

The Effect of Food Blogger's Reviews on Young Adults' Food Choice Decision in Malaysia

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Abstract--*A blog (a combination words of web and log) is a web page with regular diary or journal entries that incorporates different postings by authors and responses (Boas, 2011). The first blog was created by Justin Hall through Links.net where he shared about his family background and experience of his summer trip (Chapman, 2011). Blogging has become one of the most well-liked and prominent platforms for sharing contents on personal thought, feelings, opinions, and more. To date bloggers wrote reviews of products and services that they had used and experienced. Food blogger has been growing rapidly and popular among Malaysian. The reliant on technology especially by young adults in utilising online media to search for information has led to a greater number of food bloggers in Malaysia. There are also concern among marketers as to the impact of food bloggers on blog's readers. Thus, this research aims to examine the effect of perceived usefulness, trustworthiness and reputation of food blogger on young adults' food choice decision making in Malaysia. The outcome of this study is also expected to contribute towards effective marketing strategies to marketers of food and beverage industry. In this research, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis was used to forecast an individual user acceptance of technologies. Overall findings concluded that all 188 respondents showed that perceived usefulness, trustworthiness and reputation have strong correlation with teenager's food choice decision.*

Keywords-- *food blogger, food blogger's review, perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, reputation, effective marketing strategies*

I. INTRODUCTION

A blog (a combination words of web and log) is a web page with regular diary or journal entries that incorporates different postings by authors and responses (Boas, 2011). According to Boyd (2006), Jorn Barger created the term weblog in December 1997 and later Peter Merholz shortened the "weblog" to "blog" in April of 1999. The first blog was created by Justin Hall through Links.net where he shared about his family background and experience of his summer trip (Chapman, 2011). Blogging has become one of the most well-liked and prominent platforms for sharing contents on personal thought, feelings, opinions, and more. To date bloggers wrote reviews of products and services that they had used and experienced. According to Lofgren (2013), Food Blog is one of the popular topics that primarily focused on food and it has been growing rapidly and popular among Malaysian. In fact, food bloggers may also involve in culinary travel, whereby they will share their experience of delicious food,

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reviews of places or restaurants that they have experienced. Hanifati (2015), further justified that blog is one of the top online media in influencing consumers' purchasing decision towards products or services. Consumers seem to trust someone that they follow and know for a certain time rather than to believe the brand itself (Landers, 2017). In term of blog's readers, some researchers claimed that advices in blogs are a source of reliable information to blog's readers (Kent, 2008; Parkin, 2012; Waddington, 2012).

As food blog and food blogger gradually increase, marketers in food and beverage industry should have clear understanding on how food blogger's review can affect consumers' food choice decision. The reviews written by food bloggers indirectly help the restaurants or businesses in getting more customers and boost their revenue. According to Astorga (2015), food blogs are the source of information for the consumers and it will act as a guideline to consumer selecting decision.

According to Google Trends that provides analysis on any search queries or search terms, it shows that the term "what to eat" had frequently been searched by Malaysian in the year 2018. The popularity of Malaysian over the term "what to eat" in 2018 has rose from a value of 50 throughout the year to 100 in December 2018. Besides that, according to a research conducted by Rainie (2011), the statistics had shown that 65% of the individuals who fall into the age group of 18 to 29 are the most likely to seek and get information about new restaurants. Besides that, the same research had studied the sources of information which are used by these individuals. Based on the results of the research, 51% of all the participants of different age groups had relied on online sources when it comes on obtaining information, and these online sources are; Search engines, Topical Specialty Websites and Social Networking.

The reliant on technology, especially by teenagers in utilising online media instead of traditional media to search for information caused a greater increase in number of food bloggers in Malaysia, and whether the opinions by these food bloggers able to have an impact on the decision of the blog's readers has been discussed. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine the effect of food blogger's reviews on teenager's food choice decision in Malaysia. The results of the study are expected to fill the research gap by empirical testing on the relationship between perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, reputation and the teenager's food choice decision. This study is also expected to enhance food and beverage industry's bottom line whereby marketers will be able to develop marketing strategies to market their products and services effectively.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND FORMULATING HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH

Perceived Usefulness

In the context of food blogging, the usefulness is perceived as usefulness of food blogger recommendations. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), emphasis on the system usage especially the e-commerce industry whereby study showed the application of TAM on perceived usefulness and acceptance have effect on blogger's recommendation on customer's online shopping intention (Hsu et al. 2013). According to TAM, perceived usefulness is the degree to which a person believes that using a system would enhance his or her job performance

(Jahangir and Begum, 2008). Davis et al. (1992) had explained that perceived usefulness is referring to consumers' perception regarding the result of experience. While, in terms of blogger's recommendations towards perceived usefulness, Erkan and Evans (2016) defined perceived usefulness as the usefulness of the blogger's recommendation in enhancing consumers' buying performance. Past researcher Hsu et al. (2013) sees perceived usefulness as the degree to which a blog reader believes that adopting a blogger recommendation would enhance his or her online shopping performance. While, Hanifati (2015) argued that perceived usefulness is the degree to which a consumer believes that employing a food blogger recommendation would increase their knowledge towards the restaurants. An explanation stated by AlSaleh (2017), an individual behavioural intention will be influence by the information gained from a group and peers once the individual has developed beliefs toward them. Therefore, perceived usefulness is expected to have certain extend of influences on food decision.

Trustworthiness

There are many definitions of trustworthiness among authors and researchers. Trust in general terms can be defined as being a firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing (Gefen, 2002; McKnight et al., 2002). Past researchers Rubin and Liddy (2019) defined trustworthiness as a type of trusting relationship that occurred between an individual blogger and a blog reader. The basic element affecting consumers' willingness to accept a message is trustworthiness and reliability of the source (Filieri, Alguezaui, & Mcleay, 2015). Doney and Cannon (1997) defined trust as perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust which is relevant in a blogging context. Well-known bloggers display a high level of trustworthiness which can able to attract bigger number of loyal readers. According to Phang and Ming (2018), these bloggers are mostly consumers of a product or service and they make reviews and recommendations to other consumers. Trust is also a key element in attracting and retaining customers and obtaining competitive advantage on the internet (Salo and Karjaluo, 2007). Constant reading and frequent interaction between the blog reader and blogger will develop trust in the long run if the reader found that the blogger content is reliable. Blog reader will believe positive recommendation from the blogger and finally will decide either to purchase certain product or service (Gems, 2015).

Reputation

Reputation is mostly treated as a forerunner of behavioural intention (Chaovalit, 2017). Several empirical studies have determined that reputation can affect behavioural intention. In blogging context, reputation is related to the extent to which a blogger is credible (Burgess et al., 2009). The study of Chaovalit (2017) suggests that different level of food bloggers' reputation will influence blog readers' perception differently in regarding of readers' attitudes and behavioural intentions. For instance, high reputation of a blogger will influence readers' confidence in purchasing a product or service through a persuasive message (Shamdasani et al., 2001). AlSaleh (2017) explained that the capability to establish a positive reputation depend on the social capital perspective which is good online social relations. According to Hung and Li (2007), blogger with positive reputation may positively influence blog readers' attitudes and purchasing behaviour. The attitude will be defined as the degree of blog readers' positive feelings about the information given from food blogger. As TAM refers to the behavioral intention of the consumer to follow the blogger recommendation and is become the degree of blog reader's intention to follow food blogger

recommendation in the future. In order to convince a consumer to purchase a specific product or service, blogger's reputation must be considered as a basis of credibility.

Relationships between Food Blogger's Review and Teenager's Decision Making toward Food Choice

Past research has showed that the three factors which are perceived usefulness of food blogger's reviews, trustworthiness of food bloggers and reputation of food bloggers have positive relationship on teenager's food choice decision. Perceived usefulness involves blogger's recommendation and purchase intention showed that there is relationship between them (Phang and Ming, 2018). Hanifati (2015) found that there is a direct correlation between perceived usefulness and consumers' food choice which stated that consumers have adopted food blogger recommendation and it helps to enhance consumers' knowledge of restaurants. Cheng and Fang (2015) found that the main critical of acceptance for blog readers to adopt or revisit the blog's recommendations is perceived usefulness. Nathalia et al. (2017) study claimed that there is positive relationship between perceived usefulness of food blogger and consumers' behavioural intention, therefore food bloggers play an important role to influence consumers' behavioural intention.

Phang and Ming (2018), study concluded that the factor of trustworthiness has the greatest impact on consumer attitude towards blogger recommendations. In this case, blogger recommendations with specific contents are viewed to be more trustworthy than manager-generated contents and this seems to increase consumers' perception on trust. AlSaleh (2017), found that consumers tend to accept recommendations by bloggers with high trust which concluded that there is a relationship between trustworthiness blogger's recommendation and purchase intention. Previous studies also confirmed that trust positively influences consumers' attitudes and shopping intentions (Lim et al., 2006; Hsiao et al., 2010). Cheng and Fang (2015) found trust had significant effects on blog readers' behaviours as it showed the most influential factor for readers to adopt product recommended by bloggers and the readers' intention to revisit a blog is trust. AlSaleh (2017), has highlighted the importance of reputation of bloggers on consumers' purchase intention and the result shows positive relationship between reputation of bloggers and consumers' purchase intention. Hsu et al. (2013) found consumers' attitude and their intention upon final purchase will be affected by blogger's recommendations. Chaovalit (2017) also indicated that there is a significant relationship between blogger's reputation and consumers' purchase intention.

III. FOOD CHOICE DECISION

According to Vabe and Hansen (2014), the determinant of food choice decision refers to the sensory qualities and taste of food. By understanding how consumers perceive these senses are extremely helpful in understanding consumer's food preferences. For example, if the food is extremely tasty and is affordable, consumers are more likely to make their decision towards these choices compared to alternative choices (Vabe and Hansen, 2014). Another study conducted by Leng (2016), had argued that the sensory qualities alone cannot define the consumer's food choice decision. The determinants of food choices must include dietary components such as palatable food and alcohol, cognitive-affective factors such as perceived stress, health attitude etc.

IV. UNDERPINNING THEORIES

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis in 1986 (Lai, 2017) was used as underpinning theory to support the research since its purpose is to forecast an individual user on his or her acceptance of information systems or technologies. Based on Fred Davis's TAM model, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the two factors that relevant in behaviours that will enhance users' job or life performance (Surendran, 2013). According to several past studies, TAM has been applied in order to study the perceived usefulness and acceptance towards the e-commerce or the effects of blogger recommendation on customers' online shopping intention. Hanifati (2015) argued that perceived usefulness affected intended use for purchase, whilst there is no significant effect on perceived ease of use. Results showed that consumers' attitude was influence by the perceived usefulness of recommendations. The study of Hanifati (2015) has used TAM to investigate the effects of food bloggers on consumers' attitude and behavior in choosing restaurant. Perceived usefulness was evaluated through TAM model to identify the food blogger's reviews on restaurants in the online platforms (Hanifati, 2015). In TAM model, behavioral intention to use refers consumers' behavioral intention to follow the blogger recommendation as attitude will influence the consumer intention (Hanifati, 2015). In food blogging context, the usefulness of food blogger's recommendations is perceived as useful. Therefore, in the research conducted by using technology acceptance model, Hanifati (2015) stated that food bloggers do influence consumer's behavioural intention. Thus, the researcher will be using the TAM model in this research.

Figure 1 below shows the independent variables which are perceived usefulness of food blogger's reviews, trustworthiness of food bloggers and reputation of food bloggers, while young adult's food choice decision is the dependent variable. Thus, the following hypotheses were developed accordingly;

H₁: There is a relationship between perceived usefulness of food blogger's reviews and young adult's food choice decision

H₂: There is a relationship between perceived usefulness of food blogger's reviews and young adult's food choice decision

H₃: There is a relationship between reputation of food bloggers and young adult's food choice decision

V. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

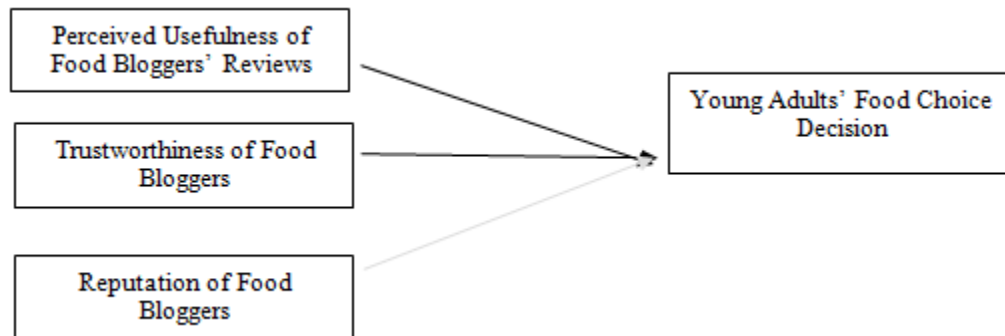


Figure 1: Research Framework

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design was a quantitative and explanatory study. The population of this study were young adults which are residing in 13 states of Malaysia with sample size of 188 young adults. This is based on the data from the Department of Statistic Malaysia 2018 that reported the number of populations in Kuala Lumpur in the year 2017 was approximately 1.79 million. The recommended sample size calculated by using Raosoft Sample Size calculator were 188 (margin of error = 5%; confident level = 90). The random sampling method was used to choose the respondents so that everyone has an equal chance of being selected. The link of Google form for the questionnaires was sent through e-mails to the respondents and some printed copies were distributed to the respondents personally.

The research strategy was based on survey and cross sectional was used to collect the data. In this research, primary data was collected by using questionnaires. The secondary data was collected through the literature review from the past research. Information was obtained from the reliable academic sources such as Taylor and Francis, Pro Quest, Emerald Insights and Research Gate.

The questionnaire has two sections. The first part of the questionnaire was about the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by the items for independent variables and a dependent variable that would be tested in the research. Closed question questionnaire such as multiple choices for demographic characteristics and five-point Likert scale for independent variables and dependent variable was used because it was appropriate for self-administered questionnaires. In total, there were 16 items; six questions for demographic characteristics, two questions for dependent variable and 9 questions for independent variables. All the Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the items ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

The SPSS was used for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis such as Pearson Correlation, Linear Regression and Multiple Regression.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profiles of the respondents

The results of the surveys on respondents' profile showed that out of 188 respondents, 112 (59.6%) were female and 76 (41.4%) were male. Basically, the respondents were only from the ages of 18 to 29 years old, an aged group that falls under young adult category. Out of 188 respondents, 151 (80%) of the respondents hold bachelor's degree and the balance holds diploma and high school certificate.

In terms of locality, 115 (61%) respondents were from Selangor, followed by Johor 38 (20.2%) and Malacca 11(5.9%). In terms of getting source of news and information about foods, 173 (92%) respondents mainly obtained the information from internet, 8(4.3%) from local radio, 5(2.7%) from local television and the balance is from newspapers.

The data gathered also showed that most of the respondents 162 (86.2%) had experience in reading food blogs while 26(13.8%) respondents had no experience reading the food blogs. Further findings indicated that bloggers' reviews would improve respondents' decision in making food choice, enable respondents to make food choice decision faster and make respondents easier to search for new foods and make food choice decision.

VIII. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The research is further supported by the descriptive results of perceived usefulness that shows a mean score of 4.32 and the standard deviation score is 1.017, thus this explained that the respondents were concerned about the perceived usefulness of food blogger's reviews in their decision making of food choice.

As for descriptive results of trustworthiness, 58.5% of the respondents agreed that food bloggers are generally reliable. The respondents will develop the trust of the respective food blogger once the respondents have gone to the restaurant that the food blogger recommended, however 52.7% of the respondents had agreed that they only trust well-known food blogger. The descriptive results of trustworthiness, resulted in mean score of 3.97 and standard deviation score of 0.952, showing that the respondents had a positive feeling towards trustworthiness of food blogger.

Descriptive results of reputation indicated the result of 44.1% of the respondents had agreed that higher reputation of food blogger will influence respondent's food choice decision. Moreover, 47.3% of the respondents had agreed that food blog which is well-explained and supported with good information is important than food blogger's reputation. Based on these two statements of reputation, it shows that high reputation or low reputation of food blogger does matter, while the food blogger with low reputation can be accepted by the respondents too if the food blog is filled with complete information. The mean score for this independent variable is 4.08 and the standard deviation score is 1.002. This indicates that respondents were concerned about the reputation of food blogger in making their food choice decision.

Descriptive results of food choice decision shows that 54.8% of the respondents had strongly agreed that they would seek out food blogger's reviews before making their food choice decision. Besides that, 52.7% of the

respondents had also strongly agreed that they would follow food blogger’s reviews. The mean score for this dependent variable is 4.25 and the standard deviation score is 1.073, which illustrates that majority of the respondents agree were concerned about their food choice decision.

Table 1: Summary of Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Test

	No of item	Cronbach’s Alpha
Dependent variable		
Young Adult’s Food Choice Decision	3	0.871
Independent variable		
Perceived Usefulness	3	0.768
Trustworthiness	3	0.821
Reputation	3	0.819

Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Test was also conducted to assess the reliability or internal consistency of young adult’s food choice decision against perceived usefulness, trustworthiness and reputation of the food blogger’s reviews. Based on the Table 1 above, trustworthiness scored the highest value among the variables with $\alpha = 0.871$, followed by reputation with $\alpha = 0.819$ and perceived usefulness with $\alpha = 0.768$. These show that all the variables are reliable and consistent for further analysis.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Test

No	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Perceived Usefulness	1			
2	Trustworthiness	0.854**	1		
3	Reputation	0.942**	0.889**	1	
4	Food Choice Decision	0.969**	0.779**	0.934**	1

Note: **, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Further testing was conducted to determine the correlation coefficient and the strength of the linear relationship between perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, reputation and food choice decision. The summary of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Test (Table 2) shows that all the independent variables have positive correlation with the dependent variable. There was a high correlation between perceived usefulness ($r = 0.969$), trustworthiness ($r = 0.779$), reputation ($r = 0.934$) with food choice decision among Young Adult.

Table 3: Model Fit

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.748 ^a	.560	.552	.42992	1.766

Table 3 above showed the R value of .748 which indicates a moderate level of correlation between the independent and dependent variables. As stated by Field (2009), the R² is a good gauge of the size of the relationship between the predictor and dependent variables in this study. The coefficient of determination (R square) value of .560 means that around 56 percent of the variance in the food choice decision among young adult. (dependent variable) is explained by the three independent variables; perceived usefulness, trustworthiness and reputation.

Table 4: Coefficients of Multiple Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.018	.068		-.261	.794
	Perceived Usefulness	.883	.045	.836	19.750	.000
	Trustworthiness	-.353	.035	-.313	-10.116	.000
	Reputation	.455	.051	.425	8.863	.000

IX. DEPENDENT VARIABLE: FOOD CHOICE DECISION

Multiple regression is also conducted to determine the overall fit of the model and the contribution of each independent variables to the total variance explained. Model summary as reflected in Table 4 is used to determine how well a regression model fits the data. Based on the regression model above, it shows that perceived usefulness, trustworthiness and reputation have significant regression of .000 with food choice decision. In addition, it is also observed that perceived usefulness (beta=0.836) has a higher influence on young adult's decision making compared to reputation (beta=0.425).

X. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The result of hypothesis testing shows that perceived usefulness has a positive and significant effect on food choice decision. This can be supported by the descriptive statement from the young adults where they claimed that food blogger's reviews are able to improve their decision in making food choice, enable them to make food choice decision faster, and make them easier to search for new foods. Moreover, this result is also supported by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) from Davis (1989) which he stated that the usage of technology is greatly influence by the perceived usefulness. According to Phang and Ming (2018), the research has confirmed that there is relationship between perceived usefulness of blogger's recommendations and purchase intention. In addition,

Hanifati (2015) has showed that perceived usefulness and consumers' food choice are directly correlated. Furthermore, Nathalia et al. (2017) study also claimed that there is a relationship between perceived usefulness of food blogger and consumers' behavioural intention.

Besides that, the hypothesis testing of trustworthiness also has a positive and significant effect on food choice decision. The descriptive statement from the young adults have proved that they feel food bloggers are generally reliable and will trust the food blogger if they personally experience the food at the restaurant that the food blogger recommended. This finding is aligned with the study conducted by Phang and Ming (2018), which concluded that the factor of trustworthiness has the greatest impact on consumer attitude towards blogger recommendations. Besides that, AlSaleh (2017), found out that consumers tend to accept recommendations by bloggers with high trust which concluded that there is a relationship between trustworthiness blogger's recommendation and purchase intention. Moreover, research by Cheng and Fang (2015) also showed that trust had significant effects on blog readers' behaviours.

The results of hypothesis testing of reputation also indicates that there is a positive and significant effect of reputation on food choice decision. This explains that if there is an increase rating in reputation of food blogger, then it is more likely that the young adults will make food choice decision based on food blogger's reviews. This is further supported by the descriptive statement from the young adults where they claimed that their food choice decision will be strongly influence by higher ranking reputation of food blogger's review. However, young adults also claimed that they will still adopt the food blogger's reviews if the food blog is complete and well-explained with detail information, despite reputation level of food blogger is not up to their expectation. According to AlSaleh (2017), reputation of bloggers is important for consumers' purchase intention and it shows that there is a positive relationship between reputation of bloggers and consumers' purchase intention. Moreover, Chaovalit (2017) also indicated that there is a significant relationship between blogger's reputation and consumers' purchase intention.

Lastly, overall findings from the above Table 4 shows that perceived usefulness, trustworthiness and reputation are highly correlated with Young Adult's food choice decision and this is consistent with other researchers findings such as Khurshid et al. (2012), Al-Azzam (2015), Khuong and Dai (2016), Mudenda and Guga (2017) and Mudenda and Guga (2017). Whilst responsiveness and assurance showed a moderate correlation with customer satisfaction. This finding is also coherent with Siew-Phaik et al. (2011), Hassan et al. (2013), Saghier and Nathan (2013), Al-Azzam (2015) and Minh et al. (2015).

In conclusion, this research has specifically measured the effect of food blogger's reviews and confirms the proposition that food blogger's reviews affect young adults' food choice decision. Hence, this research able to achieve its objectives and deliver the valuable information to marketers in food and beverage industry, and those young adults' who often care about their food choice decision. In is expected that the outcomes generated by this research will benefit marketers or marketing practitioners and consumers themselves.

Marketers or marketing practitioners should utilise the food blogger recommendations in order to help consumers to understand their products to increase sales. The useful and detailed reviews provided by food bloggers can be persuasive as it creates first-hand experience, therefore it can enhance consumers' level of adopting food

blogger's reviews. Marketers should also be cautious with the food blogger's reputation since this research shows that reputation of food blogger will influence young adults' food choice. Marketers ought to find a food blogger with a high reputation which in turn enhance consumers' food choice decision. Hence, this research can aid marketers in term of utilizing the right strategies, tools, or techniques such as choosing internet as the medium to deliver the message to attract consumers.

Despite this study has confirmed the relationships between perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, and reputation toward food choice decision, however, it has its limitation whereby this research only consists of a small sample size of young adults in Malaysia thus it does not represent the whole Malaysia as the survey was only answered by young adults in 9 states of Malaysia such as Selangor, Johor, Malacca, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Sabah, Penang, Kelantan, and Sarawak. Distribution of the survey was also dominated by female (60%) and sample size is considered minimal. Moving forward, future researcher should take the above limitations into consideration to achieve a better result about the factors that will influence young adults' food choice decision.

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