LOCAL TOURIST FOOD CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR IN KOTA BHARU, KELANTAN

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Abstract: Tourism is now one of the rapidly growing industries in the world, as well as a potential sector to generate economic development. While travelling to a locality, tourists will definitely opt for local authentic food choices to fulfil their taste buds, which provides good experience for them and adds value to their choices of destination. Food tourism has grown rapidly in recent years, especially due to the fact that local food playing an important role in differentiating a destination from another. Therefore, a tourist's experience of tasting local food is capable of developing their perceptions and values of the place. In particular, food tourism is one of the important aspects in promoting Kota Bharu and its cultural tourism, especially for local tourists, as local food is a manifestation of the national, regional, and cultural values of a tourism destination. This study attempted to determine the explanatory factors influencing tourist food consumption in Kota Bharu, which was achieved by collecting a sample size of 236 local tourists using the convenient sampling method. The resulting findings revealed that price was a major point of concern for domestic tourists in the context of food consumption, considering the factors of gender, age, or education level accordingly. Bootstrapped multiple regression was analysed and found out that motivational and physiological factors were affecting food consumption behaviour among local tourists in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Therefore, local food operators should take into consideration of their food prices when developing effective marketing strategies.

Keywords: Food Consumption, Socio-demographic, Tourist

1. Introduction

Tourism is defined as "…Any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates, and consumes branded local sources" according to Stephen, Smith, and Xiao (2008, p.289). This indicates that gastronomy is a symbolic value of a destination, whereas the local culture and authenticity are the portrayals of a destination, which are reflected in the appreciation of tourists. Therefore, food tourism offers various significant contributions to the marketability of a destination. Du Rand, Heath, and Alberts (2003, p. 97) assert that "… The local food holds much potential to enhance sustainability in tourism; contribute to the authenticity of the destination; strengthen the local economy; and provide for the environmentally friendly infrastructure".

In overall, domestic tourism in Malaysia has yielded a steady growth; it recorded a total of 221.3 million domestic visitors in 2018 and a growth of 7.7 per cent compared to 2017. Meanwhile, the total expenditure logged by domestic tourism was a whopping RM 92,561 million, along with a growth of 11.4 per cent in 2018 in comparison with the previous year. Besides, the expenditure on food and beverages spent by domestic visitors made up 13.7% of the total tourism expenditure. Moreover, tourism is the 2nd most important sector in Kelantan as it contributes around 30% of the state's gross domestic income (Sufahami, Muhammad, & Ismail, 2016). Number-wise, tourist arrivals to Kelantan increased gradually from 3.6 million in 2011 to 3.8 million in 2015, before recording a sharp increment

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further to 9.8 million in 2018 (as shown in Figure 1). In particular, the state is highly reliant on local tourism as opposed to foreign tourists ("Domestic tourism is", 2007).

Furthermore, the consumption of local food contributes to tourist involvement in learning the local geography, people, and culture (Richards, 2002) as it is deemed as part of the overall tourism experience (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). As of recently, local food is also considered as a facet of national cultural identity by many countries and viewed as one of the significant and attractive elements towards promoting tourism. In fact, food tourism activities are considered as a form of attraction and "peak" experience in inducing tourist's motivation to visit a destination.

Regardless of this, tourist food consumption has been largely ignored in the hospitality and tourism literature (Cohen & Arieli, 2004), which is attributable to the assumption that food is merely a supporting resource (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000). In this context, it presumes that it only acts as a supplementary element in support of the overall consumer experience (Quan & Wang, 2004) as opposed to being the main attraction for the tourists. However, food tourism has been underlined as one of the areas highly attracting the attention of researchers. According to Telfar and Wall (2000), one-third of the total travel expenses tourists' record is allocated to their expenditure on food. Therefore, this is a stark indicator of the significance of food consumption in the tourism sector.

In general, food consumption is perceived as a complex behaviour comprised of cultural, social, psychological, and sensory acceptation factors, which may influence the process of an individual's decision-making (Köster, 2009; Sobal, Bisogni, Devine, & Jastran, 2006). According to Randall and Sanjur's (1981) theoretical model, there are three categories of factors influencing tourist food consumption, namely the tourist, food at the destination, and the destination environment. In particular, food at the destination encompasses the factors of sensory attributes, food content, and cooking method, whereas destination environment includes those such as gastronomic identity marketing communications, services encounter, and services cape (Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012).

Recently, a multitude of scholars have emphasised the critical factors affecting tourist food consumption in a destination (Mak et al., 2012; Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010; Stewart, Bramble, & Ziraldo, 2008; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009). Summing up, factors impacting the element of tourist food consumption include: motivational, cultural and religious, and socio-demographic factors; food-related personality traits; exposure effect; physiological component, religion, and price. However, studies carried out to analyse the factors of local food consumption are relatively limited (Mak et al., 2012). In particular, those addressed on assessing the perception of domestic tourists are lacking as most of the studies have focused on foreign tourist consumption behaviour. Similarly, socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, education level, marital status, religion, and belief, among others, have been identified as crucial facets affecting tourist food consumption phenomenon in a destination (Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Mak et al., 2012).

Therefore, this study examines the importance of local tourist behaviours on the food consumption in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. It attempts to study the differences of the various socio-demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age, and education level) of local tourists on local food consumption in the selected locality. Then bootstrapped multiple regression is analysed to determine the factors affecting food consumption behaviour among local tourists in Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

2. Literature Review

Food consumption is recognised as a composite behaviour involving the factors of cultural, social, psychological, and sensory acceptance in making the decision to consume food (Köster, 2009; Sobal et al., 2006). In fact, demographic factors have been asserted as significant components in influencing a tourist's behaviour towards consuming local food in a tourist destination (Furst, Connors, Bisogni, Sobal, & Falk, 1996; Khan, 1981; Randall & Sanjur, 1981; Kim et al., 2009; Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012b).

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Referring to the above statement, Kim et al. (2009) have found that females are more interested and excited about savouring local foods, whereas Kivela and Crotts (2005) have argued that the males have a higher interest and more involvement in local food consumption compared to the females. Similarly, Flynn, Slovic, and Mertz (1994) have asserted that there was a difference in terms of gender towards food consumption attitudes. According to them, the females are primarily more focused on the elements of food safety and price of alternative food in purchasing food, while the males tend to show a higher concern about the taste of food itself.

Furthermore, an examination of the relationship between demographic variables, food choices, and food preferences has allowed Wadolowska, Babicz-Zelinska, and Czarnocinska (2008) to conclude that women are more concerned about food health, diet, and nutrition issues. In contrast, men tend to be either more negative or remain neutral about their health. Besides, Liu, Kan, and Chen (2017) have investigated the food and cuisine consumption phenomenon, thus discovering different preferences among the tourists' demographic and food choice tendencies. According to these scholars, female tourists are more concerned about the cultural experience behind food consumption and food uniqueness, whereas their male counterparts are more influenced by interpersonal relationship factors in making food consumption decisions.

Moreover, elderly people are plagued by limited food consumption choices at a destination as they are more health-conscious (Kim et al., 2009; Olsen, 2003). Meanwhile, Tse and Crotts (2005) have found a negative relationship between age and culinary discovery, whereas Wadolowska et al. (2008) are of the opinion that the education level can influence one's food preferences. The researchers have further noted that individuals equipped with primary school-level education are less health-conscious regarding the negative and neutral perceptions of food.

Similarly, motivational factors are a significant element influencing tourist food consumption, whereby local food itself is an attraction that can motivate tourist visits to a destination. Theoretically, there are four aspects that affects the motivational factors of tourist food consumption in a destination, namely physical, cultural and interpersonal motivations (Fields, 2002; Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016, Lin & Ding, 2019). For example, the physical motivation is the indication of sensory appeals, which are the flavour, visual image, taste, and smell of food and the authenticity of a place (Field, 2002; Kim et al., 2009). According to Kim et al. (2009) local food consumption model, nine elements can be included as tourists' motivational factors towards local food. These include exciting experience, escape from routine, health concern, learning knowledge, authentic experience, togetherness, prestige, sensory appeal, and physical.

In contrast, Mak et al. (2012) have divided the motivational factors into two dimensions, specifically the symbolic and obligatory dimensions. Conceptually, the symbolic dimension relates to the elements of food culture and authenticity, whereas the obligatory dimension incorporates the aspects of physical need and health. In general, a physical environment with an authentic and traditional ambience is highly preferable by tourists in driving their decisions for local food consumption. Therefore, motivational factors are recognised as salient variables in affecting tourist food preference and consumption (Lin & Ding, 2019).

In the context of the physical aspect, the image of the local food is idiosyncratic for reflecting the uniqueness of a destination motivates the tourists' food consumption tendencies. Here, food images comprise of three main elements, specifically: food distinctiveness and accessibility, food diversity and enjoyment, and food quality and presentation (Chi, Chua, Othman, & Karim, 2013). Moreover, Pornpisanu and Prathana (2019) have asserted the five types of destination food image implicated by tourists, which are: restaurant service image, food taste image, health and hygiene image, variety and eating manner image, and unique cultural experience image.

Additionally, price is yet another important factor towards creating favourable perceptions of food and in deciding on a restaurant (Pedraja & Yagüe, 2001). This notion is consistent with Grunert, Bredahl, and Brunso (2004), who have noted that consumer intention is influenced by monetary costs. Besides, it has been proven by Munusamy and Wong (2008) in which they have identified a significant and

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positive relationship between price and consumer food perception. In contrast, such perception will be negative if the price of the food consumed is relatively expensive, whether it is due to good quality, fresh ingredients, and hygienic causes. Therefore, the high price of food choices found at a destination can affect its image and reduce the level of tourist satisfaction.

3. Methodology

A questionnaire consisting of 21 items was designed to measure the factors of tourist food consumption, namely the socio-demographic, motivational, physiological, and price factors. In addition to the demographic data required, it included five items to measure the motivational factors as adapted from Kim, Eves, and Scarles (2012); six items to measure the physiological factor; five items to measure the price factor; and eight items to measure food consumption adapted from Peštek & Činjarević (2014). Meanwhile, the related items were derived from the literature review and measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The data for this study were collected from domestic tourists visiting Kota Bharu, Kelantan, whereby the convenience sampling method was employed in the process and yielded a total of 236 responses.

Next, SPSS 24 was employed for analysis purposes, whereby descriptive statistics were used to illustrate the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The information was expressed accordingly as mean±standard deviation. Then, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to determine the normality of the response distribution, whereas inferential statistics and independent t-test ($p<0.05$) were utilised to assess the significance of variables included in this study.

This study investigated the presence of statistical differences between socio-demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age and education) and tourist food consumption factors (i.e. motivational, physiological, and price). As such, the age groups were divided into either youth or mature adults. In particular, the youth age group was defined as those aged ranging from 15 to 40 years following its definition stated in Section 2, the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act 2007. Meanwhile, the education component was grouped as lower and higher education. Definition-wise, lower education consisted of those with the academic qualifications of either SPM, STPM, or certificate, whereas higher education was for those with the academic qualifications of diploma and higher. Then, bootstrapped multiple regression was applied to examine the influence of motivation, physiological, and price factors on the food consumption behaviour among local tourists who visited Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study are illustrated in Table 1. Most of them were aged between 21–30 years (45.8%), whereas the female gender was the predominantly represented (n=164, 69.5%). In terms of education level, 99 respondents (41.9%) had attained their bachelor's degree, where they stated the main purposes of visiting Kota Bharu were for rest and relaxation (33.9%) and visiting family and friends (30.9%).

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Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=236)

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	72	30.5
Female	164	69.5
Age		
Below 20 years old	31	13.1
21–30 years old	108	45.8
31–40 years old	45	19.1
41–50 years old	24	10.2
51–60 years old	16	6.8
61 years old and above	12	5.1
Individual Monthly Income		
Less than RM2000	124	52.5
RM2001–4000	52	22.0
RM4001–6000	34	14.4
RM6001–8000	7	3.0
RM8000 –10000	10	4.2
RM10001–12000	5	2.1
More than RM12000	4	1.7
Education		
SPM	43	18.2
STPM	19	8.1
Sijil	21	8.9
Diploma	99	41.9
Degree	35	14.8
Master's	7	3.0
PhD	12	5.1
Purpose of Visiting		
Rest and relaxation	80	33.9
Visiting family and friends	73	30.9
Business reasons	34	14.4
Fun	16	6.8
Culture	7	3.0
Conference	6	2.5
Religion	2	0.8
Health	14	5.9
Others	4	1.7

The overall mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum scores for each factor of food consumption are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Overall Scores

Factor	Mean	Standard deviation
Motivational factor	5.912	0.740
Physiological factor	5.779	0.930
Price factor	5.737	1.088

Next, Cronbach's alpha was employed to measure the internal consistency of the scales implemented in the study. The results are shown in Table 3, whereby all factors indicate a high reliability wherein the respective coefficient is greater than 0.7.

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Table 3: Statistics of Reliability Measures

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha
Motivational factor	0.774
Physiological factor	0.906
Price factor	0.936

Following this, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to assess the normality of data distribution, which revealed that it was significantly deviated from the normal distribution ($p<0.05$). As the assumption of normality was not met for the t-test performed in this study, the bootstrapping t-test was implemented using 95% bias-corrected confidence interval based on 1000 replications to ensure the sample is strong enough. The results of bootstrapped independent t-test on the gender differences are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Gender Differences Across the Factors of Local Food Consumption Among Tourists

Factor	Female	Male	Statistical Comparison		BCa 95% CI
			t-test(df)	p-value	
Motivational factor	5.862(0.771)	6.025(0.654)	1.561(234)	0.120	-0.427, 0.374
Physiological factor	5.715(0.959)	5.924(0.849)	1.588(234)	0.114	-0.046, 0.454
Price factor	5.644(1.159)	5.950(0.877)	2.228(176.364)	0.027	0.053, 0.590

Furthermore, Levene's test was found to be significant for the price factor ($F=4.030$, $p<0.05$), which indicated that the female and male genders were not of equal variance. Meanwhile, the test yielded insignificant outcomes for the motivational ($F=0.941$, $p>0.05$) and physiological factors ($F=1.222$, $p>0.05$), thus indicating that the female and male genders were of equal variance.

Next, the gender difference analysis conducted showed a significant difference between the female and male genders based on the price factor (M Difference= 0.306, BCa 95% CI [0.053, 0.590]) with regard to their local food consumption. The bootstrap confidence interval also confirmed the analysis results, which revealed that male tourists tended to be more price-conscious in consuming local food compared to female tourists ($M_{male}=5.950$, $M_{female}=5.644$, $p<0.05$). This is in contrary with the findings by Flynn et al. (1994), which have noted that females are more concerned of price than males. Nevertheless, this may be attributed by the fact that in the Malaysian culture, the males act as the head of a family, causing them to be more concerned about travelling budgets. Moreover, this study found no significant difference between the female and male genders on the motivational (M Difference= 0.163, BCa 95% CI [-0.427, 0.374]) and physiological factors (M Difference= 0.208, BCa 95% CI [-0.046, 0.454]) in the context of local food consumption.

Table 5 below shows the results of bootstrapped independent t-test on the age differences. First, Levene's test was significant for the motivational ($F=2.231$, $p<0.05$) and price factors ($F=5.276$, $p<0.05$), thereby suggesting that the groups of youth and mature adults groups were not of equal variance. Contrastly, its outcome for the physiological factor ($F=0.202$, $p>0.05$) was not significant, thus indicating that the youth and mature adults were of equal variance.

Table 5: Age Differences Across the Factors of Local Food Consumption Among Tourists

Factor	Youth	Mature Adults	Statistical Comparison		BCa 95% CI
			t-test(df)	p-value	
Motivational factor	6.112(0.532)	5.853(0.781)	-2.222(234)	0.027	-0.425, -0.694
Physiological factor	5.971(0.913)	5.725(0.930)	-1.694(234)	0.092	-0.532, 0.042
Price factor	6.108(0.759)	5.633(1.144)	-3.522(123.319)	0.001	-7.355,-0.230

Besides, the age difference analysis revealed a significant difference between youth and mature adults regarding the price factor (M Difference= 0.475, BCa 95% CI [-7.355,-0.230]) for their local food consumption. For example, young tourists tended to be more price-conscious in consuming local food compared to mature adults ($M_{youth}= 6.108$, $M_{mature\ adults}= 5.63$, $p<0.05$). Such higher concern among the

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youths might due to their limited travelling budget, especially for food consumption, as most of the respondents (74.5%) had a monthly income less than RM4000.
As confirmed by the bootstrap confidence interval, a significant difference (M Difference= 0.256, BCa 95% CI [-0.425,-0.694]) could be seen for the motivational factor between young tourists and mature adults (M_{youth}=6.112, $M_{mature\ adults}$=5.853, $p<0.05$) when consuming local food. In contrast, this study found no significant difference (M Difference= 0.247, BCa 95% CI [-0.532, 0.042]) between youths and mature adults with regard to the physiological factor in consuming local food. Here, youth tourists are more likely to try new cuisines as opposed to mature adults, which may be attributable to older individuals and their higher health-conscious tendencies. Therefore, they limit themselves from the opportunity to consume local food at any destination (Kim et al., 2009; Olsen, 2003). Additionally, Tse and Crotts (2005) have found that the relationship between age and culinary discovery is negative as well.

Table 6 presents the results of bootstrapped independent t-test on the educational differences. Here, Levene's test was significant for the price factor ($F=4.5989$, $p<0.05$) and indicated the secondary and tertiary education level to be of unequal variance. Conversely, the Levene's test outcomes for motivational ($F=3.508$, $p>0.05$) and physiological factors ($F=0.754$, $p>0.05$) were not significant, thereby revealing that both education levels were of equal variance.

Table 6: Education Differences Across the Factors of Local Food Consumption Among Tourists

Factor	Lower education	Higher education	Statistical Comparison		BCa 95% CI
			t-test(df)	p-value	
Motivational factor	5.556(0.991)	5.684(1.071)	0.922(234)	0.537	-0.163, 0.405
Physiological factor	5.677(0.915)	5.968(0.935)	2.319(234)	0.021	-0.316, 0.525
Price factor	5.608(1.150)	5.976(0.923)	2.677(201.223)	0.008	0.098, 0.632

Education difference analysis yielded a significant difference (M Difference= 0.368, BCa 95% CI [0.098, 0.632]) between the lower and higher education levels on the price factor with regard to local food consumption. The bootstrap confidence interval further confirmed the analysis results. Therefore, this indicated that tourists with a higher level of education tended to be more price-discerning in consuming local food compared to those of a lower education level ($M_{higher\ education}$=5.976, $M_{lower\ education}$=5.608, $p<0.05$). This is in contrary to the results of prior works, which have underlined the price factor as an important factor driving food choices for those of lower income (Steenhuis, Waterlander & De Mul, 2011). This is likely due to the reason wherein tourists with a higher education level tend to compare the price and quality of different food choices. Therefore, the results indicate that price is an important factor in driving one's food choice and not surprisingly emphasised, especially for low-income consumers.

The bootstrap confidence interval further confirmed that the difference (M Difference= 0.291, BCa 95% CI [-0.316, 0.525]) between lower and higher education levels was not significant in terms of the physiological factor towards consuming local food. Similarly, this study found that there was no significant difference (M Difference= 0.03, BCa 95% CI [-0.163, 0.405]) between lower and higher education levels regarding the motivational factor of local food consumption among tourists. Table 7 summarises the independent t-test results based on BCa 95% CI accordingly.

Moreover, multiple regression analysis with bootstrapping 1,000 resampling was applied to assess and predict local tourist food consumption behaviour in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The analysis results are shown in Table 7. First, the R^2 value of 0.363 indicated that the motivational, physiological, and price factors accounted for 36.3% of the variation regarding the local food consumption among tourists. Next, the F-test ($F = 44.111$, $p < 0.01$) showed that the regression model was a good fit of the data. Additionally, the motivational ($\beta = 0.339$, $p < 0.01$) and physiological factors ($\beta = 0.422$, $p < 0.01$) were found to be significant in predicting the local food consumption behaviour among tourists. The motivational factor was consistent with the study of González, et al (2019). This was also in line with the study of M. Roslain (2017) where he found both the motivational and physiological factor were

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influencing tourist food consumption. In contrast, the price factor ($\beta = 0.027$, $p > 0.05$) was insignificant in predicting the food consumption behaviour.

Table 7: Bootstrapped Multiple Regression Results

Hypothesis	Beta	t-value	p-value	R^2	F-value	BCa 95% CI	Decision
Motivational factor ⟶ Food consumption behaviour	0.339	3.375	0.001	0.363	44.111	0.132, 0.573	Supported
Physiological factor ⟶ Food consumption behaviour	0.422	4.604	0.000			0.242, 0.572	Supported
Price factor ⟶ Food consumption behaviour	0.027	0.379	0.705			-0.104, 0.201	Not Supported

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the differences of tourist socio-demographic factors (i.e. gender, age, and education) based on the three variables of motivation, physiological, and price factors towards tourist food consumption in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Out of the three, price was found to be a major concern for domestic tourists in driving their food consumption, irrespective of the contexts of gender, age, or education level. Therefore, local food operators should take their food price into consideration when developing marketing strategies. Besides, it is suggested for the local authorities to consistently monitor the prices set by food and beverage operators in order to protect the locals and tourists alike in eating at the stores. This way, the tourists will gain a level of confidence regarding the food pricing practices in Kelantan.

However, when running regression on these three variables, it was found that motivational and physiological factors were influencing tourist food consumption. This suggested that tourists perceived the importance of these two factors when come to the food consumption in Kota Bharu. Surprisingly, price was not a significantly factor in affecting food tourist consumption. This was probably because tourists developed the feelings of a special taste of place when they were in Kota Bharu. This was why they were willing to spend the money on the unique food here, of which these experiences could not be found elsewhere outside Kota Bharu.

Based on all the findings in the study, to sustain and attract more domestics tourists, local food and beverages service providers are suggested to preserve and improve Kelantan authentic local foods.

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