

Research Article

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# Tourist motivation to consume Pulau Pinang local food

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## Abstract

This paper presents the finding of a study that identifies the most influential factor among local tourists to consume Pulau Pinang's food. Data collection was done in numerous tourist attraction spots in Pulau Pinang. A total 98 respondents were selected for this study, represented the local tourists who traveled to Pulau Pinang. Motivational factors included in this study are exciting experience, escape from routine, health concern, cultural experience. The finding shows that the most influential motivational factor is the cultural experience. It could be said that, the major reason for tourist to consume Pulau Pinang food is the cultural experience that they encounter during the consumption of the foods. It also shows that people engage with food tourism in Pulau Pinang to experience the local culture. The findings of the study can be used by the state's tourism agencies to strengthen the efforts to develop and promote the food culture of Pulau Pinang hence, increasing the tourism value of the state

## Keywords:

Motivation, cultural, experience, Pulau Pinang, local food

## 1 Introduction

Food tourism or alternately can be addressed as culinary tourism or gastronomy tourism is one of the top trends in the world of tourism these days. It can be defined as

the intentional and exploratory participation in the food ways of another participation including the consumption, preparation and presentation of food items, cuisine, meal system or eating style considered to a culinary system not one's own (Long, 2004). According to Santich (2004), food tourism plays a crucial part in the sector of travel and tourism industry and there is a growing demand for that. Food and tourism have a significant relationship towards one another and food in fact is a critical tourism resource (Henderson, 2004). It is vital for tourists to consume food when travelling as food can be a motivator which satisfies their needs and wants (Tikkanen, 2007).

Food and beverages are among the important factors for travellers who are on holiday or even on a business trip because approximately one third of all tourist expenditures were spent on eating out during a holiday as cited in a related study (Telfer & Wall, 2000). For example, from one hundred people that came to visit the United Kingdom, 72 of them were interested in local food and beverages during their stay and they were pleased with the experience they attained when trying and tasting local food (Enteleca Research and Consultancy, 2000). Another simple example of how people like to taste and give a try for local foods can be seen from a statistic by the Munich Tourist Office (2007) when 6.2 million people came and experienced the 16-day Munich Oktoberfest and from that period of time, 69.046 hectolitre of beer, 142,600 pairs of local pork sausages and 521,872 units of local chicken had been consumed by the visitors and it was estimated that 955 million Euros were spent during that period (Munich Tourist Office, 2007). These examples suggest that tasting local food and beverages is the key factor for tourist to visit a particular place and directly contribute to the economy of that destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Telfer et al., 2000).

In the perspective of Malaysia, in the year of 2011, the country has recorded RM9.4bil worth of money in terms of net spent for the food consumption by the visitors (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012b). According to Malaysia Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen, the food and beverage sector has contributed 17.5 per cent or almost RM9.4bil of the total revenue generated by the country' tourism industry in 2011 (Bernama, 2012). Besides the international highlights, Malaysia domestic tourism also gives an impact towards the tourism activities. The culture of "Balik Kampung" that literally means "going back home" is a culture where people from different places come to their places of origin to visit their parents and relatives (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012a) According to the survey, domestic tourism in Malaysia is seasonal as it is highly affected and influenced by the public holiday, festive season and also big events. Domestic visitors spent RM42.3bil in 2011 as the number of domestic trips was accounted at 162.8 million trips in that year (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012a).

## **2 Literature Review**

There is no universally agreed definition for local food in general, but for the purpose of this research, local food is defined as foods that are produced and within the local area, or local signature food that reflects the local identity of the food (Enteleca

Research & Consultancy, 2000; Sanger & Zenz, 2004). In addition, local food can also be described as food that is processed locally in spite of the food that requires raw material from outside of the area (Nummedal & Hall, 2006). Local food and beverages present the taste and the destination's culture and tradition to the tourists which allow them to try new flavours other than equipping the tourists with the unique tourism experience (Fields, 2002).

On the contrary, Kim et al. (2009) claimed that present studies about the local food consumption at a place are still forming a basic doctrine. However, in the tourism literature, local food has been reviewed in many studies (Yurtseven & Kaya, 2011). Among them are the marketing and unique placements of tourism destination (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2006; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007), the social and cultural significance of food (Arce & Marsden, 1993), sustaining regional identity and culture (Wood, 2001), the role of local food in tourism (Hall & Mitchell, 2001; Kivela et al., 2006; Wolf, 2002), and in terms of native growth and the fiscal profits.

According to Rand, Heath and Alberts (2003), local food is crucial to develop sustainability in tourism where the government and entrepreneurs should join forces to entertain the tourists and as a result, the local economy will be solid, adding the originality of the places and offers the needed infrastructure. Moreover, Rand and Heath (2006) claimed that the economy, culture and environment can be sustained through foods and drinks of those tourism destinations. This view makes the local food a vital element in tourism as it can be an important tourism product and adds value to a destination (Richards, 2002).

## **2.1 Escape from routine**

This factor literally means 'to escape from the daily life'. It is a motive to inverse the daily routine by approaching food (Fields, 2002). Fields (2002) stated tasting local food during the holiday can become a method of being away from their regular environments. Fields (2002) also stated that rich individuals sometimes go somewhere far to try to consume fresh and exotic local fruits that is representing the food of poverty which is counted as the act as to go away from the norm of life. Mayo and Jarvis (1981) recognised 'escape from routine' as different conditions of everyday life. They added that transformation of everyday is a means of overcoming a sense of anxiety and boredom, which consequently leads to enhanced freedom and satisfaction.

This statement is supported by Iso-Ahola and Weissinger (1990) who stated that travel is one of the most common means of alleviating or escaping boredom, and they viewed 'escape from routine' as the removal and reduction of the perception that experiences available in the home environment are not sufficient to satisfy the need for optimal arousal. With respect to the mode of culinary tourism experiences, Hjalager (2003) also recognised that some tourists are interested in tasting local food as 'gastronomy tourists', seeking to escape from their everyday eating habits, such as routine dining, food shopping, and preparing a dish. Similarly, Kim et al. (2009) found

that some tourists may taste local food as they want to escape from daily routines or experience something different.

## **2.2 Exciting experience**

According to Mayo and Jarvis (1981) as cited by Kim and Eves (2012), exciting experience is created through the medium of doing activities involving unknown risks or unusual happening in leisure or travel activities. The intake of food can be considered as an exciting experience according to previous studies. Otis (1984) showed that exciting activities can be reflected through the act of trying new foods. For instance, the need to try local food and beverages that have never been tried before is an excitement and it comes from people who are looking for exciting experience. Furthermore, the excitement or the curious feelings of trying new food can arouse the expectation of dining experience (Kim & Eves, 2012). Sparks, Bowen, and Klag (2003) stated that one of the main factors of tourist eating out during holidays is the chances of trying local food that are different, exciting and new for them. For instance, Rust and Oliver (2000) pointed out that satisfaction with meal experiences is caused by the meal being unexpectedly or surprisingly pleasant and Kim et al. (2009) further indicated that eating local food, not eaten before, is one of the exciting experiences in tourist destinations.

## **2.3 Health concern**

The definition of health concern in this context refers to the degree of awareness in well-being when consuming local food (Kim & Eves, 2012). According to Kim et al. (2009), health concern is the main motivational factor in determining the interest of tourist in choosing local food and beverages. From the previous study of Kim et al. (2009), they found that most tourists believe that when they consume fresh locally produced foods, it will improve their health mentally or physically. However, Glanz, Basil, Maibach, Goldberg, and Snyder (1998) argued that eating healthy food alone is not enough but one has to engage into a healthy lifestyle including exercise and tourists also need to consider the significance of the taste, nutrition, price and weight control for their health.

According to Cornell (2006), 'health concern' in tourism is related to increasing well-being and health, rather than relaxation during holidays. Cornell (2006) stressed its importance, because some tourists are now interested in a beneficial outcome for their health through travel experiences. Previously, travelling for health was simply about exploiting natural phenomena, such as sea water and mineral springs for their health benefits. Thus, many spas represented the effective start of local and health tourism, since people believed that 'taking the waters' was good for their health (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007).

## **2.4 Cultural experience**

Based on the findings of Kim et al. (2009), tourists believed that a new and unique experience during the vacation is viewed as an authentic experience. Kim et al. previous work separated the authentic experience and the learning knowledge; however, it has

been grouped under the cultural motivator. According to McIntosh et al. (1995), cultural motivator does not only relate to experience the culture differences like music, lifestyle and food but also to gain knowledge about cultural activities in other countries. Fields (2002) suggested that food tasting should be grouped in the cultural motivator because when tasting new local food, tourists are also experiencing new culture. The cultural experience in the context of tourism can be seen from the existing literature including knowledge gain (e.g., learning about history, understanding different nations) and authentic experience (e.g., new and unique experience of travelling) (Crompton & McKay, 1997; McIntosh et al., 1995).

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This section explains about the research design, sampling and population, data analysis, questionnaire, pilot study and data collection method. The main purpose of the research is to determine the most influential motivational factor among local tourists to consume Pulau Pinang food during their visits. A descriptive research design was applied to gather information of a specific activity or current occurrences in the environment; in this case, local food consumption among local tourist.

#### **3.2 Population and sample**

Target population of this research were the local tourists who visited Pulau Pinang for various reasons such as business trip, holiday, visiting family and friends or many other reasons. Sampling technique that had been used for this research was convenience sampling where the researcher gathered the information from the population conveniently accessible (local tourists). Sampling size of this study is 100 local tourists who came to Pulau Pinang. G\*Power used to determine required sample size using an alpha of 0.05, a minimum power established at 0.80, a medium effect size ( $d = 0.3$ ), and one predictor. Based on the assumptions, the desired sample size to find a statistically significant effect in the model is 64. The researcher managed to get 98 respondents for this study.

#### **3.3 Research instrument**

The instrument of this study was a close ended questionnaire which means the questions have a limited answer in which the respondent chose the answers that have been stated in questionnaire. The question was written in English and Bahasa Malaysia and it was adopted from the research by Kim et al. (2009). The questionnaire was developed using five Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

#### **3.4 Pilot study**

Pilot study was first conducted before the actual data gathering process. For the purpose of the pilot study, 30 questionnaires had been distributed in Penang Hill,

Georgetown, Gurney and Batu Ferringhi areas. Table 1 shows the alpha coefficient range and the strength of association.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha reliability test result for pilot study

Sections	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability test result
Exciting experience	0.794
Escape from routine	0.771
Health concern	0.801
Cultural experience	0.893

Based on Hair, Money, Samouel, and Page (2007), the data range 0.8 to 0.9 alpha coefficient is considered as very good while above 0.7 alpha coefficient range is good data. Thus, from Table 1, it can be said that the instrument used are reliable.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Descriptive analysis

Based on the respondent's data, male dominated the 'gender' variable (57.1%) and most of the respondents were aged between 18 to 25 old (34.7%). With regard to state of origin, Selangor (15.3%) had the highest number of representatives in the study. As for the race, majority of the respondents were Malays (53%). Table 2 shows the demographic analysis.

Table 2: Demographic analysis

Descriptor		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	57.1 %
	Female	42	42.9 %
Race	Malay	53	54.1 %
	Chinese	24	24.5 %
	Indian	16	16.3 %
	Others	5	5.1 %
Age	18 – 25	34	34.7 %
	26 – 35	27	27.6 %
	36 – 45	22	22.4 %
	46 – 55	10	10.2 %
	>55	5	5.1 %
Origin	Selangor	15	15.3 %
	Perak	11	11.2 %
	Melaka	9	9.2 %
	Kuala Lumpur	9	9.2 %
	Johor	8	8.2 %

## 4.2 Multiple regression analysis

Each variable was tested by using Multiple Regression to find the relationship of motivational factor to consume to intention to consume local food. Multiple regression analysis is a statistic technique to calculate the variance in the dependent variable by regressing the independent variables against it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The researcher used this statistical instrument to explore the predictive ability of a set of independent variables on one continuous dependent measure and subsequently determine the most influential motivational factor among local tourists to consume Pulau Pinang food.

Before proceeding with the analysis, several assumptions have been taken into consideration. The assumptions were sample size, multicollinearity, outliers and normality of the data were investigated. These assumptions were checked from the scatterplots and normality probability plot which were generated as part of the multiple regression procedure. The independent variables then produced an  $R^2$  value of .501 for the prediction of behavioral intention. The regression model explained 50.1% of the variance in the behavior intention among local tourist. Another 49.9% is explained by other predictor variables. The highest beta coefficient is .619, which is for cultural experience ( $\beta = .619$ ,  $p < .001$ ) thus deemed to be the major influence on tourist behavioral intention to consume Pulau Pinang food. Table 3 shows the multiple Regression result

Table 3: Multiple Regression result

Predictor	B	Standard error	Beta ( $\beta$ )
Constant	3.462	1.582	
Exciting experience	.042	.078	.056*
Escape from routine	-.164	.101	-.196*
Health concern	.046	.084	.055*
Cultural experience	.285	.048	.619***

The result of the most influential motivational factor to consume Pulau Pinang food among local tourists is obtained by conducting multiple regressions. From the findings, the most influential motivational factor is the cultural experience ( $\beta = .619$ ,  $p < .01$ ). It could be said that, the primary motivational factor for tourist to consume Pulau Pinang food is the cultural experience that they encounter during the consumption of the foods. This result can be supported from the previous literature.

Getz (2000), stated that local food experience can provide the chance to learn local culture, how to eat and drink as local people do. Fields (2002) also suggests that local food and beverages can be included in the cultural experience because whenever people try new local foods, people are also experiencing new culture. He also claimed that food culture is the most important element in the total cultural product because different cities and regions have different food cultures. By the gastronomic

experiences, pleasant memories of location and cuisine festivals can blend with positive destination images to attract gastro-tourists to revisit or recommend such experiences to others (Chaney & Ryan, 2012). To summarize, this finding is consistent with past research (Crompton et al, 1997; Getz, 2000; Hjalager, 2003) in that tasting local food at a tourist destination can be seen as experiencing a different cultural tradition.

## 5 Conclusion

The result of this study indicates that local tourists are motivated to try and taste the Pulau Pinang food for the cultural experience. Understanding tourists' food and beverage wants and needs is inevitably vital to hospitality businesses. Since the cultural experience is the most influential motivational factor that influences the local food consumption among local tourist in Pulau Pinang, it is highly recommended for the relevant bodies to strengthen the efforts to develop and promote the food culture of Pulau Pinang hence, increasing the value of tourism of the state.

## 6 About the authors

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