



Pahang's Heritage Food: Do consumption values play a role in the development of behavioral intentions?

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Abstract

This study explores the state of tourists' perception of Pahang heritage food. Data were obtained from 164 tourists through social media applications. The survey outcomes were encouraging, which showed a positive and significant influence between food consumption values and a domestic tourist's behavioral intentions to consume heritage foods. These findings will help Pahang's destination managers better understand how the promotion of heritage foods can be utilized 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; Heritage Food; Behavioral Intentions; Domestic Tourists

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1.0 Introduction

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

Over the years, many destinations, including France, Italy, and Thailand, have utilized food as a way 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 been able to take advantage of their distinct culinary heritage and cultural characteristics to attract visitors (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). The consumption of local foods can add to the traveler's perception of authenticity when visiting such a destination (Kim et al., 2009). With the increased number of visitors seeking local cuisine, more destinations emphasize food as a major attraction. At present, tourism service manufacturers and destination management organizations have become increasingly interested in and aware of the potential of food tourism to increase the number of visitors.

In order to better understand and develop opportunities for domestic tourism, data collection regarding domestic movement is critical, but many developing countries fail to report domestic demand (Nasir et al., 2020). In Malaysia, 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 in order to savor local delicacies (Som, Nordin & Ghazali, 2020). Accordingly, the performance of domestic tourism in Malaysia recorded a higher record compared to 2018. In 2019, a total of 239.1 million visitors were recorded, showing an increase of 8.1 percent as against the previous year. In terms of expenditure, a total of RM103.2 billion was spent by domestic visitors, with an annual growth rate of 11.5 percent (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2021). Based on this concrete foundation, this study was conducted to unveil further how heritage foods influence local tourism. This study investigates how domestic tourists perceive Pahang heritage food and how this may influence behavioral intentions for their consumption. Research on food (i.e., Atikahambar

et al., 2018; Saad, Abdul Rahman & Umadi, 2019) provided some groundwork for the current research.

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 endeavored to measure these values and how they may influence domestic tourist's behavioral intention to consume the food again in Pahang.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Heritage Food in Malaysia

Heritage food has been defined as the "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 (Omar et al., 2015). The Department of National Heritage describes heritage as something passed down from one generation to the next. Heritage is a national treasure that a group or individuals own, and it becomes a collective responsibility for the protection and preservation (Department of National Heritage, 2021). A recent study focused on the awareness of Malaysian consumers about the origin of heritage food and found that respondents considered heritage food to be traditional foods in which respondents understood the description of the food heritage, the characteristics, and styles of food and associated with the identity of food (Ramli, Zahari, Halim & Aris, 2017). 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.



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

However, one of the challenges Malaysian heritage food faces is that the food presentation is not always considered attractive (The Star Online, 2019). For example, 'Sambal Hitam,' may taste good, but the dish's color is plain black. While the black color of this sambal originates from a fruit called 'belimbing buluh,' which is the main ingredient and helps provide the dish's flavor, this black color may not appeal to tourists unfamiliar with the local cuisine (Clydesdale, 1993). A recent survey found that while Malaysian cuisine may be considered tasty, tourists did not find it very appealing (The Star Online, 2019). The survey results may be due to the perception of those less familiar with the dishes' appearance. Researchers have found that familiarity with a local cuisine helps create a more positive interpretation of the food itself (Omar et al., 2015). A fact hinted at by celebrity Chef Datuk Redzuawan Ismail recently commented that Malaysian cuisine did not have the global footprint of other more popular cuisines like Thai and Vietnamese dishes suggesting this knowledge may have contributed to the survey results (The Star Online, 2019).

Globalization may also influence what is perceived as heritage food as the influx of visitors may incentivize local businesses to produce more palatable cuisine to specific cultures (Omar, Ab Karim & Omar, 2015). The globalization effect may also influence how locals perceive heritage food as their flavor preferences. The perception may also be altered by the availability of these different flavor profiles in specific cultural cuisines that may now be available to them. These factors may influence how domestic tourists perceive Malaysian heritage food. Therefore, as domestic tourism is such a significant part of Malaysia's overall tourism, it becomes paramount to investigate how domestic tourists perceive Malaysian heritage food.

2.2 Behavioral Intention

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) describes behavioral intention as the perceived probability of an individual or a subjective probability of engaging in a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), it is vital to capture the motivational factors that influence behavior. It indicates how hard people are willing to try and how much effort they plan to perform a particular behavior. Generally, the stronger the intention to engage in said behavior, the more likely one performs the behavior. According to Sheeran (2002), "people do what they plan to do and do not do what they do not plan to do" (Sommer, 2011).

Similarly, Danner, Aarts, and Vries (2008) found that intentions may play a significant role in confirming goal-oriented behavior. Consequently, intents have emerged as the core and spirit of the action itself. Without any intention, it may be impossible for someone to reveal a specific action. When studying potential human behavior, it becomes essential to understand one's intentions to predict what one may do. Recently, Ratnasari et al. (2020) studied customer satisfaction between perceptions of environment destination brand and behavioral intention and reported that the satisfaction of customers affected behavioral

intentions. In this study, the behavioral intention refers to the consumer's intention to consume, intention to return, and intention to recommend to others.

2.3 Emotional Value

Emotional value refers to an individual's emotions. Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) described emotional value as the perceived effectiveness derived from an alternative's ability to stimulate an emotional response. The alternative acquires emotional value when associated with specific feelings, precipitates, or perpetuates said feelings. The emotional value may play a significant role regarding the perception of heritage food by domestic tourists as the food relates to a shared cultural history (Ramli et al., 2017). As Heddy et al. (2017) stated, increased knowledge may lead to a shift in attitude and emotion.

Understanding emotional value is essential as emotions have been found to be related to behavioral 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. This study, therefore, aims to explore the emotional value in the consumption of Pahang's heritage food. Thus, it is hypothesized that emotional value will positively influence domestic tourists' behavioral intention towards heritage in Pahang.

2.4 Quality Value

The quality value is functional as it evaluates the utility aspect based on a quality perspective. In the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, "quality" is defined as the degree of excellence. Studies evaluate how consumers determine what excellence is concerning the gap between expectation and performance (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 2002). In other words, if the performance of a product exceeds the buyer's expectations, they will experience satisfaction and perceived quality. The relationship between expectations and quality may signify that familiarity and previous knowledge may influence consumers' perception of quality. Suggesting that if domestic tourists are exposed to more information regarding heritage food, they may form more realistic expectations, resulting in a stronger perception of quality.

This notion is vital as quality has been found to be related to behavioral intention in multiple studies. Altintzoglou, Heide, and Borch (2015) noted that quality was a significant factor in purchasing food souvenirs while on holiday. Similarly, Yan, Wang, and Chau (2015) researched restaurant intentions by reviewing online customer reviews and established that food quality and quality of service were antecedents of a customer's intention to revisit. Furthermore, another study noted that the quality of the overall experience also influences behavioral intentions, particularly the intention to revisit (Wu, Li, and Li, 2017). Notably, a recent study conducted by Suhartanto et al. (2020) 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 influence domestic tourists' behavioral intention towards heritage food in Pahang.

2.5 Epistemic Value

Epistemic value is described as the product's ability "to arouse curiosity, provide novelty, and/or satisfy a desire for knowledge" (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). The epistemic value may play a significant role regarding heritage food due to its inherent novelty. Domestic tourists seeking heritage food or those domestic travelers who may not be seeking but become exposed to heritage food during travel may be curious regarding their heritage and look toward food to better understand their history (Ramli et al., 2017). Others may seek heritage food as a means of exploring something that may not be available, something new to them (Omar et al., 2015).

The epistemic value effect was investigated on public acceptance of genetically modified food in a study by Hu, Liu, Zhang, and Zhang (2021). The finding shows that once the consumers are familiar with the products, the epistemic value can influence the modified food's acceptance. The results are essential because epistemic factors in previous studies have shown a significant ability to influence behavioral intention. Choe and Kim (2018) determined that epistemic values positively influence tourists' attitudes regarding food and that these attitudes influence behavioral intentions like revisit and the intention to recommend. Uehara and Assarut (2021) also found out that epistemic value or the perceived novelty of a food positively influenced Japanese consumers' attitudes toward foreign cuisine. Based on this literature review, this study would like to postulate that epistemic value will positively influence domestic tourists' behavioral intention towards heritage food in Pahang.

To summarize, this study aims to fill literature gaps by investigating the effect of heritage food consumption values on domestic tourists' behavioral intention by narrowing the heritage food in the state of Pahang. Fig. 2 illustrates the proposed framework for this study.



Fig. 2: Consumption Values Model

3.0 Methodology

The questionnaire for this study was developed using a quantitative approach after a review

of the literature. This study adapted thirteen question items from Choe and Kim (2018) for the Consumption Values to measure emotional value, quality value, and epistemic value. Question items for the behavioral intentions are adapted from Aprile, Caputo, and Nayga (2015) and Choe and Kim (2018). The questionnaire survey was divided into four sections. The first section was on respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, ethnicity, and state of origin. The second section asked respondents to rate their perceived consumption values of emotion, quality, and, finally, epistemic values. The third section measured the respondent's behavioral intentions toward heritage food. Finally, in the fourth section, respondents were asked for their thoughts and suggestions.

In this study, the midpoint answer was omitted, and the items were scored on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 6 indicating strongly agree. This study chose the online survey through the Google form as the method of data collection. This method has a limitation in that it 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 lecturers reviewed the English and Malay sets of questionnaires from the Department of English and Department of Malay at the International Islamic University in Johor's Kulliyyah of Languages and Management. The experts' viewpoints in the Department of Tourism were also considered for some modifications. A pilot study was then conducted before the mass data collection process. A total of 29 responses were analyzed 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 traveled for Pahang's heritage food. Questionnaires were distributed via social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Messenger, and Telegram. Data collection took place from 13 October to 13 November 2019. It was a snowballing selection approach to provide the researcher with a generalized sample (Sharma, 2017), intending to have 384 respondents for a population of more than 13 million people, as suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

4.0 Findings

4.1 Sample Profile

This study managed to collect 164 responses and achieved a 42.7% response rate based on the target set based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) suggestion. Three responses were excluded from the analysis because the respondents were non-Malaysian, resulting in a total of 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 percent of

respondents agreed that heritage food commercialization activities in Pahang should be expanded to other destinations. According to the data collected, heritage food was common and popular primarily in Temerloh.

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 and found that all variables have a strong relationship. 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	Behavioral 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 as a whole value is significant. The evaluation of each hypothesis shows that emotional, quality and epistemic variables are statistically significant towards the behavioral intentions. Table 3 summarizes 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	Standardized parameter est.	Sig.	Conclusion
H1: Emotional value positively influences domestic tourist' behavioral intention towards heritage food in Pahang	.115	.000	Supported
H2: Quality value positively influences domestic tourist' behavioral intention towards heritage food in Pahang	.196	.000	Supported
H3: Epistemic value positively influences domestic tourist' behavioral intention towards heritage food in Pahang	.630	.000	Supported

5.0 Discussions

With the increase in the popularity of food tourism, Malaysia, with its unique culinary heritage, is well positioned to take advantage of this phenomenon. While the rich gastronomic legacy of Malaysian cuisine may be utilized to attract international visitors, it makes sense that Malaysian destination managers should look inwards toward the domestic tourist market first as this market represents more than half of all tourism-related revenue. In addition, 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 behavioral intentions of domestic tourists.

The study determined that emotional values, quality values, and epistemic values significantly influenced domestic travelers' behavioral 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 travelers to partake in new or rare experiences related to food. The novelty of Pahang's heritage food may relate to the opportunity for domestic travelers 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 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 behavioral 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 contribute to behavioral intentions of domestic tourists significantly, perhaps related to the pride domestic tourists feel regarding their gastronomic heritage.

While studies have looked at the influence of heritage food on tourist behavior, few if any have evaluated the influence utilizing 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 traveler and how they each influenced the consumers' behavioral intention.

5.1 Implications

Food tourism is on the rise and can potentially contribute to economic growth in Malaysia. The study's results indicate that the consumption values of heritage food influence the behavioral intention of domestic tourists. These findings will help Pahang's destination managers better understand how the promotion of heritage foods can be utilized to attract future domestic tourism. Marketers should work to increase familiarity with heritage foods, particularly among potential domestic tourists as familiarity may lead to increased emotional values (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 behavioral intention.

Consequently, the region's destination marketers should be sure to focus on promoting the uniqueness of the local cuisine to have the greatest impact. Finally, as the quality was also a significant influence on behavioral intention, destinations should ensure that the establishments they promote utilize 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 behavioral 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 & Recommendations

This study was able to determine that consumption factors do indeed influence the behavioral 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 travelers, although domestic travelers account for the largest share of tourism revenue (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). In addition, studies regarding heritage food have rarely if ever conceptualized the influence of local foods utilizing consumption values. Focusing on how

the consumer values heritage foods allows industry professionals to better respond to market needs.

For academics, understanding how consumers value heritage food can lead to further exploration regarding how these values form. Future research may focus on the relationship between prior experience and emotional quality, and epistemic values, as all may be influenced by prior knowledge. New studies can incorporate and facilitate in-depth gastronomic experiences to those who have never tried Pahang's heritage cuisine. It is also essential to replicate or compare studies among different populations in other geographic regions and repeat studies on first-time, domestic, or international tourists to improve the understanding of the consumption of heritage foods. In summary, future studies should review other areas of Malaysia to reaffirm the findings of this study.

Possible limitations of the study are related to the sample and its likeness to the general population of domestic tourists in Malaysia and also the inclusion of residents from Pahang taking part in the survey. These can be mitigated in future studies, but due to the challenges related to collecting data in today's environment, the study chose to evaluate the data they were able to 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.

Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper adds to gastronomy literature, particularly in the literature of food heritage and domestic travelers' behavioral intentions in Malaysia.

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