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# How Foodies Choose Popular-Commercial Food

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** This study aims to describe the foodie phenomenon in Makassar City regarding the process of selecting various types of popular-commercial food and/or drinks.

**Methodology:** The informant determination technique used is purposive (deliberate). The data collection used is by observation, in-depth interviews with informants, and confirmed by various literature studies that are relevant to the research topic. In this study, the method used is a qualitative method.

**Results:** The results showed that in eating activities, foodies were influenced by several things, including; the concept of eating, the concept of deliciousness and various factors that influence the activity of eating popular-commercial food.

*Keywords: Foodie; food; popular-commercial.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Culture is the main differentiator between humans and animals, and a marker of the perfection of humans as living beings. The formation of culture occurs through a learning process - both formally, informally, and non-

formally which is then applied and integrated in a certain life order, and because culture is dynamic-adaptive, the learning process essentially occurs continuously, thus culture continues to develop as well as life [1,2,3]. However, the thing that underlies the formation of culture is precisely because of human awareness

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of its physical limitations, especially when it comes to efforts to meet the various needs of life, so that culture becomes the sole resource for humans [4].

Culture, thus, is a guide in life and in living, because "it consists of principles or standards for deciding what it is, what can be, how one feels about it, what to do about it, and how to go about doing it." [5] which is why the development of life – which is generally based on economic stability shows the occurrence of cultural development, which in certain contexts forms a socio-cultural phenomenon or the formation of a "new culture", because human beings are in essence always. "construct culture as they go along and as they respond to life's contingency" [6].

One of the social phenomena that is formed along with the development of civilization and culture, is the foodie phenomenon, which can simply be understood as a social phenomenon in a socio-cultural and/or socio-economic context related to the commercialization of food. This phenomenon was first "discovered" in New York City - United States [7], which was indicated by the rapid and stable economic development, which later formed the "consumer generation" or as the "children of the consumer boom" [8].

Along with the movement of people and the development of civilization, the foodie phenomenon has become a global phenomenon, because apart from the fact that food is a necessity related to "self-reproduction" [9] it is also triggered by an increase in economic stability which is summarized in the term globalization. Foodie itself by Johnston and Baumann is defined as someone who thinks food is not only limited to fulfilling biological needs but as part of their identity and making it a lifestyle [10]. So that Foodie is understood as a living unit in the form of groups and/or communities consisting of "consumer generations", who in their daily lives consume one or several types of popular commercial food even though they are available in different areas with separate distances, with purposes that are not related to function food in a biological context but in a social context [7,10].

Referring to the working definition above, it shows that foodies have a culture because the learning process has occurred and continues to be related to the fulfilment of the need for food, which in turn forms a social phenomenon termed as foodie. Anderson emphasized that the activity of consuming food for foodies was largely driven

by the desire to communicate their own characteristics and personality which was also inseparable from their taste or "individual taste" [11].

These popular-commercial foods are assumed to be the result of improvisation, namely a form of creativity that refers to a condition where something continues to experience renewal, as opposed to a condition where something that has been formed over the development of the same thing so that it is ready to be used, or what is termed as innovation [12]. This assumption is none other than the "key" of the wide variety of popular-commercial foods that can be; "traditional-creative food" which refers to various types of special foods belonging to certain ethnic groups that have gone through an improvisation process for commercialization purposes, and/or; "scientific-creative food" which refers to various types of food in which there are flavor enhancers and or sensations with scientific nuances, with the emphasis that; the first form, refers to the improvisations made by "food makers" and subsequently commercialized through public spaces as summarized in the term "street food", and; the second form, refers to the improvisations made by the cooks in a certain room as summarized in the term "molecular food".

Understanding the brief review above, shows the existence of foodie culture [10] where the term culture refers to defining, categorizing and or classifying, besides that culture in this case also includes typical actions based on the process of providing, serving, and food designation [13], or in other words refers to; the process of selecting various types of popular-commercial food, which consists of the reasons and methods of choosing; the process of consuming popular-commercial food, in which there are ways of consuming, and; the process of evaluating popular-commercial types of food, which consists of the reasons and methods of judging.

However, attaching the term culture to the foodie phenomenon, or understanding the foodie phenomenon as a culture, also means showing the existence of stakeholders who provide commercial-popular food, which are none other than the owners of creative improvisational abilities.

Conducting a study of foodie culture, thus, will form knowledge regarding the "relationship" of humans with their food in the creative industry era, and knowledge regarding the priority issue

of various types of food in human life in the era of progress of economic stability, both of which are closely related to one of the only tourism, because the existence of foodies is then understood as one of the categories of visitors or tourists in the context of culinary tourism [14]. Also studied by Robinson [15] placing foodies in the context of tourists seeking experiences through culinary tourism and finding that almost all of their research samples that label themselves as foodies have a high level of food-involvement. The views and understandings of experts related to the foodie phenomenon as described briefly above indicate that the area of the foodie phenomenon still requires further study because it is very closely related to changes in community lifestyle trends, both local and global in consuming popular-commercial foods.

Vadnal [16] describes that if foodie in the 1980s referred to the depiction of class differences and/or economic strata; the era of the 1990s was a trend of changing behavior and/or lifestyle which was shown by fanaticism towards various types of food, giving rise to a culinary explosion; so in the early and mid-2000s the existence of foodies was democratized by the role of social media as the growth and advancement of visual platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Tiktok.

A similar view has also been conveyed the understanding related to foodie through studies is still not complete, therefore the foodie phenomenon is still placed in the phase of research subjects that require more in-depth analysis. As is the case when dressed with the current condition of Makassar City. So it then led the researchers' interest to explore more deeply related to foodie in Makassar City related to the process of selecting various types of popular-commercial food and/or drinks consisting of reasons and ways in choosing, the process of consuming popular-commercial food where there are ways to consume and the process of evaluating the types of commercially popular foods consisting of reasons and ways of judging, which is a cultural phenomenon.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach. Further explained by [17], qualitative research is interpretivist and adopts a constructivist perspective; so the researcher considers the qualitative research approach very suitable to be applied to this research; because this research

focuses on consumers and consumption practices that affect social interactions.

The type of qualitative research applied is an ethnographic approach that allows researchers to better understand the foodie phenomenon and its influence on social interaction. The research carried out uses ethnography as a research design, because; The research focuses on foodie culture, especially with regard to the reasons and ways of choosing, consuming, and evaluating popular-commercial foods, so that culture exists only among foodie groups and/or communities. The implication of the application of the ethnographic research design is the application of two distinctive methods in it, namely participant observation and ethnographic analysis.

This research was carried out in Makassar City, Indonesia which today has become a city center for business turnover, trade as well as the most advanced advances in knowledge and technology in the central and eastern parts of Indonesia. Foodservice Director, Fontera Brands Indonesia, Sigit Wijanarko, said that Makassar City.

The selection of 15 informants in this study aims to select individuals who are willing to share their experiences and consumption behavior in this case consuming food and beverages. Therefore, the first criterion in selecting informants for this research is that they must be foodies. The definition of foodie used as the informant selection frame refers to the definition of foodie by [18] which is labelling for individuals who integrate food, food preparation and processing processes and enjoy a variety of food offerings into their lifestyle, and become personal and social identities. because it is always covered with a variety of culinary activities, cooking, sharing food and culinary information.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 How Foodies Choose Commercial-Popular Food

Food selection includes the process of selecting and consuming food and beverages, by considering what, how, when, where, and with whom a person eats, as well as considering aspects of food and eating behavior that will arise [19].

Galuh (23 years old) said that the rise of coffee-holics in Makassar could not be separated from

the influence of a coffee-themed film the other day. The film he was referring to was Philosophy of Coffee. The film was shown in various theaters and then caused a coffee fever everywhere. At the same time, many coffee shops have sprung up. Galuh (23 years old) said, since then, he started drinking coffee which he even thought before that coffee was a drink for man.

Day by day, he began to have a curiosity about anything new and related to coffee. Not only that, the Korean film fever has also influenced many foodie references in finding food. Then there are various shops or restaurants that bring up typical Korean menus that often appear on the screen. For example, Gildak which sells a variety of Korean 'snacks'. Foodie, who then had an interest in serving Korean menus, could not be separated from how he idolized several actors or actresses in the Korean film.

In addition to films, social media has also become a medium that influences the process of choosing food to be eaten by foodies [20]. Diyan (34 years old) often uses Instagram as the first 'storefront' he sees when he wants to order a food. He said that everything that people are eating a lot must appear on Instagram. Even sometimes, when he has no intention of eating but accidentally sees some food on his Instagram timeline, he subconsciously orders the food he sees and is interested in. The incident he called the term 'eye hunger'.

The desired foods are based on social media, also allowing for 'fails' to occur. Pao (31 years old) said he was disappointed because the food he saw in the media, even covered in major media such as CNN, did not live up to his expectations. After that, he was more traumatized when he had to choose food based on social media. This can be confirmed by Pipi (26 years old) who often receives endorsements from many culinary entrepreneurs. When it comes to doing 'advertising', Puput (26 years old) honestly says that he doesn't tell the truth about the description of the taste of the food. First, because it clashes with the value of solidarity to support existing small culinary businesses. These two things also go against the value of good manners in front of food, such as not insulting food and that people have different tastes. Thus, because of the clash of values, he doesn't tell the truth.

Next is the image factor of a restaurant or the image of a chef working in a restaurant. Pao (31 years) said that he knew of a restaurant that had

been recognized as a place that definitely never let his tongue down. The restaurant is Metis Restaurant, Bali. Even though the restaurant has the concept of a season menu, or a food menu that changes periodically, he is never disappointed, even when he often eats a menu of food that he has never eaten at all.

Apart from the driving factors for a foodie in choosing food, there are also several things that become obstacles or taboos that are part of the process of choosing food. Rikar (34 years) who suffers from cholesterol, sugar, and hypertension must break the domination of his desire to eat anything like when he was young or healthy. Even his wife helped keep him from food ingredients that could trigger his illness. Therefore, still unable to contain his craving for food, Rikar often eats *cokko'-cokko'* (Traditional food). In other words, in this case, he could no longer hold back his urge and ignored the illness he was suffering from. Apart from Rikar, Galuh (23 years old) also has special considerations regarding food because it is related to his skin. The specific he was considering was the frying method that made the food oily. At the same time, Galuh is also a celebrity, so it is necessary to pay attention to her skin and appearance. Murcott states that women have a big role in planning and providing food as well as the need to pay attention to their own body shape in order to still look "desirable".

In addition, religion is still an influential factor in food choice decisions. Specifically in Islam, the terms Halal and Haram are known. This religion-based justification is the most decisive factor against the limits of a Muslim foodie in choosing food. This is also related to the necessity to come to a place to eat a food in order to see first-hand the cleanliness as well as to observe the ethnicity of the owner of the restaurant. Bella (25 years) said, at least if we know the ethnicity, we can associate the ethnicity into a certain religion

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The construction of taste both in terms of taste buds as well as sensation or texture of food has provided derivatives of knowledge and behavior based on ideals for each individual foodie. These ideals can then form small 'circles' that are bound because they have something in common with things that are considered ideal about eating and food. The derivatives of knowledge and behavior consist of factors that influence in choosing food, behavior in eating food, to various dimensions about assessing a food. The taste experience

gained in the process of growing a person has become the basis for a foodie to make food choices. The experience cannot be separated from the influence of the social environment, including the virtual world or social media, visualization of food in films, and ethical or moral values towards food which are heavily influenced by norms from religion and close family. As a city, Makassar is already full of multi-ethnic people. There are certain ethnic groups that are often associated with non-Muslim communities, such as people who are ethnic Chinese and Toraja. Strauss said that humans categorize food as food that can be consumed which is related to religious beliefs.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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