



Food trails: Its relationship with halal food & creating experience among visitors

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Abstract

Food trail is one of the tools for tourists' destination developers and marketers to promote and attract tourists as well as visitors to that particular destination. Created to become an established food destination, food trails are an effective illustration of the depth of local food product. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge the relevance between a food trail towards the awareness of halal food and creating experience among tourists and visitors. As food tourism expands to become an important element in tourism sub-sector, its relationship with any supporting elements should be equally put in priority. And as a multibillion market business globally, halal food should be analyzed in terms of its relationship with food trails. Similarly, the understanding of experiences in food trails should be recognized in order to fulfill the specific needs of tourists and visitors towards food trails and its attraction.

Keywords: food trail, halal food, creating experience

1. Introduction

Food trail are the element of food tourism which has the potential of providing a tourism product that can be used for destination marketing purposes. A trail can be an effective illustration of the depth of a local food product in a region. It can help to provide that local area with credibility and exposure as a food destination. Variety of food is one of the tourism attractions at a destination. However, visitors rarely follow a food trail religiously. Rather it may be a motivator for them to visit an area or they will use it as a guide to do or be at places for them to eat or find interesting food while they are engaged in other tourism attractions or activities. To get a successful food trail, it must offer a unique food experiences that are enticing and attractive enough to motivate people to travel for experiencing a variety of good foods all over the world.

Research shows that both domestic and overseas visitors seek quality ingredients, local foods and look for a holistic food experience. Getting to know Malaysia by going on a food trail is a very interesting and rewarding experience. What better way to get to know the lifestyle and traditions of various communities than by going on a food trail.. For Muslim traveller, they will always have to find a halal food to consume. Halal food industry is a high potential industry to be developed in line with the Malaysia's aspiration to be the centre of regional halal products (Raudhiah, Siti & Farah, 2017). With the Muslim population around the world is now estimated at two billion people, the halal food market will produce a huge profit with an expected growth of 3.5% per annum.

Subsequently, owing to the increasing demand for halal food in the world's market, many Muslim consumers are feeling doubtful and unconfident with the halal status of the food sold in a particular destination.

2. Literature Review

Food Tourism

Food tourism or culinary tourism is the exploration of food as the purpose of tourism. It is now considered a vital component of the tourism experience. Food tourism is simply a matter of travelling beyond your immediate neighbourhood to find great food. Culinary or food tourism also is the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences, both near and far. Globally, food and tourism are increasingly being combined and the development of gastronomy as a tourism product has become a trend recently. The awareness of the importance of food as a heritage component in tourism has been steadily growing. As competition between tourism destinations in the Asia region increases, Malaysian local food and culture are a valuable source to attract tourists. Malaysian gastronomy has a significant identity, and an important role to play since food is closely related to tourist consumption and experience.



The tourists' quest for authentic tastes and experiences has been a fundamental thrust, and in practice tourism destinations strive to develop their own distinctive and unique identities (Zainal, Zali and Kassim, 2010). Food has been found to be an attribute whereby tourists perceive the attractiveness of a destination for a reason other than climate, accommodation and captivating scenery, thus, it is a fundamental element of the tourist product. Food related tourism can allow tourists to achieve the desired goals of relaxation, (Frochot, 2003). Food tourism has its own benefits such as more visitor arrivals. Nowadays, there are many people that go travel to find a unique and variety of special foods around the world. So that food tourism can attract more visitors to come to a certain destination because of the food attractions. Other than that, it can increase sales under tourism industry like airplane seats, rooms, restaurant meals, car rentals, and others. It is obvious clear that if the food tourism's sales increase, it will affect other tourism industry to get increase.

Food choices and motivations differ across travellers. Hall and Sharples (2004) argue that when defining food tourism there must be a differentiation among those tourist behaviours who consume food as a part of their travel experience and those who select destinations solely influenced by their interest of food. Wolf (2002) defines culinary tourism as travel for searching prepared food and beverages and memorable gastronomic experiences. However, any visit to a restaurant is not considered as food tourism, destination choice of tourists must be shaped by a special interest into culinary, gastronomy, gourmet or cuisine. Food tourism involving visitation to a primary and secondary food producer, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production region or tasting the dishes of a particular chef (Kim, Duncan & Jai, 2013) are considered under food tourism.

The Food Trail

According to Hall and Mitchell (2001), food once considered particular to a region and a season can now be purchased anywhere and at any time. They were looking for a destination that could provide examples of good practice, opportunities to improve the visitor food experience, a platform for the development and promotion of food tourism, an understanding of the challenges faced in the development of food tourism and a forum for networks to share knowledge. A food trail can offer visitors a unique food experience that is enticing and distinctive enough to motivate them to travel to your region. Visitors will often dip in and out of a food trail, using it a guide to a region.

Research shows that both domestic and overseas visitors seek quality ingredients, local food and look for holistic food experience. Food trail tourism has very little specifically written about it; however, there are a number of fields of study that contribute to their analysis, in particular, culinary tourism, touring route tourism and food trail management. Food Trails are normally made up of producers of food and drink, local restaurants and cafes, farmers markets and fresh produce providers and accommodation. The focus is on providing an authentically local experience. Areas that have a significant supply of food and wine experiences often produce a directory or map that shows the visitor where all of the experiences are.

This is important in informing the visitor about the range of experiences but can often be overwhelming for the visitor. Boniface (2003) states that "the tourist who is interested in cuisine as part of the tourism experience is likely to be a well-educated, older person (although not exclusively) gaining satisfaction from a deep and relaxed pace of tourism experience." The promotion of food in tourism is seen as one way of developing the distinctiveness and identity of a region while retaining and maximising the benefits of visitor spend to the region's economy and local communities (Hall and Sharples, 2003).

For trails appear to be more than the whole of their parts, something beyond basic food. A trail gives an uncommon street or course, the appeal of an excursion through time and domain. Trails can incorporate other cultural and historic attractions, tourist amenities and residential accommodation as well as scenic viewpoints and view. This extends possible outcomes for the visitor and can makes linkages between trail organizations and other neighbourhood business operators that further increment monetary potential (Boyne, Williams and Hall 2002). The food trails are an example of many strategies that engages different operators in promoting food tourism and is one of the most developed products in food tourism (Fandos Herrera, Blanco & Poyuelo, 2012). According to AntonioliCorigliano (2002), trails are said to usually link regional raw materials to other environmental and cultural tourism resources to ensure tourism use of the region. The trail is a complex tourism product that entails interaction between different tangible and intangible components, and one of the most crucial issues for creating a trail is the management of the social dynamics among the producers (Leal, 2015).

Although food trails are essential as a promotion strategy, it cannot be a simple list of restaurants where the traditional cooking from the area is practised, or of stores where products can be purchased. A trail has to be a route that traces the foot steps of both, the cooking and the products, and an adventure in which to enjoy them (Medina and Tresserras, 2018).



Halal Food

According to Robin (2004), lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the Halal concept among Muslims and the manufacturers of Halal products may cause the loss of appreciation to Halal. Consumers' understanding, awareness and familiarity with the food that they consume are determined by individual, social and environmental factors including marketing, information and food specific properties. Apart from the lack of awareness in obtaining Halal certification, most of Halal food small business entrepreneurs are lacking of knowledge about the registration requirements for intellectual property ownership. By implement the halal requirement, it would produce better quality of product compare those that only implement the conventional standard (Talib& Ali, 2009). Today halal food is no longer more religious obligation but it is considered as the standard choice of Muslim and also well as non-Muslims. The halal concept is familiar with all segments in the market.

The halal foods are well growing in popularity even among non-Muslims as the humane animal treatment concerns and also the perception that Halal food is more harmless and also healthier. In this day and age, business in Halal industries is the quickest developing business around the world. It is an emerging market force that attracts Muslims and non-Muslims with healthy, hygienic and contamination-free principles in food production (Bahrudin, Tan and Desa, 2011). Halal idea has gotten expanding consideration because of the way that the interest for halal food is developing each year because of the expansion in the Muslim populace around the world, which is around 1.8 billion. In 2010, the Halal foods advertise is up around 16% of world food trade and is evaluated to be worth more than \$ 500 billion multiyear (Talib and Ali, 2009).

Golnaz, Zainal Abidin and Nasir (2012) show that 79% of non- Muslim consumers are aware about the existence of halal concept and their knowledge of halal concept was improved by advertisement. While 21% of the respondents really knew deeply on the concept. There is an additional need for food quality assurance which is only halal food is fit to be consumed. The development of Muslim occupants in the United States of America, joined with a developing number of Muslim voyagers (Jafari and Scott 2014), has prompted an expanding request in the U.S. for halal nourishment. Halal food – food allowable under Islamic law – has religious relationship, as well as is seen by many Muslims to be more advantageous, more delicious, and cleaner (Regenstein, Chaudry, and Regenstein 2003).

Creating Experience

A tourism encounter is multi-faceted and difficult to characterize. A combine component such as the place, its framework, and the particular tourism items on offer, local people and the administration offered by workers, exercises, attractions and in addition intangible parts, for example, the eager bond that the guest were shaped with the tourism region. In any case, experience is driven by convincing thoughts, topics and stories. They are one of a kind to a zone, or made one of a kind to that place through separation. Consistently experience react particularly to characterized desires, energize a story, and make an enduring memory.

Food experience come in many pretences yet paying little notice to its particular nature, what makes any experience important is the manner by which well it meets and surpasses shopper desires; and that is accomplished by understand what they need in the primary occasion, reacting to that, and, all the while, making the offering individual and legal to the area somehow. Similarly, as the more extensive tourism experience incorporates many parts, food have the same nature. From the item, the environment or place, the individuals included, the nature of the fixings and maybe some exceptional bend in their read as well as introduction. By concentrating on encounters instead of individual items and administrations, all current food tourism administrators can better separate their contributions in the commercial centre, and regularly all the while, they can charge a premium consequently. An item is by and large moderately effectively duplicated, yet a most important affair is far harder to duplicate and this is the place genuine upper hand can be fastened (Helena A. Williams, 2014).

Co-creation is critical to build up a balanced food tourism framework in any goal. Once a system of providers is built up, swarm source whatever number thoughts as would be wise to make preview nearby goal experience. Search out various potential organizations coordinating dinners, visits, tastings, hotel, instruction and stimulation to create dynamic item openings. Decide how these experiences can help convey backing for the network and support a unique occasion. A Gastro-encounter is a legitimate, significant, food or drink related action that includes in the background perceptions went with social or regional understandings, and frequently hands-on investment, that comes full circle in bubbly, easy going, or formal sharing of food or drink. Food remains the star fascination, really supplanting area as the goal mark. The place or area is only the vehicle, or the background, for understanding genuine food in important ways.



3. Methodology

This study focuses on two main attributes in correlation with the food trail namely the halal food and creating experience. Questionnaires were distributed to visitors who were experiencing food and cuisines in popular food destinations around Muar town which has been acknowledged as food trails in Muar town by food bloggers and local council. The questionnaire focuses on the two main elements measured in this study. The first element is the awareness of the respondents towards the halal status of the food available in Muar town including the importance in seeking information on the halal status of the restaurant or stall. The next attribute is creating experience whereby respondents were asked to rate the value and impact on their experience while travel for food.

4. Results and discussions

A total of 239 respondents were obtained from the distribution of a total of 300 questionnaires. Based on the analysis of the results, it showed a different direction in both attributes measured in this study. While creating experience revealed a significant and positive relationship between it and establish food trail, the relationship between awareness of halal food and establish food trail exposed no significant amongst them.

		Trail product	Creating experience	Awareness of halal food
Food Trail	Pearson Correlation	1.00	0.528**	0.093
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0.00	0.15
	N	239	239	239

Figure 1: Correlation results between food trail and creating experience & awareness of halal food

As mentioned by Namkung and Jang, (2007), among the highest satisfaction of tourists is the understanding of the tourist patronage of different food service establishments and tourist dining satisfaction. By creating and having a food trail, it will create experiences not only in relation to the food itself but also towards the local culture and improve knowledge towards the destination. Food trails has and will become a consistent contributor towards a particular tourists' destination. It will become an added value product in enhancing visitors' experience. With proper planning and promotion, the food trail can become a main attraction and influenced towards revisits among tourists and visitors.

The development of food trails usually takes a high consideration towards the location of the food premises and the taste as well as the uniqueness of the food offered. As showed in the results of this study, the element of halal food is not a primary factor in the creation of a food trail in a particular destination. Although Muslim tourists and visitors prioritize the halal status of the food they consume, it does not relate to a particular food trail since Muslim tourists and visitors will go to any food premises that is Halal regardless if it is in the food trail or not. Availability and easy access to Halal food is considered to be one of the most important factors that influences Muslim tourist to choose a particular destination and its directly associates with satisfaction and it is compulsory for more religious devoted Muslim tourists (Kamaruddin and Ismail, 2012). Therefore, any food trails developers and marketers need to understand Muslim travel behaviour in order to satisfy their needs especially in Halal tourism industry.

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