



Undergraduate

## Introduction

- Malaysia has the highest prevalence of obesity and overweight among Asian countries (World Health Organization, 2019).
- Eating habits change abruptly during the university stage (Hernández-Jaña et al., 2020).
- Social media feeds are populated with food content :
  - unhealthy food advertisement and promotion
  - nutrition-related content by healthcare professionals/ health organisations
- Undergraduates who are in non-health science related courses may not have an advantage in evaluating Food-Related Social Media Content (FRSMC).

## Research Questions

- What FRSMC are Chemical Engineering (CE) undergraduate students at USM attracted to on social media?
- How does FRSMC **influence** eating habits among undergraduate students?
- What **issues** do undergraduates face with using FRSMC?
- How can FRSMC **be improved** for CE undergraduate users?

## Methodology

- This cross-sectional study undertook a **semi-structured interview qualitative** research methodology.
- The research participants were recruited from the study population of **CE students at USM**. **Purposive sampling** guided the recruitment of participants.
- Ten** semi-structured interviews were conducted **online**.
- Data was collected and reviewed synchronously and asynchronously during online interview sessions and from recordings of the research sessions.
- A **hybrid approach** of deductive top-down and inductive bottom-up **thematic analysis** was chosen to interpret the primary data of this research.

## Results & Discussion

	Themes	Subthemes
Influences of FRSMC on CE undergraduates	Potential to support healthy eating habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being inspired and motivated</li> <li>Information and idea</li> </ul>
	Potential to influence food choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive influences on food choice</li> <li>Negative influences on food choice</li> <li>Increase appetite</li> </ul>
	Negative effects on emotional well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling guilty for eating too much</li> <li>Being motivated</li> </ul>
	No influence on eating habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental feeding</li> <li>Accessibility to food</li> </ul>

	Themes	Subthemes
Issues faced in using RMC	Unrealistic and untrustworthy content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unrealistic expectations around food</li> <li>Untrustworthiness</li> </ul>
	Difficult and repetitive content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repetitive FRSMC</li> <li>Having trouble understanding nutrition-related content</li> </ul>
	Poor adherence to healthy diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low self-discipline</li> <li>Inadequate access to healthy food</li> </ul>
	Profit-oriented content	No specific subtheme
	Social media algorithms	No specific subtheme

	Themes	Subthemes
Strategies to improve FRSMC	Trustworthy content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educational and informative content by professionals</li> <li>Accurate representation in advertisement</li> </ul>
	Engaging content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create interactive activities</li> <li>Be trendy and innovative</li> </ul>



## Conclusion

- CE undergraduate students engaged with FRSMC like food advertising and promotions, cooking tutorials, and food and nutrition information.
- FRSMC can have positive, negative or no influence on the eating habits of CE undergraduates.
- Positive health outcomes from FRSMC may require credibility, clarity of message and attractiveness.

## Possible Further Research

- involve a larger sample of students and different Malaysian demographic groups.
- More research is needed to explain the mechanism of how FRSMC could affect one's eating habits.
- Quantitative cohort studies could be conducted to determine the causality between eating habits and other confounding factors.
- Further research could study the criteria of health and nutrition-related content that increase consumers' engagement and interest in such content.