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A qualitative study on factors influencing older consumer dining out behaviour

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Abstract

Ageing or growing old is inevitable; rather than viewing this as another life stage, this transition period is not easily welcomed by many. The main reason is because with age we are getting more susceptible to disease and disability. This mind-set is changing slowly thanks to the progress in healthcare and government policy that not only care for their health but also helps the older people to lead a better life in their golden age. It is important to acknowledge this age group not just because they are living longer; it is also because they are getting bigger in size and economic power. Restaurant preferences and patronage behaviours of older adults in Malaysia is literally unknown even though there had been numerous amount of research done involving this population. The purpose of this study is to find out what would be the factor for older adults in Malaysia to dine out. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were done with Malaysian older people ages 55 and above. 15 informers were interviewed for this study and the interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed. Atlas.ti software (version 7) was used to complement researchers' analyses of interview transcripts and develop a visual representation of qualitative data. Major thematic categories identified by older consumer in this study included cleanliness and food taste. Data are visually mapped and relationships between different themes are presented. This study will be beneficial in providing more insight to this untapped market segment.

Keywords: older consumer, older adult, dining factor, dining out, price, cleanliness of restaurant

1. INTRODUCTION

The average life expectancy at birth globally has seen an increase from 65 years to 70 years between 1990-1995 and 2010-2015 respectively (United Nations, 2013). It shows that the world population is greying or in other words, growing old. United Nations (2013) also said that one out of four people in the South-East Asia will be 60 years old and above by 2050. There are many reasons that give rise to longevity such as better healthcare, accessibility to educations, government policies and improved nutrition.

This people are also an active consumer group (Gunter, 1998). Some researchers had suggested that older adults are people who are 55 years and older (Moschis, Curasi, & Bellenger, 2003; Parks & Fu, 2016; Wildes et al., 2001; Yamanaka & Almanza, 2003). Some suggest that mature adults should be defined according to the American Association of Retired Person (AARP) which classify those who are 50 years or over as seniors (Knutson, Elsworth, & Beck, 2006). In this paper, we consider mature adults as those 55 years and older.

It is expected that Malaysia will reach the status of 'aged nation' by the year 2020 (Hamid, 2015). The term 'aged nation' will be achieved when the total older adults (by definition those who are 65 and above) population size reached 7% of the total population (Hamid, 2015). Even though it is said that older populations in developing countries like Malaysia are getting older before getting rich, the growth of this population size should not go

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unnoticed. According to Wildes, Demicco, and Seo (2001), this particular age segment has high purchasing power compared to the younger age segments.

According to Gordon, Moser, & Warren (2002), to ignore the mature market is a risky move as most marketers are overlooking this affluent market segment and giving more priority to the younger generation. Researches on mature adults in Malaysia discuss mostly concerning their welfare. Most of the discussions regarding mature adults are about financial security, health care system and policy of mature adults (Yusoff & Buja, 2013 and Masud & Haron, 2008). Restaurant preferences and patronage behaviours of older adults in Malaysia is literally unknown even though there had been numerous amount of research involving this population has been undertaken. The factors obtained through this study can be used to create a marketing plan to cater this category of consumer by the hospitality industry. The aim of this paper is to investigate the factors influencing the older adults (those 55 years and above) in Malaysia to dine out.

2. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative methodology was employed for this study as the data collection method as it allows in-depth exploration of a subject. The data collection method chosen for this study was an in-depth interview. A semi-structured interview questions were used as it allows flexibility to how and when the researcher can ask questions and how the interviewee can answer it (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

Table 1. Profile of informant

No.	Age	Gender	Race	Marital status	Occupation	Education level
1	64	Male	Indian	Married	Employed full time	Primary school
2	59	Female	Indian	Married	Retired and not employed	Primary school
3	64	Female	Indian	Married	Retired and not employed	Primary school
4	68	Male	Indian	Married	Retired and employed full time	Primary school
5	65	Male	Malay	Married	Retired and not employed	Secondary school
6	63	Male	Malay	Married	Retired and not employed	Secondary school
7	57	Male	Malay	Married	Employed full-time	Secondary school
8	57	Female	Malay	Married	Employed full-time (own business)	Secondary school
9	67	Male	Chinese	Married	Employed full-time (own business)	Secondary school
10	59	Female	Chinese	Married	Housewife	Diploma
11	68	Male	Chinese	Married	Retired and employed full time (own business)	Secondary school
12	61	Male	Indian	Married	Retired and employed part time	Master
13	56	Female	Malay	Married	Employed	Degree
14	56	Female	Chinese	Married	Employed	Diploma
15	64	Male	Malay	Married	Retired and not employed	Degree

Informants for the research were chosen based on purposive sampling. In this method, the respondent is known as the informer or informant. The choosing of the informer is done by a non-random technique where the informer must possess few pre-set criteria (Tongco, 2007). Tongco (2007) also said that this type of sampling is also known as judgement sampling where the numbers of informers are not fixed and the method do not need any underlying theories. There were few criteria on how the informants were chosen in this research. The informants must be at least 55 years old and reside in Klang Valley. This paper discussed only the preliminary result from informers with education up to secondary school. The profile of the informers is listed in Table 1.

The interviews were conducted in Tamil, Malay and English based on the language preference of the informers. 14 out of the 15 interview session were recorded using a digital voice recorder. One of the interview session was written down verbatim as the informer requested that the interview not to be recorded. The data collection stopped when there is no new themes transpire during the interview sessions.

The obtained data were first transcribed verbatim and translated to English as most of the interviews were either conducted in the Malay language or Tamil language. The translation was then validated by the supervisory committee. This type of validation is known as the peer de-briefing. Final data or the transcription was then content analysed using Atlas.ti software. Using the software, the themes and sub-themes in the research has been identified. Ryan and Bernard (2003) described themes as follow:

“Themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects. You know you have found a theme when you can answer the question, what is this expression an example of?” (p. 87).

Some themes were pre-determined based on previous research works and some of the themes were discovered during the analysis stage itself. This type of theme determination is known as inductive and deductive respectively (Berg, 2004; Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 below is the network view of the factors found during the analysis.

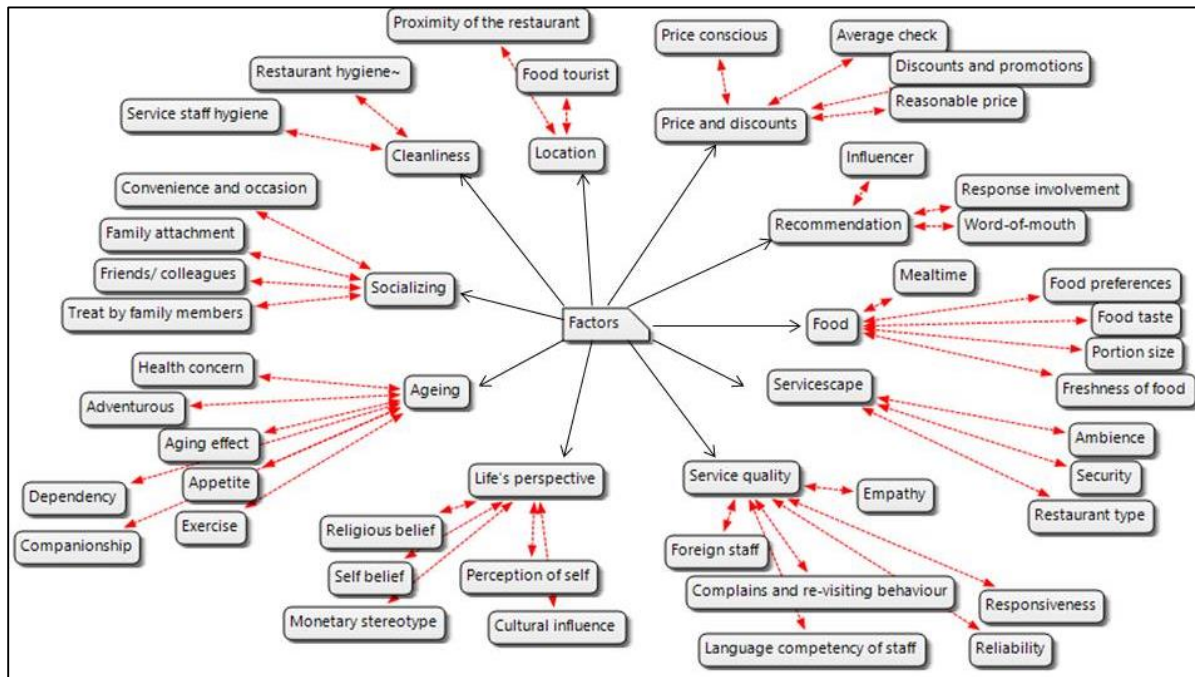


Figure 1. Atlas.ti Visual representation of factors influencing older consumer dining out behaviour

3.1 Cleanliness

Most of the informants have mentioned that cleanliness of a restaurant is an important criterion for them to decide to eat and this are in accordance with Melorose, Perroy, and Careas (2015), Yamanaka and Almanza (2003), and Harris and West (1995) who had found out that cleanliness plays a big role as the criteria in choosing a restaurant. They tend to conclude that cleanliness of a restaurant can be predicted by the cleanliness of service area, washroom and cutleries. This is the same criteria found by Almanza, Ghiselli, & Jaffe (2000) who studied the older people in three segments (50-64, 65-79 and 80+). They found that the entire older people age segment studied gave significant importance to cleanliness especially of dining areas and table, kitchen and rest room in a restaurant (Table 2, Quotes 1-2).

It is important for the staff to maintain hygiene of the restaurant and themselves. This is a tale-tell sign for older adults to determine the cleanliness of a restaurant and thus influencing their decision to visit a restaurant. The informants also observe the attire of the staff for a conformation on their hygiene practice and it has the ability to influence appetite, and thus their decision (Table 2, Quote 3). Personal hygiene includes ‘hand hygiene, clean attire, personal health and personal habit or behaviour’ (Tan, Cheng, Soon, Ghazali, & Mahyudin, 2013). Foodborne illness are closely related to the mishandling of the food (Tan et al., 2013) and the environment it is prepared and served. The major concerns related to ageing are health issues, thus it is not surprising that the older adults are giving importance to cleanliness when it comes to dining out.

3.2 Food

Aging affects the appetite, taste and smell of a person (Popper & Kroll, 2003) and this is seen as a possibility that might influence the restaurant visiting behavior (Pederson, 1993). Informants mentioned that the taste of the food is an important determinant for them to visit a restaurant (Table 2, Quotes 4-5). This factor serves more like a revisit attention as one need to experience eating the food before deciding whether it is tasty or not. If the food matches their taste, they will be a repeating customer. A consistent food and food that taste great is something that older consumer willing to trade with price reduction (Kim, Bergman, & Raab, 2010). They are willing to pay more when served with good food (Table 2, Quote 7).

Another important criteria seen by the informant with regard to food is the freshness of food ingredient used. They believe that food in a restaurant can never be as fresh as food cooked at home and even if it does, the restaurant staffs tend to mix them with the non-fresh food in order not to waste their ingredients (Table 2, Quote 6). Thus, the quality of food is an important attributes when it comes to selecting a restaurant (Yamanaka & Almanza, 2003). It is pertinent that the food served taste good and prepared using the freshest ingredient to attract this consumer group.

3.3 Service quality

Service quality is another factor that plays quite an important role in the visiting intention of older consumers to a restaurant (Sun & Morrison, 2007). Older adults are more vocal than the younger customer when it comes to complaining about their food or the service acquired. 32.7% of the older adults are more likely to complain than only 28.7% of younger adults that will (Wildes, Demicco, & Seo, 2001). The informants complain so that the restaurant can improve and correct their mistakes (Table 2, Quote 8). Sometimes the older adults can be unforgiving. They do not complain even if they have any disagreement or any issues with their food but rather leave without the intention to return to the restaurant (Table 2, Quote 9). This is consistent with the study by Wildes et al. (2001) that said both older and younger customer complaint behavior is by not returning to the restaurant. Even if they do return, it is because they are out of choice. This behavior pose a problem to the restaurant industry as a silent and angry customer is a lost revenue. For this, the restaurant personnel must be more accepting towards the feedback given by the customer and be alert towards this sensitive market segment.

Another service issue that brought up by the informants is the foreign nationals that are hired as service staff. Most of the informants prefer having Malaysian as the service staff because it will be easier to communicate and the possibility of getting the wrong order can be minimized (Table 2, Quote 10). Service staff is an important part of a restaurant experience. Attentiveness of the service staff and friendliness of the service staff is highly valued by the older adults as this not only becomes a factor to dine in, but also as a reason to re-visit a particular restaurant (Table 2, Quote 11). It is true vice versa as any bad behavior from the staff or the lack of attention can cost them their customers (Table 2, Quote 12). Older customer view the lack of attention from the service staff as an 'unpleasant service experience' (Wildes et al., 2001). Some of the informants interviewed had said that they are not afraid to venture and try new food but they are afraid that they may make a wrong order. This maybe somehow related with the level of education that they received and the medium they studied in. In situation such as this, the role of a service staff is very big. The staff must not only be able to identify this people but also be knowledgeable enough about the menu so that could explain clearly to the older consumer (Table 2, Quote 13). A knowledgeable service staff able to increase the level of satisfaction among the older adults (Wildes et al., 2001).

3.4 Servicescape

Servicescape refers to the mixture of environmental features that makes up a service area and this feature has influence on decision and behavior of customer (Bitner, 1992). The dimensions to servicescape physical features are ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, and sign, symbols, and artifacts. Most of the informers mentioned that they like to dine outside or in the open air. This is because they feel trapped or cramped when seated in-door but dining in the open allows them to enjoy the scenery rather than staring at a wall. The informer also mentioned that they do not like a noisy environment (Table 2, Quotes 14-15). This is in line with the result found by Almanza et al. (2000) who said older people has greater concern towards lighting and noise. Contrary to that, there were few informers who mentioned that they prefer to dine indoor (Table 2, Quote 16). The major concern stated by the informers is the safety of dining out in the open as it is more accident prone and bad air quality compared to dining in the restaurant. . In the study done by Kim, Bergman, and Raab (2010), fine dining visiting respondent of the research said that they value facilities with pleasant atmosphere, comfortable seating and sufficient parking. Research done by Moschis et al. (2003) found that more than half of the respondent (54.8%) of their survey had mentioned that they visit restaurant because restaurant is a 'comfortable place to socialize' (p.

55). The atmosphere of a restaurant provides an opportunity to re-connect with family members and friends. It also treated as a place to release their stress.

3.5 Life's perspective

According to (Vabø & Hansen, 2014), everyone forms sensory perception almost in the same way but this perception can be affected by surrounding social and cultural context. Being Malaysian, all the informants have been exposed to the cultural diversity (Malay, Chinese and Indian) especially in term of food. This makes them unique and serves a reason why people tend to go for different cultural food (Table 2, Quote 17). Even though the informers is influenced by the other cultural food available, they still have a strong affinity towards food of their culture and at times towards food from the place they grew up in as stated by few informers.

Religion has a strong influence on a person's eating habits and are mostly has strong and rigid guidelines in the consumption of food (Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012). As known, Hindu's and Buddhist do not consume beef and Muslims do not consume pork because of their religious restriction. Other than food prohibition, the way food prepared also important (e.g. halal) or fasting observed during certain time of the week or year (e.g. Deepavali, Thaipusam, Ramadhan and etc.). Halal is an important concept for the Muslims to identify whether the product; in this case being food; is permissible for consumption according to their religious restriction. This is the first thing that asked by the Muslim older adults when going to a new restaurant or trying a new food (Table 2, Quote 18). Being in a nation of many religions, restaurateurs should be sensitive and give importance to religious restriction (in term of food) to form marketing plan as this generation is said to be more religious compared to the millennial generation (Jackson, 2016). It was also mentioned that no matter which generation one is right now, people becomes more religious as the age increases.

3.6 Ageing

As one ages, they undergoes three main changes in life that is physiological, psychological and sociological changes (Gregoire, 2003). These changes are known as the ageing effect. The physiological changes affect the biology of the individual for example in term of their recovery period, agility and digestive ability. The informants in the research mostly undergo this phase where they have mentioned that they started to lose interest in eating and less or no appetite (Table 2, Quote 19). When it comes to trying a menu item that the informants never taken before, some are willing to try while some are not so. When the informers were asked whether they will try food that they have not tasted before or not, they are interested in trying. Few of the informant said that they are willing to try if suggested by someone they trust; family and friends; but will not go on to try on their own (Table 2, Quote 20). This might be due to the fact that the decision to eat is a routine daily decision. Routine daily decisions are usually not given much thought as it is formed based on a person's deep rooted beliefs and values (Snyder, 2002). This age group tend to be slow when it comes to explore new food (Pederson, 1993) but this is changing as older adults above the age of 50 is said to 'love to try new things' (Gordon, Moser, & Warren, 2002).

With age, illness is unavoidable. In order to stay healthy, some of the informants had said that they had reduced or controlled their food intake (Table 2, Quotes 21). Older people in this research beliefs that one can have a healthy body if they control their food intake or exercise or both. Food intake or dietary intake should match the activity level to avoid weight gain (Simpson et al., 2005). Based on the research done, it was found that older people tend to reduce their intake of food to avoid gaining weight. The informers' associates' food consumption to weight gain. The additional gain in weight is viewed to be troublesome especially with the increasing age.

According to Lin and Wu (2016), adventurous food consumer are people that looks for novelty in the food that they consume and willing to try food that are different and unfamiliar. This is an interesting find as older consumer are usually said to lack interest trying newer food trend (Reynolds & Hwang, 2006). Most of the interviewed informer states that they are interested in trying different type of food (something that they do not eat everyday) which shows the interest in trying new food item. This age group was said to be slow when it comes to explore new food (Pederson, 1993) but this is changing as older adults above the age of 50 is said to 'love to try new things' (Gordon, Moser, & Warren, 2002). The statement was found to be true when most of the informers of this research said that they are keen in trying but at different level of comfortability (Table 2, Quote 22).

Table 2. Supporting quotes

Theme	ID	Quote
Cleanliness	1	...when we go to certain restaurant's washroom, the environment is not good. If I saw something like that, I will not go to the restaurant again. This is because the kitchen will be dirty as well. (Informer 1)
	2	I have seen a bottle of soy sauce that is full of maggot once in a restaurant. I have not visited the restaurant since. (Informer 1)
	3	I will see the staff, if their attire is not very [pleasing], the appetite will go away. (Informer 8)
Food	4	I would go for taste. If I go to a shop and find the food is delicious, I will be a repeat customer there. (Informer 4)
	5	I swallow everything. As long the food is tasty. If western, I like the sauce of chicken chop. I find it delicious. (Informer 7)
	6	They (the restaurant staff) know very well that it is not good or has high possibilities of getting spoiled still they will use it. (Informer 1)
	7	About the price being expensive is not a concern. As long as it is tasty. (Informer 8)
Service quality	8	We want them to correct the mistake. If not, there is no use. You are doing business but do not want to listen to customers complain (Informer 7)
	9	Depends on my mood. If my mood is not good, I will keep quiet and will not go there again. (Informer 5)
	10	Sometimes the staffs do not understand as they are not from here. I felt that it is better not to visit the restaurant rather than explain what we want to them. (Informer 2)
	11	The staffs there take good care of us and talks very nicely. That is why we normally go there. (Informer 1)
	12	There was one restaurant where I already seated for 15 minutes and no one came to take order. We just get out of that place. After that, did not go there again. Easy. (Informer 8)
Servicescape	13	If we go to a new restaurant, we do not know how to order. We do feel like eating few things but we do not know how to order it. Because of this we do not go to a new restaurant. (Informer 1)
	14	I do not like a noisy environment. It must be quiet and open-air. Even if I go to a restaurant, I would not sit inside and dine. (Informer 1)
	15	I feel spacious. When we eat, we want to look (at the surrounding) but if we sit indoor feel like cramped. At the outdoor we feel spacious, it's a relief. We can sit and enjoy the environment. (Informer 8)
Life's perspective	16	I would see where the table is situated. If the table is (situated) beside the roadside, I won't want to go there. Because if the table is on the roadside... people now days are driving like crazy (laughs). (Informer 11)
	17	Yes, we usually go to the Chinese restaurant because sometimes we would feel like eating something different. It is because at home we always eat Indian food such as curry. (Informer 1)
	18	Will definitely see if halal or not. My son loves to eat food like sushi and everything but halal. I will ask him to find the halal ones (Informer 15)
Ageing	19	Talking about the topic of appetite, the informer had mentioned that his appetite is not good. He had reduced his food intake compared to before. It happened involuntarily and it wasn't a conscious decision. He feels that increasing age and reduced physical activity is the reason for the changes. (Informer 9)
	20	I will try it. If any of my children said that it taste nice, I would then try it. I would not go and try to eat something new on my own. (Informer 4)
	21	As I start to age, I became more conscious of my family medical history. My father has diabetes and high blood pressure. So, I try to take care of my diet. (Informer 10)
	22	Usually I will go for something different, not those that I can cook on my own such as curry. Usually will go for something different. (Informer 13)
Price and discount	23	We do not go to restaurant very often because very expensive now. (Informer 10)
	24	If I decide to eat something (in a restaurant), I will not change my decision for a promotion. (Informer 13)
	25	The price is reasonable. Tasty, so we couldn't comment on the price right. As long as they treat us well, good service, and the food is good as well. (Informer 7)
Location	26	As long as we get a good deal la. Just like Shogun, buy 3 free 1. It's worth it. (Informer 14)
	27	I would travel as far as Negeri Sembilan even Perak's Tanjung Tualang (to eat). We even travelled to Sibul to eat a fish. (Informer 14)
	28	Sometimes I will go quite far. If I feel like the restaurant's food is delicious, I will go to (the restaurant) but mostly will eat nearby the house. (Informer 15)
Socializing	29	When we go to a restaurant, we can sit as a family and eat. (Informer 1)
	30	We (informer and friend) go to mamak restaurant but will not go there with family. (Informer 12)
	31	When there is someone's birthday (in the family), we would go to a restaurant. (Informer 3)
Recommendation	32	If other complains about the shop, I will not go to the restaurant. (Informer 4)
	33	Usually my restaurant going choices is from the suggestions of friends and children. (Informer 7)

	34	Like the 'Jalan-jalan Cari Makan' program, I will take down the information of the place mentioned in it. Then, will try the place suggested. Will plan out the trip. (Informer 13)
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3.7 Price and discounts

Older adults do not always consider food price as a major factor to visit restaurant because they are willing to pay more if they feel they receive service and food that is good. This is consistent with the study done by Kim et al., (2010) that found mature consumers gave more importance to taste and consistency of the food rather the pricing itself thus giving restaurant managers flexibility in term of food pricing. In today's economy, everyone is feeling the pressure of saving money. The informant in the study do spend their money eating outside but do it occasionally as eating out is expensive (Table 2, Quote 23). There is some exemption to this where some informants do not mind spending their money eating out as long as they receive the equal amount of service and good food in return but not often as well (Table 2, Quote 25).

Older Malaysian consumers are said to be price conscious in purchasing clothes and dining out (Ong & Phillips, 2007). Being conscious about food price does not mean that older adults only will consume inexpensive food. They are willing to eat out if they find it to be reasonably priced. Informer 13 had previously mentioned that she do not like her option of eating out being narrowed just because discounts and promotion (Table 2, Quote 24). If the deal is good, the older adults do take it as a consideration when visiting a restaurant (Table 2, Quote 26).

Based on the result obtained, the older adults in this research give more importance to the quality of food and service rather than discounts and promotions which is in line with the result obtained by Kim et al. (2010). This does not mean that the restaurant operators can now charge the older adults as much as they like because it must be kept in mind that this consumer segments are both price conscious and will go for food with reasonable pricing.

3.8 Location

As people age, location becomes more important as they "*lose some agility, dexterity, eyesight, and speed*" in doing things (Knutson, 2002). Slower movement and agility in older adults has brought up the need for doing things in one go. For example, older consumer prefer if the store or restaurant that they are visiting are near the other place that they patronize or near to the place they live or work (Moschis, Ferguson, & Zhu, 2011). Most of the informers prefer eating nearby their residential area but there are some who are willing to travel just to be able to eat a certain food no matter how far it is (Table 2, Quote 27). Age does not seem to slow or stop their adventurous spirit in trying different type of food/restaurant and traveling beyond immediate neighbourhood to find great food. The informers mentioned that if they have the time, they are willing to travel for food. Some of the informer has mentioned that even though they are willing to travel quite a distance to eat, they do it occasionally as they mostly eat in places near to their house (Table 2, Quote 28). Based on previous research by (Moschis et al., 2003), they had found that half of the respondent in their research said that they choose restaurant based on the proximity of the restaurant to their workplace or home. Based on the result of the result of this paper, we can deduce that the older adults are getting more mobile in term of their food venture.

3.9 Socializing

Another prominent factor in influencing older consumer in their dining out decision is their social factor. Social factor is an important determinant in food intake among elderly (Popper & Kroll, 2003). One of the strongest motivators for senior citizen to eat out is companionship (Knutson & Patton, 1993). They had found that eating out is seen as an opportunity to socialize and a third of the respondent of the research had said that eating out gives them the opportunity to be with family and friends. This reasoning was used by both who is living alone or with family. Yamanaka and Almanza (2003) found that older people in their research eat out in a restaurant because "*there are friendly people at my favorite restaurant*" and "*go out to visit with friends*" (p.95). Most of the respondent had mentioned that they go out their family member to eat (Table 2, Quote 29) and some out with friends (Table 2, Quote 30). It is said that the most important reason for an older adult to dine out is so that they can get together with friends and family (Sun & Morrison, 2007). This statement is consistent with the result of this research where almost all the informers eat out with either family members or friends but weighing more on the prior.

Other than that, the informants in this research also said that the other reason why they go out to eat is to celebrate an occasion for example birthday celebration (Table 2, Quote 31). Previous research by Pederson (1993) found that older adults tend to dine out to celebrate special occasions while the younger adults dine out for social occasion and convenience. When asked why they like to go out with family members to restaurant, the informers

mentioned that it is fun and joyous experience for them. Thus proving the fact that older consumer view restaurant dining experience as a way to socialize (Yamanaka & Almanza, 2003).

3.10 Recommendation

Recommendation or suggestion is a form of advice given regarding particular issue or behavior. Recommendation can either be verbal (suggested by people) or non-verbal (articles, books, blog, social media and etc.). The reason people looks up for recommendation and suggestions are because they would want to learn as much possible before making any decision of purchasing (Ahmad, 2014). In the study about older adult's information search behavior, Altobello et al. (2009) found that some of their respondent states that when they do not know how to search for information to choose the best service provider they will ask recommendation from their friends. Some informants have mentioned that they will decide not go to a restaurant if someone who had experienced something bad in a restaurant shared their experience (Table 2, Quote 32). Word of mouth could influence an individual's decision to dine or not as a positive word-of-mouth can create positive response and vice versa (Ahmad, 2014). Suggestion and recommendation from others is an important criterion for older adults to make decision (Table 2, Quote 33). According to Ong and Phillips (2007), word of mouth communication or interpersonal sources are the second most important criteria for older consumer in Malaysia to choose a vacation package.

Another interesting point when it comes to recommendation is that older consumer are not only go for suggestions and recommendation given by people that they know, they also uses media as a guide. One of the informer uses the programme "Jalan-jalan Cari Makan" (a popular TV show that shows viewer places with good food) to decide where to eat (Table 2, Quote 34). Other informers also use Google and social media such as Facebook to find potential restaurant to visit. This type of information search and decision process is known as response involvement (Leavitt, et al., 1981 as cited in Michaelidou and Dibb, 2008). Older people are becoming more technologically savvy and not depending on traditional media to obtain information. They are the fastest growing group of internet users today as they believe that they can obtain information faster and help them to make a good purchasing decision (Gordon et al., 2002).

4. CONCLUSION

The factors identified in the study provide information to the food operators about the older consumer in Malaysia. Both local and international food establishment can benefit from this research result to form their marketing plan to target this untapped segment. Paying attention to the discussed factors will be beneficial to those targeting this older generations. Older consumers are more likely to dine out for socialization rather than convenience but their choice of food would be based on their past experience and their health. It is also important that the restaurant takes care of their customer well as word-of-mouth seems to influence the decision of this generation.

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