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# Determinants of consumers' motivation towards ethnic food: evidence from Indonesia

Consumers' motivation towards ethnic food

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The research objective is to explore consumers' (those of ethnic origin and non-ethnic origin) motivation for choosing ethnic food.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A total of 120 respondents were approached at Padang restaurants in Jakarta, and personal interviews were conducted using soft laddering techniques linking to means-end chain (MEC) analysis. The associations among attributes, consequences and values were mapped into a graphical hierarchy to depict the cognitive structure of consuming ethnic food.

**Findings** – The unique and spicy taste of Padang food, as well as preferences for the cuisine, was identified as the determinants of consumption of Padang food. In addition, the Minang people still considered the food's origin and tradition when consuming it. "Financial security" and "happiness" were identified as the desired values that consumers want to achieve.

**Research limitations/implications** – The extent to which acculturation affects consumers' decision-making on consuming ethnic food has not been significantly investigated.

**Practical implications** – Padang food can be promoted by highlighting its traditions and unique, spicy taste. These are key messages to attract consumers of Padang ethnic food.

**Originality/value** – The paper presents an original motivations and cognitive structures for eating Padang food.

**Keywords** Food decisions, Means-end chain, Minang, Personal value, Product attribute, Rendang

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Most of the previous studies regarding ethnic food have focused on identifying attributes and benefits as well as socioeconomic factors underlying ethnic food consumption (Wang *et al.*, 2015; Ting *et al.*, 2017; Tomić *et al.*, 2018; Ha, 2019). However, only a few have examined the cognitive structure that connects the relationship between attributes, benefits and their personal values in the ethnic food decision-making. Some studies have identified factors affecting ethnic cuisine consumption in different places from its original country and from the perspective of tourists who dine at ethnic restaurants (such as Batra, 2008; Tinga *et al.*, 2019; Ahmad *et al.*, 2020). Several of these studies concentrated on developed countries, particularly Europe. Additionally, some studies regarding ethnic cuisines from Asian countries have been widely conducted, including those from China, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam

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(e.g. [Batra, 2008](#); [Min and Han, 2017](#)), but little is known about how consumers in highly diverse communities such as Indonesia respond to specific ethnic cuisine.

Indonesia is the biggest archipelago in the world. It is the homeland of approximately 300 different ethnic groups and has the national motto “Unity in diversity”. It also contains some of the main world religions, like Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism ([Klopper, 1993](#)). The biggest ethnic group in Indonesia is the Javanese, followed by the Sundanese, Minangkabau and others. This diversity contributes to Indonesia’s unique characteristics, and it influences culture, traditions, indigenous food and food habits. Each ethnic group has a unique food tradition that includes the story behind the food, its nutritional benefits and food-related culture and consumption. West Sumatra province is home to the Minangkabau or Minang people. It is located on the west coast of Sumatra. Minang people are often called Padang people. Padang is the capital of West Sumatra province. The phrase “Padang cuisine” is usually used to refer to all types of cuisine originating from the Minangkabau ethnic group ([Klopper, 1993](#)). However, the majority of the Minangkabau’s recipes are not only from Padang city but also from other areas in West Sumatra province, such as Bukittinggi, Tanah Datar, Padang Panjang and Payakumbuh. Due to the significant differences in food culture between Minang and non-Minang people in terms of taste, cooking method and material used, it is necessary to investigate the motivations of Minang and non-Minang origin consumers of Padang ethnic food.

Padang restaurants (*rumah makan padang*) link to ethnic stereotypes of Minangkabau food and cuisine outside of the West Sumatra region. The restaurants are usually owned by Minangkabau people or their descendants. They vary from small restaurants (*warung makan*) with one to two workers, to large enterprises with 20 or more workers wearing uniforms. Rice is the main dish provided in Padang restaurants ([Klopper, 1993](#)). Side dishes include *rendang*, curries (*gulai* and *kalio*), fried dishes (*dendeng* and *dendeng paru*), sour and hot soups of fish or meat (*asam padeh*), chilli paste (*samba lado*), steamed vegetable (cassava leaves) and skin crackers (*karupuk jangek*). *Rendang*, consisting of beef cooked for 6–7 h in coconut milk with herbs, spices and chilli, is the essential traditional Minangkabau dish for many events, and it describes the taste of the Minangkabau ([Rini et al., 2016](#)). The particular food-processing technique used affects the unique taste of *rendang*. The meat texture is soft and the taste is delicious, explaining why many consumers are interested in *rendang*. In a survey conducted by the Cable News Network (CNN) in 2017, *rendang* was selected as “the most delicious food in the world”, based on readers’ choices ([CNN, 2017](#)).

Although Padang food is universally popular, little has been done to explore consumers’ motivation for choosing this type of food while differentiating between people of Minang and non-Minang origin, resulting in a lack of an understanding of how consumers behave. Previous studies have focused on the anthropology, history and philosophy of *rendang* ([Nurmufida et al., 2017](#); [Rahman, 2020](#)), the evaluation of *rendang* nutrition ([Rini et al., 2016](#)) as well as Minangkabau food culture, traditional diets and meal patterns ([Lipoeto et al., 2001](#)). To our knowledge, no studies have been conducted thus far on consumers’ motivations that link attributes to their personal value of Padang food based on people’s origin. Therefore, it is necessary to explore consumer behaviour and motivation regarding Padang food consumption to contribute to the development of the food industry and to understand the scientific background that can be used to promote ethnic food. The purpose of this study is to examine consumers’ motivations and cognitive structure of ethnic food consumption by linking attributes and benefits and consumer personal values within the context of a means-end chain (MEC) conceptual framework that is based on people’s origin.

### Determinant of ethnic food consumption

Although the term “ethnic food” is yet to be fully defined, it consistently includes food linked to a particular ethnic group by its origin. It is created using people’s knowledge of local

ingredients and their heritage, tradition, culture, religion or national origin. The food is accepted culturally and socially by consumers outside of the respective ethnic group. The preparation and processes necessary to produce these foods are an integral part of ethnic foods, underpinning the heritage, tradition and culture and resulting in a specific taste (Camarena *et al.*, 2011; Kwon, 2015, 2017). Ethnic food is eaten at geographical locations different from its origin, and the characteristics of the product are perceived as new and unusual by consumers, like food consumed based on a particular group of religious practices (e.g. halal or kosher food). In Indonesia, Javanese, Sundanese and Padang cuisines are considered ethnic food. This is in line with Groves (2001) who reported that the British perception of authentic British food is influenced by its uniqueness to Britain and culturally related factors such as the traditional association with a geographical area and the characteristics of the process used to produce the food, along with the presence of authenticity.

Ethnic food choices involve a complex decision-making process that is affected by many factors. Sensory appeal and health attributes are important determinants for Malaysians in Sarawak, creating the intention to consume Dayak ethnic food. Consumers' perceptions of ethnic food as being familiar, comfortable and healthy increase the intention to consume ethnic food (Ting *et al.*, 2017). Taste, appearance and authenticity of food and the price/quality ratio have also emerged as key attributes in Belgians' preference for Latin American and Croatian ethnic foods (Verbeke and López, 2005; Tomić *et al.*, 2018). In addition, the economic value (i.e. price); quality of food, service and environment; emotional values (i.e. feeling good, enjoyment and relaxation); and epistemic values (i.e. learning of a new food, new experiences and curiosity) have been identified as values which inform attitudes towards Korean food consumption among non-Korean customers in the USA (Ha, 2019). Local Brisbane consumers perceive Asian ethnic food as flavoursome, tasty and having a nice texture. Among the diverse types of Asian foods, Chinese food is the most popular (Min and Han, 2017). Barrera *et al.* (2015) examined Arabian and Spanish couscous consumers. Arabian consumers considered some critical attributes such as the geographical origin of the product, the cultural identification and the fulfilment of daily family needs. In contrast, Spanish couscous consumers commented that consuming ethnic food is part of being fashionable, cosmopolitan and successful. A situation when one culture is exposed to other cultures, in terms of the extent to which ethnic communities maintain their ancestral culture, adopt the new culture or develop a new culture distinct from both the ancestral and host cultures, is called acculturation (Cleveland *et al.*, 2019). Dey *et al.* (2019) proposed four categories of acculturation strategies to categorize ethnic consumers' food consumption behaviors: (1) resonance – they choose to adopt other cultures and resonate with their inherited cultural characters; (2) rarefaction – they choose to adopt other cultures while retaining their ancestral culture; (3) refrainment – they intend to adopt other cultural attributes as long as they remain within their perceived cultural borders; and (4) rebellion – ethnic consumers' desire for cultural assimilation by surmounting their own cultural obstacles.

### Personal values and means-end chain analysis

Rokeach's study showed that personal values direct people's behaviour in many aspects of their lives (Rokeach, 1973). This was then applied to marketing and consumer research by Gutman (1982). Using this method, consumers learn to select product attributes that lead them to achieve personal values. Personal values refer to important and desirable views and beliefs that govern people's lives. The values motivate people to take action and purchase products to fulfil their needs, wants and desires (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds and Olson, 2001). The means-end chain (MEC) is an approach that describes the relationship between consumers' knowledge of product characteristics, consequences arising from product use and achievement of their end state personal values. The relationship between product attributes



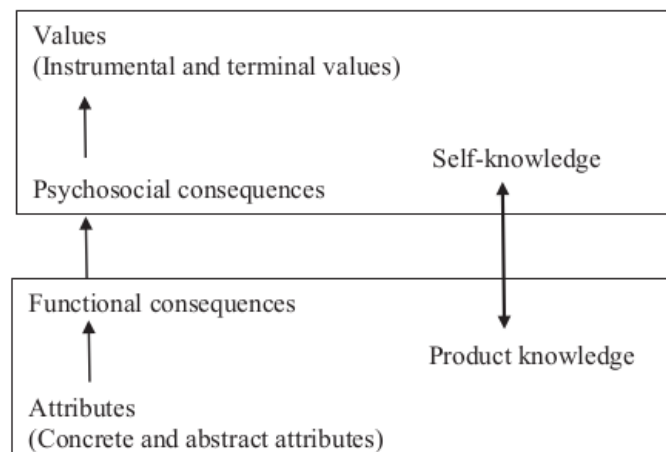
and the consequences when consuming a particular product to fulfil specific values is finally translated into a hierarchical cognitive structure called a hierarchical value map (HVM). Attributes can be either concrete or abstract product characteristics, such as price (concrete attributes), nutritional values or enjoyable eating (abstract attributes) (Botschen *et al.*, 1999). The consequences are positive or negative and/or direct or indirect results of consuming or using a product. The consequences could be functional consequences (e.g. health benefits) or psychosocial consequences, that is, personal and social benefits which are less tangible elements (Gutman, 1982). Values are divided into instrumental and terminal values. Instrumental values are a cognitive construct of modes to achieve terminal values (end-state of existence) (Figure 1) (Reynolds and Olson, 2001).

The MEC has been identified as an appropriate method to reveal the driving forces behind ethnic food consumption. Hedonism and organoleptic attributes (taste, appearance, preference and flavour), geographic origin and price are all significant concrete attributes associated with ethnic consumer preference. Additionally, food quality (guaranteed by the manufacturer), nutritional value, "appetizing" and "enjoyable to eat" are classified as abstract attributes. Health issues and appetizing, "good value for money" and making "life easier" are identified as consequences of eating ethnic food, as well as a sense of cultural identification. Values such as "happiness", "pleasure", "good relationship", "desire fulfillment" and "self-satisfaction" were identified, as shown in Table 1 (Yang *et al.*, 2009; Barrena and Sánchez, 2013; Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Tey *et al.*, 2018). Yang *et al.* (2009) reported that foreign consumers' motivations for visiting Korean restaurants located in foreign countries were "new experience", "interest in Korea", "recommendation", "good food", "easy to access", "service", "dining environment" and "price". These link to consequences such as "experience new culture", "be exposed to new experience" and "learn more about Korea".

## Method

### *Samples and procedures*

The managers or owners of the selected Padang food restaurants were contacted and asked for permission to survey respondents at their sites. A 120 respondents who ate at Padang restaurants in Jakarta, the capital city in Indonesia, were selected through convenience sampling. This was done in early 2020, before Covid-19 severely hit Indonesia. As a result, we did not spend much time discussing the pandemic's impact on ethnic food consumption. The respondents were divided into two groups: Minang origin ( $n = 57$ ) and non-Minang origin



**Figure 1.**  
The conceptual of the  
means-end chain  
method (Zanoli and  
Naspetti, 2002, p. 644)

		Consumers' motivation towards ethnic food
Level of abstractions	Example of a phrase	
Concrete attributes	Geographic origin Taste Flavour Meet my preference Price Appearance	
Abstract attributes	Quality Nutritional values Good food (good taste, healthy food)	
Functional consequences	Healthy food Appetizing Enjoyable to eat	
Psychological consequences	It is a healthy food Give me a sense of cultural identification Feel healthy, give me energy	
Instrumental values	Give me a sense with happiness and satisfaction	
Terminal values	Happiness Enhance my quality of life and security	

**Table 1.**  
The level of abstraction of ethnic food consumption

( $n = 63$ ). Prior research that used a laddering technique usually included at least 40 samples (Jun and Kang, 2010; Kitsawad and Guinard, 2014; Arsil *et al.*, 2018; Crofton and Scannell, 2020). The response rate for this study was 70%. The reasons given for declining to be interviewed were that people were busy or just wanted to enjoy the food.

The interview consisted of two parts. In the first part, the respondents were asked about their socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, education and income, and their weekly food expenditure. They were also asked about their perception of Padang food, such as buying frequency, types of food consumed daily and perceptions regarding the price and taste.

Soft laddering, a semi-structure qualitative method using pen and paper and a face-to-face interview were chosen to operationalize the laddering method of administration. Respondents were free to use natural language to explain why something is important (Reynolds and Olson, 2001). In comparison to the hard laddering method of using a written questionnaire, this method of administration produces more ladders and a higher frequency of attributes. However, this method necessitates a highly skilled interviewer, is time-consuming, costly and is subject to interviewer bias (Arsil *et al.*, 2016). Borgardt (2020) reported that 52% of MEC studies used a soft laddering approach. Three interviewers were trained in MEC concepts and laddering techniques. To elicit distinction, a triadic sorting procedure was used in which respondents were presented with a set of three products. Respondents were asked: "Why do you prefer eating Padang food compared with Javanese or Sunda food?". Then the standard laddering question was asked: "Why is this element important for you?". The question was repeated until the complete ladder of attribute–consequence–value (A-C-V) was achieved, which was indicated by the fact that the respondent could not add any further answers to the standard question. Desired personal values were achieved when consumers were able to link the product attributes to consequences of consuming the product (Reynolds and Olson, 2001).

#### Data analysis

We extracted the completed laddering interview responses into codes. To avoid broad coding, we developed a master code from previous ethnic food choice studies using MEC (Table 1). Then, the first author coded using an open coding procedure, followed by a second author utilizing the codes identified by the original author (Reynolds and Olson, 2001).

The percentage of agreement between the two coders was calculated to determine coder consistency (Shwetha *et al.*, 2015).

A summary implication matrix was created, displaying the number of frequencies among adjacent A-C-V links. Instead of categorizing responses into three categories (attributes, consequences and values) as suggested by Reynold and Olson (2001), a network analysis approach was used. This involved computing two indexes, the abstractness ratio (AR) and the centrality index (CI). AR identifies the role of each element, whether it is an attribute, consequence or value, while CI signifies the degree to which an element plays a central role in the HVM (Jun and Kang, 2010). The CI can be calculated from the ratio of in-degree plus out-degree over the total number of active cells, while AR is equal to the in-degree over the sum of in-degree and out-degree. Out-degree refers to the number of elements that are the source of an A-C-V connection or the number of rows in the implication matrix. In-degree refers to the number of elements that are at the end of an association or the number of columns in the implication matrix. MECANALYST software was used to analyse the data (Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Rahman and Luomala, 2020). The hierarchical cognitive structure was generated according to those two indexes and required a cut-off level (Reynolds, 2006). Only associations above the cut-off level were mapped into the HVM (Leppard *et al.*, 2004). A cut-off level of between 3 and 5 was suggested for 40 respondents, representing approximately 60–70% of the active links, and this produced an HVM that was easy to interpret (Reynolds and Olson, 2001; Leppard *et al.*, 2004).

## Results and discussion

### *Characteristics of Padang restaurants and respondents' knowledge of Padang food*

A total of 25 Padang restaurants in Jakarta were approached. Eighteen restaurants agreed to participate. Minang people owned 12 of the restaurants (67%), and the other restaurants belonged to people from Jakarta and Central Java provinces. Those people had worked officially at Padang restaurants and opened their own businesses afterwards. The demographic characteristics and consumers' perceptions of Padang food are presented in Table 2.

In general, the respondents were young people who had completed high school and were working as workers/staff. The respondents' annual income was between 75 and 90 million IDR, approximately. This number was higher than the national per capita income (56.9 million IDR in 2021) but lower than the per capita income in DKI Jakarta province (157.68 million IDR in 2018) (Kristianus and Nasori, 2021). Lipoeto *et al.* (2001) reported that Minang people were remarkably consistent in preparing Padang food with its original flavour, as in their hometown, even between two generations prior to 1997. Minang people in Jakarta vary the types of food consumed daily at home (54% Indonesian food and 36% Padang food). The findings show that the Minang people who have migrated from their hometown might acculturate their own food tradition into the national food tradition. Acculturation might occur as a result of marriage to members of various ethnic groups or as a result of societal effects in a multi-ethnic community. To determine the consumer's acculturation strategy, additional research should be conducted. Non-Minang people ate Padang food at restaurants more often than Minang people did. Minang people confirmed that the tastes of Padang food sold in Jakarta and in their hometown were quite different, but the price was almost the same. Table 3 shows that *rendang* was the most popular Padang food for respondents (26% of respondents), followed by grilled spiced chicken or fish (16% of respondents). This is in line with the report that *rendang* is identified as one of the most delicious foods in the world (CNN, 2017).

### *Consumers' motivations to consume Padang food*

The complete responses from the laddering interviews underpin the MEC approach. Each new term was assigned a new code such as tradition ("preserving tradition", "maintain tradition"). Similar sub-codes were combined into a single code such as "unique taste"



Consumers' characteristics	Consumers' motivation towards ethnic food	
	Non-Minang (%) (n = 63)	Minang (%) (n = 57)
Age (years old)	34.10 ± 8.81	33.91 ± 10.03
Gender (1 = male, 2 = female)	1.40 ± 0.49	1.33 ± 0.48
Occupation		
Self-employed/entrepreneur	14 (22%)	16 (28%)
Worker/staff/employee	30 (48%)	37 (65%)
Official government staff	6 (10%)	1 (2%)
Teacher/lecturer	6 (10%)	3 (5%)
Other	7 (11%)	0
Education (1 = primary school, 2 = secondary school, 3 = senior high school, 4 = university degree)	3.60 ± 0.52	3.21 ± 0.86
Monthly personal income (million Indonesian rupiah/IDR)	7.548 ± 5.019	6.266 ± 3.949
Food expenditure per week (IDR)	461,000 ± 244,197	419,298 ± 209,752
Frequency of eating at Padang restaurants		
Every day	2 (3%)	10 (18%)
1–2 times a week	36 (57%)	23 (40%)
3–4 times a week	17 (27%)	11 (19%)
5–6 times a week	6 (10%)	11 (19%)
Less than once a week	2 (3%)	2 (4%)
Money spent on Padang food at a restaurant (IDR)	30,906 ± 9,147	28,429 ± 9,760
Origin of people	Java island (75%) Sumatra island (19%) Other (6%)	Minang people (100%)
Daily food at home	Indonesian food (79%) Javanese food (10%) Other (11%)	Indonesian food (54%) Padang food (36%) Other (10%)
Does the Padang food sold in restaurants in Jakarta taste the same as the original food sold in the West Sumatra region?	Do not know (78%) Not the same (13%)	Not the same (49%) Some is not the same (37%)
How does the price of Padang food in Jakarta compare with that in West Sumatra?	The same (8%) N/A	The same (14%) The same (67%) More expensive (21%) Cheaper (12%)

**Table 2.**  
Characteristics of consumers of Padang food

(“strong taste”, “different taste from others”). Disputes were resolved through discussion between two coders. The percentage of agreement between two coders reached 92% (542 codes of 589 total codes) which is considered acceptable for science (greater than 75%) (Shwetha *et al.*, 2015).

The HVM for Minang respondents is more attribute-rich (8 attributes) than the other group (5 attributes), indicating that Minang respondents make more complex food decisions. The two groups share similarities in attributes such as “love the food”, “spicy”, “unique taste” and “good taste”. In other words, consumers express more concrete than abstract attributes (Table 4). Food taste and loving the food were also found to be the basic determinants of ethnic food consumption (Verbeke and López, 2005; Min and Han, 2017; Tomić *et al.*, 2018). In terms of centrality, “good taste” (CI = 0.07) was the dominant attribute for the non-Minang group, while “tradition” (CI = 0.04) and “love the food” (CI = 0.04) were considered the key elements for the Minang segment. In other words, Padang people were still firmly attached to their food culture as an integral part of their culinary traditions and habits. Moreover, Minang consumers believed that by eating ethnic foods, they would be able to maintain or preserve their culture. These results are in line with previous studies which show that geographic origin, cultural identification and familiarity are more important for the people who belong to



Description of Padang food	Number of respondents ( <i>n</i> = 120)	
	Number of responses ( <i>n</i> = 197 answers)	
	Number of responses	Percentage (%)

**Rendang**

51

26

The word *rendang* derives from *marandang*. It refers to long, slow cooking of beef (or different kinds of meats, such as chicken or egg), mixed with onion, garlic, chilli, ginger, galangal, turmeric and many different types of leaves (bay, kaffir lime and turmeric) in coconut milk. The spices vary between areas within the West Sumatra province. It takes approximately 6–7 h at a temperature of 80–95 °C to complete the cooking process (Rini *et al.*, 2016; Nurmufida *et al.*, 2017). *Rendang* cooked using firewood results in *rendang* with a dry texture and dark brownish colour and has a long shelf life

**Grilled spicy chicken or fish**

31



16

Cleaning the fish is undertaken by rubbing it with salt and/or lime, and/or tamarind for approximately 30 min. The chicken or fish is marinated and coated using a spice paste before it is grilled. The spice paste is made of mixed spices such as chilli, onions, garlic, ginger, turmeric, lime, bay leaves, pepper, lemongrass and thick coconut milk (Hines, 2013). Other spices such as nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, hazelnut and coriander can be added, depending on personal taste. Some fish and chicken are grilled over medium heat charcoal and tossed back and forth during grilling



**Table 3.**  
The Padang food most  
commonly bought by  
respondents

(continued)

			Consumers' motivation towards ethnic food
Description of Padang food	Number of respondents ( <i>n</i> = 120)		
	Number of responses ( <i>n</i> = 197 answers)		
	Number of responses	Percentage (%)	
Curries or <i>gulai</i> or <i>kalio</i> can be made from beef, chicken, egg, fish, animal brains, other animal organs and/or young jackfruit cooked in coconut milk with a mixture of onion, garlic, ginger, red chilli, turmeric and other species, according to the local traditions and the item to be cooked (Klopfer, 1993). Other spices such as galangal, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, hazelnut, coriander and leaves (lime, bay and turmeric leaves) may be added. Vegetables, beans and tofu can also be added to curries	24	12	
Brown fried chicken (pictured) and chicken pop (chicken boiled in coconut water, lime and spices and fried for a while): the colour of chicken pop is lighter than that of fried chicken	17	9	

(continued)

Table 3.

(continued)

Table 3.

Description of Padang food	Number of respondents ( <i>n</i> = 120)	
	Number of responses ( <i>n</i> = 197 answers)	
	Number of responses	Percentage (%)

*Gulai cincang* or *gulai cincang* is beef or goat curry cooked with a mix of spices and coconut milk. The spices and food processes used are similar to basic curry recipes. However, goat seasoning, palm sugar and tamarind might be used during cooking to add the unique taste of *gulai cincang*

14

7



*Gulai tunjang* or *kikil*. Beef tendons are boiled until tender. Leaves and spices can be added to improve the aroma of food tendons, such as bay leaves, lime leaves, galangal, lemongrass and ginger. Basic recipes for *gulai* can be used to produce the rich, spicy and succulent curry of cow foot tendons. *Asam kandis* (*Garcinia xanthochymus*) is also added during cooking to give a sour taste

14

7



Table 3.

(continued)

Description of Padang food	Number of respondents (n = 120)	
	Number of responses (n = 197 answers)	
	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
<i>Dendeng paru</i> is thinly sliced, crispy cow lung. Cow lung is boiled with lemongrass and bay leaves until tender. Then, the cow lung is sliced thinly and cooked with mortar-ground or blended spices, such as garlic, cloves, coriander, pepper, ginger, candlenut and salt. The cow lung is then fried until crispy. The spices might vary between areas and local traditions in West Sumatra	12	6
<i>Samba lado</i> (green chilli paste). <i>Samba lado</i> is another side dish made from steamed chilli, onion and tomatoes ground together into a paste, using a grinding stone or <i>batu lado</i> (Klopfer, 1993; Lipoeto <i>et al.</i> , 2001)	11	6
Other	23	12

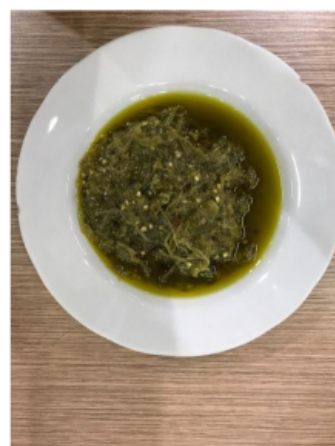


Table 3.

the ethnic group because these attributes are part of their food culture (Groves, 2001; Ting *et al.*, 2017; Barrena *et al.*, 2015).

In terms of consequences, "eating enjoyment" (CI = 0.13) and "health benefits" (CI = 0.13) were the most important consequences for non-Minang respondents. In addition, "health benefits" (CI = 0.12) and "appetite" (CI = 0.1) were identified as the most important intermediate constructs in the HVM for the Minang group. The two groups share similarities in certain functional consequences that are associated with health benefits. Non-Minang consumers associate appetite with health benefits derived from pleasure eating, while the Minang consumer's appetite and eating enjoyment provide the health benefits. Similar



Codes	Non-Minang respondents' descriptions	AR	CI	Codes	Minang respondents' descriptions	AR	CI
<i>Attributes</i>							
Love the food	Love the food	0	0.04	Habit	Habit, my childhood food, I am a Minangese person	0.04	0.03
Spicy	Spicy, like the spicy flavours, many kinds of spices used, hot and spicy	0	0.02	Origin of food	Food origin from Minangkabau	0.06	0.02
Unique taste	Unique taste, strong taste, different taste from other foods	0.05	0.02	Unique taste	Unique taste, rich in coconut milk, greasy	0.06	0.03
Good taste	Delicious, tasty	0.06	0.07	Love the food	Love the food	0.08	0.04
Save time	Save time, people use break times effectively by dining in a restaurant	0.17	0.02	Daily food	My daily food	0.09	0.03
				Spicy	Strong taste and spicy	0.1	0.02
				Good taste	Delicious, tasty, taste full	0.16	0.03
				Tradition	Maintain traditions, preserving traditions	0.18	0.04
<i>Consequences</i>							
Appetite	Appetite, matches my taste	0.17	0.02	Appetite	Appetite, matches my taste	0.26	0.1
Eating enjoyment	Enjoy eating	0.22	0.13	Nutritious	Nutritious	0.32	0.05
Nutritious	Nutritious	0.32	0.03	Eating enjoyment	Enjoy eating	0.39	0.04
Health benefits	Health benefits, have enough energy	0.52	0.13	Health benefits	Healthy	0.52	0.12
Daily activity	Working, serve the Gods	0.53	0.1	Daily activity	Working, religious services	0.6	0.09
Earn money	Earn money, get paid	0.72	0.08	Earn money	Earn money	0.69	0.07
				Meets family's needs	Meets the family's needs	0.74	0.03
<i>Values</i>							
Family responsibility	My responsibility as the head of family	0.81	0.02	Happy	Happy	0.89	0.11
Happy	Happy	0.92	0.07	Continuing life	Continuing life	0.91	0.04
Continuing life	Continuing life	0.93	0.08				
Religious service	My good deeds, my obligation as a human and a religious person	1	0.05				

**Table 4.** Attributes, consequences, and values of Padang food consumption

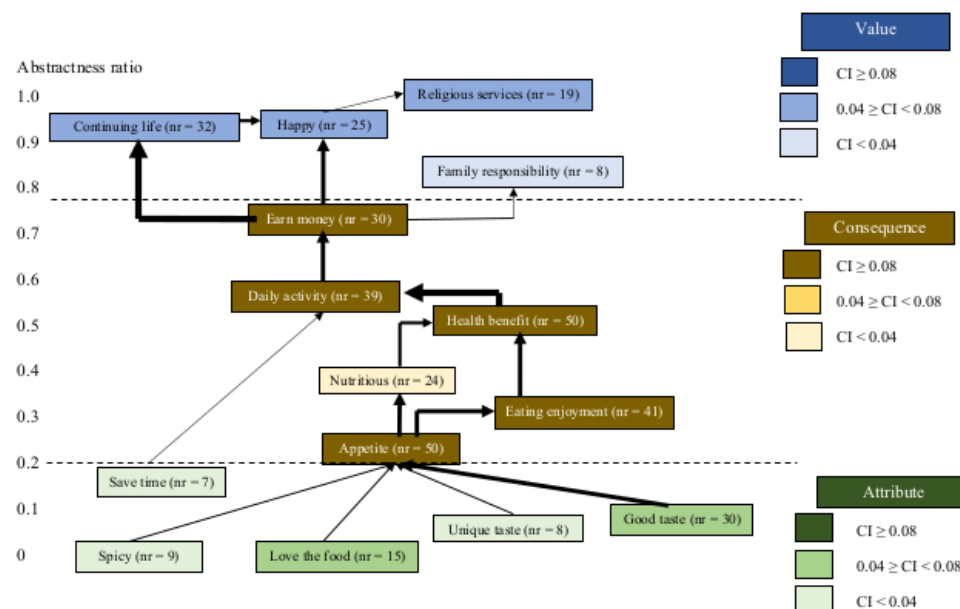
findings using MEC also reported the same functional consequences such as “health benefits”, “appetizing” and “eating enjoyment” when eating ethnic couscous food, Korean food for non-Korean consumers and Japanese food (Ha, 2019; Min and Han, 2017; Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Tey *et al.*, 2018).

According to Reynolds and Olson (2001), an MEC is a knowledge structure that connects consumers’ understanding of product attributes to their personal value through personal knowledge of consequences. For non-Minang respondents, the benefit of eating ethnic food was associated with values such as “continuing life” (CI = 0.08). For them, ethnic food leads to the health benefits that are necessary to perform daily activities, such as earning money to provide financial security (continuing life). Kahle (1988) asserted that individuals who lack economic security endorsed the security values. Additionally, Minang respondents identified “happiness” as a result of health benefits. The term “happy” refers to a cognitive evaluation of a pleasant emotional state (Diener and Diener, 1996). This comparable value was utilized in MEC studies involving ethnic foods (Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Min and Han, 2017; Tey *et al.*, 2018). This study reveals that health status is a critical concept in explaining happiness because it might enable the balance of physical, mental and social health.

The HVMs with respect to the consumption of Padang food among non-Minang and Minang respondents are presented in Figures 2 and 3. The Y-axis represents the position of qualified constructs, such as attributes, consequences and values based on their AR. The dark and light colours of the box represent the rule of each element according to the CI. The element in the darkest box is most important than other constructs.

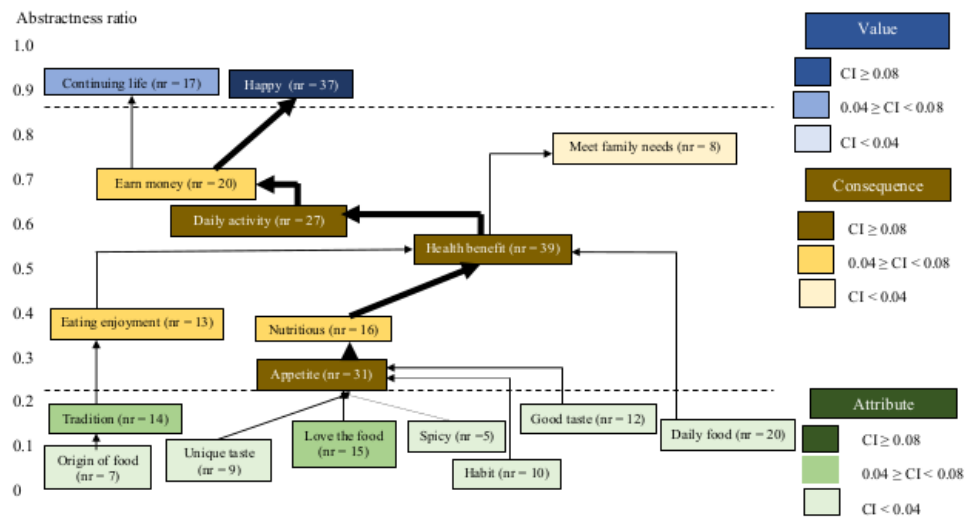
The HVM was generated at a cut-off level of 5 for both segments. At this level, we accounted for the relationships with A-C-V that were mentioned at least four times by respondents (Jun and Kang, 2010). At the cut-off level of 5, there were 850 links with 15 content codes in the HVM of non-Minang respondents. This represents 79.6% of all links (1068 links), resulting in five attributes, six consequences and four values for non-Minang respondents. The HVM for Minang respondents involved 17 content codes and 69.8% of the connections (605 out of 867 relationships of A-C-V) at a cut-off level of 5. The HVM included

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**Figure 2.** Hierarchy value maps for non-Minang respondents who eat Padang food at a cut-off level of 5. nr = number of relationships

**Figure 3.** Hierarchy value maps for Minang respondents who eat Padang food at a cut-off level of 5. nr = number of relationships



eight attributes, seven consequences and two values. Food choice, including ethnic food, was believed to be a routine and habitual activity that tended to produce outcomes rich in attributes and consequences (Arsil *et al.*, 2016).

While examining the dominant pathways within the HVM using the CI and the number of times the relationships were mentioned by respondents, we found the following specific findings:

“Love the food” was the source of “appetite” for both groups, while “good taste” was also the means for “appetite” among the non-Minang consumers. “Health benefits” were positive consequences for both segments. Therefore, respondents “can do daily activities” to “earn money” or “meet family needs”. Saving time is only mentioned by non-Minang people with respect to using break time effectively by eating at Padang restaurants. This suggests that restaurant operators, food service operators or tourist marketers could promote the ethnic food as a time-effective method of meeting one’s food requirements.

“Origin of food” is the source of “tradition” which was an important attribute that led to “eating enjoyment” for Minang people. This association has rarely been found in food consumption motives’ research. Tradition, habit and familiarity are specific attributes for Minang people. Therefore, marketing promotion could highlight the taste of food and cultural traditions as well as the origin of food at national and international levels to promote ethnic food consumption, including in the tourism sector. Tradition is also a means to achieve the personal value of “happiness” through the benefits accrued from consumer knowledge of a product. Personal values are an integral part of people’s lives and influence their behaviour. As stated by Barrena and Sanchez (2013), cultural connotation of a product increased the complexity of product choice decisions and made consumers depend closely on their personal values.

Price was considered less by consumers when eating Padang food. Those results were different from previous studies (Tomić *et al.*, 2018; Ha, 2019) which reported that price was the main element when purchasing ethnic food. This might be because Padang food is affordable. When eating at a Padang restaurant, each respondent spent between 28,429 and 30,906 IDR (1 euro is approximately equal to 17,500 IDR) (Table 1). This finding can serve as a powerful message to promote the fact that ethnic food is affordable. According to Arsil *et al.* (2018), price remains a significant determinant factor for consumers when it comes to food selection, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia.

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## Conclusions

The results of this study provide some insights into consumers' motivations for choosing Padang food. Dominant attributes underlying consumer cognitive structure vary by ethnic background. "Tradition" is important attribute for Minang people, showing that they are still firmly attached to their traditions. They considered the geographical origin of food when eating ethnic food. However, both groups share a similar characteristic in that their food consumption decisions are influenced by a desire for a spicy and unique taste. Furthermore, the health benefits, as well as the ability to do daily activities to meet the family's needs, were recognized by the respondents as the consequences of eating Padang food. This indicated that these issues are still a major concern of consumers when purchasing ethnic food. Financial security is the main personal goal of non-Minang consumers. On the other side, hedonic attributes and "tradition" bring Minang consumers satisfaction (happiness).

The results could help Padang restaurant owners and operators, as well as related industries, by highlighting culinary tradition, good taste and health benefits as the strongest messages to attract consumers, build loyalty and increase consumers' willingness to consume ethnic food. Policymakers would also benefit from taking the concepts of food taste and tradition to promote traditional cuisines as an attraction for tourism destinations. The affordability of ethnic food and the time savings associated with food consumption will also benefit the promotion message of ethnic food as a cost-effective and time-efficient method of meeting food needs. The promotion of ethnic food is in accordance with the Ministry of Tourism's strategy to elevate culinary tourism – including rendang, fried rice and satay – into a national tourist icon, attracting both foreign and domestic visitors. Additionally, the government is promoting the development of trip packages that include culinary tours (Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, 2019).

The study has a limitation in terms of investigating respondents' motivations at the time of eating ethnic food. Meanwhile, the extent to which the acculturation affects consumers' decision-making about ethnic food has not been significantly investigated. Inter-marriage between Minang people and other ethnicities, the proliferation of fast-food restaurants, the generation of migrants from the homeland– and the amount of time spent outside West Sumatra might also influence consumers' decision-making regarding ethnic food but are beyond the scope of this study.

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