

**THE EFFECT OF PERCEIVED FOOD IMAGE
AND OVERALL SATISFACTION AMONG
TOURISTS IN KOTA KINABALU**

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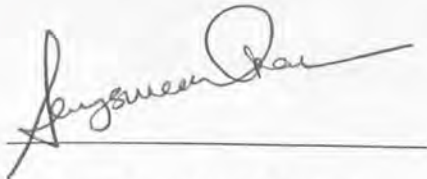
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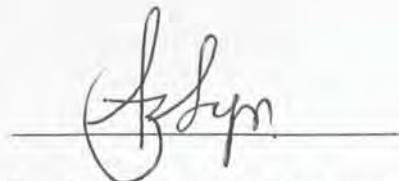
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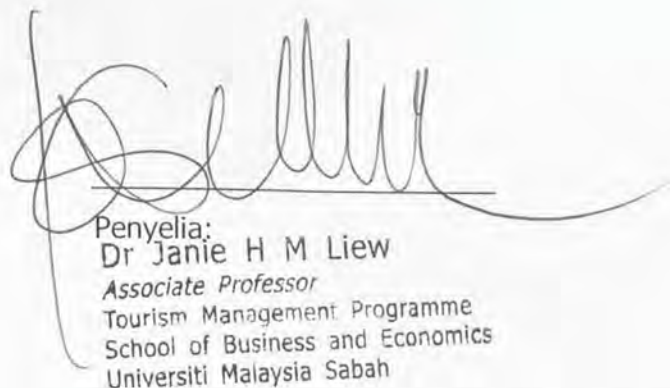
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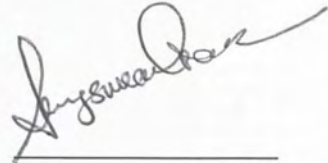


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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF PERCEIVED FOOD IMAGE AND OVERALL SATISFACTION AMONG TOURISTS IN KOTA KINABALU

Niche tourism becomes another trend to differentiate within countries in competitive tourism industry. Despite the substantial rise of food as tourism product, the study aims to investigate the effects of perceived food image on food and service quality, attraction and variety of food, price of food and food specialty and uniqueness and overall satisfaction among tourists in Kota Kinabalu by applying Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory. The moderating factors (i.e age, gender, nationality) also investigated among the relationship of perceived food image and overall satisfaction. A total of 206 respondents were used and the statistical result revealed that overall satisfaction of tourists can be explained by 66.9 percents of perceived food image by four independent variables. All the four variables of perceived food image are significant positive relationship with overall satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). However, there is no moderating effect found among the moderator (age, gender and nationality). The findings of this study will not only help practitioners in tourism to understand the perceived food image, but also provides insight into research on hospitality and gastronomy. The implication will be very useful for the stakeholder especially food supplier, food provider as well as government agencies in tourism department in Sabah and Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

KESAN BAGI PENERIMAAN IMEJ MAKANAN DAN KESELURUHAN KEPUASAN ANTARA PELANCONG-PELANCONG DI KOTA KINABALU

Perlancongan bidang menjadi aliran lain yang dapat membezakan perlancongan antara negara terutamanya dalam industry perlancongan yang kompetitif. Penarikan makanan sebagai produk perlancongan telah meningkat. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah berniat untuk mengaji kesan bagi penerimaan imej makanan pada kualiti makanan dan perkhidmatan, tarikan dan kepelbagaian makanan, harga makanan, keluarbiasaan dan keunikan makanan serta keseluruhan kepuasan di antara pelancong-pelancong yang melawat ke Kota Kinabalu. Kajian ini disokong dengan Teori Expectancy Disconfirmation. Faktor moderator (umur, jantina, kewarganegaraan) juga dikaji. Sebanyak 206 responden telah digunakan dalam kajian dan keputusan statistik menunjukkan bahawa keseluruhan kepuasan bagi pelancong boleh diterangkan dengan sebanyak 66.9 peratus oleh empat penerimaan imej makanan. Didapati bahawa kesemua empat pembolehubah bagi penerimaan imej makanan mempunyai hubungan signifikan yang positif terhadap keseluruhan kepuasan ($p < 0.05$). Walau bagaimanapun, tiada kesan moderating didapati di antara moderator (umur, jantina, kewarganegaraan). Penemuan bagi kajian ini bukan sahaja dapat membantu pengamal dalam perlancongan memahami penerimaan imej makanan, tetapi juga memberi idea kepada penyelidikan dalam hospitaliti dan gastronomi. Implikasinya adalah sangat berguna kepada pembekal makanan dan juga agensi kerajaan dalam bidang perlancongan di Sabah mahupun Malaysia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BTMICE	Business travel, meeting, incentives, conferences and exhibitions
EDT	Expectancy–Disconfirmation theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
STB	Singapore Tourism Board
WOM	Worth of Mouth
WTC	World Tourism Conference
WTO	World Tourism Organization

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GLOSSARY

EDT model	Expectancy–Disconfirmation theory. The theory proposed that customers always compare their consumed products and services with their expectation. Satisfaction is occurred when the perceived value exceed expectation and vice versa.
Food tourism	As the major motive for tasting and experiencing the food and related activities for instance food festivals or restaurants in specific region. Food tourism also involved the appreciation of the drinks and beverages or both alcoholic and non alcoholic.
Gastronomic	Gastronomic tourism defined as the primary motivation for tourists to travel a destination due to the gastronomy in the regions which involve product sampling, experience in food preparation or cookery courses, and buying food related products.
Moderators	The moderators which will affect the perceived food image of Sabah gastronomic products are consisted of demographic factors which include age, gender and nationality.
Niche tourism	Niche tourism which only focuses on specific interests, culture or activity based on authentic settings. Under roof of niche tourism, macro niches includes cultural, environmental, rural, urban and others while the micro-niches are the subsector of each of the macro group.
Overall satisfaction	Holistic evaluation in a wider scope and is not the total cumulative points from individual assessment. The satisfaction with individuals attributes is an in depth study on the attribute specific satisfaction.
Perceived food image	Perceived food image of a destination as the holistic assessment of the trip based on their belief, knowledge, behavior, perception and the experiences towards the area or particular place.
Tourist	Both domestic and international tourists who stay in Sabah for at least 24 hours or not more than a year.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The deregulation of the airline industry conjugated with technology advancement stimulates tourism to be one of the largest services industries in the world (Tak, K. H., Wan, D., and Ho, 2007). There is also no exclusion for Malaysia. Amicably, tourism in Malaysia has become the major vibrant economic generators to the nation and claimed as second largest national income after the petroleum industry. Besides, the statistic vividly indicated that Malaysian tourists had dramatically increased in the past decade from roughly 5.5 millions in 1998 to 23.65 million tourist arrivals in 2009. Simultaneously, Malaysia received RM 8.5 billion in tourism receipts in 1998 and successfully achieved revenue of RM 53.4 billion in 2009 (WTC, 2010). Besides, Malaysia was listed as one of the countries in the World Top Fifteen Destinations by the World Tourism Organization in 2002 and it has now been listed in the World's Top Ten Destinations for the year 2009 with the position of 9th place (WTO, 2010). These statistics are evidently signifies the weight of tourism in its contribution to the Malaysian economy. Therefore, it is important to continuously promote and strengthen Malaysia's image as travel destination in this competitive industry.

Novelli, (2005) stated that niche tourism is another trend to differentiate and to build own competitive advantage within the country respectively in the competitive tourism industry. Niche market includes a place or product that can be utilized as marketing tool in sustaining the industry by offering a better and meaningful experience to fulfill customer needs and wants. Recently, global tourism trend used gastronomy as tourism product and consumer awareness increased



towards food tourism (Zainal, A., Zali, A. N., Kassim, M. N., 2009). In the same view, Wolf (2002) also commented that gastronomy tourism has grown steadily since 2003 until nowadays and one of the obvious evidence can be shown is the increasing of culinary travel show in media, as gastronomy tourism has its potential to become one of these essential experiences for travelers.

Malaysia is a country renowned for its multicultural and multiracial background. The diverse ethnicity in Malaysia with a variety of culture and food are potentials for tourists around the world to seek for gastronomy pleasures. Moreover, there is a growth of 5.2% in the spending of food and beverages by tourists to Malaysia from RM 8.34 billion receipts in 2007 to RM 8.77 billion in 2008 (MOTOUR, 2010). In the Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010, food and beverages comprised of 17.4% in the tourist expenditure pattern which is the third largest important element after accommodation and shopping. The figure is expected to increase as food and beverages have become a vital component in the tourism industry. The Malaysian local food and culture can be assets to attract tourists because food closely relates to tourist consumption and Malaysia's gastronomy possesses a significant identity and experience (Zainal *et al.*, 2009).

There is also an increasing trend that more people are traveling due to the reason of gastronomy experience (Long, 2004). Besides, a successful tourist destination can be created by promoting a unique and memorable culinary identity (Fox, 2002). Again, with the success story of Visit Malaysia 2007, Tourism Malaysia continuously launched "Malaysia Truly Asia" to promote our diverse culture and coupled with "Malaysia Truly Asia Kitchen" to promote local food cuisines as tourism product, which can contribute to the gastronomic heritage in Malaysia. Thus, gastronomy tourism has its potential in Malaysia.

1.2 Problem statement

Tourism industry is increasingly competitive due to the rapid growth of tourism destinations in Asia region. On the other hand, every country has its own specialties and local products as well as services to boost the tourism industry. The fast growing tourism industry also leads to stiff competition among countries because tourists are becoming more information-driven and knowledgeable when choosing a destination which leads to greater customer demand in term of services and products quality. Various marketing strategies and effort have been done by the Ministry of Tourism i.e. Sabah Tourism Board in promoting Malaysian local food as one of the motivation for visiting our country. Some of the examples would be the aforesaid Malaysia Truly Asia Kitchen to promote local cuisines, Fabulous Food 1 Malaysia to provide gastronomic experience for food aficionados, Malaysia Food Festival, Malaysia International Gourmet Festival Tourists, Street Food and restaurant food festival etc.

Marketing requires an understanding for the needs and wants of the target market and the most crucial is the ability to deliver the products and services which meet customer satisfaction with distinctive competence (Kotler, P., Adam, S., Brown, L., & Armstrong, 2003). This is also further explained by Pike, (2008) that selling is insufficient in nowadays tourism market with more educated and sophisticated customer. There is a need to achieve optimal satisfaction and achieve return to suppliers. Therefore it appears to be a gap in understanding how these customers by acquiring the information and insight of their perceived food image towards the gastronomy products.

Mohamed, (1994) discussed that the status of food tourism in Malaysia is remained unclear and not common when it compared to other neighbouring countries especially Thailand and Singapore. The study on food tourism in Malaysia has consistently concluded that Malaysia has the potential to utilize food as a tourism product in the niche market of the competitive tourism industry. (Karim, S.

A., Chua, B. L., Salleh, H, 2009; Leong, Q. L., Karim M. S. A., Othman, M., Adzahan N. M., and Ramachandran, S., 2010; Selamat, Z., Ong, H. B., and Jaffar, Nahariah, 2010; Jalis, M. H., M. Zahari M. Salehuddin, Izzat, M., & Othman, Z, 2009; Bakar and Farinda, 2010). However, all the aforementioned authors did not use the similar attributes on perception and statistical analysis to evaluate the food tourism in Malaysia. Besides, only two studies mentioned the relationship between perception and tourist satisfaction. Therefore, there is a gap to fill in order to determine the actual variables of food tourism in Malaysia and correlation with satisfaction as tourist satisfaction is a crucial criteria in the service industry.

Image has been shown one of the vital success factors in the selection of destination (Beerli and Martin, 2004) and this is very risky for Malaysia to ignore the underlying dimension in overall satisfaction of food experience. Nield, K., Kozak, M. and Legrys, G (2000) also commented that the overall food service experience is the key elements that influence the satisfaction level of tourists. Consequently, this will impact the expenditure of tourists and any dissatisfaction can cause financial loss. Therefore, the perceived food image and overall satisfaction should be explored.

In the customer related approach, tourists' expectation is the core focus between the demand and supply (Novelli, 2005). Supply side aims to engender food as the reason to travel while demand side mentions people who seek for goods and satisfy certain need, for example, tourist and traveler (Pike, 2008). Therefore, do tourists perceived a good food image of Sabah gastronomic experience? Do expectations from supply side also reflected in demand side? Thus, this study would like to address the gaps in Malaysia's aspiration to become the choice for gastronomic tourism and the willingness of tourists to fulfill the aspiration. Will Sabah with its multi-ethnicity and multi-racial advantages in the involvement of the food tourism initiatives? Therefore, this research intends to investigate the relationship perceived of food image in terms of demand as well as to see the overall satisfaction for local food, moderated by age, gender and nationality.

1.3 Research Questions

This research is conducted to examine:

- (1) Are there any significant relationships between perceived food image and overall satisfaction among tourists in Kota Kinabalu?
- (2) Are there any significant relationships among the moderating effects of demographic characteristics (age, gender, nationality) regarding the relationships between perceived food image and overall satisfaction in Kota Kinabalu?

1.4 Research Objectives

- (1) To examine the relationships between perceived food image and overall satisfaction among tourists in Kota Kinabalu.
- (2) To investigate the moderating effect of demographic characteristics (age, gender, nationality) regarding the relationships between perceived food image and overall satisfaction among tourists in Kota Kinabalu.

1.5 Scope of study

This study is designed as cross sectional by utilizing quantitative questionnaires on tourists. The sample involves both domestic and international tourists who stay in Sabah for at least 24 hours or not more than a year. Sabah is chosen because this state is one of the major tourism hubs in Malaysia. Apart from that, Sabah festival was also selected as part of the national gastronomy campaign by Tourism Malaysia to promote Malaysia as food destination country. Besides, Sabah is a multi ethnic state in Malaysia and rich in a variety of gastronomy products such as food, fruits, snacks and beverages. Specifically, the data was carried out in Kota Kinabalu,

which is the capital city for the state of Sabah. The sample was collected at both terminals 1 and 2 of Kota Kinabalu International Airport as consideration other sites such as hotel, food outlets was deemed impractical as respondents may not tourists. Additionally, they will not be as responsive as at the airport and need more time to complete the questionnaires.

1.6 Significance of Study

Sabah, as a multi-ethnic state in Malaysia celebrates various traditional activities and events, adds as an advantage in the food tourism. Sabah food is expected to pose an identity in food culture. The research will explore the potential of food tourism as an important source of destination to attract and continuously strengthen Sabah's position in the tourism industry. Therefore, food tourism in Malaysia, especially Sabah can be in tandem with various marketing strategies.

Concerted effort is done by Tourism Malaysia to prompt the tourism industry in Malaysia, especially Sabah, with food tourism in order to increase number of tourists, nation income, and demand of products. At the same time, this improves the employment opportunities for people in Malaysia. With that, Sabah can improve the current ranking as the fourth popular destination for tourists in Malaysia and eradicate poverty of the people of Sabah as this state has been in the position of being the poorest state in Malaysia.

Cohen and Avieli, (2004) highlighted that gastronomy tourism had become a pull factor in the destination marketing. Nowadays, food is not only a necessity for man but a selling point in destination marketing. This fact is agreed by Hjalager and Richards, (2002) that food can be one of the important components for the regional cultural. Thus, it would be essential for government or main key players in the tourism industry to understand the overall satisfaction specifically in gastronomic experience because this can assist better in strategy design or

enforcement to sustain the market. Apart from that, the data in the research will aid in the food supply chain especially for supply side like restaurant, food supplier, or even hawker to know their service standard and improvement can be done to retain the tourist (Smith, M., Macleod, N., and Robertson, M. H., 2010).

Moreover, research data will also provide information for marketers and advertisers to further portray our food products and local cuisines to tourists. It would also give an insight for managers in hospitality and tourism industry a better understanding on perceived food image of food product and tourists' overall satisfaction. The provided information will assist them in planning and executing their marketing strategies and resources more efficiently. The information will be an additional advantage for the future marketer or supply side to reduce the uncertainty of demand and able to produce more effective marketing decision-making.

Mitchell, R., Sharples, L., Macionis, N., Crambourne, B., and Hall, M., (2003) highlighted that there are not enough studies on food tourism as well as its relations to tourist behaviors. The authors also claimed that rare studies lead to sketchy understanding of the industry in gastronomy tourism. This is also argued by Long, (2004) implied that there are few studies regarding to food and food-related activities which will seriously impact tourism in certain areas. Increasing numbers of researchers are focusing on hospitality industry to satisfy the needs and wants of the tourist (Spark, B., Bowen J. and Kalg, S., 2002). Hjalager and Richards' study in (2002) also supported that researchers are paying more attention in the reason of food is and key elements in the destination identity rather than mass packages. It will contribute to the hospitality and tourism literature by enriching the body of knowledge in gastronomic tourism.

1.7 Organization of study

Chapter 1, introduction highlights the overview of the research title and presents a general idea of the study. It also includes the problem statement coupled with objective of the study, research questions, scope and significance of study. Besides, definitions of the key terms are stated in this study. While, for chapter 2, literature review part gives an insight of prevailing theories and hypotheses which related to present study. Chapter 3, methodology is summarized with proposed framework, sampling and data analysis methods. In addition, research hypotheses are also included. Chapter 4 reveals the output of statistical analysis. All the findings will be supported in Chapter 5 with discussion and conclusion. Additionally, limitations will be suggested for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature reviews started with brief idea of food tourism are described according to the questions of what, why, when. At the same time, literatures reviews also exposed information on global and Malaysian food tourism. Food tourism included in the literature review due to the importance of perceived food image and overall satisfaction will influence the potential of food tourism in Sabah and Malaysia. Global tourism needed as the benchmark for food tourism to develop. Specifically, this chapter covers the literatures review of the perceived food image and overall satisfaction and moderators (i.e, age, gender and nationality) as the major study in the paper. The mother theory of the framework will also be discussed.

2.2 Food tourism

2.2.1 What is food tourism?

Mass tourism and niche tourism are two major components in tourism industry. Mass tourism consists of large number of tourists and staged traveling packages (Novelli, 2005). However, it is vice versa with niche tourism which only focuses on specific interests, culture or activity based on authentic settings (Novelli, 2005). Under the roof of niche tourism, macro niches includes cultural, environmental, rural, urban and others while the micro-niches are the subsector of each of the macro group. Gastronomic tourism is categorized under the rural sector (Novelli, 2005).



In defining the meaning of food tourism, Kivela and Crotts, (2006) mentioned that "gastronomy" is derived from the Greek word of "*gastros*" in which the meaning is *knowledge and law*. Gastronomic tourism is defined as the primary motivation for tourists to travel a destination due to the gastronomy in the regions which involve product sampling, experience in food preparation or cookery courses, and buying food related products (Smith *et al.*, 2010). Besides, Selamat, Z., Ong, H. B., & Jaffar, Nahariah., (2010) also defined gastronomy as the features of the food and drinks, method of preparation and consumption which is different from others. He further claimed that gastronomic experiences represent the food and beverages from a particular country or a region. Santich, (2003) also define gastronomy as the art of living that is related to the experience of skills, knowledge of food and drink according to preference and the aforementioned experiences will enhance the enjoyment and pleasure when traveling.

In the same perspective, food tourism, as further expressed by Hall and Mitchell, (2001), is the major motive for tasting and experiencing the food as well as related activities such as food festivals or restaurants in a specific region. Food tourism also involved the appreciation of the drinks and beverages or both alcoholic and non alcoholic (Hall and Mitchell, 2000). Novelli, (2005) added on the further explanation that food tourism is focus on the desire to taste the food as the primary reason in the traveling behavior instead of any trip to a restaurant is considered food tourism. Hjalager and Richards, (2002) explained that food tourism normally incorporate activities like sampling, food learning or participate in food-based activities and food special interest. Sometimes, people tend to label food-based tourism as gastronomic tourism or culinary tourism or even tasting tourism. Besides, Santich, (2003) also further emphasized that the exploration of the food and drinks is one of the essences in cultural tourism where people are able to experience the specialty of cultural through food and beverages. According to the Canadian Tourism Commission (2002), culinary tourism does not only include the products or service provided. It is also associated with food related events and activities from food festivals to farm visits.

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