Tourist behavioral loyalty: a comparison of first-time and repeat tourist in the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in Malaysia

ABSTRCT

The present study aims to investigate the structural relationships among food involvement, food knowledge, food experience, food image, destination image, overall satisfaction and behavioral loyalty across first-time and repeat tourist groups from the perspective of food

tourism. The study also examines if differences exist in these variables across the two groups of tourists. The „catch-as-catch-can" technique was used to sample international tourist in Melaka and George Town, Malaysia. A total of 1200 questionnaires were collected on-site and 75% of the total was randomly picked using SPSS, resulting in 868 responses analyzed. The two-step approach of structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to accomplish the study objectives. The t-test analysis demonstrated that repeat tourists expressed significantly higher food knowledge and behavioral loyalty than first-time tourists. The SEM results revealed that the structural model differed across first-time and repeat customers. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of behavioral loyalty process across first-time and repeat tourists in the World Heritage Site (WHS) of Malaysia from the food perspective.

Keyword : Past experience; Food behavior; Behavioral loyalty; Food image; Destination image.