International tourists’ attitudes towards street food in Malacca, Malaysia

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Abstract. Street food is referred to as food that is prepared or cooked, which is then sold by vendors in streets or other public locations for immediate consumption. Many locals or international tourists prefer street food rather than food served at a restaurant. The reason simply because street food offers quality food at an affordable price. This study aims to identify and examine the factors that influence the international tourists’ attitudes towards street food in Malacca. Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is adapted as a conceptual framework which represent four variables which are affection, hygiene, food quality and service quality. The research instrument being used to collect the data is an online questionnaire from 386 respondents among whom are the international tourists in the city of Malacca. Descriptive analysis, a reliability test and a correlational coefficient test were used to analyse the findings. The result of this study proves that affection is the most important factor in influencing international tourists’ attitude towards street food in Malacca and their intentions to revisit the city.

1. Introduction
The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world [1]. It is also one of the industries that contributes the highest profit in many countries including Malaysia. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (2018), the number of tourist arrivals in Malaysia was about 25.83 million and tourist receipt was 84.1 billion in 2017. It is proven that this sector is the largest contributor to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). Malaysian local foods that been served in restaurants and street settings are also observed as one of the essential attractions for travellers who anticipate to visit a particular destination such as Malacca [2]. Malaysia is capable in attracting tourists by advocating on many food festivals such as the “Malaysia Food Festival in 2017” or the “Malacca Food Festival in 2018”. These festivals help to increase the local food reputation and expose the uniqueness of the local food product especially to the tourists. Studies have concluded that food is one of the most important factors for tourists in deciding whether they want to visit or revisit a particular destination [2, 3, 4], and it constitutes an important motivator for tourists to visit Malaysia [5, 6].

Malacca is one of the famous tourist destinations in Malaysia that attracts the most number of tourists to visit and explore the state yet also officially listed by the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the World Heritage Sites (WHS) on 7 July 2008 [7]. Based on the data and information from Malacca International Trade Centre (MITC), there were around 5.68 million international tourists who came to visit Malacca on a yearly basis. In 2017, Datuk Ghazalee Muhammad, Malacca State Executive Councillor, mentioned that the total number of tourists visiting Melaka increased to 5.38 million, compared to 4.77 million in 2016 [8]. He also stated that the increase of 12.7% was a big push for Malacca which was targeting 16.75 million tourists 2017, with domestic tourists being the largest contributor with 3.69 million in January until April of...
2017. Malacca also holds huge potential in contributing to the tourism industry through its well preserved culture and heritage.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Attitude towards Street Food in Malacca

2.1.1 Affection

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, affection can be defined as a gentle feeling of fondness or feeling of liking for a person or place. For an international tourist, quality or service provided may determine if that experience is good or bad. Based on the food neophobia concept, people generally prefer foods that they're conversant in. The food consumption behaviour is also being affected by the consumer's past experience with the food which can be included in the affection category. The development of food memories which are associated with the sensory attributes of the food is contributed by past experiences with a food [9]. The past experience is one of the important predictors of a tourist’s intention to consume local cuisine in destinations [10].

2.1.2. Hygiene

According to the World Health Organization, the term of hygiene in the food and beverages industry is necessary to ensure the safety of food from production to consumption. Street food is an issue of major concern when it comes to health issues. This is mainly due to growing food-borne illness diseases which are a result of food vendors lacking an understanding of most basic food safety issues and protocols. Therefore, it is important for all food vendors to have effective cleaning techniques of their areas and in their method of food preparation.

2.1.3 Food Quality

Food quality will mostly be measured by the consumers, especially the international tourists. It is one of the qualities that will determine consumer’s satisfaction towards the food [11]. In addition, food is one of the most important parts of our lives as it can affect a person’s health, nutritional status and mental strength. Therefore, the quality of the street food is one of the elements that will be looked by the tourist since the taste, colour, texture, appearance, nutritional value will be affected and the safety of consuming it in doubt [12].

2.1.4 Service Quality

Customer satisfaction, service quality and loyalty are the most vital factors in today’s global economic downturn, profitability and productivity of business [13]. According to [14], service quality is the benchmark for company to measure their customer’s satisfaction rate. Service quality normally relates to customer satisfaction. If the customer is satisfied, they might potentially revisit the place. According to [15] satisfied customers are likely to spread positive comments and they will become loyal customers and also willingly to pay higher prices for the products and services that make them satisfied and happy.

2.2 Post International Tourist Behavioural Intention

Consumer behaviour intention is defined as a person’s commitment, plan or decision to carry out an action to achieve goal [16]. This situation normally happens before, during and after which can also be known as pre, during and post. Revisit international tourist’s behavioural intention is when the international tourist decides to come and spend their holiday at the same place and enjoy the same food that they had already experienced before [17]. For example, Malacca is one of the most popular destinations that has been chosen by the local and international tourists to visited during holidays or free time [5]. Therefore, it is important for street food vendors in Malacca to provide and maintain the best quality food and services to attract the customers to revisit them regularly.
2.3 Conceptual Framework
Theoretically, the proposed study framework (Figure 1) from this study was adapted from the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) that has been introduced by Ajzen [18]. The TPB model normally being used in understanding the behaviour of the human in making decision after experience some goods or services. Ajzen [18] theory suggest that it is important to measure the attitudinal elements specifically such as affection, hygiene, food quality and service quality, in the particular desire to act because of their position as the best measure of the behaviour.

![Figure 1. Theory of Planed Behaviour, source Ajven (1991).](image)

3. Methodology
The methodology used in this study was quantitative survey method in order to collect data among the international tourists. The location chosen was Malacca, as it is a popular place to visit in Malaysia for tourists. The researcher distributed the questionnaire at Jonker Walk and other locations nearby. The sample population for this study were the international tourists who came to Malacca. A total of 386 international tourists were surveyed and this number were considered sufficient and reliable enough for rigorous analysis to generate meaningful results which all of the respondents have been reached through using a convenience sampling. All the data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science 20 (SPSS) software to obtain the result outcome. The analysis were included as the descriptive analysis for the demographic data of the respondents and the relationship between the variables was analysed by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1 Descriptive Analysis
Table 1 below showed data that have been collected from the international tourists in Malacca with a total of 390 respondents. Since some information were missing, 4 questionnaires have been rejected, which made the researchers obtain an unbiased data with 386 respondents. The majority of the international tourists involved were male, making up 51% of the respondents, while 49% of the...
respondents were female. In addition, 45\% of them were in the range of 30-49 years old. From the total of 386 respondents, 28\% of them were Westerner.

**Table 1.** Descriptive analysis.

| Demographic Category       | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| **Gender**                 |           |            |
| Female                     | 191       | 49.4       |
| Male                       | 195       | 50.5       |
| **Age**                    |           |            |
| < 30 years old             | 142       | 36.8       |
| 30 - 49 years old          | 175       | 45.3       |
| 50 and above               | 69        | 17.9       |
| **Region of origin**       |           |            |
| Asean                      | 100       | 25.6       |
| Asia                       | 102       | 26.4       |
| Middle East                | 75        | 19.4       |
| Westerner                  | 109       | 28.2       |
| **Religion**               |           |            |
| Buddhism                   | 65        | 16.9       |
| Christianity               | 71        | 18.4       |
| Hinduism                   | 31        | 8.0        |
| Islam                      | 152       | 39.4       |
| Other or no religion       | 67        | 17.4       |
| **Marital status**         |           |            |
| Married/living together    | 205       | 53.1       |
| Separated/divorced         | 32        | 8.3        |
| Single                     | 138       | 35.8       |
| Widowed                    | 11        | 2.8        |
| **Highest level of education** |        |            |
| College diploma (NVQ/SVQ, HND/HNC) | 129 | 33.5 |
| Other qualification        | 84        | 21.8       |
| Secondary certificate (GSCE, SCE) | 33 | 8.5 |
| University degree (BSc., BA, MSc., MBA, PhD, PGCE) | 140 | 36.3 |
| **Occupation**             |           |            |
| Government employees       | 46        | 12.0       |
| Other                      | 22        | 5.7        |
| Private company employees  | 97        | 25.1       |
| Retired                    | 51        | 13.2       |
| Self-employed              | 88        | 22.8       |
| Students                   | 75        | 19.4       |
| Unemployed                 | 7         | 1.8        |
| **Monthly income in USD**  |           |            |
| $1001 - $3000              | 108       | 28.0       |
| $3001 - $5000              | 122       | 31.6       |
| $5001 - $7000              | 29        | 7.5        |
| $7001 - $9000              | 5         | 1.3        |
| Less than $1000            | 58        | 15.0       |
| More than $9000            | 1         | 0.3        |
| Not reported               | 63        | 16.3       |
Household size | > 4 persons | 83 | 21.5 |
|--------------|------------|-----|-----|
| 1 - 2 persons | 104 | 27.01 |
| 3 - 4 persons | 124 | 32.1 |
| Not reported  | 75 | 19.4 |

### 4.2 Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Based on table 2 and 3 below, the average behavioural intention to revisit was 25.7169 ± 3.48346. The average affection was 22.1302 ± 2.58106. The correlation coefficient was 0.608, which is > 0.30, indicating that there was a large strength of association and positive relationship between the two variables. The average hygiene was 19.1723 ± 3.93156. The correlation coefficient was 0.538, which is > 0.30, indicating that there was a large strength of association and positive relationship between the two variables. The average food quality was 32.5013 ± 4.56731. The correlation coefficient was 0.554, which is > 0.30, indicating that there was a large strength of association and positive relationship between the two variables. The average service quality was 29.7696 ± 3.70278. The correlation coefficient was 0.489, which is > 0.30, indicating that there was a large strength of association and positive relationship between the two variables. Since the correlation coefficient result of the four variables was in between 0.50 to 0.60, indicating the positive relationship which showing that all the variables were having an effect in determining the international tourists’ behavioural intention to revisit.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of the variables.

| Descriptive Statistics | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------|---|------|---------------|
| TOTAL_AFFECTION        | 386 | 22.1302 | 2.58106 |
| TOTAL_HYGIENE          | 386 | 19.1723 | 3.93156 |
| TOTAL_FOOD QUALITY     | 386 | 32.5013 | 4.56731 |
| TOTAL_SERVICE QUALITY  | 386 | 29.7696 | 3.70278 |
| TOTAL_BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS TO REVISIT | 386 | 25.7169 | 3.48346 |

**Table 3.** Correlations between the attitude of the international tourists towards street food and their behavioural intention.

| Correlations | TOTAL_AFFECTION | TOTAL_HYGIENE | TOTAL_FOOD QUALITY | TOTAL_SERVICE QUALITY | TOTAL_BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS TO REVISIT |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|
| TOTAL_AFFECTION | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .321** | .432** | .460** | .608** |
|                  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
|                  | N | 384 | 382 | 375 | 381 | 377 |
| TOTAL_HYGIENE   | Pearson Correlation | .321** | 1 | .753** | .432** | .538** |
|                  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
|                  | N | 382 | 383 | 373 | 380 | 376 |
5. Conclusion

The analysis of the survey has shown that affection, hygiene, food quality and service quality had a positive relationship associated with the intention to revisit. Among the four variables, affection holds the highest relationship towards the intention to revisit Malacca. Although affection is the highest, subsequent considerations following analysis suggested that affection amongst the international tourists were not the same. This is because each of international tourist might have their own opinion and preference in visiting and enjoying street food in Malacca.

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