



# Do Consumption Values In Heritage Food Play a Role in the Development of Behavioural Intentions?

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## Abstract

This study explores the state of tourists' perception of Pahang heritage food. This study obtained data from 164 tourists through social media applications. The survey outcomes were encouraging, which showed a positive and significant influence regarding food consumption values and domestic tourist behavioural intentions to consume heritage foods. These findings will help Pahang's destination managers better understand how to promote heritage foods to attract future domestic tourism. Marketers should increase familiarity with heritage foods, particularly among potential domestic tourists, as familiarity may increase emotional values.

Keywords: Consumption Value; Domestic Tourists; Heritage Food; Behavioral Intentions

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/ijabs.v6i19.392>

## 1.0 Introduction

Food and tourism have long been and continue to be intertwined. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has labelled the relationship between the two as gastronomic tourism. UNWTO defined gastronomic tourism as tourists, travellers who plan their trips in part or in whole to try the local cuisine or to engage in gastronomic activities (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017). As food can be a significant attraction for visitors, many locations have attempted to differentiate themselves from similar areas by providing tourists with unique culinary experiences (Sthapit, Björk & Coudounaris, 2017). Pursuing enjoyable foods is considered a significant push factor and an essential motivation for a tourist's destination choice (Su, Johnson & O'Mahony, 2020). Consequently, destination marketers and other affiliated businesses can potentially use local food to attract tourism (Bjork & Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2016; Moginon, See, & Saad, 2012).

Over the years, many destinations, including France, Italy, and Thailand, have utilised food to attract visitors (Karim & Leong, 2008). For example, the Damnoen Saduak Floating Market was established in the 1960s to cater to foreign tourists interested in learning about Thai culture (Lunchaprasith & Macleod, 2018). Furthermore, in Italy, the Piedmont region is widely renowned for its wines, and Campania is known for popular regional items such as mozzarella and pizza (Pagliuca & Monica, 2015). These destinations have taken advantage of their distinct culinary heritage and cultural characteristics to attract visitors (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). The consumption of local foods can add to the traveller's perception of authenticity when visiting such a destination (Kim et al., 2009). With the increased number of visitors seeking local cuisine, more destinations emphasise food as a major attraction. At present, tourism service manufacturers and destination management organisations have become increasingly interested in and aware of the potential of food tourism to increase the number of visitors.

Data collection regarding domestic movement is critical to understand better and develop domestic tourism opportunities, but many developing countries fail to report domestic demand (Nasir et al., 2020). Between 2006 and 2010, the Malaysian government created a plan to develop innovative food trails highlighting each region's culinary specialities to cater to this new and vibrant tourism market (Som, Nordin & Ghazali, 2020). Consequently, domestic tourism reached record levels in 2019. By 2019, it has recorded more than 239 million visitors. This figure amounted to a year over year increase of more than eight per cent. Considering the total economic impact of domestic tourism in 2021 was RM103.2. That annual growth in the segment averaged 11.5 per cent, and it appears that food tourism can indeed dramatically impact the Malaysian economy (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2021). This study uses this information as its foundation to unveil further how heritage foods may influence local tourism. This study investigates how domestic tourists perceive Pahang heritage food and how this may influence behavioural intentions for their consumption. Research on food (i.e., Atikahambar et al., 2018; Saad, Abdul Rahman & Umadi, 2019) provided some groundwork for the current study.

Consumption values have been found to help in describing and forecasting consumer preferences (Candan, Ünal, & Erciş, 2013). Researchers have argued that identifying the

relationship between consumption values and customer brand loyalty is essential for understanding purchasing patterns. The consumption values were considered one of the most important factors influencing consumer product and brand preferences (Denys & Mendes, 2014). This study adopted consumption values that were introduced by Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991). Specifically, three fundamental consumption values: quality (functional), emotional, and epistemic values and endeavoured to measure these values and how they may influence domestic tourist's behavioural intention to consume the food again in Pahang.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Heritage Food in Malaysia

Heritage food has recently become a trending topic regarding travel and tourism. As is often the case, this new interest has led to an ever-increasing effort to define what heritage food is. The Department of Natural Heritage described heritage as something that has been passed down through generations (Department of National Heritage, 2021). Omar et al. (2015) referred to heritage food as "typical local culinary, embedded with cultural values that represent the social community lifestyles, traditions or features that have been handed down from one generation to the next." More recently, academic researchers have found that Malaysian consumers view heritage food to be those traditional foods that are passed down from one generation to another and are associated with a region's cultural background and history (Ramli, Zahari, Halim & Aris, 2017). For this study, we consider heritage food to be a local cuisine in nature and adheres to the fundamental traditions, values, and community lifestyles passed down from one generation to the next. Researchers have found that this familiarity with heritage food and its origins may be the reason why domestic tourists seek out heritage food, thus leading to increased domestic tourism (Atikahambar et al., 2018). Fig. 1 illustrates several prevalent heritage foods from Pahang.

While heritage food may indeed be a driver of domestic tourism, that does not mean that the use of heritage food lacks challenges regarding marketing. One significant issue regarding some Malaysian heritage foods relates to their visual appeal. A recent article by Star Online (2019) found that many of its readers do not find Malaysian heritage foods to be appealing. While many foods may taste great, the ingredients of the dishes make visual plating a distinct challenge. Some of the ingredients that help the food taste so authentic may have less visually appealing properties. Take, for example, *belimbing buluh* (Averrhoa bilimbi), a very traditional Malaysian ingredient that helps create that unique Malaysian flavour; when used, it is typically black and can make the dish dark and unappealing. This issue may help explain the Star Online (2019) poll's mixed results; although respondents considered the food unappealing, the food still scored high based on taste. A local celebrity chef, Datuk Redzuawan, suggested that this may be due to a lack of knowledge regarding Malaysian cuisine. Chef Redzuawan stated that Malaysian food did not have exposure to

other global cuisines like Thai food and Vietnamese food. He may have a good point as researchers have noted that previous exposure may influence how we perceive food (Heddy, Danielson, Sinatra & Graham, 2017).



Fig. 1: Pahang Heritage Foods  
(Source: Google)

In addition, globalisation may also play a significant role in what we find appealing. As international tourists begin to become a larger portion of the target market of Malaysian restaurants, these restaurants may feel pressured to alter existing menu items to meet better the needs of this new lucrative market (Omar, Ab Karim & Omar, 2015). As this practice becomes more prevalent in an area, it may alter the perception of authentic food. This gentrification of one's taste buds may influence how locals view heritage foods and what they should look and taste like. Therefore, to better understand, it critical to investigate how Malaysian domestic tourists perceive heritage food.

## 2.2 Behavioural Intention

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) revolves around the concept that the intention to commit a behaviour makes it significantly more likely to engage in said behaviour; if one intends not to engage in a particular behaviour, they will less likely participate in said behaviour (Sommer, 2011). Ajzen (1991) describes behavioural intentions as the probability that an individual will engage in a particular behaviour. As a result, it is critical for researchers discover the individual factors that may motivate said individual to act. Researchers must understand the influence of these factors to understand the likelihood that a particular behaviour may occur indeed.

This understanding is even more critical in goal-oriented behaviours (Danner, Aarts, & Vries, 2008). As a result, the study of Behavioural Intention has become central to study human behaviour, particularly studies that focus on predicting behavioural outcomes.

Recently, Ratnasari et al. (2020) learned the relationship between the perceptions of environment destination brand and behavioural intentions and determined that customers' satisfaction affected behavioural intentions. Understanding how factors like perception may influence behavioural intention may allow stakeholders to better predict behavioural outcomes like destination choice and thus create opportunities that otherwise would not be available to them. Therefore, this study will focus on measuring the behavioural intention of Malaysian domestic tourists.

### **2.3 Emotional Value**

Emotional value refers to an individual's emotions and has been defined as the perceived utility derived from an alternative's ability to elicit feelings or affective states. When an alternative's ability is associated with specific feelings, or when it precipitates or perpetuates those feelings, it gains emotional value. Thus, emotional value is "measured on a profile of feelings associated with the alternative" (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991, p.161). Ramli et al. (2017) described emotional value as an alternative that obtains emotional values when associated with, brings about, or causes certain feelings to continue. Heddy et al. (2017) stated that increased knowledge might also lead to a shift in attitude and emotion. Understanding emotional value is essential as emotions are strongly related to behavioural intention in previous studies. Sthapit et al. (2017) determined that emotions related to food consumption influenced revisit intentions and the intention to recommend to one's friends. Another recent study also noted that emotional value influenced food recommendations to others (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). Indeed, Watanabe et al. (2020) reported that while both functional values (quality) and emotional values influenced Brazilian consumers' trust, only emotional value increased purchase intentions related to organic foods. With this understanding of the previous influence of emotional value related to behavioural intentions, this study hypothesises that emotional value will positively influence the behavioural intention of Malaysian domestic tourists in Pahang.

### **2.4 Quality Value**

Quality value relates to the perceived functionality or utility of something. While dictionaries define quality as a degree of excellence, academic studies related to service have viewed quality as a measurement of the gap between performance and expectation (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 2002; Merriam-Webster, 2021.). Consumers often view quality as the difference between what they expect and what they actually get. It says that if a product does not meet one's expectations, one will likely not be satisfied. However, if a product meets or exceeds the expectations of the consumer, they will be satisfied. Indeed, perhaps this connection between expectations and quality perception helps explain the influence of previous knowledge on the perception of quality (Heddy et al., 2017). If true, it suggests that domestic tourists exposed to more accurate information regarding heritage food, the more realistic their expectations may become and the more likely they will be to find satisfaction in consuming said products.

As domestic tourists play such a vital role in the Malaysian tourist economy, a better understanding of this topic seems to be in order. In previous studies, quality is related to behavioural intentions. Quality was acknowledged as a significant factor in purchasing food as a souvenir by tourists on holiday (Altintzoglou, Heide & Borch, 2015). Another study determined that both the quality of service and the food quality were an antecedent to consumer visitation intentions. Similarly, a third study noted that the perceived quality of the overall experience also positively influenced the revisit intention of consumers (Wu, Li, & Li, 2017). Notably, a recent study conducted by Suhartanto et al. (2020) also revealed that perceived quality positively influences tourist loyalty, motivating tourists to visit tourist attractions in Bandung, Indonesia. Based on the literature review, this study postulates that quality value will positively impact domestic tourists' behavioural intention towards heritage food in Pahang.

## **2.5 Epistemic Value**

A product's ability to arouse curiosity, provide novelty and or satisfy a need for knowledge had been referred to as epistemic value (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). This novelty and the ability of heritage food to help us connect with our roots may cause domestic tourists to travel to find this connection and satisfy their curiosity (Ramli et al., 2017). Malaysians that want to experience the food of their forefathers may be motivated to seek out this food. Also, suppose the food source is not typically available where the tourist lives. In that case, this factor may influence a domestic tourist to choose a travel destination based on the availability of this food source. Still, others may want to try something new and different from other food offerings nearby (Omar et al., 2015).

Epistemic value has frequently been studied, and those studies have revealed that it too can influence behavioural intentions. One such study determined that epistemic values influenced consumer attitudes towards food and that this, in turn, influenced behavioural intentions. This study found that epistemic values were to influence tourist attitudes towards local foods strongly. This improved attitude influenced behavioural intentions to recommend to friends and revisit (Choe & Kim, 2018). Uehara and Assarut (2020) also determined that epistemic value or the perceived novelty of a food positively influenced Japanese and Thai consumers' attitudes toward foreign cuisine. The study found that epistemic values significantly contributed to perceived value. Finally, in a related study, epistemic values influenced public perception of genetically modified foods (Hu, Liu, Zhang & Zhang, 2021). This study established that familiarity combined with epistemic value led to increased acceptance. Based on these studies, this paper hypothesises that epistemic value positively influences the behavioural intention of domestic tourists regarding heritage food in Pahang.

To summarise, this study has been designed to fill the gaps regarding how domestic tourists perceive heritage food in Pahang and the impact on behavioural intentions. Perception will be measured utilising the consumption values of emotion, quality, and epistemic value. Figure 2 illustrates the proposed framework of this study.



Fig. 2: Consumption Values Model

### 3.0 Methodology

The questionnaire for this study was developed using a quantitative approach following a thorough review of the literature and was segmented into four sections. The first section required respondents to answer their demographic information, including age, gender, ethnicity and state of origin. While, in the second section asked the respondents to rate their perception of the consumption values, which are emotion, quality, and epistemic values. It was measured utilising a 13-question measurement scale developed by Choe and Kim (2018). The third section measured the respondent's behavioural intentions toward heritage food. A scale was adapted from Aprile, Caputo, and Nayga (2015) and Choe and Kim (2018) to determine the respondent's behavioural intentions. Lastly, in the fourth section, respondents were asked to provide any thoughts or suggestions on the topic.

The midpoint answer was omitted in this study, and the items were scored on a 6-point Likert-type scale. "1" is indicating a strongly disagree, and "6" indicating a strongly agree. This study used a snowball approach to data collection due to the inherent risks of data collection during a pandemic. An online survey dispersed using Google Form. This method has a limitation, which is heavily reliant on each respondent's effort to spread the survey. A pretest activity at two levels was carried out at the beginning to ensure the validity of the question items. Language instructors from the Department of English and Department of Malay at the International Islamic University in Johor's Kulliyah of Languages and Management reviewed the questions. They ensured the English and Malay were consistent on both sets of questionnaires. In addition, Department of Tourism experts' viewpoints was also considered for additional modifications. Finally, a pilot study was conducted before the data collection process. A total of 29 responses were analysed for reliability, and all items achieved an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value, ranging from 0.812 to 0.935.

### 3.1 Data Collection

Pahang received 13,992,313 visitors in 2019 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Purposive sampling is used because this study is intended for domestic tourists who travelled for Pahang's heritage food. Questionnaires were distributed via social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Messenger, and Telegram using a snowball approach where respondents were asked to forward the survey to others (Sharma, 2017). Data collection

was collected from October to November 2019. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) suggested that 384 responses are necessary for a population of more than 13 million people to reduce the margin of error to provide a margin of error of 5% at a confidence level of 95%.

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Sample Profile

This study managed to collect 164 responses with a response rate of 42.7% based on the target set following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) suggestion. Three responses were excluded from the analysis because the respondents were non-Malaysian, resulting in 161 usable data points. Approximately 81% were female, and 78% were between the ages of 12 and 24. The majority of the respondents were Malay (95%) and mainly were from Pahang (42%). Almost all respondents (99.4%) agreed that heritage food consumption could preserve the culture. The findings also revealed that 97 per cent of respondents agreed that it is necessary to expand heritage food commercialisation activities in Pahang to other destinations. According to the data collected, heritage food was common and popular primarily in the Temerloh area.

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

As indicated by Table 1, Cronbach's alpha estimates for the emotional value of 0.923, while the quality and epistemic values are 0.896 and 0.912, respectively. Emotional and quality values each had four items, while epistemic values have five. The result shows that all construction items are considered to have good reliability.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Emotional value	5.14	.912	.921
Quality value	5.16	.847	.896
Epistemic value	5.08	.961	.912

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

This study used Pearson correlation analysis to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between epistemological, emotional, and quality values. It determined that all of the variables are strongly related. As shown in Table 2, all study variables are considered strongly correlated and significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).



Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

Independent Variables	Behavioural Intention
Emotional value	.715**
Quality value	.683**
Epistemic value	.835**

Note. N=161. Significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

#### 4.4 Hypotheses Testing

The multiple regression explains the overall model at 74.2%, and the ANOVA result indicates that the model's value is significant. The evaluation of each hypothesis shows that emotional, quality, and epistemic variables are statistically significant in behavioural intentions. Table 3 summarises the hypothesis testing. From this table, all hypotheses can be accepted. Among the three variables, epistemic value accounted for 63%, making it the most significant contribution, followed by the emotional value (12%) and quality value (20%).

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Standardised parameter est.	Sig.	Conclusion
H1: Emotional value positively influences domestic tourist' behavioural intention towards heritage food in Pahang	.115	.000	Supported
H2: Quality value positively influences domestic tourist' behavioural intention towards heritage food in Pahang	.196	.000	Supported
H3: Epistemic value positively influences domestic tourist' behavioural intention towards heritage food in Pahang	.630	.000	Supported

#### 5.0 Discussion

With the increase in the popularity of food tourism, Malaysia, with its unique culinary heritage, is well-positioned to take advantage of this phenomenon. Malaysian cuisine can potentially utilise its rich gastronomic legacy to attract tourists seeking new and authentic food experiences. To take full advantage of this, Malaysian destination managers should consider focusing inward on domestic travellers as they represent most of all tourism receipts in the country. Moreover, with the advent of Covid-19, international travel has been severely limited. Also, the literature shows that familiarity and previous experience may influence how consumption values are perceived, and thus the most likely consumers to be influenced are those with prior experience with Pahang's heritage food (Heddy et al.,

2016; Suhartanto et al., 2020; Uehara & Assarut, 2020). Indeed, the results of this study have indicated that the consumption values of Pahang's heritage food can influence the behavioural intentions of domestic tourists.

The study determined that emotional values, quality values, and epistemic values significantly influenced domestic travellers' behavioural intentions to the region, with epistemic value contributing the most. As epistemic value is related primarily to novelty, this may indicate a desire for domestic travellers to partake in new or rare experiences related to food. The novelty of Pahang's heritage food may relate to the opportunity for domestic travellers to reconnect to their culinary heritage reaffirming recent findings in the literature (Ramli et al., 2017). The feelings of curiosity and a sense of novelty can significantly influence a tourist's motivation to try Pahang heritage food. This idea suggests that the inherent novelty of Pahang heritage food may act as a catalyst, at once satisfying a desire for knowledge among tourists and potentially helping them connect to the region's unique culinary heritage supporting Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen (2016). In addition, the perceived quality also was found to be significantly related to the behavioural intentions of domestic tourists, also reinforcing the findings of earlier studies (Bjork & Kuppinen-Raisanen, 2015; Choe & Kim, 2018; Yan, Wang, & Chau, 2015). Lastly, emotional values were also found to significantly contribute to domestic tourists' behavioural intentions, perhaps related to domestic tourists' pride regarding their gastronomic heritage.

Investigations of heritage food's impact on tourist behaviour indicate that few have evaluated the influence utilising consumption values. By focusing on how domestic tourists perceive the different values of heritage food, industry professionals can better focus their marketing efforts on what truly matters to their target market. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the consumption values of the traveller and how they each influenced the consumers' behavioural intention.

As stated above, the food tourism market is continuing to grow. This improved understanding of how travellers perceive Pahang's heritage food should help Pahang's destination managers focus their marketing efforts on attracting future domestic tourism. Marketers should increase familiarity with heritage foods, particularly among potential domestic tourists, as familiarity may increase perceived emotional value (Heddy et al., 2016). In addition, the study shows that the epistemic value domestic tourists place on the novelty of heritage food can be very influential regarding their behavioural intention.

Consequently, the region's destination marketers should be sure to concentrate on promoting the uniqueness of the local cuisine to have the greatest impact. Finally, as the quality was also a significant influence on behavioural intention, destinations should ensure that the establishments they promote utilise high-quality ingredients and traditional methods to meet the consumers' expectations. A failure to ensure quality may lead to dissatisfaction if it does not match the expectations set, thus negatively impacting behavioural intention. By focusing on consumption values to fine-tune their marketing approach, destination managers can potentially increase tourism response and create future demand among domestic tourists.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This study determined that consumption factors do indeed influence the behavioural intention of domestic tourists that travel to Pahang. These findings confirm previous studies and extend them to the context of Malaysian domestic tourism. Previously, studies regarding heritage food in Malaysia focused on international travellers, although domestic travellers account for the largest share of tourism revenue (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). In addition, studies regarding heritage food have rarely, if ever, conceptualised the influence of local foods utilising consumption values. Focusing on how the consumer values heritage foods allow industry professionals to better respond to market needs.

While this study reinforces and broadens the existing literature regarding the influence of consumption values on behavioural intentions, further research can and should be conducted regarding both the formation of these values and the relationship between prior experience and each consumption value, as all may be influenced by previous knowledge. Researchers should focus on how first time experiencers perceive these values when compared to those with existing knowledge. Future studies can compare international tourists with domestic tourists to see how cultural background may also influence this perception.

Some possible limitations of this study may be the sample regarding its likeness to the general population of domestic tourists in Malaysia due to the data collecting method and the inclusion of residents from Pahang itself taking part in this survey. Future studies can mitigate this, but due to the challenges of collecting data in today's environment, the study chose to evaluate the data they could obtain. Regarding the inclusion of Pahang residents, stay-cations have grown in their importance for domestic tourism due to the CoronaVirus pandemic currently affecting most areas. As a result, it is still vital to consider locals when evaluating domestic tourism as they are more likely to be a significant portion of the population in the future.

## Article Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper both reinforces and broadens the existing literature regarding the influence of consumption value on the behavioural intentions of domestic tourists. The findings may indicate a relationship exists between prior experience and the consumption values of quality, emotion and epistemic value, opening up a new avenue of research possibilities.

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