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Does Food Image Attribute influence The Tourist Repeat Visitation? Evidence from Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has huge contribution on economic. Most of countries compete to impress new tourist and repeated tourist to visit their tourism. Food image is said as attractive factor that influence tourist satisfaction and finally repeat visitation. However, lack of study has found it directly. Thus, objective of this study is to determine food image attributes from tourist's perception and its relationship on their repeat visitation. Its attributes are included food quality, food price, and food taste. The study was conducted in Penang, Malaysia by a structured questionnaire of 236 repeated tourists. Findings show that food quality, food price, and food taste have significant correlation with tourist repeat visitation. The better food quality, unique with local ingredient will increase the chances of tourist repeat visitation to that place. It is balancing with reasonable, appropriate and valuable price. Some recommendations offer to assist restaurateur and also destination marketers to develop their strategies in increasing tourist repeat visitation.

Contribution/Originality: Most of countries compete to impress new tourist and repeated tourist to visit their tourism. Food image is said as attractive factor that influence tourist satisfaction and finally repeat visitation. However, lack of study has found it directly. Thus, this study is one of very few studies which have investigated relationship among food attributes on tourist visitation directly.

1. Introduction

Since pandemic Covid-19 attacks the world, economics drops. The tourism industry as a major economic contributor is paralyzed (Khan, 2020; Lee & Brahmasrene, 2013). After all the pandemics decrease, many countries try to get more tourists to revisit their countries. One important part of the success of the tourism industry is to provide

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tourism satisfaction. This can affect the choice of goals and decisions to repeat visits (Ji et al., 2016; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This satisfaction can be obtained if the description of the tour meets their tourism expectations and in the end, they will repeat their visits and allow them to provide recommendations to families and friends (Chen Tsai, 2007; Yen et al., 2018).

A culinary tourism destination is greater than a tourist destination. Even culinary is the main destination for the majority of tourists (National Restaurant Association, 2007). Tsai and Wang (2017) also revealed that the majority of tourists satisfy with the traveling due to its food image. There is a huge numbers of tourism studies related to the food image and have empirically tested that satisfaction is influenced by food image (González et al., 2007; Hsu & Scott, 2020; Jung et al., 2015; Su et al., 2020). Food image plays an important role in influencing satisfaction (Han & Hyun, 2017).

Tourists who are satisfied increase the propensity to visit the same tourist destination and provide positive recommendations to family and friends (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020; Wang et al., 2017). The relationship between food image and tourist repeat visitation is still questionable and unexplored. Chavarria and Phakdee-auksorn (2017) explain that food satisfaction and value felt by tourists can predict the intention of tourists to revisit. However, lack of studies have determined the relationship directly between food image and tourists repeat visitation.

Food quality is found related to tourists satisfaction positively (Choe & Kim, 2018; Khoshkam et al., 2022). It could be as a factor that encourage tourists to repeat visitation. Not only food quality, Rousta and Jamshidi (2020) noted that price has a significant effect on overall tourists' satisfaction and recognize price as a key factor influences tourists to change place visitation. Food taste has a cultural phenomenon especially for the tourists that always searched for something different and authentic. The food taste able to provide eternal memories in their lives (Lane, 2013).

Malaysia is expressed as "Asia's greatest cuisines meet and mingle" and unique country with itself (Hutton, 2005). Malaysian wealth includes a variety of nature, culture, and community consisting of three main ethnics: Malay, China, India, and other indigenous peoples/ethnic (Jalis et al., 2014; Safian et al., 2021). Malaysia is also a fusion point of a variety of culinary heritage and beneficial tourism experience. It devotes to the tourism.

Thus, objective of this study is to determine food image attributes from tourist's perception and its relationship on their repeat visitation. It includes food quality, food price, and food taste of Malaysia by measuring the perception of tourists' and its relationship on their repeat visitation. By examine the relationship between food image attribute and tourist repeat visitations, help restaurant managers, and cuisine sector to plan and implement strategies pertaining food image attributes

2. Literature Review

2.1. Food Image

Satisfaction can be obtained if the description of the tour meets their tourism expectations and in the end, they will repeat their visits and allow them to provide recommendations to families and friends (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Yen et al., 2018). Hunt

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(1975) described it as tourists' appreciation of destination. Deep image can distinguish the destination of competitors to open the minds of visitors (Hsu & Scott, 2020). This must be specific context due to each destination has special uniqueness. Food tourism is defined by Chi et al. (2013) as "a visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions is the primary motivating factor for travel." Food can be a tourist attraction to gain experience about a variety of cultural phenomena of the local community (Choe & Kim, 2018).

2.2. Food Quality

Food quality is the most crucial point of customer satisfaction (Ha & Jang, 2010). Choe and Kim (2018) found that food quality has an impact on customer satisfaction and desire. It has a positive effect on customer satisfaction and behavior intentions. The better the quality of the food, the more satisfied customers. This can be one of the driving factors for tourists to repeat visitation. Khoshkam et al. (2022) found that food satisfaction and quality can explain and predict the intention of culinary tourists to make a return visit. The results of the study were also supported by similar results found by Nguyen et al. (2019), Kim and Eves (2012) and Lertputtarak (2012).

2.3. Food Price

Tourist apply price as a sign in assessing food exploitation and creating perception towards restaurants. Tourist foster use of price as a sign of expectation, evaluation, and decision making (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Adongo et al. (2015) describe price as "what is given up or sacrificed to obtain a product". It is

divided as objective prices and felt prices. The objective price is the actual price of food, while the felt price is the price based on tourist perception (Jung et al., 2015). The thing to remember is that the objective prices becomes worthwhile for tourists if it get an appreciation from tourists, but this is subjective. Restaurants in tourist destinations will usually offer a variety of types of food and prices.

Environmental complexity of such pricing creates it improper to apply objective food price in examine the price position. Sometimes tourists are difficult to remember the actual price of food, but they mean prices in their own way (Ji et al., 2015). Therefore, this research uses a felt price or the price of perceptions from tourists rather than using actual prices.

2.4. Food taste

Tourists are always looking for something that is authentic and unique for tourism purposes. For example, Maine is famous for its lobster icons. New Zealand is famous for its sweet Green Mussels and is very soft and different from mussels in any country. Likewise, Japan is famous for its variety of foods with unique serving styles. Gagic et al. (2013) found that the majority of tourists visited Turkey because of its culinary. Therefore, food can be categorized as a factor that contributes to the overall satisfaction of tourism. In addition, the amount of money spent on food at an event can influence the satisfaction and intention to repeat visitation (Kim et al., 2011). It can be decided that the quality, price, and taste of food is a major factors that must be considered in forming food images.

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3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection, sample size, and sampling

A questionnaires tool was used to gain respondent view about the food images attributes and their repeat visitation. The study targeted tourist who had dined in experienced in casual dining Restaurant in Penang, Malaysia. Penang has signature cuisine and culture. A convenience samples were collected of 236 revisit tourists from 15 top restaurant as stated in TripAdvisor Malaysia. It verified respondents had repeated visitation and accomplished food in Malaysia.

3.2. Instrument and Measurement

This study used structured questionnaire that adapted from previous related studies to collect the primary data such as Atikahambar et al. (2018), Rousta and Jamshidi (2020), Nguyen et al. (2019). Additional factors were included to suit the current environment in Malaysia. It was composed of three parts: (1) The demographics details of respondents include gender, age group, and marital status; (2) food image attributes (quality, price and taste); (3) tourist repeat visitation. The questionnaire contained 26 statements developed using a 6-point Likert measurement scale, including (1) Extremely Disagree, (2) Very Disagree, (3) Somewhat Disagree, (4) Somewhat Agree, (5) Very Agree, and (6) Extremely Agree (Awang et al., 2016).

This study was conducted by two steps, pilot study and final data collection. Before collecting final data, a pilot test was carried out to verify questionnaires, its validity and reliability. It was involving 30 respondents. Data collection in pilot study used the same form as final data collection. Respondents should be repeat visitation in Malaysia and have stayed more than one day to verify the food image attributes. Data in pilot study were subsequently subjected to the reliability and validity assessment. The food quality questionnaire used 10 items (alpha Cronbach 0.913), the food price questionnaire used 3 items (alpha Cronbach 0.853), the food taste questionnaire used 10 items (alpha Cronbach 0.829), and repeated visitation questionnaire used 3 items (alpha Cronbach 0.877) demonstrate high reliability and validity. Pearson Product-moment Correlation at level of significant 95% ($p < 0.05$) was used to determine significant relationship between food image attributes and repeat visitation. The strength of relationship was determined by coefficient of Pearson Product; slight (±0.00 - ±0.21), small (±0.21 - ±0.41), moderate (±0.41 - ±0.71), high (±0.71 - ±0.91), and very strong (±0.91 - ±1.00) based on Hair et al. (2007). Preliminary analyses were performed to confirm all the assumptions such as normality, linearity and homoscedasticity have been meet.

4. Result

4.1. Respondent profile

Respondent profiles were presented in Table 1. From the accumulated total of respondents that were surveyed, 47.9 percent of them were males (n=113) and 52.1 percent of them were females (n=123). In this study most of the respondents were females 123 (52.1 percent) as compared to males 113 (47.9 percent). Based on the observation most of the tourist who patronizing the restaurant are females teenagers. The age group of 21-20 years old are majority respondents (33.89%). However, this

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study has covered various age groups. From the survey administered, most respondents are student at 56.35 percents, followed by professional (40.25%). Lastly, from all of 236 respondents that were surveyed, majority of them were single at 87.3 percent (n=206) and only 12.7 percent (n=30) were married. This is because most of them are students.

Table 1: Respondent profile (n = 236)

Variable		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	1	47.9
	Female	123	52.1
Age Group (years)	Below 21	55	23.31
	21-20	88	33.89
	31-40	62	26.27
	Above 40	39	16.53
Employment	Professional	95	40.25
	Student	133	56.35
	Other	30	12.70
Marital status	Single	206	87.3
	Married	30	12.7

4.2. Food quality

Table 2 shows result of descriptive analysis tourism perspective on food quality. Majority of the respondents said that this place presented food very well overall. It also provides nutritious food for the customer, and prepared their food using very good quality of the ingredient. Each of the restaurant used proper cooking method when preparing their food for the customer. They also provide kind of the food choices to the customer. The availability of the food is very high. The entire restaurant in Penang very concerned in cleanliness of the restaurant. The services that they provide to the customer is good. It has being decorated very attractive to their customers. Each of the place has a comfortable eating surrounding. Majority of the respondent agree that the food are good quality.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis tourism perspective on food quality

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	This place is well presented of food	4.30	.925
2	This place provides nutritious food	4.17	.922
3	This place prepared using quality of ingredient	4.27	.978
4	This place use proper cooking method by preparing the food	4.23	.894
5	This place provides variety of food choices	4.32	.925
6	This place have high availability of food	4.37	.853
7	This place concerned is clean and safe to consume	4.43	.931
8	This place is good in the quality of the food service	4.40	.852
9	This place is attractiveness	4.42	.912
10	This place concerned with comfortable eating surrounding	4.42	.971

4.3. Food price

Result of descriptive analysis tourism perspective on food price as shown in Table 3. The respondent agree that the price at this place is reasonable. They also agree that the price

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being charged by the owner of the restaurant is appropriate. The respondent also agrees that the food is very value for money.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis tourism perspective on food price

No	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Reasonable price	4.10	1.018
2	Appropriate price	4.14	.961
3	Value for money	4.17	1.017

4.4. Food taste

Result of descriptive analysis tourism perspective on food taste as shown in Table 4. The respondent agrees that the place provides delicious food for them. They also agreed that the food being served is rich of flavor. Most of the respondent agree that the food is hot and spicy. The respondents somehow agreed that the food is a little bit salty. Majority of them agreed that the food being served is still hot. They also agreed that the aroma of the food itself is aromatic. The food being served to them also contain too much carbohydrate. The delicacies and beverages are sweet enough and nice. The main course that they served were comfortable in mouth and has unique taste with local ingredient.

Table 4: Descriptive analysis tourism perspective on food taste

No.	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	This restaurant provides a delicious food	4.39	.977
2	The food is rich in flavors	4.33	.886
3	The food is hot and spicy	4.08	.958
4	The food is salty	3.66	1.135
5	The food is served hot	4.33	.947
6	The aroma of the food is adorable	4.30	.907
7	The food contains too much carbohydrate	3.97	.915
8	The delicacies and beverages are sweet enough and nice	3.95	.977
9	The main dishes are comfortable in mouth	3.75	1.105
10	The food is unique with local ingredient	3.70	1.136

4.5. Relationship among food quality, food price, food taste and repeat visitation

Relationship among food quality, food price, food taste and repeat visitation are shown in Table 5 by Pearson product-momen correlation and significant. With significant less than 0.05, means there is significant correlation. Based on Table 5, all the independent variables, which were food image attributes: quality, price, and taste have significant relationships to the tourist repeat visitation with moderate strength relationship. Food quality is the most food image attributes influence on tourist repeat visitation since it has highest coefficient of Pearson product-moment correlation followed by food price and food taste (Hair et al., 2007).

Table 5: Pearson product-moment correlation between variables

No.	Variable	Coeff.	Significan
1.	Food quality and repeat visitation	.616	.000*
2	Food price and repeat visitation	.554	.000*

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3	Food taste and repeat visitation	.416	.000*

*p<0.05 = There is relationship

5. Discussion

Result on the analysis determined there was positive correlation between food quality and tourist repeat visitation. In other words, the better the quality of the food in the food image attributes the greater the chances of tourist repeat visitation on that place. It is supported by previous study of Nguyen et al. (2019), Kim and Eves (2012) and Lertputtarak (2012). Food quality contributes the most significant factor on tourist repeat visitation. It is the most significant food image attributes. The presumption and standards that can be accepted for food quality prepared by tourism destination should be concerned. Delivering of food quality to be responsive and reliable could increase the superiority competition among restaurant as a marketing tool (Kim & Eves, 2012). Unmaintained food quality and the failure of food serving can have a negative impact on tourist attitudes, and embarrass the reputation of tourist destinations (Miklós, 2019).

Food price also has significant relationship to the tourist repeat visitation. In simple converse, the more reasonable the price of the food, the greater chances of tourist repeat visitation to that place. It is supported by previous study of Eren (2019). Kim and Eves (2012) found amount of money spent on food influence satisfaction, then impact to the intention to revisit. A tourism destination offers various kind of foods and prices. Tsai and Wang (2017) explain that environmental complexity of such pricing creates it improper to apply objective food price in examine the price position. Sometimes tourists are difficult to remember the actual price of food, but they mean prices in their own way (Ji et al., 2015). Sold out food reflects food's uniqueness and authentic serving style related to money value.

Lastly, food taste also influences tourist repeat visitation. The better the taste of the food, the greater the chances of tourist repeat visitation to that place. It is similar finding with previous study of Chi et al. (2013). Taste has a significant influence in demonstrating culture to tourists (Gagic et al., 2013; Adongo et al., 2015). Deliciousness and unique taste build up a food image and strongly impact to the tourist's adventures.

6. Conclusion

Tourism is a competitive sector. This requires an effective marketing strategy in order to attract new tourist and maintain tourists repeat visitation. Food image attributes; quality, price and taste have relationship that influence tourist to repeat the visitation. In the term of quality, tourism place should well presented food with variety of food choice. The food also should has a good quality of the ingredient, clean and safe to consume. The place have high availability of food, attractive, good in the quality of the food service, and concerned with comfortable eating surrounding. In the term of price, the place should concern the reasonable price, appropriate and value for money. Taste is depend on each tourist. The sweetness, hot, and spicy could be discussed between restaurant and tourist taste with keep in originality of local food. The food should comfortable in mouth, and unique with local ingredient.

The recommendations can assist restaurateur and also destination marketers to develop their strategies. Malaysian society is well-known for good attitude. Food image could be reflect diverse Malaysia culture. They should serve tourist with good attitude.

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Enthusiastic and friendly greetings make tourists who are comfortable feeling like at home. Different cultures could make tourist anxious toward food and the way eating it. Therefore, they should be taught on how to eat in Malaysian style. Table of menu should provide description on food ingredients and merit.

For the future study, it should compares tourist from various countries to verify various response on food image. In addition, further studies can focus on various respondents' profiles such as family background, education, income, age, gender, and lifestyle. This makes it possible to get different perceptions in food image. They can use a qualitative research approach to further explore food image and tourist ideas in increasing visitors and attraction of tourist destinations.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by The Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Research Ethics Committee (UTM REC). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Conflict of Interests

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