Research Article
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Local heritage food as a significant factor in Malaysia gastronomy tourism

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Abstract

Food has been recognized as an effective promotional and positioning tool for a destination. Similarly, with the increasing interest in local cuisine, more destinations are focusing on food as their core tourism product. For example, France, Italy, and Thailand have been known for their cuisine. The importance of the connection between food and tourism cannot be ignored. Each destination has different levels of attractiveness that can draw tourists from different countries. Malaysia offers various kinds of food, including traditional and modern cuisines. As time goes by, the national heritage food is likely to be forgotten due to some factors such as lack of chefs and tourist awareness on this kind of food. Thus this research aims to investigate the level of awareness of food industry players on local heritage food, identifying the promotion effort implemented by the food industry players in marketing local heritage food and to explore the perception from food industry players on the potential, importance and opportunities of local heritage foods to be a factor of gastronomy tourism in Malaysia. The samples of a self-administered questionnaire were chefs who registered under the Malaysia Professional Chef Association (MPCA). It is shown that only one out of four hypotheses is statistically significant and has a strong relationship between the variables of the perception of the importance of local heritage food with the perception of the potential of local heritage food.

Keywords:

Gastronomy in Malaysia, National Heritage Food, Traditional Food, Food Tourism

1   Introduction

In 2017, Malaysia was the second most-visited South East Asian country after Thailand. Malaysia received a total of 25,948,459 international tourists and recorded a 0.1% growth in tourism earnings, thus contributing RM82.2 billion to the country's revenue. Meanwhile, the average length of stay in 2017 for foreign tourists decreased to 5.7 nights from 5.9 nights in the previous year (Ramli, 2018). Malaysia's tourism and hospitality industry that consists of hotels, foods, restaurants, chefs, as well as food services equipment and suppliers, is the third-largest contributor to the country's economy (The Star Business, 2017). The Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010 had planned for innovative food trails based on the distinct specialties of states, regions and communities to attract tourists to savor local delicacies. According to Artinah et al., (2010), the states of Melaka, Perak, Penang, Sarawak and Sabah could be highlighted as "the states for gastronomy routes". Specific information about Malaysia's culinary offerings is important since food can provide a superb and enjoyable holiday atmosphere and is undeniably a positive plus for the tourism industry (Shahrim and Chua, 2010). Therefore, with such an exciting diversity of food, Malaysia should be upheld as the destination to enjoy the "art of eating", thus Malaysian gastronomy should be considered when promoting local destinations (Artinah et al., 2010). Malaysian cuisines are being introduced to the world, which represents a mix of Malay, Chinese and Indian cooking through the "Malaysia Kitchen", simultaneously helping to spawn side industries like the production of spices for the dishes.

A report by the Department of Statistic Malaysia in 2016, showed 16% (RM 29.2 billion) from RM182.4 billion contribution of tourism sector came from food and beverage compared to retail trade, which was 43.9%. Malaysia has a variety of heritage food that can potentially become an attraction to international tourists. Most tourists give positive feedback and love traditional food, snacks and desserts in this country (Artinah et al., 2010). This country has become the leading holiday destination among tourists everywhere with the blend of the three different races (Malay, Chinese and Indian) and the cultures these three races offer. With the blend of different cultures and heritage, the birth of different foods sets Malaysia apart from any other country allowing it to become a food lover's paradise. The tourism ministry in Malaysia is working on making food as one of the main choices for tourists to visit Malaysia and there have been ongoing initiatives done by the relevant parties to help ensure that this aspect of tourism continues to grow and in time is able to sustain its own self.

However, local heritage food is still not commercialized seriously in the hospitality industry in Malaysia. Based on observations, most of the famous and five-star ranked hotels in this country are offering specialized dishes like Chinese food, Indian food, Japanese restaurants, Mediterranean sets, Western sets and Arabic restaurants. Although some studies showed a very significant relationship between gastronomy and tourism industry, the offer rates are still at an average level (Jalis, 2017). Most hotels are giving high priority on their superior services, such as luxury accommodations and

intimate hospitalities. But, very limited efforts have been put into practice on the promotions of local food especially Malay cuisines in hotels (Ismail, 2013).

In view of this, the research aims to generate deeper knowledge of the role and potential of national heritage food to improve Malaysia's gastronomy tourism industry. The audience of this study will be selected among Malaysian professional chefs that registered as members of the Professional Chefs Association. Chefs are widely recognized as culinary professionals who are responsible for maintaining the high quality of food service in hotel and culinary-related operations which have a direct impact on the country's tourism sector. They are well aware of the demands and requirements of the industry (Nornazira Suhairom, 2015). In this research, professional chefs are considered as the main actor who plays the major roles in introducing, promoting and serving heritage culinary food to tourists. Their perceptions are significant reflections of tourist behaviors on national heritage food. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the possibility of national heritage food in increasing attention to gastronomy tourism in Malaysia by studying the demands and requirements of the industry.

2 Literature Review

Gastronomy tourism refers to trips made to destinations where the local food and beverages are the main motivating factors for travel which consumers travel to places to eat and drink specific (usually local) produce (One Caribbean, 2009). In this field, the study of branding in food tourism is limited. In recent studies, food can be an enhancer in the aspect of the identity of tourism destinations. This is because food is closely related to the way of life, local production, cultural celebration and heritage. Food is considered as a key attraction for tourists. Many places have attempted to provide tourists with the best culinary experiences they can offer (Hussien, 2016). In urban tourism, gastronomy tourism has become an important theme, while encompassing a number of specific topics. It includes food events that act as attractions, streets or districts of restaurants and beverages, the importance of catering food alternatives to a wide variety of tourist preferences and needs, and the possibility of branding the cities for food lovers.

According to the Global Report on Food Tourism by the World Tourism Organization, the average tourists spend around a third of their holiday budgets on food and beverages (Coppola, 2016). This shows the degree to which this sector is involved with a visitor's in-destination experience. The Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA) says that culinary tourism "includes any tourism experience in which a person learns about, appreciates, consumes or spoils in food and drink that reflects the local cuisine, heritage, or culture of a place". In Malaysia, it is significant for local cuisine to act as a vital element in marketing initiatives to promote the tourist destination, and is recognized as an important tourism product and experience (Jalis, 2017).

Malaysia's tourism industry contributes RM82.2 billion to the country's revenue and the country becomes the second most-visited South East Asian country after Thailand. One of the major motivations for tourists to visit Malaysia is because of the culture and heritage that Malaysia possesses and this is expressed in our food and local delicacies. People from other parts of the world are eager to know, learn and understand how is it that people of different races are able to live under one roof and allow their cultures to blend together. Tourists are able to experience and learn about the different cultures through the tasting and partaking of the local food. The main significance and importance of conducting this research are that, to draw a linkage between the role of national heritage food and the improvement of gastronomy tourism in Malaysia. The research aimed to focus on the opportunities and chances brought by national heritage food to motivate tourists to choose Malaysia as their destination. Besides, this research will generate knowledge on the weakness of gastronomy tourism in Malaysia and pool ideas to ensure continuous improvement in the future.

2.1 National heritage food

Food heritage is defined as a set of material and immaterial elements of food cultures, that has been considered as a shared legacy or a common good. This food heritage includes agricultural products, ingredients, dishes, techniques, recipes and food traditions. It also includes table manners, the symbolic dimension of food and in its more material aspects, cooking artifacts and the table setting: utensils, dishware (Tibere, 2013). From the Malaysian perspective, it has been associated closely with classical and traditional foods that are continuously prepared and consumed by all generations without major alteration in the original flavors.

Food heritage has been reflected in environmental history, belief, ideology and food technology of society at a particular time (Md Ramli, 2016). In Malaysia, the Department of National Heritage is responsible for gazetting or certifying heritage food as intangible national heritage items. Until October 2017, 196 foods have already been gazetted as national heritage under the National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 265) including *nasi lemak, teh tarik, roti canai, air nira, kuih lapis* etc (Berita Harian, 2017). It is clearly becoming one of the national agendas (Azhari, 2014). In the case of this country, "multiracial" or "multi-ethnic" characterizes the local cuisine, which has also been described as a 'fusion cuisine' formed out of the influences of the predominant ethnic populations of Malay, Chinese and Indian (Jalis, 2014). This quality has contributed to the emergence of various types of food and cuisines available throughout the country. Table 1 shows the list of popular Malaysian heritage foods according to National Heritage Department in 2005.

The choices of Malaysian heritage foods available at hotels are not comprehensive to create the traditional classical dining experience (Ismail, 2013). Unlike the other ethnic culinary arts, Japanese or Arabic restaurant, for example, the hotel tends to promote this segment aggressively such as through its proper setup, traditional decoration to create a live environment, specific menu, and even live cooking to attract

guests to feel the true culinary experience as in the origin country of the ethnic. While, Malaysian heritage food is served at the hotel's coffee house or at the buffet counter and a la carte as well, thus the food is not properly presented to depict the traditional environment. Thus this study raises a question on hoteliers' initiative to bring up Malaysian heritage culinary arts to a higher level.

Table 1: List of popular Malaysia heritage foods

LIST OF POPULAR MALAYSIA HERITAGE FOODS			
Rice	**Side Dishes**	**Sauce/Ulam**	**Noodles**
Nasi ayam	Ayam percik	Pekasam	Mee goreng mamak
Nasi kerabu	Asam pedas	Tempoyak	Laksa
Nasi Lemak	Rendang	Sambal belacan	Yee sang
Nasi dagang	Gulai tempoyak ikan patin	Kerabu mangga muda	Char kuey teow
Nasi Himpit		Cencaluk	Mee kari
Nasi Ulam	Kari kepala ikan	Sambal gesek ikan bilis	
Nasi goreng kampong	Serunding	Sambal tumis	
Ketupat	Botok-botok ikan	Pajeri	
Lemang	Gulai lemak umbut	Budu	
	Gulai lemak cili padi	Acar	
	Gulai asam rom	Halwa	
	Kurma daging/ ayam		
	Hinava/umai		
	Ayam panggang		
	Daging dendeng		
	Masalodeh		
	Telur pindang		

Bread/ wheat	**Cracker/ Snacks**	**Sweets**	**Local Cakes**
Roti jala	Otak-otak	Bingka ubi	penderam
Lempeng	Sata	Wajik	Karipap
Roti canai	Pulut panggang	Seri kaya	Kuih lopez
Putu mayam	Yong tau foo	Dodol	Bahulu
Tosai	Satay	Lempok durian	Ondeh-ondeh
	Pisang goring	Laddu	Epok-epok
	Keropok lekor	Tapai	Kuih keria
	Ubi Kayu	Agar-agar	kuih bingka

	Porridge	**Drinks**	
	Bubur As-sura	Teh tarik	
	Bubur kacang hijau	Cendol	
	Sagu gula Melaka	Air batu campur (ABC)	
		Air selasih	

(Source: Adapted from National Heritage Department, 2005)

2.2 Roles of professional chefs in gastronomy industry

Chefs are the main key-player in the gastronomy industry. A chef is defined as a person who cooks professionally for other people and is referred to as a highly-skilled professional cook who is proficient in all aspects of food preparation (Hegarty, 2008). A chef is responsible to maintain the quality of food especially in taste and texture, preserve the cooking method and recipes, and also initiate the innovation of food.

In Malaysia, professional chefs are aware of the culture and norms of the people. They are the front-liner-person who know better about the demands and acceptance among tourists towards our local foods (Jalis, 2017). A combination of previous studies on these three elements would help this research to map the needs and impacts of national heritage culinary to Malaysia's gastronomy tourism.

2.3 The promotion of Malay food at the hotel

Currently, most of the promotions done in hotels are focusing on their accommodations and other hotel facilities. The monthly promotion at any given hotel, for example, mostly highlights their luxurious amenities and finest quality of services in accommodations and dining facilities. Very limited marketing efforts are given to the promotion of local and traditional food except during the fasting month, festive seasons, and Malaysia's Independence Day. In fact, the promotion for traditional Malay food in hotels has taken a back seat since the concerted efforts of using experienced women chefs to cook for special dishes during state-wide promotions not so long ago. Their motherly touch and their *kampung* style cooking stood out during the promotion where everybody was looking forward to enjoying traditional Malay dishes.

As of today, these types of promotions have not been practiced in hotels due to the lack of incentives from the government, as well as the current trends in socio-economic and lifestyles. Although it may be true that changes in economic, lifestyles and culture could have an impact on the promotion of local food in hotels, it is important not to overlook the commercial demand in the hotel itself. Changes in the trends of consumption among the younger generations have led to the emergence of a post-modern circuit of food and the rise of a new culture of consumption among the consumers (Zahari *et al*., 2011 as cited in Miele, 1999). Yoshino (2012) suggested that the new trends of consumption are more towards the other Asian foods such as Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Indonesian cuisines and not forgotten the globalization of American fast food.

The global spread of this culinary diversity relatively has an indirect impact on the consumption patterns for Malaysians, in general. The main issue is information and knowledge of traditional Malay food. This is manifested in the hotels' website whereby information about traditional Malay food is barely made available. Even if the information is made available, it is just general information, segregated according to ethnic races. This is consistent with Jalis *et al.* (2009) findings that most of the food promotions in Malaysia have been segregated into different races and cultures. As a result, the information about local cuisine, the channel to disseminate the information

and its purpose may not work to the targeted audience which is in this context are international tourists. Thus, this research aims:

i.   To investigate the level of awareness of food industry players on local heritage food.
ii.   To explore the promotion effort implemented by the food industry players in marketing the local heritage food.
iii.   To investigate the perception of the food industry players on the potential, importance and opportunities of local heritage food to be a factor of gastronomy tourism in Malaysia.

Dann (1977), following Tolman's work (1959), introduced the concept of push-pull of tourist motivation in tourism research. In answering the question "What makes tourists travel?" he indicated that there is a distinction between the 'push' and 'pull' factors. This theory suggests that people travel because they are 'pushed' by internal forces and 'pulled' by external forces. In other words, these forces describe how individuals are pushed by motivational variables into making a travel decision and how they are pulled or attracted by the destination area.
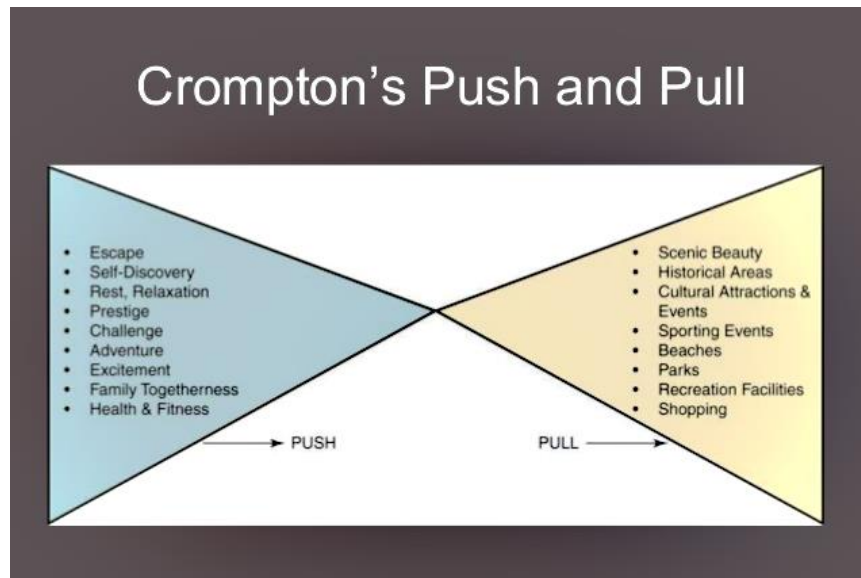

Figure 1: Crompton's tourism push and pull motivation factors model

In this study, national heritage food becomes the pull factor to attract international tourists to visit Malaysia. Theory of this research can be interpreted as follows:

PULL FACTOR

Figure 2: Research conceptual framework

In this research, the hypotheses, IVs and DVs have been identified as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between a chef's awareness of local heritage food with the number of tourists visiting the café of the premise.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between promotion initiatives on local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between the perceptions on the importance of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between the perceptions on the awareness of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food.

Thus, there are two dependent variables that are represented by two items in the data instruments. Meanwhile, for independent variables, there are four dimensions that need to be measured and analyzed thoroughly. The dependent variables are the number of tourist arrivals who visit the café of hotel/premise and the perceptions of respondents on the potential of local heritage food in improving gastronomy tourism in their café. The independent variables are awareness of local heritage food, the perceptions on the importance of local heritage food, the preferences of tourists on local heritage food and the promotion efforts implemented in terms of marketing the local heritage food in the café.

3   Methodology

This research applied the quantitative method for its research design, where data collection was through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to the samples. Samples came from the chefs registered under the Malaysia Professional Chef Association (MPCA). The population of MPCA members is about 212 as of March 2018. Considering the population size, margin of error and standard deviation (0.5), the researcher chose to have 100 respondents to complete the questionnaire. The descriptive statistics used in this study were frequency, percentage, mean and standard

deviation of the questionnaire on the importance of heritage culinary and its relationship with the enhancement of the gastronomy tourism industry.

Correlational analysis was used to explore the relationship between variables and intent to determine if and to what degree the variables were related. In this research, correlational analysis was important to show connections between the 4 identified variables: (1) chefs' awareness on local heritage food to serve tourists, (2) chefs' perceptions on the importance of local heritage food to tourism industry, (3) chefs' perceptions on the preferences to heritage food among tourists and (4) promotional activities to support local heritage food towards the enhancement of Malaysia gastronomy tourism.

4 Findings

4.1 Demographic analysis

Based on the samples collected through the distribution of the questionnaire, male respondents slightly outnumber female respondents, accounting for 57% as against 43%, respectively. The majority of the respondents are from the age group of 30 to 39 years (36.2%) and 40 to 49 years (31.9%), 14.7% are from the 18 to 29 years group, 11.2% are from the 50 to 59 years group and minimal respondents fall within the range of 60 years and above (6.0%). The majority of the respondents are Malaysians (97%), while the remaining 7% are non-Malaysians. In terms of respondents' length of service, most of the respondents have worked for 11 to 20 years (34.5%) followed by 21 to 30 years (19.8%) and above 30 years of service (17.2%). 17.2% of the respondents are from the group of 3 years and below and minimal respondents fall within the range of 4 to 10 years length of service (12.9%).

The majority of the respondents are currently employed, representing 75.9% and minimal respondents are self-owned businesses or entrepreneurs (6.0%). 33.6% of the total respondents are working in the education sector for culinary arts, while 58.6% are from the food and hospitality sector and the remaining 7.8% from other sectors. 25.9% are from the hotel and serviced apartment sector, 15.5% are F&B operators, 9.5% are F&B consultants and another 7.8% are caterers. To establish the dependent variable which is the tourist admission in respondents' premises, the question on the number of tourists who visited their premises is asked. The majority of the respondents (35%) stated that they were having 300 and above tourists on their premises in 2018. This is followed by 200-299 number of tourists (29%), 101-199 and 50-100 number of tourists (16%) and lastly less than 50 tourists (3%). This shows that most of the respondents are working/owning an established hotel or cafeteria which caters to almost 850 and above customers per month. Thus, the response can be considered as reliable and trusted to be taken as data input for this study.

4.2 Mean analysis

The means of 28 items, tested according to each variable, are presented below. Almost all items have a mean score above 3.00. This is an indication that the majority of the respondents agreed with the items' statements based on each variable and considered those items as major antecedents of customer loyalty towards mobile service providers.

Table 2: Mean analysis

Variables		Importance	
		Mean	**Std. Deviation**
IV 1 : AWARENESS			
B1	**I recognize more than 50 types of local heritage food.**	4.21	0.72
B3	I am proficient to prepare more than 30 kinds of local heritage food menu.	3.45	1.15

Variables		Importance	
		Mean	**Std. Deviation**
B4	I am aware there are special tips and taboos in the preparation process of local heritage food.	3.47	1.16
B5	I practice those tips and taboo when I prepare a local heritage food.	3.28	1.10
B6	I make effort to learn how to prepare local heritage food (e.g take classes, attend training or meet with cooking teachers).	3.29	1.07
B7	Malaysia's local heritage food usually has extreme taste of being too sweet, sour or spicy compared to fusion and contemporary food.	3.52	1.03
B8	I think, local heritage food isdifficult to prepare.	2.87	1.13
IV 2(a) : PERCEPTION – IMPORTANCE			
C1	**I think local heritage food reflects our national identity to tourists.**	4.69	0.58
C2	I think that at present, local heritage food is a factor that attracts tourists to hotels and restaurants.	4.26	0.92
C3	Local heritage food should be placed as the main menu of a hotel or restaurant.	4.43	0.78
C4	Local heritage food makes the experience of visiting a tourist destination more interesting.	4.53	0.61
C5	Tourists commonly will search information on local heritage food when visiting a tourist destination.	4.37	0.74
C6	Tourists do not really care about the menu served at the hotel or restaurant throughout their trips.	2.91	1.06

Variables	Importance	
	Mean	*Std. Deviation*
IV 2(b) : PERCEPTION – PREFERENCES		
D1 Hotel guests/tourists are more comfortable eating local food served at the hotels or a nearby café/restaurant rather than buying street foods.	3.50	1.05
D2 **Most tourists have no problem trying out the diversity of local heritage food as part of traveling experience**	4.38	0.78
D3 In my opinion, many of the tourists are excited to try the local heritage food menu served at the hotel/restaurant.	4.34	0.89
D4 At my hotel/restaurant, a selection of local heritage food is served daily.	4.08	0.99
D5 At my hotel/restaurant, a selection of local heritage food is served more than fusion and contemporary food.	3.61	1.07
D6 At my hotel or restaurant, tourists choose to enjoy popular local heritage food instead of trying out a newly discovered menu.	4.00	0.89
D7 In my opinion, local heritage food is only suitable for tourists in hotels or restaurants during certain occasions such as festive seasons and special celebrations instead of being served as a daily menu.	2.70	1.25
D8 Tourist are usually more comfortable enjoying the menu from the home country or the universal menu rather than the local foods.	2.97	1.11
D9 Chefs at the hotel or restaurant are more comfortable providing fusion and contemporary food rather than local heritage food.	3.04	1.24

Variables	Importance	
	Mean	*Std. Deviation*
D10 In my opinion, if local heritage food ingredients are being innovated as a paste, instant mix and frozen food, it would be easier for the chefs at the restaurant/hotel to prepare and serve it.	3.67	1.22
IV 4 : PROMOTION		
E1 Local heritage food menu served, attracted more tourists to stay in the hotel or come to the restaurant.	4.03	1.03
E2 The rating/review of the local heritage menu served will also affect tourist to choose a hotel/restaurant.	4.17	0.93

E3	My hotel/restaurant has been promoting the local heritage food menu more than 4 times a year.	3.91	0.92
E4	The government's efforts and related agencies in promoting local heritage food menu have been sufficient.	3.04	1.06
E5	The government's efforts and related agencies in promoting local heritage food menu need to be improved.	4.46	0.94
	DV: TOURIST ARRIVAL (for gastronomy tourism)		
DV1	**In my opinion, local heritage food can attract tourists to visit Malaysia.**	**4.58**	0.73

By looking at the mean of every item, the research questions that have been formalized earlier in the study can be analyzed and answered accordingly. Under the main research question which is "to what extent can local heritage food play roles in improving gastronomy tourism in Malaysia?" there are two other questions that specifically require attention to be explained.

The first question is:-

1. Is there any possibility that local heritage food can contribute in promoting the different and diverse cultures, races as well as the national identity?
   To answer this question, items no C1 and D2 which are:-

C1	*I think local heritage food reflects our national identity to tourists*	*4.69*
D2	*Most tourists have no problem trying out the diversity of local heritage food as part of traveling experience*	*4.38*

   Mean values for both questions are quite high which can be considered acceptable and it is suggested that there are possibilities that local heritage food can contribute in promoting the different and diverse cultures, races as well as national identity.

The second question is:-

2. To what extent is the industry players' concern in promoting and providing local heritage food?
   To answer this question, items no C1 and D2 which are:-

E3	*My hotel/restaurant has been promoting local heritage food menu more than 4 times a year.*	*3.91*
DV1	*In my opinion, local heritage food can attract tourists to visit Malaysia*	*4.58*

   Mean values for both questions are quite high which can be considered acceptable and it is suggested that there are high concerns from industry players in promoting and

providing local heritage food. However, there are some variables that achieve less than the mean value of 3:

i) B8: "I think, local heritage food is difficult to prepare (2.87)" – this result shows that most of the respondents did not agree that local heritage food is difficult to prepare.

ii) C6: "Tourists do not really care about the menu served at the hotel or restaurant throughout their trips" (2.91) shows that most of the respondents believed that tourists cared about the food served throughout their trips.

iii) D7: "In my opinion, local heritage food is only suitable for tourists in hotels or restaurants during certain occasions such as festive seasons and special celebrations instead of being served as a daily menu" (2.70). Most of the respondents concluded that local heritage food is suitable to be served in all seasons.

iv) D8: "Tourists are usually more comfortable enjoying the menu from the home country or the universal menu rather than the local foods" (2.97). Most of the respondents perceived that tourists love to have local food when they travel to different places.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

This research intends to test the hypotheses as follows:-

I. H1o: "There is no significant relationship between a chef's awareness of local heritage food with the number of tourists visited the café of the premise."
H1: "There is a significant relationship between a chef's awareness of local heritage food with the number of tourists visited the café of the premise."

II. H2o: "There is no significant relationship between the promotion initiatives on local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food."
H2: "There is a significant relationship between the promotion initiatives on local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food."

III. H3o: "There is no significant relationship between the perceptions on the importance of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food."
H3: "There is a significant relationship between the perceptions on the importance of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food."

IV. H4o: "There is no significant relationship between the perceptions on the awareness of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food."

H4: "There is a significant relationship between the perceptions on the awareness of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food."

To test H1o and H1, an analysis of correlation using Spearman Rho's was executed. The assumptions of the Spearman correlation are that data must be at least ordinal and the scores on one variable must be monotonically related to the other variable. Spearman Rho's test was chosen due to the IV1 (awareness level) is an ordinal data and DV2 (number of tourists visited) is an internal data. The results are as follows:-

Table 3: Correlation test for IV1 and DV2

Correlations

		IV1	DV2
IV1	Spearman Rho's Correlation Coefficient	1	.206
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.185
	N	100	100
DV2	Spearman Rho's Correlation Coefficient	.206	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.185	
	N	100	100

For hypothesis 1 (DV2 vs IV1), by looking at the Spearman Rho's Correlation table above, it shows that (r_s (100) =.206, p=0.185), where the p-value is greater than 0.05 (not statistically significant). Thus, H1o is accepted where there is no significant relationship between a chef's awareness of local heritage food with the number of tourists visited the café of the premise.

Next is to test either hypothesis H2 until H4 accept or reject the Null hypothesis or Alternative hypothesis. To test these hypotheses, due to the data being normal after being tested using the Normality test previously, and by taking reference that both data are ordinal data, a Pearson Correlation was used. Meanwhile, the findings of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables are summarized as follows:

Table 4: Correlation test for IV1, IV2, IV3 and IV4 and DV1

		Dependent variable
		Perception on Tourist Arrival (DV1)
IV1 : Awareness	Correlation	0.09
	Significance (2-tailed)	0.32
IV 2: Importance	Correlation	0.70**
	Significance (2-tailed)	0.00
IV 3 : Preference	Correlation	0.11
	Significance (2-tailed)	0.25
IV 4 : Promotion	Correlation	0.16
	Significance (2-tailed)	0.08

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For hypothesis 2 (IV4 vs DV1), by looking at the Pearson Correlation table above, it shows that (r_p (100) =.016, p=0.08), where p-value is greater than 0.05 (not statistically significant). Thus, H2o is accepted where there is no significant relationship between the promotion initiatives on local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food.

For hypothesis 3 (IV2 vs DV1), by looking at the same Pearson Correlation table above, it shows that (r_p (100) =.070, p=0.00), where p-value is smaller than 0.01 (statistically significant). Thus, H3o is rejected and H3 is accepted where there is a significant relationship between the perceptions on the importance of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food. The positive relationship is a strong association as it falls into the range of 0.7 to 1.0.

For hypothesis 4 (IV1 vs DV2), looking at the Pearson Correlation table above, it shows that (r_p (100) =.009, p=0.32), where p-value is greater than 0.05 (not statistically significant). Thus, H4o is accepted where there is no significant relationship between the perceptions on the awareness of local heritage food with the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food.

To sum up, correlation analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses developed and it has resulted in only one out of four hypotheses being statistically significant and has a strong relationship between the variables of IV2 (the perceptions on the

importance of local heritage food) with DV2 (the perceptions on the potential of local heritage food).

5   Discussion

In a survey that has been conducted, for item C1: "I think local heritage food reflects our national identity to tourists", the mean score is 4.69 with a standard deviation of 0:58, showing that the majority of respondents agreed with the statement. Although the correlation results show a low significance for the preference with DV, the score for this item has proven that local heritage food represents national identity to tourists. Through the experience of enjoying local food, tourists can learn the cultures, history, ways of life and values shared by the society in Malaysia. In the case of Malaysia, "multiracial" or "multi-ethnic" characterizes the local cuisine, formed out of the influences of the predominant ethnic populations of Malay, Chinese and Indian. This quality has contributed to the emergence of various types of food and cuisine available throughout the country to be enjoyed by tourists.

Based on the finding, correlation indicates that a higher relation between the chef's knowledge with the importance of local heritage food to attract tourists to visit Malaysia for gastronomy purposes. This shows that chefs are the most related industry players to food tourism and they should increase awareness on the importance of local food heritage as an element in the selection of Malaysia as a tourist destination among tourists. To achieve that, many things can be emphasized as persistent training for existing chefs in the industry on local heritage food using funding facilities, for example, apprentice schemes and human resource development fund (HRDF).

In addition, early exposure at the education level should emphasize local heritage food modules as a continuity to the younger generation who will work as a chef in the future. This is also a part of the efforts to conserve local heritage food, as well as contributions to the tourism sector. Innovation in the preparation and manufacturing of local heritage food can also contribute to the role of chefs in increasing the offer of local heritage food in hotels and restaurants. By looking at the industrial revolution 4.0 today, many possible improvements can be made to assist in the preparation of food quality and to attract tourists. Moreover, it is also an injection of new elements to local food heritage in Malaysia. This area of research can be explored more to enhance the potential of national heritage food in Malaysia, such as:

- Outlining and identifying the potential of local heritage food to motivate tourists to visit Malaysia.
- Investigating how local heritage food could result in positive impacts on gastronomy tourism in Malaysia.
- Gathering ideas on the initiatives that should be taken to ensure the continuous growth of local heritage food in the future.

From the findings, the vast majority of them prefer to dine in the restaurant rather than street stalls food. This is due to the quality, cleanliness and also the good condition and environment provided to them while enjoying the food. However, there are also a few respondents who love to buy food from street stalls due to the reasonable price and the food has the same taste as being cooked at home. Therefore, food services in Malaysia including restaurants, street stalls, hawkers, and night market should improve their quality, cleanliness, do price revising, apply a reasonable standard for the recipes and enhance the panorama to attract international tourists towards consuming Malaysia heritage food. In characterizing this food, they could just say that Malay food is spicy, sweet and oily, Indian food is spicy meanwhile Chinese food is mostly seafood-based. This shows that there is a lack of knowledge and information spread worldwide about Malaysian food. The extinction of our heritage food is getting serious especially when there is a hybridization of cuisine embedded from outside cultures like Thai food, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean which could seriously outperform our Malaysia heritage food globally and locally.

Certainly, heritage food should be given specific attention concerning health issues, quality of food, dining services, food environment, aggressive promotions, motivational factors and other related aspects. Moreover, positive word of mouth (WOM) also could be one of the best ways to indirectly promote and enhance a positive attitude towards heritage food acceptance. Thus, bad reputations of heritage food should be avoided to encourage more visitors in recognizing heritage food as a world cuisine and branding Malaysia as one of the food image destinations in the tourism sector. To put it in a nutshell, the attitude of international tourists could be predicted in the future by analyzing the level of those motivational factors revealed in this study and the factors should be further developed to understand tourists' overall attitude and perception regarding heritage food consumption for tourism destination.

As for food operators (restaurants, hawker stalls or food courts), particularly those who operate their business at frequently visited areas by international tourists, should, therefore, take this opportunity to promote and provide more varieties of local ethnic food and beverages which are of good quality, clean and decently presented. In addition, as Western tourists perceive that the taste of local food and beverages are too spicy and sweet, food operators should consider these aspects when preparing these products.

Travel agencies and other tour organizers should offer more tour packages specifically focusing on food and food culture, indigenous cuisines, dining out, cooking and shopping for food at local markets. This is in line with Kivela and Crotts (2006) who noted that many international tour agencies and tour organizers around the world have included gastronomic products as part of their tour itineraries and consequently this has successfully attracted more international tourists to participate in those activities. This approach has been proven to be successful in marketing and promoting the exquisiteness of the local gastronomic products.

In addition, the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Art and Heritage and Ministry of Agricultural should play a significant role in promoting this country internationally as they are the government authorities who are responsible for this matter. Thus, the Ministry of Tourism through the Malaysian Tourism Promotional Board should now focus on offering gastronomic products to tourists whereby previously it had been concentrating on the beautiful islands, exquisite floras and faunas and enchanting traditional cultures. The government should also aspire to be a 'gastronomic paradise'. The government through the Economy Planning Unit (EPU) introduced a project called 'Malaysian Kitchen' since 2006 to increase the number of Malaysian restaurants all over the globe to popularize Malaysian gastronomic products internationally. Besides 'Malaysian Kitchen', there are many other promotional activities that have been launched namely creative cooking tours, food-related events (open houses and other Malaysian festivals), Malaysia International Gourmet Festival and Halal Hub program in an effort of boosting the Malaysian gastronomic products locally and internationally (MOTOUR, 2007). From such promotional ventures, they do not only generate foreign income through the sales of food overseas but also popularize Malaysian gastronomic products among the potential international tourists. The government or the responsible authorities should continuously organize these events perhaps on a bigger scale as they can be used as a platform to introduce Malaysia as a paradise for food lovers.

6   References

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