#### Food Consumption Preference Among Young Adults Based on Social Media Influence in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** Food consumption amongst young adults has potentially been influenced by social media. Businesses also utilize social media as a medium of promotion. Thus, cultural food has gone viral on social media, causing the demand for cultural food to rise. Several factors in social media influence could be the reason for young adults discovering international cultural foods. Therefore, the focus of this study is to identify how social media influences young adults' tastes and preferences for international foods. Data was collected from 115 respondents who are young adults. The implications and consequences of the study findings for food consumption are further discussed. Social media influence on cultural food includes audio-visual appearance, information sharing, and delivery, finally, peer pressure on social was investigated in this study.

#### Keywords: Food preference, social media, information sharing, peer pressure, audio-visual preference

## 1. Introduction

In the food sector, social media impact is critical since it provides customers with knowledge about food. Photos, videos, links, and writings shared on social media may also be classified as natural occurrences that transmit knowledge to other people (Ventola 2014). This is extremely influential in determining the influence of foreign cultural cuisine. According to Fotis (2015), social networking is the reason for individuals to share their thoughts. Consumer reviews of food, services, and decorations can help to increase the impact of worldwide ethnic cuisine (Li et al., 2020). YouTube and Instagram have aided businesses in the construction of their own branded communities by allowing them to create their customized profiles and extend crucial information. As a result, counting the number of likes, comments, shares, and interactions is crucial in determining the impact of worldwide cultural gastronomy (Yu & Sun, 2019). The ratio is used to compute the number of likes, and then the posting likes are calculated as a percentage of the overall reach. Second, the total number of comments is calculated by looking at the number of comments received by each post.

One of the methods to assess the effect of international cultural food is to look at the number of shares (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Finally, interaction may be used to determine popularity. The term 'Engaged Users' refers to the number of people who have visited thepage and clicked on the shared content. This entails like, commenting on, and sharing the content that has been watched, such as videos, links, and photographs (Edosomwan et al., 2011). On the other hand, the younger generation is more prone to tailor their behavior to their peer group (Rubin et al., 2008).

International cultural food has spread to the community, especially young adults. The "growing adulthood" years are a potentially fragile and pliable transitory stage for youngadults aged 18 to 24 (Barrett & Ii, 2006). During this stage of development, young people go through substantial life changes that consent them to gain responsibility and independence, as well as perhaps acquire long-term health-related attitudes. (Kim et al., 2017). Even though young people are less likely to have serious health concerns than older age groups, they are nonetheless prone to the detrimental effects of poor lifestyle practices that can continue into maturity, possibly leading to significant health consequences later in their lifetime (Salleh et al., 2021). They have money and social media has taken their attention to new things to try (Appel et al., 2020). Young adults are thus a crucial age group to comprehend to adapt to the progress and maintenance of vigorous habits, as well as to safeguard persons from the impacts of food promotion (Bonnie et al., 2015). Television (all forms), radio, print (magazines and newspapers), and billboards are all traditional food advertising channels. Advertising, on the other hand, takes happen on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram in the digital age (Appel et al., 2020). "The use of social media technology, channels, and programs to produce, communicate, distribute, and trade valuable products" is how social media advertising is described. Social marketing, which tries to use marketing concepts to alter people's behavior for thebetterment of society, also makes a habit of social media. Together the food and health sectors use social media as an advertising instrument to spread brand

information and awareness (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Young adults are among the supreme energetic social media handlers, with Malaysians aged 18 to 29 spending the utmost time on several social media sites on a regular (Ahmad et al. 2015). Because of the widespread use of social media, young individuals are frequently exposed to advertisements for food and beverages (Potvin Kent et al., 2019).

Marketers can link and involve potential clients at any moment they are using social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and even some of the newest websites such as TikTok are excellent platforms to begin (Folkvord et al.,2020). Marketers who have a great social media strategy and the capacity to provide engaging content can engage their audience (Aydin et al., 2021). By using social media, a brand can build trust with potential clients, communities, and allies (Vance, 2006). This is exclusively correct if other people are spreading positive words regarding your company or services or products (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Friends and family are almost more likely to be trusted with advice or suggestions than authorized brand channels.

In addition, Mukbang (broadcast of eating) is a sort of Korean live web audio-visual broadcast in which a host or creator consumes a significant quantity and variety of dishes (Kang et al., 2020). Viewing mukbang by internet streaming is an alternate option to please the need for social dining in this generation. Individuals watch videos of mukbang while consuming their dishes, rendering YouTube commentaries; in other terms, several young Koreans regard mukbang to be their new consuming mate (Kang et al., 2020). Second, mukbang viewers get vicarious delight, analogous to "food porn" or "eating shows." Mukbang creators tenaciously eat vociferously or assemble the meals near the watching spectators to maximize spectator gratification. Mukbang audiences have confidence in their hunger and are gratified vicariously over this audible and visual stimulus. As mukbang videos become more popular, many young adults are becoming more concerned about the influence of mukbang on their food consumption (Strand et al., 2020).

Food-related programs transmitted through the media have been demonstrated in previous research to inspire and rouse overeating, and youngsters are identified to be predominantly impacted by these food-related broadcasting. Similarly, the meal intake of influencers like mukbang makers is believed to influence the food feasting of viewers. The sorts of meals and consumption habits depicted in these media may have an important part in determining the influence of mukbang (Strandet al., 2020). Despite the logical connection between food consumption and social media influence, only a few studies have examined this connection, especially in the Malaysian context. Hence it is appropriate to investigate this connection and analyze it quantitively.

First, this study might give helpful information about social media content as well as data for forecasting the popularity of cultural food consumption videos. This study evaluates the social media's viewpoint on cultural food consumption by analyzing the reflection of Malaysian young adults' point of view. These findings might aid the development of future research goals and serve as a foundation for decision-making in any organization.

Therefore, this study attempts to determine (i) the association between the audio-visual appearance of food preferences on social media; (ii) the information shared and delivered on social media; and (iii) the peer pressure impact through social media.

# 2. Literature Review

# **Cultural food preference**

Our biological responses to the food we eat are one of many diverse aspects that influence our eating preferences and decisions. Such responses are connected to the perception of sensory modalities and physiological post-digestive repercussions. According to Costell et al. (2010), consumers' responses to food products are determined by four different components. Consumers initially notice a product's sensory attributes. Second, a product's general reaction from the customer is an important element. The thirdstep involves the consumer using a cognitive component that is based on the knowledge they have about the product as well as their attitudes and opinions. Fourth, the response is affected by a behavioral component that involves the person's intentions or actions for future behavior.

Today, social media is incredibly accessible since it includes a lot of information that people require (Richins,

2015). "Social media serves three purposes: communication tools as a location to exchange information, and a self-tracking system for keeping track of one's data (Chau et al., 2018)". Because the organization will use social media to inform consumers about the items that the organization sells, social media plays an important role in the cuisine's appeal. Food preferences are the choices made by consumers on the type of food that they are compelled to purchase because of a variety of factors. One obvious reason is that biological determinants such as hunger, appetite, and taste are involved.

Culture, family, and peers are all social determinants that can play a role. A person's food choices can be influenced by their social environment, whether they are aware of it or not. Also, attitudes, behavior, and food knowledge are all factors that can influence food choices. Social media can influence and have an impact on people who use it for good or bad. The way people use social media as a platform for information sharing or communication about food determines the relationship between social media and food preferences. Most people all over the world use social media to interact with others about food intake, dietary guidelines, and suggestions - all of which can influence their food choices.

People currently do not place as much faith in advertisements as they do in social postings about food products made by other consumers (Aydin et al., 2021). There is research that looks at the association between peer popularity and university students' eating habits (König et al., 2017). Many others were drawn to eat the cuisine that their famous peers had previously tried because they had posted specific types of food photographs on their social media accounts. "Because of the increased use of social media, migration of people is no longer a concern, as each migration has its eating patterns and dietary habits (Choudhary et al., 2019). As we all know, everyone's eating habits vary, but as more people migrate for media, migration eating habits are no longer a concern. This is because people learn about a person's eating habits. Thus, via the use of social media, their culture's food will become more acceptable to a wider audience (Di Renzo et al., 2020).

## Audio-visual appearance of social media

Users of social media are exposed to stimuli, particularly for their hearing and visual senses. "Audio" and "visual" refer to what may be heard and seen respectively in their literal senses (Yu et al. 2019). Audio-visual media (or simply audio-visual media) are mass communication mechanisms that transmit your messages not merely through the sense of sight as in traditional print media, but also through the sense of hearing (Uda, 2014).

Media use multimedia technology to combine the visual benefits of the printed model with the immediacy of spoken radio, creating a more complicated format that resembles real presence in the order of the transmitted events. Food preferences are a multifaceted construct that is not solely influenced by our internal incentives. Indeed, sensory scientists, consumer psychologists, and marketers have demonstrated that externalambient cues, such as background music, can influence a wide range of subconscious consumer behaviors, resulting in increased sales of food and beverages. This is true of television, movies, and, more recently, the Internet. Thus, "Audio Visual Aids" or "Instructional Material" refers to all such tools that try to educate us by appealing to our senses. As hearing and sight influence a person's decision-making, audiovisual content is extremely important (Fotis, 2015).

The ability to share photographs and videos on social networking sites such as Instagram makes photo editing more appealing. This allows people to improve the appearance of their food images on Instagram, which may lead other users to believe the meal is tasty. Koniq et. al (2017) discovered that social roles or images are one of the crucial factors to be taken into account when university students are targeted by food advertisements on social media, and consumers value neither the good nutrition nor the cozy sentiment." Instead, they like eating quickmeals, frozen foods, and unhealthy snacks easily available at convenience stores.

## Information sharing and delivery of social media

People can only learn about something if it is successfully conveyed to and received by them, hence information transmission and sharing are crucial. Social media is undeniably at its peak right now in terms of content delivery and sharing. Nowadays, sharing anything throughout the world only takes a single click. Socialmedia has gained popularity as a tool for communication and could significantly influence social norms through its effectiveness in information exchange. On a related note, social media has developed over the past ten years

into a vital tool for disseminating and obtaining information in a variety of spheres of life (Chau et. al 2018). The growing popularity of social media raises a few concerns about the extent to which it is used, and the types of information shared. As a result, one possible solution to persuade consumers tomake healthier food choices is to provide new varieties of healthier foods, as well as appropriate food information.

Grafstrom (2018) argued that viewers of unhealthy food-related television commercials can expect to eat more food overall, both healthy and unhealthy, than viewers of healthy advertisements. According to Rutsaert et al. (2014), the online information environment has changed from Web 1.0, in which users could only use the internet to look for and seek out information, to Web 2.0, a setting in which they could independently develop and share information. In the meantime, Sogari et al. (2018) discovered that it is evident that social media has, to a certain extent, succeeded in penetrating organizations' long-established question and complaint services.

Cultural food has gone viral on social media, causing the demand for cultural food to rise (Dewbre et al., 2014). While social media has become a key source of product information for many of its users, particularly young adults, they are outside of the traditional advertising realm hence, their behavior is out of marketers' control (Dwivedi et al., 2021).As a result, there is evidence that consumer content is becoming more significant in the decision-making process of consumers (Oke et al., 2016). Similarly, other recent studies have investigated how social media technology is helping to enhance customer-relationship management and organizational performance (Rodriguez et al., 2015). As aresult, internet marketing management is consuming an increasing amount of marketers' time and money (Nezamabad, 2011). These interests ranged from networking to entertainment, and from professional assignments to academic material. The information-sharing behavior via social media varies from culture to culture, people to people and society to society. The literature on monocultural individuals' information-sharing behavior via social media platforms is still limited.

## Peer pressure through social media

In a society, peer pressure is inevitable. Whether or not they are aware of it, it has the power to affect someone. The key platform of peer pressure received from engagement in social media. The influence of social media can be a major source of impact to peer pressure for young adults. No one wants to feel left out, so when coworkers or acquaintances post about their lifestyle on social media, it encourages others to follow suit. According to Rubin et al. (2008), social media posts on food can affect young adults' appetites and dietary preferences. Their decisions aboutwhat food to eat are influenced by this. Social media seems to play a significant role in our lives today. According to Rubin et al. (2008), there is some evidence that social media helps many young people feel more self-assured and extroverted and enhances their social connections. The younger generations typically do not use Instagram to express their daily experiences, but rather for aesthetic reasons. Beautiful breakfasts, get-togethers, birthday tributes, and other events are shown inInstagram stories. Additionally, users of social media could manage how theyshow themselves to their social network and how others perceive them Rubin et al. (2008).

Peer pressure can have a positive impact on one's sense of self, sense of support and belonging, confidence, exposure to healthy hobbies and interests, and sense of self. According to Byrne et. al (2017) strategic networkdriven initiatives should be taken into consideration for engaging teenagers in the promotion of beneficial dietary behaviors. With social media platforms increasingly acting as the main setting for peer encounters, social media has significantly changed the worlds of teenagers.

The transformation framework identifies various ways in which social media can change adolescents' perceptions of peer influence (Nezamabad, 2011). Social media, for instance, allows teenagers to be exposed to their friends' actions in an unprecedented volume and frequency, at all hours of the day and night, via images, videos, and text due to its openness, permanence, and accessibility (Nezamabad, 2011).

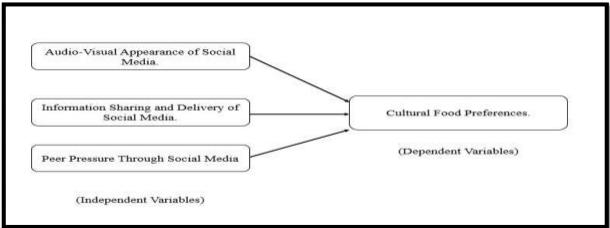
## Impact of social media on food preferences

Nowadays, most people utilize social media to find information on their interests. Finding someone who has never used social media would be ludicrous and out of date. The word "social media" became popular in the last years to describe the various World Wide Web(WWW) apps such as Twitter, video-/image-/file-sharing, or other sorts of applications that may be shared with others. According to Folkvord (2020), disparaging

remarks about certain companies can spread through hundreds or even millions of people in a matter of hours. Online word-of-mouth and complaint behavior directed towards a specific individual, company, or organization can occur during an online firestorm, which is characterized by a sudden influx of numerous messages. These comments frequently show ferocious fury without citing any specific complaint. The younger generation has different food choices and portions are known to be influenced by social engagement. Even though social media greatly affects consumer behavior, some of the top food and beverage companies in the world employ it in creativeways.

Being continuously responsive and aggressively creative is necessary to maximize social media's influence. Simply keeping an eye on and replying to tweets and hashtags related to your company can improve your social media presence and the experience for your present or potential clients. People are being exposed to cuisines they may have never seen before thanks to social media platforms. It can also introduce people to new foods and cultures. Better cultural understanding and communication may result from this exposure. According to certain studies,how much customers trust the information on food blogs can affect how they choose to eat. As a result, businesses use the Internet to market their goods and interact with consumers through online brand communities, social media, forums, websites, blogs, andonline gaming platforms.

Thus, the framework of this study is as below, this research is progressed by the independent variables comprised of three main foundations which are the audio-visual appearance of social media, information sharing and delivery of social media and peer pressure through social media. Meanwhile, the dependent variable is food consumption preferences. The framework of social media is one of the focal elements influencing cultural food (Uda, 2014). Hence, this study's framework is shown in Figure 1.



# Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Framework.

# 3. Methodology

This study utilized a correlational study research design. A self-administered survey questionnaire was distributed to all respondents online. Quantitative research method to describe the association between food consumption preference and social media influence. According to Ahmad et. al (2015), young adults are most of the food bloggers and social media influencers who have followers in this age gap. In addition, according to the statistics, the majority of social media users in Malaysia are youth aged 13-34. Data was collected from young adults as respondents aged between 16 to 30 years old because this age group shows a higher level of competencies in using social media. Hence, this age group is very trendy with the current situation in social media.

Quantitative research is described as the numerical illustration and management of data to define and interpret thephenomena reflected in those observations (Salkind, 2013). This research technique is expressed and altered in numeric data of observation to define and further understand the processes that those observations reflect (Salkind, 2013). This research explores the link between social media and food preferences among

young adults in Malaysia. Other aspects and factors are used from earlier studies as referrals and comprehension in this research. This study describes the factors regarding cultural food preference that are audio-visual, the appearance of social media, information sharing and delivery of social media and peer pressure through social media seeking among Malaysian young adults. This objective is to investigate any relationship between the influence of social media and cultural food preferences targeted to young respondents.

The total group of individuals that the researcher wants to study is referred to as the target population. The respondents in this study were concerned citizens who were frequent users of social media across all platforms. These people were chosen since they use social media to publicize their daily activities and get access to food-related information. The target range of the target population is people between the ages of 16 - 30. The researcher has distributed the questionnaires to 115 respondents who actively using social media platforms among Malaysia young adults.

The population's size determines the size of the sample. The sample size for this study should be representative or generalizable. According to Taherdoost (2018). Developed a formula for calculating sample size, the number of independent variables that used is n > 50+8(m) where n for the sample and m is the number of independent variables. Since the independent variable in this study is four, therefore the number of sample sizes is n > 50+8(3) = 74 and the total of sample size that predictor variable is 74. As the result of the questionnaires were spread in the form of Google Form links is 115 respondents.

Since the target respondents' personal information is unavailable, a non-probability convenience sampling method is used in this study to select the sample. Respondents are selected via convenience sampling because they are frequently readily and easily accessible.

Next, for data analysis, SPSS was used to determine the frequency statistics, which gave information on the frequencies, means, and standards. The relationship between independent factors and dependent variables is established using deviation, central tendency (mean, median, and mode), and range. Pearson Correlation was applied to determine how the variables related to one another. In addition, regression analysis was utilized to estimate the values for the independent and dependent variables as well as to calculate their combined effects.

# 4. Findings

The reliability conducted involved both independent variables and dependent variables. In this study, independent variables consist of appearance, information, peer, and preference. Based on Table 1, it is shown that Cronbach's Alpha for appearance is 0.896, information is 0.850, pear is 0.948 and for preference is 0.849. From the results, it is shown that the reliability for both independent variables is good and excellent. According to Hair et al. (2010), values above 0.7 were considered as reliable. The Cronbach's alpha for 15 items was found to be 0.948, indicating that there was good internal consistency among the items.

## **Table 1: Reliability Analysis**

	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Audio Visual Appearances	.896	8
Information Sharing and Delivery	.850	8
Peer Pressure	.948	15
Food Preference	.849	6

Based on the results, it was found that all variables have mean values ranging from 4.34 to 5.13; with audiovisual appearance having the highest mean value of 5.13. The total score is the highest for the mean (m = 5.13, sd = 7.56) for audio-visual appearance. Next for the second higher (m = 4.93,sd = 7.22) is Information sharing and delivery. Last is the lowest (m = 4.78, sd = 9.18) is peer pressure. Table 2 indicates the inter-correlation values among variables. It was found that all independent and dependent variables used in the study were significantly inter-correlated.

Tuble 2. Descriptive statistics				
	Mean (m)	Std. Deviation (sd)		
Audio Visual Appearances	5.13	.756		
Information Sharing and Delivery	4.93	.722		
Peer Pressure	4.78	.918		
Food Preference	4.34	1.068		

#### Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Data was collected from 115 young adults aged between 16 to 30 years old. Based on the findings, most of the respondents were female (65.2%) and male (34.8%) young adults spend more than three hours a day on social media. 94.8% of young adults preferred TikTok and Instagram as their first choice for social media preference. The two main reasons to use social media are shopping and socializing. In addition, the findings show about duration spent per day by respondents where the majority 53.9% (n=62)of respondents spend time more than 3 hours per day, followed by 26.1% (n=30) of respondents spend time between 30 minutes to 1 hour per day, followed by 16.5% (n=19) of respondent spend time between 15 to 30 minutes per day and last but not least is 3.5% (n=4) of respondent none spend time per day.

## Table 3: Respondents background

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	75	65.2
Male	40	34.8
Age	Frequency	Percent
16 - 21 years old	3	2.6
22 - 25 years old	23	20.0
26 - 29 years old	89	77.4

From the correlation analysis in Table 4, there is a relationship between audio-visual appearance and food preference among Malaysian young adults (r= .281\*\*, p=<0.01) the finding showed that there is an association between these two variables based on the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Index (Salkind, 2003). Next, there is a relationship between information sharing and delivery and food preference among Malaysian young adults (r= .574\*\*, p=<0.01) which has a higher score than audio-visual appearance. Finally, peer pressure and food preference indicated the most association with food preference among Malaysian young adults (r= .585, p=>0.01).

# Table 4: Correlation Analysis

	Audio Visual	Information Sharing	g Peer	Food
	Appearances	and Delivery	Pressure	Preference
Audio Visual Appearances	1			
Information Sharing and Delivery	570**	1		
Peer Pressure	.425**	.643**	1	
Food Preference	.281**	.547**	.585**	1

One obvious reason is that biological determinants such as hunger, appetite, and taste are involved. "People currently do not place as much faith in advertisements as they do in social postings about food products made by other consumers (Aydin et al., 2021)". There is research that looks at the association between peer popularity and university students' eating habits (König et al., 2017). Many others were drawn to eat the cuisine that their famous peers had previously tried because they had posted specific types of food photographs on their social media accounts. "Because of the increased use of social media, migration of people is no longer a concern, as each migration has its eating patterns and dietary habits (Choudhary et al., 2019)". Customers can provide comments on the food product on social media, which can improve the relationship between the company and its customers (Lee et al., 2017).

There is an association between information sharing and delivery and food preference. Table 4.4 indicated that information sharing and delivery had a relationship with the statistics among Malaysian young adults (r= .574\*\*, p=<0.01) the finding showed that there is a moderate relationship between these two variables based on the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Index (Salkind, 2003). The growing popularity of social media raises a few questions about the extent to which it is used, and the types of information shared. As a result, one possible solution to persuade consumers to make healthier food choices is to provide new varieties of healthier foods, as well as appropriate food information. The information-sharing behavior via social media varies from culture to culture, people to people and society to society. One of the methods to assess the effect of international cultural food is to look at the number of shares (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The term 'Engaged Users' refers to the amount of people who have visited the page and clicked on the shared content. This entails like, commenting on, and sharing the content that has been watched, such as videos, links, and photographs (Edosomwan et al., 2011). Young adults are among the supreme energetic social media handlers, with Malaysians aged 18 to 29 spending the utmost time on several social media sites on a regular (Ahmad et al. 2015). Because of the widespread use of social media, young individuals are frequently exposed to advertisements for foods and beverages (Potvin Kent et al., 2019). Young individuals often use social media to discuss, gather, and exchange food and health-related information. People will simply locate what they are searching for and need thanks to the numerous social updates that are provided and have been uploaded by users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Auditory and visual senses are two fundamental senses employed in social media.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the analytical outcomes of this study, the independent variables of the type of social media, the role of influence and food globalization were examined, thus, the findings demonstrate that in the social media influence, cultural food has a strong variance on the connection between them.

This study helped us to gain a better grasp of the social media influence on food consumption based on characteristics and behavior. The study's findings show that exposure to healthy food photographs on social media, particularly those that are widely endorsed with 'likes,' may encourage consumers to pick healthier meals over less nutritious items (Sogari et al., 2018). One reason for this might be that participants are compelled to change their behavior to fit in with what they consider tobe the norm when they believe that others 'enjoy' and consume fruits and vegetables (Pem & Jeewon, 2015).

Another finding of this research is that type of social media influences cultural food consumption. The food industry can promote its food review on social media because the influence of food consumption through social media is high (Folkvord et al., 2020). Type of social media is used to spread the food culture and affect the person's food consumption. The results will help Malaysia's food culture spread globally (Karim & Krauss, 2018).

Additionally, research findings recommend that firms, communications, and dealers must hold insights into the impacts and effects of influencers on the buying decision of clients to launch marketing tactics that fit consuming inclination as well as exploit successful influencer marketing (Petit et al., 2019). Moreover, developing influencer marketing will help save more advertising and promotion expenses than old-style promotion events, so, maximize the firm's income (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Furthermore, social media posting can be a model to spread the cultural food of some countries that never usuallyheard of. For example, Malaysia country is not as popular as other country around them like Thailand and Indonesia, because it is a lot less mainstream through social media than a lot of other countries (Hampton and Hampton, 2008). Further research is required to discover whether and how these findings can be rendered into digital interferences to support persons who want to make healthier beverage selections and to comprehend how social media podiums can be applied as an instrument to back vigorous eating attitudes. To determine the effect of these communications on nutrition selections, consumption, and eating attitudes, more research is needed. Furthermore, this research should be expanded to include a wider range of samples in the future. Other than that, other influence factors might be added to make the proof that socialmedia influences cultural food consumption. Finally, this study should be conducted with more respondents in different regions to explain more generality.

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