

FACTORS INFLUENCING DESTINATION FOOD IMAGE IN PENANG
WORLD HERITAGE SITE

UNG EAN NA

A project report submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Science (Tourism Planning)

Faculty of Built Environment
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JUNE 2016

DEDICATION

To my beloved family, husband Yap Tek Hong, daughter Wan Ning and son Zi Yang

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the journey of my research and thesis preparation, I was in contact with many people, researchers, academicians, and practitioners, also included the dedicated tourists from around the world who's was involved in these research. They have contributed towards my understanding and thoughts. In particular, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Hairul Nizam Bin Ismail, for encouragement, guidance, advices, critics and motivation. I am also very thankful to staffs of Faculty of Built Environment (FAB) in term of documentations preparation, support and cooperation of my research. Without their continued support and interest, this thesis would not have been the same as presented here.

I am also indebted to Bahagian Biasiswa, Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi Malaysia (KPTM) for funding my Master degree study. Librarians at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), and the Politeknik Ibrahim Sultan (PIS) also deserve special thanks for their assistance in supplying the relevant literatures.

My fellow postgraduate students should also be recognised for their support. My sincere appreciation also extends to all my colleagues and others who have provided assistance at various occasions. Their views and tips are useful indeed. Unfortunately, it is not possible to list all of them in this limited space. I am grateful to all my family members.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship of destination food image has on the preference and intention to eat of Penang food among tourist. As Penang is well known for food tourism, it is important to identify the cognitive images that influence the preference and intention to eat specifically among tourists. The empirical objectives of this dissertation concerned identifying cognitive image of destination foods that influence on preferences for destination foods, influence on intention to eat destination foods and that behaviour intention is mediated by preference for destination foods. A survey using questionnaire was conducted among 151 tourists around the Penang World Heritage Site which is well known for its food tourism. Results indicated that the tourists has good cognitive image towards the Penang food except in promoting health. Attractiveness of Penang food was identified as the image that significantly influences both preference and intention to eat. This study has an impact in allowing to recognize the images such health promotion that needs to be given attention in order to improve the preference and intention to eat Penang Food.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat perhubungan di antara imej destinasi makanan dengan kegemaran dan niat terhadap makanan Pulau Pinang di kalangan pelancong. Pulau Pinang terkenal untuk pelancongan makanan, maka adalah wajar untuk mengenalpasti imej kognitif yang mempengaruhi kegemaran dan niat terhadap makanan Pulau Pinang khususnya di kalangan pelancong. Tinjauan menggunakan soal selidik telah dijalankan di kalangan 151 pelancong di sekitar bandar George Town yang terkenal bagi pelancongan makanan. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pelancong mempunyai pandangan yang baik terhadap makanan Pulau Pinang kecuali mempromosikan kesihatan. Daya tarikan makanan Penang dikenalpasti sebagai imej yang secara signifikan mempengaruhi kedua-dua kegemaran dan niat. Kajian ini mempunyai impak dalam mengenalpasti imej yang perlu diberi perhatian seperti mempromosikan kesihatan bagi memperbaiki pilihan dan niat terhadap makanan Pulau Penang.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 STUDY BACKGROUND

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes (UNWTO Glossary, 2014). Tourism has become a significant contribution to many countries' wealth. The ability of the national economy to benefit from tourism depends on the satisfaction of tourist's particular travel experience. Tourist satisfaction significantly influences their positive experience to others (word of mouth) and the decision to return. (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Understanding drivers to tourist satisfaction in support the production of tourist experiences is an activity that involves overnight at a hotel (accommodation), shopping or outdoor activity (recreational and leisure), cruising (transportation), attending meetings and exhibition (business) as well as including food and beverages (Leiper, 2003). Food and beverages cannot be ignored by tourists, and some in fact consider them as one of the most essential elements of the tourist experience.

Tourism activity related to food has been labelled such as food tourism, culinary tourism, or gastronomy tourism. These terms have the same meaning: people travel to a specific destination for the purpose of finding foods (Long, 2004). Travel

for food has become a trend in many countries in the world. Countries which are popular with their cuisine such as Italy, France and Thailand, have been known for the food and/or wine tourism. Other emerging countries in food tourism are Australia and Canada; these two countries have made their cuisine one of the reasons for travellers to visit (S. Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Recently the modern tourists are increasingly motivated by the search for new experiences and sensations from visiting traditions and cultures of a particular destination with enjoyment of the local cuisine (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). The ability of foods served as both a cultural activity and an entertainment is recognized (Salehuddin & Zahari, 2009).

Satisfaction with the destination leads to customer loyalty and this in turn gives a higher level of intention to repeat the visit. Food consumption is acknowledged as positively influencing tourists' experiences of a destination and in generating satisfactory travel experiences (Robinson & Getz, 2014). Food quality is a decisive factor in satisfaction, as it produces a lasting memory about the experience lived by the tourist. Food tourism is currently a key element in the development and promotion of a tourist destination (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). Thus, food experience at a destination not only satisfied the physiological needs of tourists but also their psychological aspect (Smith, 1983).

Several studies have found that tourists travel to those destinations that have established a reputation as a place to experiment with quality local products including food consumption. Several studies has shown the significance of food as a determinant of attitudes toward the destination. It has been proved that food is one of the components of destination image (Quan & Wang, 2004). Hu and Ritchie (1993) mentioned food is the fourth most important attribute in tourists' perceptions of destination attractiveness after climate, accommodations, and scenery. Food can be a great motivator for travel decisions as well as one of the main attributes of a country (Heung, Qu, & Chu, 2001) since it provides pleasurable sensory experience (Boniface, 2003), and helps one learn the local culture (S. Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Quan and Wang (2004) noted that food can convey unique experience and enjoyment to travellers. Specifically, food may totally enhance tourists' experience and can be the

most memorable part of the trip. Thus, the food of a destination can represent the image and distinctiveness of the destination (S. Ab Karim & Chi, 2010).

A right destination image can be attract more tourists to travel to those destinations, and food is part of that image (Seo, Yun, & Og, 2014). Food experience during travel is important to travellers (Sims, 2009), so food image at the destination is also important. Hjalager and Corigliano(2000) emphasised that food image was important to cultural tourism, with food-related tourism products such as wine tours and food products as souvenirs. For instance, Italy uses the appeal of Mediterranean style food, especially its image of health, to successfully attract tourists (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). Karim, Chu, and Salleh(2009) found that if tourists had a more positive image of Malaysian food, they were more satisfied with their trip and had more intention to recommend and revisit.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country and this is reflected in the Malaysian cuisine. Tourism including food tourism has been strategically positioned to ride on the cultural diversity of the country with Tourism Malaysia aptly adopting the slogan – “Malaysia, Truly Asia.” which characterises the local cuisine has also been described as a ‘fusion cuisine’ formed out of the influences of the predominant ethnic populations of Malay, Chinese and Indian. Besides language use, belief and religion, each ethnic has their own signature cuisine and food culture practices. Similar to other nations, food and beverages of each ethnic in Malaysia has been created since earlier generations by using the natural resources or any consumable things that available during that time (Hazman-Wong & Sumarjan, 2015).

Malaysia is having a diverse ethnic groups and races is giving an advantage with a vast food products which directly contribute to the country's economy and promoting the food tourism(Yusoff, Zahari, Kutut, & Sharif, 2013).These Malaysian gastronomy products that are a mixed of the various race particularlyMalays, Chinese, Indian and other ethnic groups. Acculturation and assimilation among these ethnics in the early 1970s have added to the potpourri of local food and beverages and created a

Malaysian cultural and gastronomical heritage. To name a few, Nasi Lemak, Rendang and Air Kelapa Muda (young coconut juice) claimed as a traditional Malay food and beverage, Chapattis, Puree, Teh Tarik (pulled tea) and Lassi as Indian, Char Kway Teow (flat rice noodle), Chicken Rice, Chincou and Len Chi Kang (varieties condiments beverages served either hot or cold with palm sugar syrup) as Chinese and many others has no longer belong to one single ethnic group, but are well accepted as Malaysian food and beverages. (Jalis, Salehuddin, Zahari, & Othman, 2009)

According to Global Report on Food Tourism (World Tourism Organization, 2012), the universal significance of the Straits Settlements and Spice Route, together with the built structure of Portuguese, Dutch and English influence were internationally recognised with the inscription of Georgetown (Penang) and Malacca as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Penang Island is a key Southeast Asian crossroad that historically brought together traders, armies from across the world and created a huge repository of culinary delights. Penang is known for its diverse cuisine and street food, there are night food markets. Penang has long been known to have the best hawker food in Malaysia among its fellow countrymen. It is not uncommon for outstation travellers to go on a hunt around the island for the best Char Koay Teow, Nasi Kandar and Laksa the very moment they arrive, even after a four-hour long drive. According to Correia et al. (2008), food has a particularly important role in the generate expenditures from tourists, since it makes up a large part of tourism expenditure. Tikkanen (2007) indicated that food is an attraction, is a product component, is an experience, and is a cultural phenomenon.

Speak to any Malaysian and the first thing they will associate with Penang is food. When both the New York Times and Lonely Planet recognised Penang's street food as some of the world's finest, the locals sighed, "Finally!" Street food or hawker food offers an extensive list of very affordable dishes with many of them having the status of 'famous' with the locals who will travel halfway across the island to savour a specific dish. Visitors can choose from Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Nyonya styles but even within these broad categories, there are many variations on the theme – for

example, Chinese options range from Cantonese to Hong Kong, Hokkien, and Szechuan, to name but a few.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Tourism industry has many facets such as, ecotourism, ethnic, cultural, tourism, sports, sex, health, and others. All these types of tourism produce different kinds of experiences (Long, 2004). Food-related activities are essential to a destination. In many cases, dining out experiences, sampling local food, and purchasing regional food products contribute to the holistic experience and may even serve as a major attraction. In

Many studies have explored the role and influence of destination image in tourist behaviour, and destination image has been identified as a key component of destination loyalty. As one part of destination image, unique food images, which depend on tourist perceptions of cognitive attributes, need further study. Destination food image can significantly motivate tourists, so tourists' food consumption behaviour should be affected by the image that they have of destination foods. A more favourable destination food image will lead to higher consumption intentions among tourists. Moreover destination food experience has emerged as a major tourist attraction, so tourists will more likely consume destination foods with stronger positive images.

The role of food and eating at a destination has not yet been the focus of any comprehensive studies. Little has been done to understand destination food image. While several studies have reported the importance of food image for a destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004), food image has still only been considered as one of the many attributes that determine overall destination image. One of the important issues which

is seldom discussed in the food tourism field is the impact of destination food image on preference and tourists' intention to eat destination foods. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the relationships among destination food image (cognitive images), preference for destination foods, and intention to eat destination foods.

1.3 RESEARCH GOAL

The aim that have been identified in this study is examining the relationships among destination food image, preference for destination foods and intention to eat destination foods in Penang, Malaysia, by focusing on the city of George Town as a study destination.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper assesses the three main objectives based on the study:

- i. To identify cognitive image of destination foods that influence on preferences for destination foods.
- ii. To identify cognitive image of destination foods that influence on intention to eat destination foods
- iii. To identify preference for destination foods that influence on intention to eat destination foods

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There are three research questions have been developed from the objectives:

- i. What are the attributes of destination food image which influence consumer preferences for destination foods?
- ii. What are the attributes of destination food image which influence tourist on intention to eat destination foods?
- iii. What is the relationship between destination food preference and destination food consumption intention during a trip?

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 depicts the hypothetical model that examined the relationship among the constructs in the study. Each construct in the model was selected based on a comprehensive literature review. The theoretical concept of this model was discussed in the literature review section.

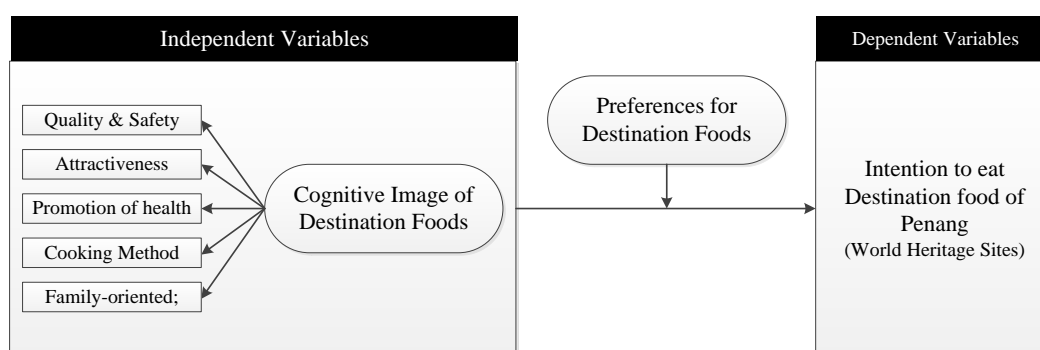


Figure 1:1: Research conceptual framework

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study focused on analysing tourists behaviour that influenced by the food image of a destination in tourism industry and those factors which influenced their

choice of a food destination. This research made contributions to the hospitality and tourism literature with developing the body of knowledge in food tourism. This study sought to characterize the profile of travellers interested in food tourism and add to the existing knowledge by improving the understanding of travellers' behaviour which includes sources of information, destination image, and demographic profiles associated with food tourism. Moreover, this study would help both governmental bodies and managers to better understand and serve the international tourists, so they may be able to design better the destination products and marketing focus, and eventually increase the suitable strategies for Penang, Malaysia.

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