

FACTORS INFLUENCING LOCAL FOOD SELECTION AMONG TOURISTS IN PENANG

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the main sources of income for most countries in the world. The third largest expenditure of tourist are food and beverage. The increase in food expenditure by tourists shows that local food has great potential to be promoted to international tourists. The study is to examine factors influencing the selection of local food among tourists in Penang. This study is also being carried out to determine the food preferences of tourists while them on vacation. The independent variables that will be used in this study are knowledge, experience and excitement which will be tested to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. Questionnaire forms will be used as a tool to collect data. Respondents will be selected among domestic travellers travelling in Penang. Data will be analyzed using 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS). The finding from this study will be able to encourage restaurant operators to further understand the factors that cause tourists to accept or reject local food

Keywords: Local food, Knowledge, Experience, Excitement, Local tourist.

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI PEMILIHAN MAKANAN TEMPATAN DALAM KALANGAN PELANCONG DI PULAU PINANG

ABSTRAK

Pelancongan merupakan salah satu sumber pendapatan utama bagi kebanyakan negara di dunia. Perbelanjaan ketiga terbesar pelancong ialah makanan dan minuman. Peningkatan perbelanjaan makanan oleh pelancong menunjukkan makanan tempatan berpotensi besar untuk dipromosikan kepada pelancong antarabangsa. Kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pemilihan makanan tempatan dalam kalangan pelancong di Pulau Pinang. Kajian ini juga sedang dijalankan untuk menentukan pilihan makanan pelancong semasa mereka bercuti. Pembolehubah bebas yang akan digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah pengetahuan, pengalaman dan keseronokan yang akan diuji bagi memastikan kebolehpercayaan dan kesahan kajian. Borang soal selidik akan digunakan sebagai alat untuk mengumpul data. Responden akan dipilih dalam kalangan pelancong domestik yang melancong di Pulau Pinang. Data akan dianalisis menggunakan 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS). Dapatan daripada kajian ini akan dapat menggalakkan pengusaha restoran untuk lebih memahami faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan pelancong menerima atau menolak makanan tempatan.

Kata kunci: *Makanan Tempatan, Pengetahuan, Pengalaman, Keseronokan, Pelancong Tempatan.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the main sources of income for most countries in the world. Malaysia is popular among international tourists, where it receives a total of 29 million tourists and contributes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 182.4 billion (Astroawani, 2018). The encouraging arrival of tourists has boosted the country's income in the tourism sector (Berita Harian online, 2017). Significant economic growth in this industry has been driven by the growing number of international tourists (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2015).

Based on reports by Euromonitor International (2010) and Tourism Malaysia (2015), food expenditure is the third largest expenditure spent by international tourists after shopping and accommodation. Statistic by Tourism Malaysia reported that foreign tourists spent 69.6% on shopping, accommodation, and food and beverages in 2015, compared to 68.5% in 2014. The increase in food expenditure by tourists shows that local food has great potential to be promoted to international tourists. Kivela and Crofts (2006) stated that that food tourism is an alternative to nature where it can be used as an event throughout the year without being affected by other problems such as weather and season.

Penang is the most popular tourist destination in Malaysia (Wonderful Malaysia, 2015). In 2008, UNESCO listed Penang as a World Heritage Site. In addition to many beautiful historical places, Penang is also famous as the best food destination in the world (Mstar, 2016).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Acceptance of food is the most important aspect for a tourist who visits an area. However, there is a probability that the acceptance of the local dish is at a relatively low level. This means that a tourist is likely to dislike a certain food based on the taste, texture or aroma of the dish. the said. Sometimes they will think that the local food has a strange taste, in addition, the food uses ingredients that are less known and causes the risk of food poisoning to be high (Nummedal and Hill, 2006).

The selection of food is an important aspect of the tourist experience, where tourists not only like to enjoy the scenery but also "feel" the place. It cannot be denied that all tourists eat a lot (Shenoy, 2005; Yusuf, 2017). Local food refers to food that can be obtained in tourist destinations. Local food and drink destinations are not only about locally grown produce but also include food that requires raw materials from outside the area that are then processed locally and thus give the place or region its identity. (Nummedal & Hall, 2006; Kiráová, 2017).

Local food is a basic component of human life, but in most tourist destinations, food is made as a product and an attraction for the destination. Therefore, we need to develop some unique strategies that can be identified as characteristics of Malaysia to attract foreign tourists who will experience and enjoy local food when they visit our country.

Mak and Chang (2013) stated that the consumption of food in the context of international tourism, in the form of unique food consumption that occurs in foreign and non-foreign contexts, has been largely ignored in studies related to tourism and hospitality.

In addition, the problem of lack of experience among tourists also contributes to the acceptance of Penang's local food. This happens due to the geographical factor of the tourists' country of origin which is quite far from Penang which causes them to know less about the food and drinks available in Penang. According to Nummedal and Hall (2006), the 'destination' of a food is not dependent on the place where it is grown or produced only, it even involves raw materials from outside areas that need to be mixed to produce a dish that can be considered 'special' in that area

This issue is also supported by Mak and Chang (2013). Kim and Eves (2012) said that there are several studies that try to explore the motivational aspect of tourist food selection. In order to answer this problem, this study aims to empirically examine the selection of local food among international tourists.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This research will be conducted to fulfill several objectives:

1. To identify knowledge influencing local food selection among tourists in Penang.
2. To study how experience influences food selection among tourists in Penang.
3. To study how excitement influences food selection among tourists in Penang.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

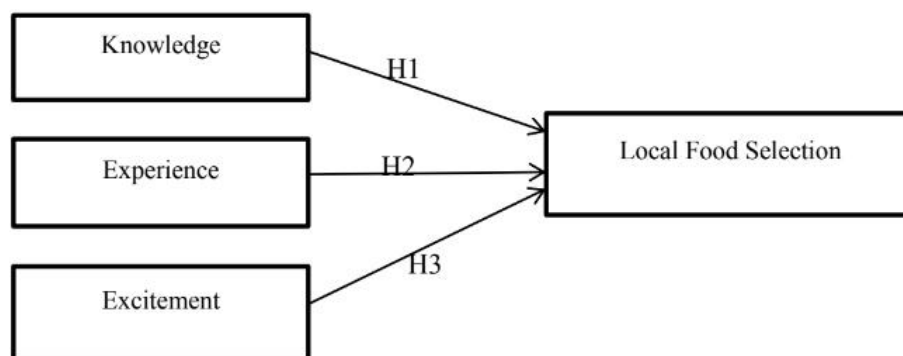


Figure 1: Conceptual framework adapted from Y.G Kim et.al., (2009)

HYPOTHESIS

H₁: There is a positive relationship between aspects of knowledge and local food consumption in Penang.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between experience and local food selection in Penang. H₃: There is a positive relationship between enjoyment and local food selection in Penang.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism And Food

The term "culinary tourism" can be explained as a journey to learn, appreciate, and taste the "brand" of local cuisine along with its original food sources (Xiao & Smith, 2008; Arikan, 2018). Walter (2017) defines culinary tourism as the combination of the uniqueness and beauty of the experience of eating and drinking at a destination as a travel experience. The combination of these two definitions shows that there are two important dimensions to culinary tourism. First, "culinary tourism" refers to

the beauty of the experience gained from the local food culture and the destination visited. The second dimension explains that culinary tourism is not tied to any activity related to specific foods (Hsu, 2014).

Local gastronomy is part of the heritage and is one of the most popular forms of tourism (Lopez and Martin, 2006). While Omar et al (2011) argue that local food is a marker for the culture, history and lifestyle of the local people. Local food usually refers to the use of raw materials and prepared by local residents who are skilled in their production. According to Mitchell & Hall (2003), gastronomic tourism can be classified as one of four types of interest in local food, namely Gourmet Tourist, Gastronomy and Cuisine Tourist, Culinary Tourist and urban/rural tourism.

For centuries, Malaysia has been a focal area of cultural mixing resulting in various types of food. Therefore there are many types of Food available throughout Malaysia. This traditional / local food needs to be preserved so that the authenticity of this local gastronomy is not 'tainted' by the current of progress. However, the use of modern technology in the production of traditional dishes which aims to add value to the quality of food hygiene and safety is highly encouraged (Omar et al, 2011).

The existence of the trend of tourists or travelers who make food and any activity involving food as the main purpose of traveling makes the emergence of more restaurant operators who are smart in adapting the local cuisine menu to the sense of taste of foreign tourists. So, it is not surprising if local food and drinks can be well received by those who are somewhat unfamiliar with Malaysian eating culture. This study also proved by Abd Karim (2006), that there is a significant relationship between the 'image' of food in a tourist destination and the intention to travel. This is also supported by the ease of accessing information about a destination before the person reaches the desired destination.

According to Monaco et al. (2006), when consumers decide to buy a certain food, their choice is also driven by other information, such as nutrition, safety, origin, product image, packaging, brand, and price. Even a study found that tourists will spend more than one third (1/3) on food and drinks and this figure will increase from year to year (Sanchez-Canizares & Lopez-Guzman, 2012).

Since gastronomic tourism is recognized as a fundamental thing in tourism, Malaysia should aggressively market local cuisine and culture as another tourism product. In addition, the government is also involved in the promotion of "Malaysian Kitchen". This is one of the projects fully funded by the government where the objective is to promote Malaysian cuisine in the international market. Even gastronomic tourism is often associated with cultural tourism and indirectly, it is considered a paradigm in the world of modern tourism (Bernama, 2008).

Local Food Selection

In the context of tourism, local dishes are foods found in the destination visited. Local food is a key component of attraction in a destination. But it is a challenge for local food product operators to introduce the dish to tourists from abroad. Therefore, a strategy must be created to attract foreign tourists to taste local food when they visit our country.

Today, the preparation of local delicacies has been recognized as a field that is rising significantly because it provides tourists with valuable, memorable experiences and, indirectly, makes them willing to pay a higher price (Smith & Costello, 2009). A study conducted by Norliana, Wan, Aida, and Rashid (2017) found that the main reason most tourists visit Penang is to taste the food available in the state. According to Hrelia (2015), one of the factors that drive food-based tourism is the influence of the media. The existence of celebrity chefs such as Gordon Ramsey and Jamie Oliver, as well as local chefs who come from various countries, causes the foods of certain countries to be promoted.

Local Food In Penang

Penang, which is located in the north of Peninsular Malaysia, is suitable for the development of food tourism activities because the state has a variety of unique and exotic foods. This state is not only famous for its variety of interesting and historic tourist destinations, but it is also considered a food paradise because here there are various races such as Malays, Chinese, Indians, Peranakans, and several other minorities. The variety of types of food found in this state shows that tourists can taste many types of food when they are in the state of Penang. According to Mstar (2016), Penang is

recognized as the world's best food destination, surpassing several other destinations such as Bangkok and Paris. In a book entitled, "Food Tourism around the World", (Mitchell et. Al., 2003) states that studies on the consumer behavior in the field of food tourism is limited, the information available on food tourism is imperfect, and much research is needed to understand the behavior of tourists.

Knowledge

Kim et al. (2012) have also identified that there are nine motivational factors that can be linked to the selection of local food, namely enjoyable experience, escape from routine, health awareness, knowledge, learning, authentic experience, togetherness, sensory stimulation and physical environment. Levitt et al (2017) through a study on the selection of local food among tourists found that most choose local food based on: exploration of local culture, authentic travel experience, opportunities to learn and obtain information, status and prestige, influence from the referred group and subjective perception.

Experience

When a tourist travels to a destination, he often seeks to experience and feel for himself the uniqueness of the way of life in that location. So one of the experiences that can change the perception of tourists is to try and taste the variety of authentic cuisine in the places visited (Hsu, 2014). In fact, this statement is supported by Norliana et al (2017) that, the experience of eating in a new place (visited) is more valuable and will be a component that will be remembered compared to other things.

Excitement

Fun can be defined as a combination of interesting and out-of-routine experiences (Au & Law, 2002; Choe & Kim 2018). The need for experience to try new foods or drinks that are different from what they taste and eat at home is referred to as enjoyment in the context of food tourism (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Almeida & Garrod). In addition, feelings of pleasure or curiosity will stimulate expectations from the food experience (Rust & Oliver, 2000; Norliana et al, 2017). Pleasure is a motivation related to emotions, because it involves the perception of tourists' feelings, such as joy, surprise, and disappointment caused during the experience of enjoying a meal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research paper is quantitative because it aims to measure information and also uses some form of statistical analysis. All data is collected from the main source (primary data), which is the distribution of questionnaires to participants. This study will be descriptive in that it is based on research objectives that identify the factors that influence the selection of local dishes among Penang tourists.

Data Collection

This is a quantitative study where convenient sampling will be chosen to collect data. A total of 382 local tourists who visited Penang and had eaten local dishes in Penang will be used as respondents in this study. Based on a report from the website Free Malaysia Today (2016), in 2015, a total of approximately 726 thousand local tourists visited Penang.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire is divided into five parts. Part A consists of demographic questions. While Part B is related to the knowledge factor, Part C is about the experience factor, Part D is about the enjoyment factor, and Part E is related to the selection of local food among local tourists in Penang. A 5-point Likert scale will be used in Parts B, C, D, and E. Respondents will be asked to rate the answers from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), while the nominal scale will be used in Part A. The entire questionnaire used is in Malay because the respondents who will fill out this form are local tourists.

Data Analysis

Based on the issues studied in this study, which are the factors that influence the selection of local food dishes among foreign tourists, the researchers will use SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 26.0 software to analyze the data obtained. Among the analyses that will be carried

out are descriptive analysis, a pilot test (to test the reliability of questions as a research instrument), a reliability test, and a multiple regression test.

CONCLUSION

Food tourism is a tourism product that can be highlighted to further enhance the image of a tourist destination. The state of Penang, which is famous and rich in the deliciousness and uniqueness of various local foods, is able to attract many tourists whether domestic or foreign to enjoy local food in Penang. The distinctive taste, preparation, ingredients and deliciousness can highlight the food at the global level. However, the responsible party should develop some effective strategies and promotions in attracting more foreign tourists to enjoy local food while visiting our country.

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