



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i12/5262>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i12/5262

Received: 14 Nov 2018, **Revised:** 13 Dec 2018, **Accepted:** 15 Dec 2018

Published Online: 06 Jan 2019

In-Text Citation: (Atikahambar, Zainal, Rahayu, & Mokhtar, 2018)

To Cite this Article: Atikahambar, Y., Zainal, A., Rahayu, M., & Mokhtar, R. (2018). Quality of Food and Tourists' Satisfaction of Penang Delicacies in Predicting Tourists' Revisit Intention. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(12), 1606–1618.

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Vol. 8, No. 12, 2018, Pg. 1606 - 1618

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Quality of Food and Tourists' Satisfaction of Penang Delicacies in Predicting Tourists' Revisit Intention

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Abstract

Penang foods become one of the attractions for the foreign tourists to visit Penang. This study focuses on the relationship between quality and tourists' satisfaction of Penang delicacies and revisit intention among foreign tourists. 82% response rate or a total of 328 questionnaires were completed by international tourists who visited Penang Island. The results revealed a positive relationship between quality, tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention ($R^2=0.32$, F Change=68.35, $p<0.01^{**}$). This study contributes to the literature on the relationship between quality, satisfaction and revisit intention. From the practical perspectives, Penang Tourism Board and local authorities could use this finding as a means of enhancing the quality of Penang foods, hence attracting more tourists to visit this paradise island. Furthermore, business organizations and marketers could spend more resources on advertising Penang food, culture and ethnic events and community interactions. This study will also provide food managers more information on food quality, thus understanding international customer needs and wants.

Keywords: Quality, Satisfaction, Revisit Intention, Penang Food

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Malaysia received a total of 25,948,459 international tourists and recorded a 0.1% growth in tourist receipts, thus contributing RM82.2 billion to the country's revenue (Tourism Malaysia, 2017). Tourism has been an important source of revenue and a catalyst for Penang's economic growth for a number of years. Placed as the second highest sector after manufacturing, tourism accounted for more than 30 percent of the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2012 (Mok, 2013). As one of Malaysia's leading tourist destinations, after Kuala Lumpur and Pahang (The Star Online, 2012), in 2013, the total number arriving in Penang reached a record of 4.70 million (Tourism Malaysia, 2015).

Notably, there are many attractions with regards to cultural and tourism such as landscape, building and food heritage that can boost the tourism industry.

According to the statistics from Malaysia Immigration Department, Penang has seen a growing number of international arrivals flying via Penang International Airport which grew at an annual growth rate of 7%. In 2014, it increased by 6.9% total up to 718,000 visitors from 671,000 visitors recorded in 2013 (Penang Tourism Survey, 2016). Penang which is known as Pearl of the Orient is one of the most visited destinations in Malaysia and got listed as one of the top states visited by foreign tourists. Additionally, Penang Tourists Survey in 2016 affirmed Penang was visited for a variety of reasons with top essential activities such as experiencing local food, shopping, sightseeing, and visiting historical sites (Tourism Malaysia, 2017).

Penang is a prominent destination for food lovers or culinary tourists and it is known as food heaven among Penangites and tourists. It offers masses of tastes from different cultures and ethnicity, as it is recognized as one of the famous street food of the world combining Malay, Chinese, Indian, Arabic, Siamese, and European cuisines, as a real feast. British daily The Independent reported that Penang was listed as the top culinary spot for 2014 by Lonely Planet (The Star, 2014). Conversely, James Oseland a world renowned food writer, magazine editor, and reality cooking show judge has claimed Penang as the world's best food destination T. Ruxyn (2016). He noted despite the fact that the environment of Penang has undergone major changes, but the quality of the food are still maintained due to the competition between other eateries to serve the best food.

In dealing with types of tourism, among other states, Tourism Malaysia categorised Penang into cultural tourism, adventure, beach, medical tourism and agriculture tourism, food tourism and many more. Thus, in offering international visitors many different experiences, the local cuisines should become apparent, obvious and visible as a destination's intangible heritage; as experiencing the delectable taste allow tourists to gain an authentic cultural experience (Zainal et al., 2010). As a tourism initiative to brand Malaysia as a food heaven, the Ministry of Tourism have encouraged states to transpire unique food trails that are state, region, and even community specific. This allows tourists to savour different local delicacies and gain inimitable and unique cultural experience (Zainal et al., 2010; Jalis et al., 2014).

Hence, this present study focuses on relationships between food quality, satisfactions, and revisit intention from the perspective of international tourists. It offers significant knowledge and understanding to the tourism board, local authorities as well as food operators in Penang on the impact of the quality of Penang foods on tourists. The hypotheses formulated are as follows:

H1: Quality of food is significantly related to tourists' satisfaction

H2: Quality of food is significantly related to tourists' revisit intention.

H3: Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between quality of food and revisit intention.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

In Malaysia, tourism industry has become the most important industry that contributed to the foreign exchange (Economic Planning Unit (EPU), 2015). In 2014, the industry generated RM72 billion of foreign exchange and RM379 million of revenue. There are several attractions for tourists to visit this country such as culture, heritage, and food, and previous study showed that food tourism grew tremendously and became one of the interesting areas in the current tourism industry (Zainal et al., 2014).

Despite of indulging taste buds, study indicated that food tourism impacted the tourist satisfaction and revisit intention (Hendijani, 2016). Revisit intention was highlighted as an important research topic in the competitive market of tourism destinations and tourism scholars also concentrated on repeat visitation as an antecedent of destination loyalty. Past studies acknowledged that many tourist destinations rely seriously on repeat visitors (Jayaraman et al., 2010). In this case, previous researches examined factors influencing tourist behaviour towards a repeat visitation. Food tourism specifically is considered a major event, attraction, and climax experience that could inspire people to travel to their destination and encourage them to repeat visits (Allan, 2016). Repeat visitors often think of food quality (Cho et al., 2014) since food became the important item for the tourist experience and increase their intention to revisit (Jayaraman et al., 2010). Notably, the motivation of food tourism is to obtain special experience and familiarity of authentic cuisines from different ethnicity.

Food Tourism

Food Tourism grew considerably and became one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism. Hence, it contributed to the development of the destination and the region, as well as providing an opportunity for intercultural insight. It was highlighted that food and drink is one of the important elements which tourists had to consume when they travel, and if it is a new experience, probably the sensory experience may be enjoyable and gratifying (Zainal et al., 2014). Researchers noted that food tourism is fast becoming one of the most popular and interesting areas in the tourism industry today (Kim et al., 2011).

Previous studies identified how food tourism has increased and become the most active segment in tourism (Meladze, 2016). The availability of multicultural food (Mohamad & Som, 2010), (Chang, 2013) could increase tourists intention to visit a place and revisit decision attributes when food is taken into consideration (Rajasenan et al., 2012). Henceforth, local cuisines will be able to add value to the traditional tourism experience, particularly for those tourists who are seeking new experiences (UNWTO, 2017). Accordingly, Penang is the best example that had successfully promoted food tourism in Malaysia. This state is popular with varieties of well-liked food such as nasi kandar (historically Indian Muslims used to carry buckets of rice on a long pole over their shoulders), assam laksa, char kway teow and others. Despite of the popularity of these foods, the food provider should understand the importance of quality of foods that they offer.

Quality

Previous study noted that quality and perceived value were cognitive responses to the service experience. Gastronomy could add value to tourists' experiences and is associated with quality

tourism for travelers in search of new products and experiences that yield a high level of satisfaction (Atikahambar et al., (2014).

Food quality is the quality characteristics of food that is acceptable to consumers (Kapisir, 2012). Therefore, to ensure the food tourism is significant among tourists, the food operators and local authorities need to ensure the quality of food is superb. Previous study revealed that food quality is considered as the main product of restaurants and restaurant managers should focus on food quality in order to satisfy customers and keep their values on the long term (Canny, 2014). Predominantly food quality has a positive and significant relationship with customer behavioral intentions in both upscale and quick-service restaurants (Bujisic et al., 2014).

Food quality and other quality dimensions are antecedents and consequences of image in relation with experience. Studies revealed that food quality had positive influence on restaurant image (Ryu et al., 2012), whilst return visitors often think of the food quality (Cho et al., 2014). In addition, the impact of food quality on customer's satisfaction and other influences on food quality and customer's mindset satisfaction found that food quality is predictor of customer perceived values (Ryu et al., 2012).

The food quality attributes allowed restaurateurs to make improvements in areas that could lead to a greater satisfactory to customers' restaurant experience which could also satisfy diners with the quality of its core value such as freshness, menu variety, presentation, temperature, healthy and tastefulness (Rozekhi et al., 2016).

Tourist Satisfaction

Li et al., (2011), defined satisfaction as "an affective state that is the emotional reaction to a service experience." Past studies reported that food quality directed positive effect on customer satisfaction (Canny, 2014; Nasir et al., 2011). Similarly with other industries, tourists' satisfaction is considered as vital goal for tourism industry (Hendijani, 2016). Meanwhile, (Quach, 2016) described satisfaction as something that is indispensable in determining a successful marketing strategy, whereby "it impacts the choice, the consumption of goods and services, and the decision to return."

Additionally, the most significant aspect in the field of business is customer satisfaction because satisfied customers have significant impact on the profits of business (Sabir et al., 2014).

Revisit Intention

Revisit intention refers to customers who have previous experiences with the restaurants that they perceive as highly valuable in terms of efficient and economical aspects which will be more likely result into revisit intentions (Ha & Jang, 2010). The effect of destination attributes on revisit intention in Penang, found repeat visitation as an indicator of loyalty in tourist destination that is strongly affected by destination attributes (Mostafavi et al., 2010). Furthermore, several studies found that the destination experience would affect tourists' future visits. Revisit intention had been discussed

in numerous researches related to food and restaurants and the result indicated that it is imperative for restaurant revenue (Majid et al., 2016; Namin, 2017; Pham et al., 2016b).

The Relationship between Quality, Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Wang & Chen (2012), found that the full service restaurant operators desired to obtain favourable behavioral intentions by providing better service space, waiting experience and food quality, thus increasing customer perceptions of overall service quality and value. Previous studies highlighted that food quality had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. Greater support was reported in previous studies (Al-Tit, 2015; Nasir et al., 2014), which confirmed food quality as one of the key drivers of customer satisfaction. This is in line with Gagic et al., (2013) that found food quality was a key contributor to customer satisfaction and behavioral intention. This is also supported by studies that focused on perceived quality leading to positive impact to customer revisit intention (Namin, 2017; Pham et al., 2016a).

According to Abdelhamied (2011), customer satisfaction could reflect the customer intention to re-patronage in future. Similarly, Zabkar et al., (2010) explored complex relationship between main constructs and behavioral intentions and found that destination attributes affected perceived quality which then affected satisfaction the latter led to revisit intention.

Previous research (Kim et al., 2011) pointed out there was a positive tendency for tourists to revisit the destination and recommend to others once they are satisfied with a destination.

METHODOLOGY

As the intention of this study is to tap the foreign tourists' opinions on food tourism, Penang was chosen since it had been well documented with variety of popular delicacies. A total of 328 out of 400 questionnaires were returned with a response rate of approximately 82%.

The survey instrument consisted of four sections including the demographic information, food quality (4 items), tourist satisfaction (3 items) and revisit intention (4 items). The instruments of quality and satisfaction were adapted from previous studies (Atikahambar et al., 2014; Zainal et al., 2014), based on the works modified from Petrick, (2002) and Oliver's, (1997). The scale ranged from "totally satisfied" (5) to "totally dissatisfied" (1). While tourist's revisit intention was measured ranged from 5 (extremely sure to revisit) to 1 (will not revisit). The instruments were adapted from (Zainal et al., 2014).

RESULTS

Respondents Characteristics Analysis

Respondents consisted of 55.5% (n=182) males and 44.5 % (n=146) females with a majority of respondents aged between 18 and 27 years old (41.5%). 35.4% of the respondents were professionals and 42.7% of the respondents were degree holders. A large number of respondents had visited Penang Island more than 7 times (41.5%) and the nationality includes Australian, Americans, Asians and Europeans.

Descriptive Analysis for Quality of Food, Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Descriptive statistics were employed to look at the mean scores to investigate the influence of quality of food toward tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention. The mean scores for all four items in the quality variable ranged from 3.74 to 4.13 thus indicated all items had moderate scores. The probable reasons for these moderate scores were due to the respondents' feelings that the quality of food in Penang Island was inconsistent. Although having the same name, a particular dish may vary in taste and appearance when presented to tourists for the second time.

Meanwhile, the mean scores for all three items for tourists' satisfaction ranged from 4.07 to 4.21 indicated all items with high scores. This indicated that overall the respondents were satisfied with the food and dining experience that they had in Penang Island although the quality of food was unpredictable.

There are four items in the measures on revisit intention that recorded fairly high mean scores ranged from 4.02 to 4.10. It could be expected that due to positive responses on tourist's satisfaction. It confirmed that respondents would recommend and mention positive things about food in Penang Island to others. Besides that, the potential respondents would return for the food experience in Penang Island given the fact that Penang Island has delectable food. This indicated that there was a close relationship or connectivity between tourist's satisfaction and revisit intention.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis for Quality of Food, Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

No	Item	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation(SD)
1	The quality of the food is outstanding.	3.84	0.64
2	The quality of the food is very reliable	3.82	0.60
3	The quality of food is very dependable.	3.59	0.69
4	The quality of food is very consistent.	3.71	0.69
5	I think I made the correct decision to visit Penang Island for food experience.	4.21	0.70
6	My choice to experience dining different kind of food in Penang Island was a wise choice.	4.07	0.70
7	Overall, I am satisfied with the food experience in Penang Island.	4.12	0.65
8	I am likely to revisit Penang Island for the good food and friendly people	4.09	0.68
9	If I choose to attend an event in the future, I will be sure to come back to Penang Island for the food experience.	4.02	0.73
10	I would recommend the food in Penang Island to my friends or others.	4.10	0.71
11	I would say positive things about food in Penang Island to others	4.04	0.68

Hypotheses Testing

The relationships between quality, satisfaction and revisit intention were tested using regression analysis as indicated in table 2, 3 and 4. Analyses conducted on the data suggested that quality accounted 28% of the variance in the tourists' satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.28$, F Change = 131.78, $p < 0.01^{**}$) with ($\beta=0.53$), thus H1 is supported. Meanwhile quality accounted 18% of the variance in the tourists' revisit intention ($R^2 = 18\%$, F Change = 74.51, $p < 0.05^*$), with ($\beta=0.43$), hence, H2 is supported.

As a final point, the results of the mediation tests on the relationship between quality, tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention was indicated in table 4. The analysis in Model 1 (quality with revisit intention) revealed that quality accounted 43% of the variance on revisit intention ($R^2=0.18$, F Change=74.51, $p<0.01^{**}$). Meanwhile, Model 2 (tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between quality and revisit intention) revealed 19% presence of tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between quality and revisit intention ($R^2=0.32$, F Change=68.35, $p<0.01^{**}$). The results indicated that tourists' satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between quality and revisit intention. Thus, hypothesis H3 was partially supported.

Table 2: Regression analysis for quality of food and tourists' satisfaction (H1)

Independent variable	Std. β	Results
Quality	0.53	Supported
R ²	0.28	
Adj. R ²	0.28	
F-Change	131.78	

Table 3: Regression analysis for quality of food and tourists' revisit intention (H2)

Independent variable	Std. β	Results
Quality	0.43	Supported
R ²	0.18	
Adj. R ²	0.18	
F-Change	74.51	

Table 4: Regression analysis on the relationship between quality, tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention (H3)

Hypotheses	Model 1 Std. β	Results	Model 2 Std. β	Results
Independent Variables :Quality	0.43**	Supported	0.19**	Supported
Mediating Variable : Tourists' satisfaction			0.44**	Supported
R ²	0.18		0.32	0.18
Adj. R ²	0.18		0.32	0.18
F Change	74.51**		68.35**	74.51**

DISCUSSION

The analyses for quality of food to tourist satisfaction such as outstanding, very reliable and dependable taste are moderate due to the stance that the quality of food in Penang Island is inconsistent based on previous experiences and knowledge that tourists had during their prior visits.

Nevertheless, there were positive reactions for revisit intention, since the analysis indicated that they would recommend the food in Penang Island to friends, and they are likely to revisit Penang Island for the good food and friendly people. Optimistically they would definitely come back to Penang Island for the food experience if they happened to be in Malaysia.

Quality made a contribution on revisit intention and it can be concluded that satisfaction will lead to revisit intention. Evidently, the positive relationship between higher levels of customer satisfaction and the intention to revisit or recommend a destination to others has been studied by previous authors. The researchers recommended that related tourism sectors and agencies in Malaysia to collaborate with the service providers (food preparer and travel agencies) in sustaining the cleanliness of food area, quality and value of food in order to entice more tourists to consume Penang's delicacies (Zainal et al., 2014; Atikahambar et al., 2014).

Apparently, when customers are satisfied with our services or products, it resulted in increased loyalty and future visitation. The results of this study are in line with previous researches, agreeing that satisfaction can lead to the revisit intention (Mostafavi et al., 2010; Gagic et al., 2013; Quach, 2013; Hendijani, 2016). Thus, this study contributes to more extensive understandings of theories that can be applied to hospitalities and tourism industry in Penang Island. This study confirms the importance of quality of Penang food in enhancing the tourist satisfaction and revisit intention.

CONCLUSION

Beneficially this study is significant for the academicians and the practitioners at large. It will assist marketers to enhance, improve and maintain factors that contribute to tourists' intention to revisit. Marketers should focus more on food quality to elevate the image of Penang Food as they are expanding the products and services and add differentiation to create exceptionality to attract tourists' attention. From the academic view, this research will be able to expand the portfolio information as well as expanding existing and new knowledge through research of food quality and tourists satisfaction; as well as sharing knowledge on the development of heritage food to promote a culture of research and analysis in exploring Malaysia's heritage food in line with the objectives of the Department of National Heritage.

Furthermore, the findings of this study also contribute to more extensive understandings of theories that can be applied to hospitality and tourism industry in Penang Island to sustain a position in the global industry as a food tourism destination preference. Notably, tourists' characters, attitudes and lifestyle have changed their tastes in encountering a particular tourism destination. Thus, these factors will influence a formation of tourist friendly destination concept, which will enable tourists to enjoy, and obtain in new knowledge and experience about tourism product such as food tourism.

Hence, to ensure the sustainability of food tourism in Malaysia and Penang food in particular, it is essential for state governments and tourism authorities as well as food operators to collaborate in the effort to survive the uniqueness of the local delicacies and food heritage.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Due to time and budget constraints, this study specifically focused on food tourism in Penang. There was a lack of participation and cooperation from the international tourists due to the fact that this study does not offer them direct economic impact nor does it bring immediate profit to them, apart from language barrier among the tour guides and respondents. Future research could extent this study with other states such as Malacca and Kelantan which are known to have arrays of delicacies. It is also suggested that future studies should use the triangulation method to get further insights from food tourists regarding Malaysian delicacies. It is hoped that the findings from this study will serve as a guide for future research in shedding more lights to the food tourism in Penang.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who had participated and assisted us in this study. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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