

ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MOTIVES BEHIND INDONESIAN CULINARY PURCHASING DECISIONS BY INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the psychological motives that influence Indonesian culinary purchase decisions by Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. Migrant workers often face challenges in adapting to a new culture, which encourages them to seek psychological comfort through the consumption of familiar foods. Indonesian cuisine becomes a means to overcome homesickness and maintain cultural identity. This study identified several key psychological motives, namely nostalgia, cultural identity, social influence and hedonistic motives. Nostalgia plays an important role in creating a sense of comfort, while cultural identity is reinforced through the consumption of typical foods. Social influence from other migrant groups also influences culinary choices, in addition to the search for enjoyment generated from Indonesian food. The results of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the consumption behavior of migrant workers, as well as open up opportunities for culinary businesses to meet specific market needs.*

Keywords: psychological motives, purchasing decisions, Indonesian cuisine, migrant workers, Malaysia.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of Indonesians migrating abroad has become a complex global issue. One of the most common destinations for Indonesian migration is Malaysia, which is one of the largest migrant receiving countries in Southeast Asia. Quoting from IOM Indonesia (2023) thousands of Indonesian citizens each year choose to work in the neighboring country, seeking better economic opportunities. According to data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/MOFA in 2020, there were as many as 2.7 million Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. This brings with it the culture and habits of migrant workers, including their culinary preferences.

Indonesian cuisine has now successfully penetrated the global market. To date, there are 1,170 Indonesian restaurants operating abroad. This is due to the role of the Indonesian government through the "Indonesia Spice Up the World" program, which plans to open 4,000 Indonesian restaurants abroad by 2024. In addition to the mission of introducing Indonesian food in the foreign arena, this program also targets an increase in the export value of Indonesian herbs and spices to two billion dollars in 2024 from only one billion dollars in 2021 (Salsabila & Rini, 2023).

In Malaysia, the existence of Indonesian restaurants and food stalls is increasingly mushrooming and attracting the interest of not only local people, but also Indonesian migrant workers. This is inseparable from the influence of consumer habits on culinary that uses a lot of spices so that it creates a certain pattern of purchasing behavior, especially for Indonesian migrant workers. Adaptation for migrant workers is a complex process where according to the results of research from Mulia, Rahardjo and Ayun (2024) stated that the strategy adopted by migrant workers in the adaptation process is an integration strategy where there are efforts to maintain the culture of origin while adapting to the culture there. Especially the culinary

adaptation process which involves adjusting taste, social interaction, and strategies to overcome different cultural barriers.

In consumer purchases, according to Meilinda and Susanti (2018), consumer psychological factors are very influential when making purchases. The results of this study show that consumer purchasing decisions are made because of a sense of interest and curiosity so that in this process consumers can recognize their needs, taste perceptions, and post-purchase behavior.

Migration often creates homesickness, which is manifested through the consumption of traditional foods. For Indonesian migrants, food fulfills not only biological needs, but also emotional, social and psychological needs. The decision to purchase ethnic foods, including Indonesian foods, among migrants is often related to factors such as nostalgia, the need for cultural identity, social group influence, and hedonistic motives. The importance of understanding the psychological motives behind this consumption behavior can be seen as a great opportunity in business.

Therefore, this study aims to understand how psychological motives can influence Indonesian culinary purchasing decisions especially among migrant workers, as well as the implications of this phenomenon for the national identity and economy of both countries.

2. Literature Review

Purchasing decisions according to Kotler and Armstrong in Sengkey and Wenas (2015) are the process of choosing consumer decisions from existing alternatives due to motives that generate interest in meeting needs. According to Adindarena and Djara (2022) the purchasing motive that becomes the benchmark for companies in researching market opportunities can be based on the consumer's point of view in the form of primary and secondary purchasing motives which start from an internal drive towards self-adjustment to meet needs and a sense of satisfaction. These motives are expressed by Nugraha et al (2021) based on the category of viewpoints used by consumers in decision making, including economic, cognitive and emotional viewpoints. In some circumstances, consumers make purchases not based on logic but because of their emotional motives.

Psychological motives are one of the motives that are very influential in consumer decision making. Psychological motives are motives that arise within consumers to fulfill their needs. Where these needs will become the biggest motive underlying purchasing decisions if they are pushed to reach an adequate level of intensity. These psychological motives can include the need for recognition, appreciation, or a sense of group membership (Priansa, 2017).

Migrant workers will generally adapt to the local environment both in terms of socio-culture and society because they are driven by their needs (Sabariman et al., 2020). Some people need a longer adjustment process than others. One of the migrant adaptation processes is in terms of culinary. Not infrequently psychological motives become the underlying motive for consumers, especially migrant workers, in choosing culinary preferences to be purchased. Some of the motives underlying migrant workers in making purchasing decisions are nostalgic motives, cultural identity motives, social motives and hedonistic motives.

Nostalgia, or longing for the past, is one of the main psychological motives driving the purchasing decisions of Indonesian cuisine by migrant workers in Malaysia. Research shows that traditional foods have the ability to trigger strong emotional memories and create a sense of closeness to home. Herz (2021) states that food can bring sensory experiences that stimulate nostalgia, which in turn influences consumption behavior. This is particularly relevant in the context of migrant workers who often miss the culture and food of their home country.

Ethnic food consumption is often used as a way to assert social and cultural identity. According to Sultan & Wong (2020), ethnic food is a way for migrant workers to maintain their cultural identity in a foreign environment. Indonesian food provides a strong link between migrant workers and their cultural roots, as well as strengthening social relationships with fellow migrants.

Social norms and reference groups play an important role in purchasing decisions. Chandon & Wansink (2022) mentioned that consumption behavior is often influenced by the social environment. For migrant workers, recommendations from friends and other migrant groups can influence their choice in purchasing Indonesian food. Social norms within migrant groups can reinforce preferences for Indonesian specialties.

In addition to nostalgia and cultural identity factors, purchasing decisions can also be influenced by hedonistic motives, namely the search for pleasure and taste satisfaction. Larson & Story (2019) emphasize that food has an emotional dimension that can trigger happiness and satisfaction. The authentic taste and quality of Indonesian food can be an attractive factor for migrant workers to buy this culinary specialty.

Migrant workers' consumption choices are also influenced by environmental conditions, including food availability, price, and service quality. According to Ajzen (2020), the theory of planned behavior explains that intention to purchase is influenced by attitudes towards the product, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this case, migrant workers may be influenced by the availability of Indonesian food in their neighborhood as well as perceptions of the price and quality of the food.

3. Method

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. According to Sugiyono in Kiswanto (2022) descriptive qualitative method is a research method that is usually used to research on natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments) and is based on the philosophy of postpositivism where the researcher is the key research instrument.

The informants or research subjects who are the sources of this research are 13 migrant workers. Then the object of this research is psychological motives in making purchasing decisions where the indicators taken are nostalgic motives, identity and cultural motives, social motives, and hedonistic motives.

Table 1. Buyer's perspective

No.	Data type	Indicator	Conclusion
1	Primary data	Nostalgic motifs	Remembering the hometown atmosphere and the sense of comfort and tranquility when eating Indonesian food.
2	Primary data	Cultural identity motif	Pride as an Indonesian, a sense of wanting to introduce food to foreign friends, and definitely defending Indonesian cuisine if someone drops its name.
3	Primary data	Social motives	The intensity of eating with fellow migrant workers in Indonesian restaurants and the ease of adapting to the environment because it often makes Indonesian restaurants a gathering place.

No.	Data type	Indicator	Conclusion
4	Primary data	Hedonistic motives	Statements related to taste, authentic flavors, and willingness to spend more if they find high quality Indonesian cuisine.

Source: Author (2024)

Table 2. Interview with seller

No.	Data type	Indicator	Conclusion
1	Secondary data	Reasons for choosing to sell Indonesian cuisine	The location of the business is close to the domicile of the migrant worker.
2	Secondary data	The most sought-after food	Javanese Cuisine.
3	Secondary data	Buyer's ethnicity	Indonesian and Malay.
4	Secondary data	Taste	Shoppers' tastes and habits for spicy food as Malaysian cuisine tends to be sweet.
5	Secondary data	High price	The average buyer does not mind paying a higher price as long as the quality of ingredients and taste are equivalent, for example in dishes made from meat, cuttlefish, shrimp or grilled fish.

Source: Author (2024)

4. Result and Discussion

Respondent characteristics are a profile of the object of research that can provide research results regarding the analysis of the psychological motives behind purchasing decisions for Indonesian cuisine in Malaysia. To find out this, the respondents in this study are migrant workers who work in Malaysia, who have lived for at least 3 months in Malaysia, and who often consume Indonesian cuisine and often buy Indonesian cuisine at Indonesian food stalls or restaurants in Malaysia. The psychological motives obtained are nostalgic motives, cultural identity motives, social motives and hedonistic motives.

Respondents showed an emotional attachment to their hometown when consuming Indonesian food in Malaysia. 77% of respondents agreed that Indonesian food reminds them of being with family and friends in Indonesia, and 38% strongly agreed with this statement. This confirms that food plays an important role in maintaining memories and curing homesickness for Indonesian migrant workers. In addition, 69% feel more comfortable and calm when eating Indonesian food, suggesting it is also a source of psychological comfort.

Indonesian food in Malaysia is considered important in maintaining cultural identity for migrant workers. As many as 61.5% of respondents feel proud to be Indonesian when eating Indonesian food, and 61.5% feel that Indonesian food is part of their identity. This shows that food has a significant role in building and maintaining cultural identity in a new environment. Indonesian cuisine is also a means of socialization for migrant workers. A total of 69.2% of respondents strongly agreed that Indonesian restaurants are a place to gather and socialize with fellow Indonesian workers, which shows that food serves not only physical but also social needs.

Respondents expressed their preference for the distinctive flavors of Indonesian cuisine. A total of 76.9% strongly liked the taste of Indonesian food and 76.9% felt that Indonesian cuisine was

more in line with their tastes. This reinforces the role of flavor quality in food purchase decisions. In addition, 53.8% do not mind paying more for high quality Indonesian food, indicating that hedonistic aspects are an important factor in purchasing Indonesian food..

5. Conclusions

Based on the results and discussion of "Analysis of Psychological Motives Behind the Decision to Purchase Indonesian Culinary by Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia", it can be concluded that Indonesian culinary has an important role in the lives of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, both as a reminder of home, a means of maintaining cultural identity, a place to socialize, and as a preferred food choice. These four motives-nostalgia, cultural identity, social, and hedonistic-influence the decisions of Indonesian migrant workers in choosing Indonesian cuisine in Malaysia.

Food not only serves as a basic need, but also as a medium that strengthens workers' emotional and social connection with their identity as Indonesians. This is a very promising opportunity for businesses to expand internationally. By guaranteeing the quality of authentic flavors, consumers are more likely to make repeat purchases.

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