009). Besides, a pretest was also conducted using the target respondents to finalize the usability of the questionnaire (Hunt *et al.*, 1982).

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to distribute questionnaire at universities, colleges and public places in Malaysia. As such, two criteria were set to ensure the respondents were non-Dayak Malaysians and had not tried Dayak food before (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). In all, 300 copies were distributed, and 211 completed and usable copies were collected in a month's time in June 2015, indicating that non-response bias was not a major issue. The data were then keyed in into SPSS and imported to SmartPLS to perform latent variable analysis (Ringle *et al.*, 2015). The latter software utilizes structural equation modelling of partial least squares (PLS-SEM) approach to enhance predictive relevance by maximizing the variance of key target variables by different explanatory variables (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Henseler *et al.*, 2009). PLS-SEM is becoming increasingly useful in explaining complex consumer behaviour in marketing research (Hair *et al.*, 2012). It is deemed more suited for the present analysis instead of covariance-based SEM due to two reasons. First, as food neophobia is not part of TPB and is adopted as the key construct to assess consumption intention in a relatively unfamiliar context, the focus of the study is more on the explanative capacity by components, rather than reproducing of covariance matrix to achieve model fit (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Second, since only non-Dayak Malaysians who have not tried Dayak food are sampled, PLS-SEM is preferred because it requires fewer demands on sample size and data normality (Astrachan *et al.*, 2014; Barnes *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, PLS-SEM is utilized to perform latent variable and moderation analyses in the study.

4. Findings

4.1 Respondent demographics

Table I shows the demographic information of 211 non-Dayak Malaysians for this study. Most of the respondents are found to be college or university students.

4.2 Measurement model

Table II depicts the assessment of construct reliability as well as convergent validity for the variables of this study. The composite reliability (CR) values of 0.902 (ATT), 0.924 (PBC), 0.929 (SN), 0.887 (FN) and 0.93 (INT) demonstrate that these constructs

Variable	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	98	46.4
Female	113	53.6
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Chinese	117	55.5
Malay	84	39.8
Others	10	4.7
<i>Age range</i>		
15-20	35	16.6
21-25	73	34.6
26-30	49	23.2
31-35	29	13.7
36 and above	25	11.9

Table I.
Respondent profile

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118,11**2788****Table II.**
Internal consistency
and convergent
validity

Construct	Item	Loading	CR	AVE
Attitude	ATT1	0.870	0.902	0.697
	ATT2	0.862		
	ATT3	0.849		
	ATT4	0.752		
Perceived behavioural control	PBC1	0.856	0.924	0.802
	PBC2	0.921		
	PBC3	0.909		
Subjective norm	SN1	0.902	0.929	0.814
	SN2	0.907		
	SN3	0.890		
Food neophobia	FN1	0.784	0.887	0.531
	FN2	0.676		
	FN3	0.628		
	FN4	0.709		
	FN5	0.742		
	FN6	0.769		
	FN7	0.779		
Intention	INT1	0.934	0.930	0.817
	INT2	0.925		
	INT3	0.850		

have high levels of internal consistency. Similarly, the variables in this study demonstrate good convergent validity. All the constructs achieve a minimum threshold value of 0.5 for average variance extracted (AVE) which is an indication that the items explain more than 50 per cent of the construct's variances (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Tables III and IV depict the assessment of discriminant validity using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion as well as Henseler's *et al.* (2015) HTMT criterion. As

Table III.
Fornell and
Larcker criterion

	ATT	INT	FN	PBC	SN
ATT	0.835				
INT	0.532	0.904			
FN	0.412	0.393	0.729		
PBC	0.467	0.513	0.354	0.896	
SN	0.316	0.455	0.228	0.412	0.902

Notes: Diagonal elements represent the square root of AVE. Off diagonal elements are simple bivariate correlations between the constructs

Table IV.
HTMT criterion

	ATT	INT	FN	PBC	SN
ATT					
INT	0.589				
FN	0.473	0.417			
PBC	0.522	0.570	0.389		
SN	0.350	0.509	0.249	0.460	

Note: Criteria: discriminant validity is established at $HTMT_{0.85}$

illustrated, the square root of AVE of each construct is larger than the correlation estimates of the constructs. This indicates that all the constructs are distinctly different from one another, implying that each construct is unique and captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, the results demonstrate that the correlation values corresponding to the respective constructs do not violate the most conservative HTMT_{0.85} criterion for assessing discriminant validity (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is used to test the model fit in PLS-SEM analysis (Henseler *et al.*, 2014). The SRMR is an absolute measure of fit and is defined as the standardized difference between the observed correlation and the predicted correlation. As the result shows 0.061, which is less than 0.08, the model is surmised to have a good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

4.3 Structural model

Before assessing the structural model, it is important to ensure that there are no collinearity issues in the structural model. Table V presents the outcome of the collinearity test. The VIF value for each of the constructs is lower than the offending value of 3.3 (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006), thus suggesting that there is no issue with collinearity in the study.

Table VI illustrates the results of path coefficient assessment using the bootstrapping procedure for each of the hypothesized relationship in the model. The proposed relationships are all significant whereby two relationships are found statistically significant at 99 per cent confidence interval (ATT→INT, $\beta = 0.335$, $t = 4.000$; LL = 0.188, UL = 0.483; SN→INT, $\beta = 0.257$, $t = 3.070$; LL = 0.169, UL = 0.432) and one relationship is significant at 95 per cent confidence interval (PBC→INT, $\beta = 0.243$, $t = 2.220$; LL = 0.006, UL = 0.335). Hence, it is surmised that attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control have positive effect on intention towards consuming Dayak food. The first three hypotheses are subsequently supported. Although the relationship between food neophobia and intention is not hypothesized in the study, it is tested and found to be not significant (FN→INT, $\beta = 0.151$, $t = 1.378$, LB = -0.135 UB = 0.247).

Table VII presents the assessment of coefficient of determination (R^2), the effect size (f^2) as well as the predictive relevance (Q^2) of exogenous variables on endogenous

	INT
ATT	1.428
FN	1.258
PBC	1.465
SN	1.237

Table V.
Collinearity assessment

	Direct effect (β)	SE	t -statistic	Interval estimate		Decisions
				LL	UL	
ATT → INT	0.335	0.084	4.000**	0.188	0.483	Supported
SN → INT	0.257	0.084	3.070**	0.169	0.432	Supported
PBC → INT	0.243	0.110	2.220*	0.006	0.335	Supported
FN → INT	0.151	0.110	1.378	-0.135	0.247	Not Supported

Notes: LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit at 95 and 99 per cent confidence interval. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed)

Table VI.
Path coefficient assessment

variable in this study. The value for coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.421. This suggests that the exogenous variables in this study, namely attitude, perceived behavioural control and subjective norm explain 42.1 per cent of variances in intention. Overall, the Q^2 value of 0.326 for intention, which is larger than 0 (Hair *et al.*, 2014) suggesting that all exogenous variables possess predictive ability over the endogenous variable. Each of the exogenous variables (ATT, $f^2 = 0.148$; PBC, $f^2 = 0.080$; SN, $f^2 = 0.083$) has small to medium effect size on the endogenous variable.

Table VIII elucidates the moderating effect of food neophobia on the relationship between attitude and intention ($\beta = 0.096$, ns), perceived behavioural control and intention ($\beta = -0.029$, ns) and subjective norm and intention ($\beta = 0.136$, $t = 1.832$). It is found that food neophobia moderates the relationship between subjective norm and intention to consume Dayak food. Dawson's (2013) plot as shown in Figure 2 illustrates that the postulated relationship is stronger when food neophobia is high. As such, while $H4$ and $H6$ are rejected, $H5$ is supported.

Table VII.
Determination of coefficient (R^2), effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2)

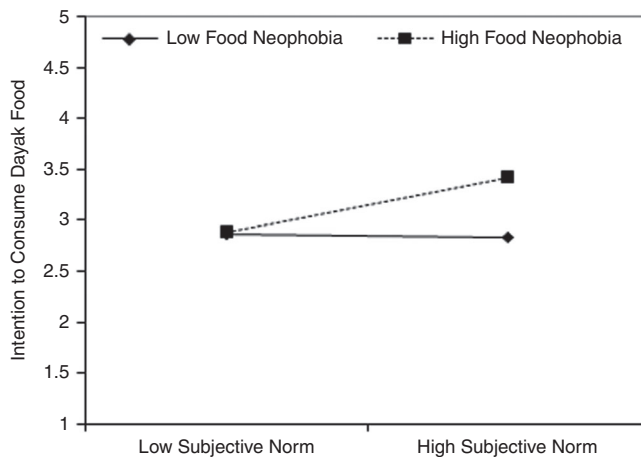
	Coefficient of determination R^2	Predictive relevance Q^2	Effect size (f^2)	
			Intention	Effect size
INT	0.421	0.326		
ATT			0.148	Small to medium
PBC			0.080	Small to medium
SN			0.083	Small to medium

Table VIII.
Results of moderating effect of food neophobia

	Standard β	SE (STERR)	t -statistic (IO/STERR)	Decisions
ATT \times FN \rightarrow INT	0.180	0.143	1.258	Not supported
PBC \times FN \rightarrow INT	-0.027	0.127	0.215	Not supported
SN \times FN \rightarrow INT	0.252	0.136	1.832*	Supported

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed)

Figure 2.
Moderation effect of food neophobia



5. Discussions and conclusion

While the effects of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on intention towards consuming Dayak food are significant, only the moderating effect of food neophobia on the relationship between subjective norm and consumption intention is found significant. In general, TPB is useful to explaining the magnitude of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control in understanding the intention of non-Dayak consumers towards consuming Dayak food (De Castro, 1995; Sheeran and Orbell, 2000; Teng and Wang, 2015; Zielinska 2006). Attitude towards consuming Dayak food is found to have the strongest effect compared to subjective norm and perceived behavioural control, highlighting the importance of consumers' beliefs, feelings and other psychological avenues about Dayak food.

However, even though Dayak food is not what non-Dayaks in Malaysia would normally consume, food neophobia is found to moderate only the relationship between subjective norm and consumption intention. This implies the importance of recommendations and favourable word-of-mouth from the significant ones, such as family members and peers, to make people willing to try and consume Dayak food. This corresponds to earlier findings pertaining to the collectivistic culture in Malaysia (Khalek and Ismail, 2015; Voon *et al.*, 2011). Unlike countries with individualistic cultures where people perceive themselves as autonomous and independent of the group, Malaysians tend to conform to the consumption choices of significant others. As Malaysia cuisine is described as "Asia's greatest cuisines meet and mingle" (Hutton, 2005, p. 5), it is no surprise that food culture is prevailing and Malaysian consumers in general like to try new food. However, when considering unfamiliar food in a condition where food neophobia is high, the approval from the close ones will prove to be decisive to their favourable intention to consume Dayak food.

Moreover, having no moderation effect on attitude-consumption intention and perceived behaviour control-consumption intention relationships could well be due to the fact that non-Dayak Malaysians, despite being somewhat unfamiliar with Dayak food, are no strangers to the Dayaks and their food (de Run, 2012). As such, fear or avoidance of Dayak food does not seem to affect nor alter their intention to consuming the food. However, when given choices, they may not choose to consume it. Given the fact that Dayak is the most populous indigenous group in Malaysia, one would have expected that Dayak food is well known and well researched. This could well suggest the lack of business model and marketing effort to promote Dayak food and to make it more readily available to Malaysian consumers and foreigners or travellers. Consequently, it attracts relatively less attention in business and research.

This study has introduced the deepening of TPB by incorporating food neophobia as a moderator in the model to provide additional theoretical explanation to ethnic food consumption intention (Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001). However, there are a few caveats which require continuous efforts to validate and further extend the use of the model. First, the sample is largely made up by college/university students and young adults in Malaysia who are believed to be more daring to try new things, including new food, regardless of unfamiliarity (de Run and Ting, 2013; Ting and de Run, 2015). Second and more importantly, the dearth of literature and empirical studies on Dayak food and ethnic food in Malaysia might have actually pointed to the potential limitation in using only quantitative questionnaire in the study. As salient beliefs are the antecedents in TPB (Ajzen, 1991), knowing consumers' specific beliefs about Dayak food would have provided a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of consumption intention and the moderating effect of food neophobia.

As such, the present groundwork study lays foundations for further investigation to explore salient beliefs about Dayak food and other ethnic food using qualitative and mixed method approaches. Subsequently, salient beliefs elicited through qualitative methods could be incorporated into quantitative study to provide more depths to the investigation. Personal, psychological and societal factors related to behaviours could also be included in the model to enhance explanation on how these variables would eventually lead to actual behaviour to consume Dayak and other ethnic food. Moreover, as there is substantial increment of tourists visiting Malaysia (*The Rakyat Post*, 2015), the understanding of ethnic food consumption intention from not only Malaysian but also tourist perspectives is of great need. This would add knowledge to past literature on ethnic food consumption, thus contributing novelty and addition of knowledge to consumer behaviour, food and service industry, and tourism.

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