

## **B36 The influence of social media on eating habits among chemical engineering undergraduate students at Universiti Sains Malaysia, School of Chemical Engineering**

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What is the relationship between food-related social media content (FRSMC) and the eating habits of undergraduates from chemical engineering (CE) course? We know that social media can influence one's purchasing decisions through advertisement, reviews and marketing tactics, yet little is known about its influence on the eating habits of Malaysian undergraduates. Does it positively or negatively affect their eating habits? This thesis contributes to this deficit in knowledge, exploring social media usage of Malaysian non-health profession undergraduates, their eating habits and how they perceive the FRSMC to affect their eating habits. A qualitative cross-sectional interview study was conducted focusing on eating habits and social media usage of CE undergraduates at the School of CE, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). A total of 10 participants were enrolled to participate in semi-structured interview sessions. The sample of 10 participants is deemed sufficient for data saturation in a qualitative study. Recordings from interview sessions were transcribed and qualitative data thematically analysed. Study findings indicate FRSMC that attract and engage CE undergraduates are food advertising and promotions, cooking tutorials and, food and nutrition information. The results show that FRSMC can positively and negatively affect eating habits of CE undergraduates. Undergraduates perceive that FRSMC, specifically health and nutrition related content are more credible when created by healthcare professionals. Participants suggested that the credibility of health-related content needs to be complemented with creative and engaging interactive features. Such features can help in creating health awareness, dispelling myths and promoting healthy eating habits. Further research could involve a larger sample of students and different Malaysian demographic groups.