

**ASEAN CUISINE PREFERENCES OF HOTEL, RESTAURANT AND
TOURISM MANAGEMENT STUDENTS OF ST. PAUL
UNIVERSITY PHILIPPINES**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated on the food preferences of Paulinian students on ASEAN cuisine. Participants' food preferences were further examined with respect to the food specific elements such as aroma, aesthetic appeal, taste and texture. The study further probed on the participants' reasons for their food preferences. Comparative analysis was undertaken to determine whether there exists significant differences on students' food preferences when they are grouped according to gender. The study used the descriptive comparative research design which covered 120 HRTM student participants that were enrolled in the ASEAN cuisine subject during the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015. Participants involved 48 males and 72 females. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to data gathering. Data were obtained using the questionnaire which was further substantiated by a follow up interview. Generally, the results revealed that as to aroma, aesthetic appeal, taste and texture, the most preferred by the participants was the Filipino Cuisine. Although in some of these specific elements, cuisine in other countries was most preferred. It was found out that food preferences along the specified elements do not differ significantly among gender groups except for taste and texture. Based on their ranking, the Filipino cuisine ranked first, the Thai, Singaporean and Vietnamese cuisine ranked second and the Indonesian cuisine ranked third. Reasons for their preferences were likewise unveiled in the study.

Keywords: ASEAN cuisine, food preferences, ASEAN menu, cuisine, food aesthetic appeal

INTRODUCTION

According to Food writer Mark Kurlansky “Food is about agriculture, about ecology, about man’s relationship with nature, about the climate, about nation-building, cultural struggles, friends and enemies, alliances, wars, and religion. It is about memory and tradition.”

“We are what we eat” is a common saying among people who study culinary. Cookery is not chemistry. It is an art. It requires instinct and taste rather than exact measurements. This study examines food preferences and how such preferences are exercised.

The act of consuming food represents a basic locus of identity, of conformity, and of resistance. Even those who appear otherwise powerless exercise choices in food preparation, presentation and consumption. Food is a significant means to penetrate into another culture as it allows an individual to experience the ‘Other’ on a sensory level, and not just an intellectual one. The growth of eating out as a form of consumption and the market forces of globalization have made the food products and cuisines from all over the world more accessible. This premise that the researcher would like to access ASEAN Cuisine as food preferences of HRTM students of St. Paul University Philippines, is to determine their knowledge in terms of the different food presentation, aesthetic appeal and taste of the ASEAN Cuisine.

Using the Food Choice Questionnaire (FCQ) (Step toe et al., 1995) researchers have revealed that several factors such as health, price, convenience, mood, sensory appeal, natural content, weight control, familiarity and ethical concerns affect our food choices (Step toe et al., 1995). According to Grunert (2002), food choices are framed in terms of our quality expectations before and after our purchase of a food product. Research has shown that apart from price, sensory appeal is one of the most important factors influencing food choice (Costell et al., 2010; Drewnowski, 1997; Scheibehenne et al., 2007; Step toe et al., 1995). In the FCQ sensory appeal covers whether the food smells nice, looks nice, has a pleasant texture and tastes good (Step toe et al., 1995). What is interesting is that not only do our sensory or food preferences guide food choice, but a great variety of other factors also contribute to our final

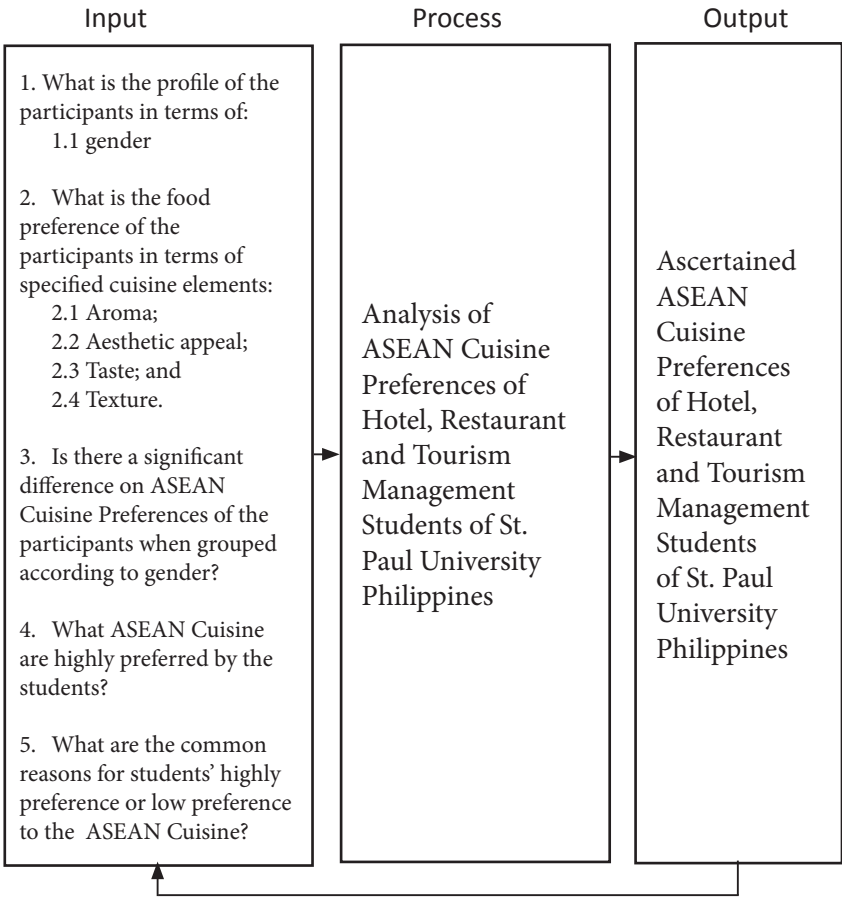
choice of food. According to Costell et al. (2010), consumers' responses to food products are determined by four different components. First, consumers perceive the sensory characteristics of a product. Second, the consumer has a general response to a product, which is an affective component. Third, the consumer applies a cognitive component which is related to the information the consumer has about the product and to the consumers' attitudes and beliefs. Fourth, the response is affected by a behavioral component which involves the persons' intentions or actions for future behavior (Costell et al., 2010). These components are of importance and will be discussed further throughout the paper. A central argument however, is that consumers' responses to food products are further affected by the social milieu or culture we are surrounded by. Whether considered a fifth component in the reasoning above, or treated as a part of the cognitive component, the social milieu we live in is not only important in response to food products but also of importance when it comes to the development of our food preferences. One might claim that the consumption of food can only be fully understood in a social context (Rozin, 1996). Since people grow up in different societies all over the world, we can see distinct differences in food traditions and cuisines (Montanari, 2006). In other words different demographic, socio-cultural and economic factors modulate the connection between taste responsiveness to food and our choices of food (Drewnowski, 1997). This entails the assumption that people from the same culture or region of the world would have been affected in the same way culturally and therefore have similar food preferences compared to people from other parts of the world. Further, in the contemporary world it is common for people to eat the same food or ingredients all over the world. However, due to differences in weather and soil conditions, it does not necessarily mean that foods are prepared in the same way or that they taste the same across geographical regions (Risvik et al., 2006). Following from the previous discussion, sensory preferences alone do not determine our food choice. As seen with the FCQ, several other factors determine what we choose to eat. The interesting thing is how the individual factors (biological and psychological) and the cultural or socio-cultural factors interact to create people's unique sensory food preferences. This paper combines marketing and consumer research literature with sensory and food science literature to provide an interdisciplinary picture of the aforementioned issues. In this, some central questions are: what

biological or inheritable factors affect our food preferences; and what psychological factors contribute to the formation of food preferences? Moreover, what cultural or social factors affect food preferences and what factors affect our food choices are also important issues to address. Finally, how we make food choices and how our food preferences affect or interact with them are also of particular interest. In order to answer these questions, the researchers initially elaborate on factors that cause differences or similarities in food preferences, focusing on thematic areas such as biological, psychological, cultural and societal factors. Secondly, the underlying reasons for consumers' food choice will be discussed. Then, the review will provide a brief discussion of the connection between food preferences and food choices. Finally, any lack of research focus within the areas of food preferences and food choices are suggested.

Personality characteristics also affect consumer perception and preferences for food (Jaeger et al., 1998). Private Body Consciousness (PBC) (Miller et al., 1981) is one such characteristic and previous studies have related PBC to food preference (Jaeger et al.,1998; Solheim & Lawless, 1996). PBC is an individual measure of inner body awareness and subjects might be classified as either high or low in PBC. The subjects are classified based on several factors such as sensitivity to changes in body temperature, internal tensions, heart rate, dryness of mouth and throat, and hunger sensations (Jaeger et al.,1998). PBC theory predicts that some people are more sensitive to changes in their body than others, and this has been successfully linked to different aspects of human behavior including reference for sensory characteristics (Jaeger et al.,1998). Specifically, Jaeger et al.1998 showed that people who were high in PBC were more likely to evaluate apple samples on the basis of sensory characteristics than people who were low in PBC. How consumers' react to information given about a food product (in this case cheddar cheese) has also been found to depend on whether they are high or low in PBC. High PBC increased the purchase probability when tasting was accompanied by correct information about fat content and price (Solheim & Lawless, 1996).

Research Paradigm

The research illustrates the relationship of the three component input, process and output.



Feedback

Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

As shown in the figure the input includes the profile of the participants, food preferences in terms of specified cuisine elements, and ASEAN Cuisine highly preferred by the students of St. Paul University Philippines. The process employed is the analysis of ASEAN Cuisine Preferences of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management students of St. Paul University Philippines. The expected output is ascertained ASEAN Cuisine Preferences of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management Students of St. Paul University Philippines.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the ASEAN Cuisine Preferences of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management Students of St. Paul University Philippines.

Purposely, the researchers sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the participants in terms of gender?
2. What is the ASEAN cuisine preference of the participants in terms of aroma, aesthetic appeal, taste and texture?
3. Is there a significant difference on ASEAN Cuisine Preferences of the participants when grouped according to gender?
4. What ASEAN Cuisine is highly preferred by the students?
5. What are the common reasons for students' highly preference or low preference to the ASEAN Cuisine?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive comparative research design, specifically the descriptive survey method was used to ascertain the ASEAN Cuisine Preferences of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management Students of St. Paul University Philippines.

Participants of the Study

The study covered 120 Bachelor of Science in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism management (HRTM) student participants that were enrolled in the ASEAN cuisine subject during the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015 at St. Paul University Philippines. Participants involved 48 males and 72 females.

Instrumentation

Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to data gathering. Data were obtained using the questionnaire which was further substantiated by a follow up interview.

Data Gathering Procedures

The questionnaire was used to gather information from the participants regarding their expressed ASEAN cuisine preferences.

Survey questionnaire was used to elicit the ASEAN cuisine preferences of the participants.

Upon the accomplishment of the questionnaire the researchers gathered and retrieved the entire questionnaires and were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted to arrive at conclusion and recommendation.

Data Analysis

The following statistical tools were used to analyze the data gathered.

1. The Frequency Count and Percentage Distribution were used to present the gender profile of the participants.
2. Chi-Square. This was used to determine the significant difference of the ASEAN cuisine preferences of the participants when they are grouped according to gender.
3. Weighted Mean was used to determine the participants' level of preference on ASEAN Cuisine. Obtained means were interpreted using a 3-point scale.

Arbitrary Scale:

Scale	Descriptive Interpretation
2.34-3.00	Most Preferred
1.67-2.33	Moderately Preferred
1.00-1.66	Less Preferred

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Participants

Majority (72) or 60 percent are female participants while 48 or 40 percent are male participants. This implies that there are more female than male participants.

ASEAN cuisine preferences of the participants in terms of specified cuisine elements

On aroma, results showed that the Thai cuisine mean of 2.63, Filipino cuisine mean of 2.61 and Singaporean cuisine mean of 2.58 have the highest mean and they are the “most preferred” by the participants. Myanmar cuisine mean of 1.60 and Laos’ cuisine mean of 1.40 have the lowest mean and they are “less preferred” by the participants. The overall mean of 2.06 revealed that as to aroma preference of the students, item “spices” is “likely preferred” by the participants. Item “pleasant flavor,” Indonesia cuisine mean of 2.58, Vietnamese cuisine mean of 2.49 and Filipino cuisine mean of 2.58 have the highest mean and they are the “most preferred” by the participants. Thai cuisine mean of 1.60 has the lowest mean and it is “less preferred” by the participants. The overall mean of 2.05 revealed that as to aroma preference of the students, item “pleasant flavor” is “likely preferred.”

As to spices, Laos’ cuisine mean of 2.73 and Filipino cuisine mean of 2.58 have the highest mean and they are “most preferred” by the participants. Singaporean cuisine mean of 1.60 and Myanmar cuisine mean of 1.58 have the lowest mean and they are “less preferred” by the participants. The overall mean of 1.98 revealed that as to aesthetic appeal preferences of the students, item “shape” is “likely preferred” by the participants. Item “color”, Malaysian cuisine mean of 2.69, Thai cuisine mean of 2.60 and Myanmar cuisine mean of 2.49 have the highest mean and they are “most preferred” by the participants. Singaporean cuisine mean of 1.60 and Vietnam cuisine mean of 1.58 have the lowest mean and they are “less preferred” by the participants. The overall mean of 2.12 revealed that as to aesthetic appeal preference of the students, item “color” is “likely preferred” by the participants. Item “food presentation”,

Laos' cuisine mean of 2.60, Myanmar cuisine mean of 2.70 and Filipino cuisine mean of 2.75 have the highest mean and they are "most preferred" by the participants. Thai cuisine mean of 1.63 has the lowest mean and it is "less preferred" by the participants. The overall mean of 2.06 revealed that as to aesthetic appeal preference of the students, item "food presentation" is "likely preferred" by the participants.

With regard to taste preference of the students, item "salty", Vietnam cuisine mean of 2.48 and Malaysian cuisine mean of 2.60 have the highest mean and they are "most preferred" by the participants. Thai cuisine mean of 1.60 has the lowest mean and it is "less preferred" by the participants. The overall mean of 2.09 revealed that as to taste preference of the students, item "salty" is "likely preferred" by the participants. Item "sweet", Filipino cuisine mean of 2.48 and Malaysian cuisine mean of 2.70 have the highest mean and they are "most preferred" by the participants. Indonesian cuisine mean of 1.59 has the lowest mean and it is "less preferred" by the participants. The overall mean of 1.97 revealed that as to taste preference of the students, item "sweet" is "likely preferred" by the participants. Item "sour", Cambodian cuisine mean of 2.14 and Filipino cuisine mean of 2.16 have the highest mean and they are "most preferred" by the participants. Thai cuisine mean of 1.61 has the lowest mean and it is "less preferred" by the participants. The overall mean of 2.03 revealed that as to taste preference of the students item "sour" is "likely preferred" by the participants. Item "spicy", Thai cuisine mean of 2.65 and Indonesian cuisine mean of 2.75 have the highest mean and they are "most preferred" by the participants. Myanmar cuisine mean of 1.58 has the lowest mean and it is "less preferred" by the participants. The overall mean of 2.02 revealed that as to taste preference of the students, item "spicy" is "likely preferred" by the participants.

With regard to texture preference of the students, item "medium rare", Indonesian cuisine mean of 2.55 and Filipino cuisine mean of 2.56 have the highest mean and they are "most preferred" by the participants. Vietnamese cuisine mean of 1.58 and Laos cuisine mean of 1.50 have the lowest mean and they are "less preferred" by the participants. The overall mean of 1.92 revealed that as to taste preference of the students, item "medium rare" is "likely preferred" by the participants. Item "rare", Filipino cuisine mean of 2.58 has the highest mean and it is "most preferred" by

the participants. Vietnamese cuisine mean of 1.56 has the lowest mean and it is “less preferred” by the participants. The overall mean of 1.88 revealed that as to taste preference of the students, item “rare” is “likely preferred” by the participants. Item “well done”, Thai cuisine mean of 2.61, Vietnamese cuisine mean of 2.66 and Malaysian cuisine mean of 2.74 have the highest mean and they are “most preferred” by the participants. Myanmar cuisine mean of 1.60 and Laos cuisine mean of 1.50 have the lowest mean and they are “less preferred” by the participants. The overall mean of 2.11 revealed that as to taste preference of the students, item “well done” is “likely preferred” by the participants. Item “over cooked”, Filipino cuisine mean of 2.45 and Vietnamese cuisine mean of 2.60 have the highest mean and they are “most preferred” by the participants. Thai cuisine mean of 1.58 and Laos cuisine mean of 1.50 have the lowest mean and they are “less preferred” by the participants. The overall mean of 1.96 revealed that as to taste preference of the students, item “over cooked” is “likely preferred” by the participants.

Chi-square Analysis on the Significant Difference on Students’ Level of Preference on ASEAN Cuisine across Gender Groups

On Aroma, it was found out to have no significant difference in the students’ level of preference on ASEAN cuisine across gender.

As to aesthetic appeal, there is no significant difference in the students’ level of preference on ASEAN cuisine across gender.

In terms of taste (sweet and sour), it was found out to have no significant difference in the students’ level of preference on ASEAN cuisine across gender. In contrast with, when it comes to saltiness of the food it was found out to have significant difference across gender.

With respect to texture (medium rare and rare) in the students’ level of preference on ASEAN cuisine, it was found out to have a significant difference on gender. On the other hand, it was found out that in terms of texture (well-done and overcooked) there is no significant difference on gender.

Like, Dislike, Rank and Reasons of ASEAN Cuisine as Preferences

Results showed the like, dislike, rank and reasons of the ASEAN cuisine preference of the participants the Filipino cuisine ranked first, Thai, Singaporean and Vietnamese cuisine were ranked second and the Indonesian cuisine ranked third it followed, while Cambodian cuisine rank eight as the last ASEAN cuisine preference by participants. The participants have common reasons in the ASEAN Cuisine as their preference. This implies that participants examine their highly preferred ASEAN cuisine. Filipino cuisine rank first as the most preferred cuisine among all Association of Southeast Asian Nations country.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Generally as to aroma, aesthetic appeal, taste and texture, the participants most preferred the Filipino Cuisine. Although in some of these specific elements, cuisine in other countries were most preferred. Based on their ranking, the Filipino cuisine ranked first, the Thai, Singaporean and Vietnamese cuisine were ranked second and the Indonesian cuisine ranked third. Reasons for their preferences were likewise unveiled in the findings. It was found out that food preferences along the specified elements do not differ significantly among gender groups except for taste and texture.

Students' preference to Filipino foods indicates that still Filipino cuisine is appealing for the participants. This is traded on the fact that they most prefer the aroma, aesthetic appeal, taste and texture of Filipino foods. Although in some of these specific elements, cuisine in other countries were most preferred. Male and female have the same food preference with respect to aroma, aesthetic appeal but not on taste and texture. Based on their ranking, the Filipino cuisine ranked first, the Thai, Singaporean and Vietnamese cuisine were ranked second and the Indonesian cuisine ranked third.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

Results of the study shall be presented among international restaurant businesses to provide them with significant inputs on ASEAN food preferences.

Since the study only considered popular foods in each ASEAN country, it is further recommended that a parallel study be conducted to include other cuisine.

Further investigation to explore more of the food preferences by including other set of participants including foreigners.

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