

# Malaysian Chef's Perception towards Factory Farmed Poultry Products: A Qualitative Enquiry

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## Abstract

Chicken meat consumption in Malaysia is one highest per capita consumption rates in the world. In the latest release by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (December 2015) the per capita poultry meat consumption of Malaysia stood at 46.6 Kgs at the end of 2014. It is seen as one of the most popular and cheapest source of protein in the country. This is mainly because of the non religious or dietary prohibitions of Malaysians and also due to the low cost of procuring chicken. Convenience practices like beak trimming, (Larrère and Larrère, 2000; Porcher, 2004), featherless chickens, clubbing (to death), antibiotics and drug pumped chicken, confinement in 24 hour bright light, battery hens and confinement in crowded are sources of real concern in intensive breeding of poultry, and affect even the breeders themselves.

This literature review aims to explore the latest trend of meat consumption in Malaysia, primarily Chicken; and the reasons for chefs in Malaysia to procure and sell factory farmed chicken in the restaurants. It also seeks to explore whether these consumers are aware of the convenience practices in the poultry production methods and their feelings towards such methods. The paper touches on meat consumption from various angles of religion, health, environmental impact, economic reasons and food safety. A very important aspect of meat consumption is to understand the reasons and attitudes for people to choose a particular meat product in comparison to other food products in the market. During this literature review, it was found that there is a dearth of research in most of the Asian countries regarding this topic. This lack of research is not surprising, considering that most of the researchers are striving to solve practical problems in this field rather than researching about it. With animals like Chicken becoming a commodity in an industrialized production system, efficiency developed at the expense of the human-animal link or of the care for animal wellbeing is at stake. In this research in-depth semi structured and semi directive interviews of professionally trained chefs from different cultures and religions based in Malaysia were conducted. The results were coded into the different emergent themes. The resultant three emergent themes were pricing, awareness and food and race/ religion. This research aims to find and highlight the consumption behavior, and ethical behavior patterns of professional chefs in Malaysia towards factory farmed chicken and battery eggs.

**Keywords:** Factory Farmed Chicken, Consumer Perception, Food Consumption Ethics, Qualitative Research.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Consumption of food all over the world is not just a reflection of our nutritional needs, but is also guided by our preferences for different tastes, colours, odours, textures and also our cultural and ethical considerations (Ayres, Midmore, 2009). Our food consumption patterns have changed historically over time. In the post industrial-revolution society there has been a drastic increase in the scale of catching, producing and gathering food items with it becoming progressively easy to produce and distribute all over the world. Earlier meals were based on locally produced food

products to the latest trends of diets with new and exotic food products like fruits, meats and spices. The relation between food, health and energy has become ever more complex and multifaceted in today's society which has raised a serious concern for governments all across the world. What our parents and grandparents considered as an attractive meal just a few decades ago may be considered as non-edible, strange and even unpalatable by many of us today. The present and future meat consumption habits and patterns would also be a reflection on the changing lifestyle (Klaus, 2006), financial levels of a family (Parker, 1999) (Levinsohn, Berry and Friedman, 2003), social and ethical value system (SDC, 2003) (Tallontire, Rentsendorj and Blowfield, 2001) and also of the changing environment in which we and our children would be living.

In 2008 the world's total population of humans on this earth was approximately 6.5 billion (The United Nations Population Database). This figure is expected to rise to 9 billion by 2050 (Food and Agriculture Organisation) and would not stop at that figure. As the population grows, so would our requirements for food. In the last 50 years we have seen a long term decline in the red meat consumption since the early 1960 along with declining pork and pork products consumption since the early 1980's. Poultry consumption on the other hand seems to have risen progressively since the mid-1950s (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997).

The two fastest growing ingredients and also the costliest ingredients in our food menu are meat (chicken, pork and beef) and seafood. We humans produced 276 million tonnes of chicken, pork and beef along with other meat products in 2006 which was four times higher to that of 1961. Also on average humans now eat two times as much meat products as we did in 1961 (Halweil and Nierenberg, 2008). According to Smil (2002), meat is now the biggest source of animal protein in all prosperous nations of the world. This demand for animal flesh is expected to increase more than 2 times by 2050 (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2006).

By the year 2050 the livestock population is expected to be 120 billion from the present 60 billion farm animals (Pachauri, 2008). The need for an investigation into this food consumption pattern consequently arises as it is very clear that we are heading towards a possible collapse in the food production/ consumption machinery.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

After the Second World War there were concerns raised regarding food shortage. Along with this goal set by most of the world governments, they were also very keen to keep the food prices low as to keep them in check and assist in the respective economies to recover. 'Factory farming' was one of methods found in the European and American countries which were quickly adapted by new world countries like Malaysia and India.

In the poultry farming industry, the 'batteries' or long chicken wire cages were designed to reduce the costs as well as to maximize production of meat and eggs. This is done with the help of various methods like beak trimming, high density of hens per cage, food and drink rationing, selective breeding programmes, factory lighting and chicken medication (Hester and Shea-Moore, 2003). To put things in perspective; there are more chickens in the world compared to any other bird. Furthermore, more than 50 billion chickens are reared annually as a source of food, for both their meat and their eggs (Compassion in World Farming, 2011).

Just like the other female animals in the factory farming meat industry, the laying hens are primarily used as reproduction apparatuses. According to Rollin (1995; p 1) “In 1933, the average yield per hen was 70 eggs a year. A yield of 150 eggs from a six-pound hen was considered unattainable. Today a four-pound hen produces 275 eggs per year”. This is attained by forcing the hens to shed their feathers, or molt, because as soon as they grow a new layer of feathers, their reproduction cycles resume. To compel the hens to molt, they are put under a tremendous amount of trauma by being deprived of food and water for a certain period of time on a daily basis (Rollin, 1995). This stress manipulates the hen’s egg cycles and the fast-paced reproduction causes cruel and unnatural behavior in the hens and their offspring.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

I looked into the consumption patterns of various cultures around the world. However, I failed to uncover any research done on perceptions of chefs towards the factory farmed poultry products. As a consequence it is imperative to undertake this research to fill the gap in knowledge that exists in the academic world. I aim to observe and detect the reasons, rational and motivation of chefs of the three main races of Malaysia, the Malays, Indians and Chinese (Majdi, Ramli, and Mahmud, 2005) to choose a particular type of poultry product (factory farmed) instead of the others (free range, organic, *kampung* chicken) available in the market. There is a distinct gap in the knowledge available regarding factory farmed poultry chicken consumption and perception of Chefs towards the products available in the market.

## **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will be very significant to the policy makers and other interested parties in the Asian scene to make strategic decisions about the consumer’s behavior and ethical considerations of the consumption of poultry products in Malaysia. I did qualitative semi structured and semi directive interviews to gather the data required for the study. These results provide us with a starting point for further studies of the meat consumption in the Asian region. It would also provide a representation of the perception of various races of Malaysia towards the different meat products available in the country. It may also be useful and essential tool for the policy makers in Malaysia to plan and act on further livestock development, production and support in the country and also in the international trade. Also the chefs use a lot of poultry products in their day to day working in a home; much more than a regular household family so it would be very interesting to study the reasons for these chefs to choose one meat product compared to another.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

17 years ago in 1999 the total population of the world surpasses the 6 billion mark. In this present century we are estimated to add another 4.6 billion people to this number according to the UN. This increasing total global population is spearheaded by the developing countries of the world. According to the Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society, by 2050 another 600 million people will live in India and another 300 million in China. Along with this Nigeria’s population is expected to be 339 million by 2050, which is more than half the total population of the whole of Africa in the 1950’s (Brown, 1999).

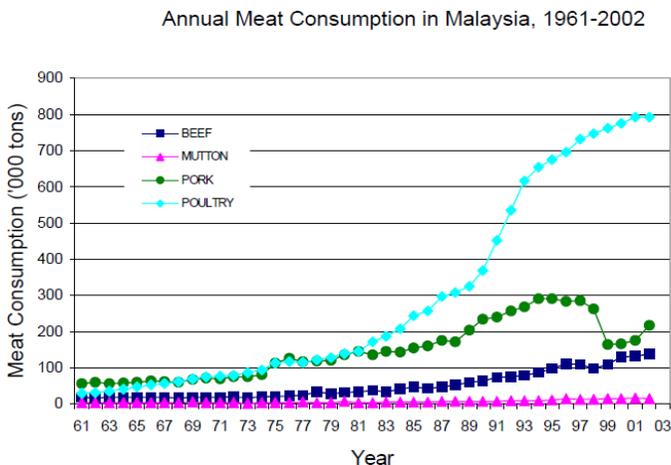
In the conference by World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation & International Agricultural Centre, Wageningen, The Netherlands in June 1997, the meat production of developed countries has increased by 127% and the egg production by 331%. Even then only 22% of dietary protein is derived from animal products. In the developed world, the meat products figure stands at 60%. It is

also estimated that if all the 10 billion people of the world eat the same amount of meat as a typical US diet, we would need 4 extra earth sized planets to produce the extra 9 billion tons of grain (State of the World 1999). Chicken is most used and consumed animal by humans at about 9 to 10 billion worldwide every year (Rollin, 1995).

## 2.1 MEAT CONSUMPTION PATTERN IN MALAYSIA

Since the 1961 till 2002, the Malaysian meat consumption pattern seems to have increased from 108,219 metric tonnes to 1,162,937 metric tons. This is a ten-fold increase (Table I). Most of this growth is from the Poultry products. Pork consumption was higher than poultry in the 1961-1966 periods after which poultry took over as the highest selling meat. In the 1970, 74,889 metric tons of poultry products were consumed by the Malaysian population which reached to 792,786 metric tons by the year 2002.

**Table I: Annual Meat Consumption in Malaysia, 1961-2002.**



### Source: FAO 2004

Malaysia has one of the highest per capita consumption rates in the world for chicken. The per capita consumption of chicken is at 46.6 kg according to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia. Chicken meat is seen as the most popular and also the cheapest source of meat protein among Malaysian consumers. This is fundamentally because there are no religious restrictions or dietary prohibitions against consumption of chicken meat. In the last decade or so, many quick service restaurants (QSR) such as McDonald's, Nando's Chickenland, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Popeyes, A&W, Kenny Rogers, Hartz Chicken Buffet have boosted the growth of chicken consumption in Malaysia.

In 2005, Malaysian meat consumption per person was 41 per cent and 45 per cent respectively below the levels in the Australia and United States. For milk, the consumption level in Malaysia is significantly lower than in the OECD countries (Table II). Even though Malaysia's consumption of livestock products is considerably lower than that of many Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries which including the Australia and United States, compared with other rapidly growing Asian countries, Malaysia's per person consumption of livestock products is comparatively higher, 48 kilograms person consumption of meat in Malaysia compared

to around 35 kilograms in both Japan and Republic of Korea, 24 kilograms in Thailand and just 4.8 kilograms in India.

**Table II: Consumption of food in Malaysia and other selected countries in 2005.**

	Malaysia	Thailand	India	China	Korea, Rep.of	Japan	Australia	United States
<b>Daily calorie intake</b>	calories	calories	calories	calories	calories	calories	calories	calories
Vegetable products	2552	2740	2339	2391	2532	2232	2116	2627
Animal products	383	244	182	571	409	431	953	1031
Total	2935	2985	2521	2962	2941	2664	3069	3658
<b>Per person consumption</b>	kg	kg	kg	kg	kg	kg	kg	kg
Cereals	171.6	164.7	206.6	188.1	215.7	173.0	98.8	177.0
Starchy roots	22.8	145.2	23.3	75.3	19.1	38.3	54.0	57.3
Oil crops	90.4	67.3	50.4	71.4	86.7	68.4	101.4	80.0
Fruits	57.9	72.4	35.9	57.6	64.6	58.3	98.7	122.6
Vegetables	49.2	31.5	68.0	290.0	251.4	130.4	100.0	125.4
Sugar crops	383.2	396.1	201.4	76.9	123.5	119.1	254.9	173.2
Meat	47.6	23.9	4.8	60.1	34.6	34.7	89.4	93.6
Milk	43.5	24.6	68.6	17.8	39.6	75.3	221.4	256.2
Eggs	12.0	8.7	1.9	18.2	11.0	18.6	7.4	14.8
Fish	57.3	31.0	4.6	25.4	51.0	64.7	22.7	23.4

**Source Suthida Warr et al. 2008**

Malaysia is a multi racial and multi religious country but a large number of residents in Malaysia are Muslims (mainly Malays) followed by the Buddhists and Christians (mainly Chinese) and the Hindus (mainly Indian Origin). Consequently, chicken is very popular in Malaysia as it is free from religious restrictions and accepted by all races as pork is not consumed by the Muslim population and beef is shunned by the Hindus on multi ethnic and multi religious Malaysia’s consumers. Chicken meat is now considered the “Universal Meat” for most of the Asian countries. Malaysians are also quite price-sensitive and usually look for value-for-money products. This is a big challenge for the poultry products industry in the country which is already challenged with producing newer and innovative products at lower costs yet without compromising on the quality.

**2.2 FOOD AND RELIGION**

Historically, there has been a link between religious tradition’s willingness to demean nonhuman animals and the totality of modern secular societies’ subordination of nonhuman animal’s lives to human profits, leisure, and progress (Sorabji 1993; Waldau 2001).

Looking at the five main religious traditions of the world commonly (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam) called the “world religions” (Singer, P, 2006. p.70), it becomes very clear that their claims about ‘animals’ are either defending them or in some cases intensely offending them.

Hinduism, which is the main religion of the Indian origin population of Malaysia is best understood as a complex structure of miscellaneous sub traditions joined together to offer an enormous assortment of views about all the living beings who share our ecological community. The Hindu sub traditions are divided into two general beliefs about how they think of humans’ relationship with the earth’s other animals and birds. The first one being that humans are undoubtedly recognized to be a part of and in the same range as other life on earth. Secondly the humans are on

the other hand considered to be the exemplar of what biological life on the earth should be. In many of the Hindu scriptures and writings within Hindu culture there are claims that the status “human” is above the status of any other animal (Singer, P, 2006. p.71). The Hindus’ believe in reincarnation, in which it is said that that any living creatures current arrangement in the cycle of life is a deserved position based on what ‘karma’ he has done in the past life. The humans who act immorally or do evil deeds in this life are, destined to become animals in the next life; a demeaning life which is seen as being mainly unhappy and miserable as compared to human existence. This negative view of the Hindu majority may be transferred into harsher treatment of animals as they may be seen as being inferior to the humans (Flood, 1996).

A positive side of Hindu culture may be the views that as other animals, like humans, have souls they may be worthy of ethical considerations and the ahimsa principle of non-violence or non-harming applies to them. Another positive attitude of Hindu tradition is the belief that animals should not be killed and some scriptures also go on to say that the animals should be treated like your own children as the earth has been created equally for all living beings, human or otherwise. This coexistence is clearly visible in Indian villages and in Indians/Hindus in Malaysia who treat the Cow as a sacred animal.

Other than this there is also a close association of animals with Hindu deities, for example Lord Ganesha, the most widely recognized Hindu god is an elephant-headed god, and Lord Hanuman, the monkey god are worshipped in India. These associations also help the Hindus defend certain animal species against killing.

The Abrahamic traditions Christianity and Islam also share quite a few common postulations about nonhuman animals and birds even though they are in quite a few important respects very different from the Hindu and Buddhist views of nonhuman animals. For the most part, the views of these groups of religious traditions are subjected by a speciesist approach (some species treated differently) for deciding which lives should be seen to be within the moral circle when it comes to issues involving nonhuman lives.

These Abrahamic traditions in their primary understanding are characterized by a persistent claim that God specifically designated humans and designed the earth mainly for the benefit of humans instead of the benefit of all forms of life. This tendency of making human beings the centre of the life on earth has manifested and justified itself regularly in being harmful to the other animals. The Christians took to the Hebrew vision that all humans in this world are made in the image of God and that they have been given total dominion over the earth. As a result many sub traditions within Christianity started exhibiting an unrelenting refusal to scrutinize the significance of other animals’ actual veracity which is characteristic of their speciesism.

Islam also echoes the Abrahamic traditions’ importance on humans as the center of Gods created universe its traditions provides moral insight that nonhuman animals’ and birds lives require recognition by the humans. Because of this in Islam tension exists between the claims that other animals have been placed on earth exclusively for the benefit of humans (Qur’an 5:4; 16:5–8; 22:28; 22:36; 23:21; 36:71–3; and 40:79), and the other claims that show that Muslims should recognize that the other animals have their own importance as Gods creatures. Qur’an 6:38 also warns that other animals have their own communities, and Muhammad himself commented,

“Whoever is kind to the creatures of Allah, is kind to himself.” and that doing of good or bad deeds to other animals is similar to similar acts done to humans.

Conflicting to most of Hinduism, animal sacrifice practices are still a major part of Islamic practice. For example at the end of Ramadan which is the traditional month of fasting many animals are slaughtered for a celebratory banquet. This practice reveals the basic belief of Muslims that humans are close to God, and that other animals are subordinate to humans and in special situations intended for humans’ use. Even if in Islamic vision the living beings that most truly matter are humans, the ethical sensibilities regarding other animals are still given of respect like the sacrificial practice included rules that were basically projected to make the killing as humane as possible.

### **2.3 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FACTORY FARMED CHICKEN AND EGGS**

Even though factory farming has achieved an exponential growth in the meat production and egg production methods, this industry has received a lot of criticism from all the fronts, be it environmental, ecological, occupational as well as ethical treatment of animals. The most common ethical issues highlighted include the pain and suffering of the birds from birth to death by factory farming practices like beak trimming, crowded living conditions, living on chicken wire cages etc. also the growth hormones given to the chicken are linked to sexual and reproductive problems in the humans along with food poisoning epidemics in humans due to the antibiotics administered to the chicks (Albrecht, G 2001). This awareness and ethical concern for the chickens in these farms have arisen after a long history of humans not caring for these birds. We can divide this history in three main parts.

#### **2.3.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: BIBLICAL**

Human history is filled with references showing humans to be mentally and morally superior to animals and having the right to do anything they want with these animals. Such views in the ancient biblical and other texts clearly state the role of humans as masters of these animals and us having the rights to use these animals as we wish. In Genesis it is said:

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Genesis 1:6, King James Version)*

Noah was also told that:

*And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth [upon] the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.(Genesis 9:2, King James Version )*

The relationship between humans and animals/birds can be seen as being very anthropocentric and portrays that the chicken is an animal which is free for humans to manipulate and dominate.

#### **2.3.2 CAPITALISTIC**

Chicken meat is seen as a ‘natural resource’ by the capitalistic view wherein it can be used, commercialized and made profitable according to the human needs by capture, growth, domestication, manipulation and finally consumption of these animals. With the process of selective breeding and genetic manipulative engineering methods leading to the maximization of profits by increased meat and egg production, chicken meat is rendered a ‘natural resource’ for our consumption. This maximization of meat, eggs and profit is supported by the biblical traditions.

### 2.3.3 CARTESIANISM

Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the famous French philosopher was of the view that animals should be treated as machines. The cries, screams and other sounds made by these birds and animals when they are killed, tortured or injured should be nothing but the sounds from a machine which also groans due to its rusty hinges and screws. As implied by Singer, Descartes thought and believed that the animals:

*...experience neither pleasure nor pain, nor anything else. Although they may squeal when cut with a knife, or writhe in their efforts to escape contact with a hot iron, this does not mean that they feel pain in these situations. They are governed by the same principles as a clock (Singer 1975, P. 218).*

This perspective matched the biblical and the capitalistic view that animals and birds like chicken are just a natural resource which can be manipulated as and however it is required and that their welfare is not to be taken too seriously. The commonality of all three traditions is that ethical considerations apply to only humans, not to animals. Chicken meat is seen as being under human control and something which is ours to use, without any consideration for their welfare or needs. We are altering the species; cross breeding different species and altering the genomes in the process to suit our needs and requirements.

### 2.3.4 ETHICS AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

In the old Christian traditions respect and care of animals were mentioned but the Cartesianisation was easy to follow by the new physiologists and anatomists as it evaded them of guilt and dissect animals and birds without the use of anesthetic as they were merely revealing the 'inner workings of the machine'. There was no regard for the pain and suffering of the animals in question. Nevertheless it was found that these animals inner machinery was very similar to the humans. As Voltaire (1694-1778) pointed out:

*There are barbarians who seize this dog, who so greatly passes man in fidelity and friendship, and nail him down to a table and dissect him alive to show you the mesariac veins! You discover in him **all the same organs of feelings as in yourself**. Answer me, mechanist, has Nature arranged all the springs of feelings in this animal to **the end that he might not feel?** (Singer 1975, p.220)*

We as humans have an even greater need to treat these animals with ethical care as they are so much like us, feeling pain and suffering and having bonds and hierarchies. As said by Bentham in 1780:

*.....**Can they reason? Nor, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?** (Bentham, 1780 as quoted in Singer 1975, p. 8)*

The latest arguments under researchers like Peter Singer on this argument of Specisism are that we humans give an unequal treatment to animals that are as alert and conscious as us without any possible explanation. Singer says:

*Once we place non human animals outside our sphere of equal consideration and treat them as things which we use to satisfy our own desires, the outcome is predictable. (Singer 1975, p. 99)*

### 2.3.5 ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

Humans live in a complex ecosystem comprising of millions of animals, birds and insects living and interacting with each other. These interactions form the food chains and are supported with essentials for all life on earth like fresh water, clean air and fertile land/soil. Without this

combination it will be very difficult to have human or animal life. It is thus important for us humans to preserve this ecosystem and not alter this ecological balance for our personal gain.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

I have chosen exploratory research under an Interpretivist paradigm of thought as it me to gain a superior understanding of a topic that I do not have a sufficient amount of knowledge about (Hoepf, 1997). Exploratory research can help in this field because even though I myself consume a lot of chicken meat and eggs in my personal life and professional life I still do not understand the depth of motivations for myself and others in using factory farmed poultry products as compared to free range meats. I also aim to understand if there is any connection of the different races of Malaysia to the chicken meat consumption patterns.

### 4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Analyzing the interviews, I gathered data and tried to understand the main factors and pointers for these chefs to consume factory farmed chicken meat in their work and personal life. Three main codes or facets of the theme emerge. I coded these themes according to my understanding of the whole research exercise and tried to make sense of all the data that I had assimilated.

#### 4.1 THEME 1: PRICING

Despite the decreasing price of the chicken meat in the global market, the respondents feel that the chicken meat is too costly and that the pricing of the chicken meat is one of the main criteria for a chef in Malaysia to choose a particular type of meat over another. When asked regarding their feelings about factory farmed, intensively bred and high stressed factory farm poultry industry and its products some of the respondent chefs replied as follows:

*..... is always about costs ..... because of the cost (Malay chef Annu)*

*...we have a certain criteria to follow and feels as it....costing for that (Indian Chef Gurinder)*

*... I don't really care because for them its the price ok that's what im saying yeah (Malay Chef Kharry)*

As the excerpts and observations from these interviews show, the cost of the chicken meat for the chef is more important than the quality or the ethical consideration. As the interviews were semi directive, I had hinted on the malpractices going on in the industry by his question, I felt that the way of answering of the chefs were pointing out to the fact that they were aware of the intensively bred and highly stressed chicken meat industry but they were trying to justify their actions by putting the blame on the pricing of the food and also on the way that they said that if it was to them personally or in their personal life they would be using free range chicken but it is the demands of their job/ restaurant that they need to use the cheapest meat.

When the chefs were asked for the main factor for them to be choosing a particular type of chicken product (factory farmed/ battery eggs) compared to another (free range chicken and eggs), the chefs answered as follows.

*For me the main factor would be the price where the price and also the ...basically the availability and the price is co-relational to each other...*

*...To choose is price... (Malay chef, Annu)*

*... I mean at the end the **chicken they are selling in the industry is much cheap** actually...I believe I would say the **price make a big difference** because as a chef, as business people, doing business you want to make money ..... And most of the time you ask for price. **What price you can give me.** (Chinese Chef, Rexxy).*

*... **money does stand over you ethical decisions.** You know I mean... (Malay Chef Kharry)*

It seems that for a Chef, the profits are the most important part of their job and a lower price meat product guarantees a higher profit, at least in the short run. Also the chefs argued that as long as their guests do not know the difference in tastes of free range or *kampung* chicken, why they should be spending more money on the costly chicken meat. This perception of the chicken meat being costly for the consumers was seen overtly in the following interview:

*The **main reason is price**, but looking at price again, **chicken is not that cheap** in Malaysia ..... (Malay chef Naddy)*

Based on these interviews I feel that the chefs seem to be having a dual identity. On one hand is their social and moral identity at work where they feel that the price is an important part of their decision making process. But when it comes to the personal identity of the chefs it feels that the price is not a very important factor for them in their decision making process and that they seem to be willing to spend more in their personal life with their family.

#### **4.2 THEME 2: AWARENESS**

The awareness of the issue of factory farmed consumption also was an important point which kept coming up during the narrative analysis of the answers. Most of the respondent chefs felt that they were aware of the issues which have been plaguing the factory farming industry. This awareness can be categorized into two categories; awareness about the practices going about in the industry and awareness of issues due to consumption of factory farmed meat. The awareness and seriousness of this issue is clearly visible in the following answers:

*..... **Yeah I'm well aware of this but not all** of ...how they are being treated... (Malay chef Naddy)*

***Beak trimming I heard first time, but overcrowded factories, I have heard** and seen before as well (Indian chef Amit)*

Many chefs were unaware of the practices happening in the factory farmed industry. This trend could be seen across the board of the Indian, Chinese and the Malay chefs. Some of the chefs seemed to be aware of some practices like beak trimming whereas some were aware of the crowded conditions. I also noted from the interview sessions that sometimes it felt that some of the chefs were not aware of the problems but as they were guided by the semi directive interviews the chefs were trying to prove that they were aware of the issues by repeating the researcher's examples. This could be seen some interview answers like:

*I am quite sure that it is **factory farmed** because a **compared to the free range chickens they (free range) do cost a lot more** and ...(Chinese Chef Tony).*

Some chefs were also aware of the problem as they genuinely seemed interested in the issue and also had previous experience like visiting farms etc.

*yes unfortunately I am aware of it because of my background I have been to these farms aaa in in the united states I have seen especially the beak being cut off ..... there are so many chicks in the factory farm so they don't pick up the dead... (Malay Chef Kharry)*

Some of the respondent Chefs seemed quite aware of the negative effects of factory farmed chicken meat consumption.

*... at the end of the day your product chicken comes to your aa packaged ...in it doesn't have any bruises on it, it looks as if the chicken led a happy life ... (Malay Chef Kharry)*

*.....we don't know what it contains of the feedings of the chicken it could be left over food (vegetable) ..... Chicken mince recycled and used as a pellets and what ever powdered forms to feed the chicken back..... (Malay chef Naddy)*

*...and of course they use a lot of antibiotics they use a lot of hormone injections ..... give hormone injections ..... (Malay chef Naddy)*

*..... producers inject all the hormones in the neck of the chicken and those poor people who were having it now they are getting tumors in the body because of the antibiotics ... (Indian Chef Gurinder)*

From the data received from the interviews, it seems that the chefs are aware of the problems and some of them even gave examples regarding the negative effects of factory farming. Even with this awareness the chefs were still consuming the factory farmed chicken in their professional life. This trend points towards the fact that these chefs may be compromising on their 'personal ethics' when it comes to their working in their professional environment.

#### **4.3 THEME 3: FOOD AND RACE/ RELIGION**

According to Delener (1990, 1994), religion is one of the most significant factor in shaping the culture of a person or a faction of people which in turn would have an influence on consumers' decision-making. All the three races of Malaysia are backed by the three main predominant religions; Hinduism, Islam and Christianity/Buddhism. The shaping of cultural trends and eating habits have been further supported by Andrew Lindridge (2005). In fact psychologists have suggested that religion filters through not just into a persons consciousness, but also into his or her social and cultural spheres of life (Spilka and et al, 2003, cited in Stodolska and Livengood, 2006).

The chefs from all three races were unanimous in their arguments towards the factory farmed chicken meat consumption patterns. All the chefs condemned the practices happening in the industry and seemed to be getting ethically challenged using the factory farmed chicken. This can be seen in the below mentioned texts:

*For me it is very simple anything that is unnatural is not good for me ...personally I say that I would take the naturally (bred) chicken (Malay chef, Annu).*

*For me it is totally unacceptable because as a animal I believe they have the right to grow naturally. I don't feel good .... Not ethical at all. (Chinese Chef, Rexxy)*

*I think I will reconsider ... (Chinese Chef, Rexxy).*

*... As a consumer you should know where your chicken is coming from. (Chinese Chef, Rexxy)*

*...as a person I personally don't like the way farm chicken is produced. Very sad very sad ... (Indian Chef Gurinder)*

*Ok as a chef and a person what I feel about it I do really think of it as a major problem ... as a person a Malaysian or a Malay most people don't know about this. It's not that you don't know about it but most of them don't care ... it does concern me but at some point .... (Malay Chef Kharry)*

Again the chefs of all three races seemed to be reaching a consensus that the practices of factory farmed chicken meat production was not a good practice and they condemned these practices, but when it came to them making the same choices as a producer the answer was quite striking when they said that they would do the same thing as the present producers as there was a high demand for these products and that financial security/ profit is the main criteria for them. It seems that the price of chicken meat is of prime importance to the chefs here in Malaysia.

*I am sure I am sure every human being has a feeling that they want to raise the chickens normally... if I was a business owner and the demand is so high I would have done the same thing ... (Malay Chef Kharry)*

*... ok because the demand is getting high and high ok because at this aaa stage we see that aa all these bad practices .....I don't feel that is right but at the end of the day but when my customer doesn't know the difference I have to save costs as a chef I don't really mind ...(Malay Chef Kharry)*

Looking at the data from the interviews of the chefs of the three races of Malaysia, it can be clearly seen that the chefs agree on many points like price, market demands and their perceptions of the way their consumers feel about the meat on their plate. According to the literature, the race, culture and religion of a person plays a major role in his or her choices (Fatt Sian 2009), but looking at the data from the interviews it clearly shows that the chefs of all the three races seem to be talking in sync with each other and that they all seem to be facing the same problems. From this data I can infer that due to the globalised and fast developing nature of the society in urban Malaysia, the race of a person plays a much lesser influence on his or her decision making practices and that other factors like 'price' plays a more important part in their professional life. Further research can be carried out to find out this in greater detail and to investigate the consumption patterns of these chefs in their personal life.

## **5. LIMITATION OF STUDY**

As stated by Patton (2002), "There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs" (p. 233). The interviews will be administered to chefs in the hospitality schools in and around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, hotels in the Kuala Lumpur city centre and chefs owning independent restaurants in Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas. The results of the study might only be

generally applied to chefs in the hospitality schools in and around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Hotels in the Kuala Lumpur City Centre and chefs owning independent restaurants in Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas. There could also be a limitation because of the potential unequal interviews of male and female respondents; there could be not equal gender representation.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

After the interviews with the respondents from the three races of Malaysia, Malays, Indians and Chinese, I deduce that the chefs are aware of the issues faced because of the poultry industry but their knowledge of the seriousness and intensity of the issues is lacking. This can be explained for them not using free range chicken meat in their day to day work environment. The chefs also try to justify the use of factory farmed chicken meat in their work environment by claiming to be consuming free-range chicken meat in their personal life. This duality seen in the chef's behavior needs to be further studied in detail. The two dimensions in which the chefs embrace different sets of ethical and moral values could be because of various reasons. The trend could be a physiological reason for the chefs to justify their obvious wrong choice of meat in their workplace, or it could just be a fictitious reason for them to feel or appear good in front of the researcher. It could also be a justification for themselves to look good in their own eyes as being caring for the ethical concerns of chickens and them trying to balance out their factory farmed meat consumption at work with free range or *kampung* chicken at home. This stance needs further investigation in future research. The following quote from one of the chefs interviewed sums up their stance perfectly:

*Of course, it depends where you come from. From animal point of view of course it is very cruel. But then if you come from business point of view, I think the demand is there so I think in order to cope with the demand I think they would do it this way. (Chinese Chef, REXXY)*

This stance also shows a duality of ethical and moral perspective from the chef's point of view. It is also surprising for the researcher to see that 'race' did not play a very significant role in the decision making process of the chefs professional life. Whether the chefs 'perform' their ethnic, cultural and racial duties at home only is a recommended subject for further research. Further research coupled with this research may be useful in exposing the worst practices in the Chicken farming industry and would eventually challenge the industry to raise the bar on its ethical practices. We need more research, more intervention as well as more monitory inputs to help make more selective changes in this chicken meat and egg farming industry. This intervention needs to be done urgently as the present practices are harming the poultry as well as the humans.

Have we gone too far already, is the damage done to the chicken irreversible? Are our attempts to reintroduce old traditions and practices just a futile attempt to reclaim the lost habits, habitats and behavior of the chicken? Is the chicken changed so much from its ancestor, the Indian Red Jungle Fowl or *Gallus gallus* that it was thousands of years ago? Are we deliberately distancing ourselves from the realities of animal agriculture? As said by Peter Cheeke in his book *Contemporary Issues in Animal Agriculture* (p. 332),

*"For modern animal agriculture, the less the consumer knows about what's happening before the meat hits the plate, the better..... one of the best things modern animal agriculture has going for it is that most people in the developed countries are several generations removed from the farm and haven't a clue how animals are raised and processed".*

These questions need to be answered by us and can be a further area of research. We also need to research on other alternatives of chicken meat from either animal origin or plant origin.

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