

# TOURIST PERCEPTION OF FOOD IMAGE AND TOURIST SATISFACTION IN PERLIS

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## TOURIST PERCEPTION AND TOURIST SATISFACTION TOWARD FOOD IMAGE IN PERLIS

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### Abstract

Food has become one of the most essential components for travellers in tourist places, making food tourism an appealing sector for both tourists and hosts in recent decades. However, the correlation between food image and satisfaction remains unclear, and tourists' knowledge of the favourable image of local gastronomy is still limited. The purpose of this study is to identify Perlis' destination food image and to assess tourists' satisfaction with Perlis' local food image. Attractions in Perlis such as Kangar and Padang Besar, as well as a social media distribution network, were surveyed. In this study, we employed quantitative approaches as a research instrument. A total of 154 tourists in the area were sampled, using a systematic sampling strategy. Perlis has the potential to become a food tourism destination because it is considered a stopover for people who want to taste the local cuisine. According to the findings, all of the characteristics were found to have a substantial relationship with tourists. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the image has a direct impact on tourists' satisfaction with the Perlis communities. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse and interpret the data. The data supports the idea of returning to a unique food culture on multiple occasions. Future studies are suggested, as well as practical and theoretical contributions. Several recommendations are also made for future studies to consider in order to identify potential areas for improvement.

**Keyword:** Food Image, Food Tourism, Tourist Satisfaction

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is about places that are embedded in countries' and communities' cultures, economies, and social lives (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Everett et al., (2010) also suggest that tourism should encompass more than just sight-seeing and that culinary tourism should be included in a vital tourism field of study. Food has been considered as one of the most crucial attributes of a destination in the tourism industry. It is one of the factors that can influence a traveller's experience; therefore, it is important for destination management organisations to constantly strive to improve and enhance dining experiences in tourist attractions (Gani et al., 2017). Food tourism expresses the concept of understanding the culture through food (Wolf, 2002). Food is an attraction, a component of a product, an experience, and a cultural phenomenon (Irma Tikkanen, 2007). Reynolds (1993) found that a group's food and drink can help them understand a destination's or country's social and economic lifestyle. Food tourism is an emerging component of the tourism industry, and tourism attractions are competing to promote it. (Mohd Nazri et al., 2018)

Local cuisine is a destination's uniqueness, analogous to a place's symbol (Niedbaa et al., 2020). A tourist's positive perception of a destination's local cuisine can affect travel preferences. Destinations may advertise their local cuisine as a valuable tourist resource for another experience that boosts tourists' satisfaction. (Ali et al., 2020); Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2018). Tourists' culinary experiences are a potent marker for destination brand image, and it has become a strategic emphasis for restaurant industry experts and destination management organization (DMOs) (Henderson, 2009). Tourists' authentic gastronomic experiences can help to rejuvenate cultural heritage (Giovine et al., 2017) while also improving the destination's food image (Choe & Kim, 2018). When measuring food image, the most important things to consider are the food itself and the location where it is offered, both of which can reflect the originality of the cuisine and the meal serving style with regard to value for money. 2012 (Lertputtarak)

Food images in tourist destinations are important because they impact potential tourists' decision-making. Tourist perception influences both a positive food image and tourist satisfaction. (Haarhoff, 2018). According to Gartner (1986), the entire image of any travel place is generated by the interaction of tourist perceptions of the place's features, which include all of the attractions and activities in the area. The importance of tourists' perceptions of a destination's image as a favoured tourism destination is essential (Ragavan et al., 2014).

A multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the association between Malaysian food images and tourist satisfaction with the consumption experience in Malaysia. The quality and variety of the local cuisine were determined to be the most important food image on the customer's overall satisfaction by Ab Karim et al., (2011). Three components of local cuisine image, including "food quality and pricing," "affective image of food," and "food uniqueness and cultural heritage," justified tourists' general wellbeing with the eating experience. (Pestek & Cinjarevic, 2014). The image of local cuisine was found to be the most important factor in tourist satisfaction in the dimension of high-quality and value-for-money local cuisine (Pestek & Cinjarevic, 2014).

Malaysia is known for its different ethnic groups, ethnicities, cultural customs, and beliefs, which result in a vast range of tastes vary from mild to spicy to sweet and sour. (Muhammad Shahrin Ab Karim et al., 2011). Gastronomy is the most valuable tourism products of attracting tourists from all over the world to visit Malaysia. The majority of tourists believe Malaysia has a distinct food culture and identity that provides a wide range of delicious, freshly cooked foods and beverages (Mohd Iziri et al., 2009). Food tourism in Malaysia is a product that can attract foreign visitors, and it has contributed to the richness and diversity of Malaysian cuisine from Perlis to Johor, as well as Sabah and Sarawak (Leong et al., 2012). In a study by Quee Ling et al. (2010), the strength of Malaysians' perceived food image was found to be centred on reasonable prices, rich in flavours, high availability of food, good service, and a variety of local specialties. Marketers in the hospitality and tourist industries can use the Malaysian food image

attributes identified to develop informed and systematic marketing and positioning strategies for Malaysian food tourism (Leong et al., 2012).

Perlis is the smallest state in Malaysia. Perlis has tremendous potential in tourism, especially in agri-food tourism according to *Perlis Strategic Development Plan 2012-2030* (2013). The strategic location of Kuala Perlis has made it a focal point for the regional fish product centre. Kuala Perlis currently functions as an important local commercial and service centre for urban tourism centre catering for seafood enthusiasts. One of the most significant current discussions in agri-food tourism is Perlis signature fruit, the Harumanis mango. Mangoes are mostly grown for export and sold in East Asian countries, particularly Japan. Aside from that, the mangoes are a favourite tourism product among local tourists (Hong Ching et al., 2014).

Several studies have shown a correlation between the destination image and tourist satisfaction. For instance, Chi & Qu, (2008) focused at the seven aspects of a destination's image that have a favourable impact on attribute satisfaction: accommodation, dining, attractions, activities and events, shopping, environment, and accessibility. However, the relationship between food image and satisfaction is still questionable. The possible impact of checking food image on tourist satisfaction is still limited (Quee Ling et al., 2010). International tourists' understanding of the positive image of local cuisine is still very limited. Compared with other countries in the region, the image of Perlis local cuisine as a culinary destination is still very weak. It is crucial to promote local cuisine image based on its originality and diversity, which represents the unique native culture, and it is vital to build and sustain image identity by formulating appropriate methods (Tu et al., 2017). This study aimed to identify the destination food image of Perlis and to examine tourist's satisfaction towards local food image at Perlis

## 2. METHODOLOGY

To measure visitors' food experiences during their vacation in Perlis, this study used a descriptive research design. Self-administered questionnaires with two variables, Perlis' food image dimensions and tourist satisfaction with food in Perlis, were distributed randomly to tourists in popular tourist areas around Kangar and Padang Besar. The questionnaires were adopted from Karim et al., (2009) and Gani et al., (2017) which the first section asked about socio-demographic of visitors and their travel pattern. The second section was developed to assess food images using 19 attributes derived from previous research on destination images, which were then altered to meet the study's needs. The respondents were asked to use 5-point Likert scale. Besides of distributing questionnaires in A4 size paper to respondents, this study also used electronic questionnaire designed by using Google form which were more convenient. The third section with 10 questions on the level of satisfaction of food tourism in Perlis. The survey questionnaire was written in two languages: English and Malay.

The data collection was conducted in during Malaysia's Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO). After eliminating incomplete responses, 154 (94.48 percent) valid questionnaires were used in subsequent analysis to determine Perlis' destination food image and to assess tourist satisfaction with Perlis' local cuisine image. Descriptive analysis was conducted to

identify the rudimentary elements of Perlis's food image attributes and the level of tourist satisfaction of food tourism in Perlis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were analysed by using SPSS version 22. Respondents' demographic data were analysed by descriptive statistics using SPSS. Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic characteristics and their travel pattern in terms of frequency and percentage.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile and their travel pattern (n= 154)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	97	63
Male	57	37
<b>Age</b>		
Under 21	66	42.9
21 – 35	49	31.8
36 – 50	30	19.5
51 – 65	8	5.2
Over 65	1	0.6
<b>Occupation</b>		
Professional	11	7.1
Managerial	5	3.2
Production/clerical	7	4.5
Technic/sales	4	2.6
Self-employed	13	8.4
Housewives	14	9.1
Students	81	52.6
Other	19	12.3
<b>Region of Residence</b>		
Kedah	57	37
Pulau Pinang	28	18.2
Perak	22	14.3
Selangor	12	7.8
Kuala Lumpur	8	5.2
Kelantan	5	3.2
Terengganu	4	2.6
Pahang	2	1.3
Negeri Sembilan	2	1.3
Melaka	4	2.6
Johor	9	5.8
Sabah	0	0
Sarawak	1	0.6
<b>Length of stay in Perlis</b>		
Less than 1 day	53	34.4
1-2 days	39	25.3
3-5 days	17	11
1 week	5	3.2
About 2 weeks	3	1.9



About 3 weeks	1	0.6
About 1 month	4	2.6
31 More than 1 month	32	20.8
<b>Main Purpose for Visiting Perlis</b>		
Holiday/pleasure	77	50
Business/meeting	3	1.9
Convention/exhibition	0	0
Visiting friend/relatives	26	16.9
Wedding/honeymoon	4	2.6
Others	44	28.6
<b>First Time Tasting Perlis Food</b>		
Yes	85	55.2
No	69	44.8
<b>Enjoyed Perlis Food</b>		
Yes	149	96.8
No	5	3.2

A five-factor solution with 19 attributes was adopted from previous studies and adopted to measure the image of tourist perceptions about the context of Malaysian food in Perlis, as shown in Tables 3. Named all factors have been according to the items grouped below. FACTOR 1 had six things related to satisfaction with the 'eating atmosphere'. FACTOR 2 consists of five elements about the 'food characteristics of Perlis'. FACTOR 3 consists of four items related to 'core food value'. Next, FACTOR 4 consists of two entities associated with 'Perlis food especially'. Finally, FACTOR 5 has two items related to the uniqueness of Perlis food.

Table 3: Means score of perceived food image in Perlis

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>FACTOR 1: Food and Dining Atmosphere</b>		
Perlis food is well-presented	4.01	0.796
Perlis food is nutritious	3.86	0.841
Quality of food service	3.92	0.792
Attractive eating surrounding	4.21	0.824
Clean and safe to consume	4.10	0.802
Quality ingredients	3.97	0.824
<b>FACTOR 2: Features of Perlis Food</b>		
Variety of food choices	4.18	0.818
Variety of cooking methods	4.00	0.824
Variety of ethnic foods	3.86	0.817
Much information on local foods	3.83	0.877
Easy to access the eating outlets	4.12	0.885
<b>FACTOR 3: Core Food Value</b>		
Adds to my visiting enjoyment	4.10	0.748
Value for money	4.03	0.745
Reasonable price	4.11	0.728
Perlis food is delicious	4.12	0.778

<b>1</b>		
<b>FACTOR 4: Perlis Food Specialty</b>		
A lot of traditional foods	3.81	0.846
A lot of food specialties	3.89	0.919
<b>FACTOR 5: Perlis Food Uniqueness</b>		
Perlis food is hot and spicy	3.64	0.905
Perlis food is original and exotic	3.74	0.862

In this Factor 1, there were six items to analyse food and dining atmosphere content. Based on Table 4, the highest mean was 'Attractive eating surrounding' (M=4.21), followed by the second highest, 'Clean and safe to consume' (M=4.10). Then, 'Perlis food is well-presented' (M=4.01). Meanwhile, the lowest mean was 'Perlis food is nutritious' (M=3.86). It is the lowest because from tourist perception there is Perlis food are mostly oily, sweeties, saltiest and there is no health to consume. From the bar graph Figure 1, most of the respondents agree with the factor of food and dining atmosphere items.

Factor 2 have five items in analysing 27 features of Perlis food. Based on Table 5, the highest mean was 'Variety of food choices, (M=4.18) followed by 'Easy to access the eating outlets' (M=4.12). Then for the other mean was 'Variety of cooking methods' (M=4.00) and 'Variety of ethnic foods' (M=3.86). Meanwhile, the lowest mean was 'Much information on local foods' (M=3.83). It is the lowest because there is a limitation of food information resources on social media, the internet, or local people, so it is common and complex for tourists to be informed. Based on Figure 2, the bar graph shows that almost 50% of respondents agree with the factor of features of Perlis food.

In this factor 3, there were four items in the exam 28 in the context of core food value. Based on Table 6, the highest mean was 'Perlis food is delicious' (M=4.12), followed by 'Reasonable price' (M=4.11). Then the mean value in core food value 'Adds to my visiting enjoyment' (M=4.10). Meanwhile, the lowest mean was 'Value for money' (M=4.03). Some people may think the value money of the Perlis food is not affordable and reasonable towards the food served or the presentation of food. However, from Figure 3, the graph shows that half of the respondents agree with the factor analysis of core food value.

The next factor is content only two items to analyse the Perlis food specialty. Based on Table 7, the highest mean was 'A lot of food specialties' (M=3.89), followed by 'A lot of traditional foods' (M=3.81).

These factors are the study contained in two items in analysing Perlis food's uniqueness. Based on Table 8, the highest mean was 'Perlis food is original and exotic' (M=3.74), followed by 'Perlis food is hot and spicy' (M=3.64).

Respondents were tested on the level of satisfaction of food tourism in Perlis. The table below presents the statements used to measure their satisfaction level.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of Tourists' Satisfaction

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
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4	Perlis's local food contributes to the quality of my visiting experience	4.00	0.767
	Perlis's local food contributes to my eating pleasure	4.06	0.764
	Eating Perlis's local food adds to my visiting enjoyment	4.04	0.774
	The food experience in Perlis meets my expectation	4.03	0.767
	I experienced the culture of Perlis through local food at Perlis	3.88	0.843
	I will recommend Perlis's local food to my friend and my family	4.12	0.795
	I have a good impression on Perlis's local food	4.08	0.700
10	I strongly remember my food experience in Perlis	4.03	0.762
	As a whole, Perlis is a good food tourism destination	4.04	0.791
	I will revisit Perlis for Perlis food	4.16	0.788

The satisfaction dimension had ten attributes adapted from previous studies to examine tourist satisfaction about the context of food in Perlis (citation). Overall, respondents' satisfaction was positive can skewed (Table 8). The attribute with the highest mean score was 'I will visit Perlis again for Perlis food' (4.16). These items were followed by 'I would recommend local Perlis food to my friends and family' (4.12). The next attributes 'I have a positive impact on local Perlis food' (4.08), and 'Local Perlis food contributes to my eating pleasure' (4.06). While 'Eating local Perlis food added to my enjoyment of visiting' and 'Overall, Perlis is a good food tourism destination' (4.04), 'The food experience in Perlis met my expectations' and 'I remember my food experience in Perlis' (4.03). The results show that Perlis food plays an important role in providing an unforgettable and positive image of Perlis as a tourist destination as tourists agree that Perlis food adds value to their holiday experience. However, the attribute 'I experience Perlis culture through local food in Perlis' was rated slightly lower (3.88) than the other mentioned attributes. This analysis could indicate that visitors do not believe cuisine in Perlis can influence the cultural influences found in a place and a lack of ability to teach them about Perlis lifestyle and food culture. To make tourists know about the culture of Perlis, marketing materials such as websites, brochures, and even promotional stalls, as well as efforts from entrepreneurs or restaurant owners to create an atmosphere of an area or destination that emphasizes culture in Perlis. Local people can show the tourists about the culture or the lifestyle like displaying traditional cooking utensils, local handicraft exhibitions that have become a cultural identity in Perlis. Food providers should prepare tourists to experience outside of their usual way by tasting the food. Sharing the culture should be designed for tourists to experience outside of their routine by tasting. As a result, Perlis food may break into the international tourism industry.



#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The contentment of tourists who considered food image and tourist satisfaction was explored in this study. The survey data was used to investigate the correlations between all the variables in this study. Food image appeared to have a direct effect on tourist satisfaction, such as intention to return and positive word of mouth, according to relationship analysis. Because visitors rely on pictures, all good marketing methods should strive to boost the image of food in tourists' minds. Some variables are used to develop the image of food and should be fully utilised, such as media marketing, travel companies, and marketing materials. Furthermore, one's image is shaped by word of mouth based on one's own experiences. At the same time, authorities must recognise that the flaw could stymie efforts to improve the image, particularly in food.

Tourist satisfaction is determined by comparing travellers' experiences and expectations about the destination they visited (Pizam, Neumann, and Reichel, 1978). Eating visuals had a substantial impact on travellers' overall satisfaction with their food experiences. The link between food attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction was also strong. The influence of overall satisfaction on travellers is significant. In the literature, it is well known that the desire to return has a strong association with overall satisfaction with the eating experience during the visit (Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Ryu and Jang, 2006). Furthermore, the significant associations show that food image and satisfaction will be the most important component in increasing tourist contentment. This shows that food can be used as a tourist attraction. As a result, it is critical for Perlis to employ an effective marketing plan to promote its food in order to boost good images and tourist satisfaction.

Finally, positive intentions among local and domestic tourists to promote food and return to the country in the future are triggered by attention and teamwork among all those engaged in developing a positive food image and enhancing satisfaction levels.

The proposal is made in order to entice tourists to visit Perlis in order to sample the local cuisine, which is in keeping with the stated goals. Can turn a city into a tourist magnet and a lucrative destination. Creating a website that permits the disclosure of information about food in a location is also a way to learn more about the relationship between visitor perceptions and food pleasure. Given that tourists rely on intriguing visuals and descriptions of a place, a successful marketing strategy should attempt to improve the image of cuisine in tourists' perceptions.

Several components that can be used to establish a food image should be completely utilised, including digital ads, travel suppliers, and marketing initiatives. Those in the tourism business should not disregard this encouraging indicator, but instead take proactive initiatives to promote these gastronomic goods to tourists, as they can act as "pulling factors" for visitors to come to Perlis. The following suggestions can help destination managers construct their plans. As a result, the following are the study's recommendations:

##### a. Image of food tourism in Perlis

To promote more local food especially traditional food. The government should publish more information about the ingredients and benefits of eating Perlis food via official government websites, food supplier websites, and any social media tools, as well as printed materials. The exhibit at the Kuala Perlis restaurant, tries to highlight the restaurant's food's diversity, quality, and freshness. It's just good manners to direct local clients to options that are quick, clean, and prepared to order. However, preparation should not be done in front of the customer right away.

To create more cultural environments to promote real experiences surrounding. Restaurant owners should be aware of the differences in their clients' dietary cultures. Food is viewed as a crucial channel for expressing cultural customs and traditions across different locations, in addition to satisfying hunger (Wright et al., 2001). Local restaurants should also enhance their physical surroundings with gorgeous and distinctive cultural aspects, such as cultural relics and background music, to make them feel more immersed in the place. Depending on the level of participation of each tourist, service staff should actively communicate with customers to tell them about local specialties and food culture, which may symbolise novelty and authenticity features, as well as foster interaction with locals within the service context. Local food service businesses who offer affordable local cuisines may have a competitive advantage over others who charge astronomically high prices.

b. Tourist satisfaction of food tourism in Perlis

Restaurant owners can promote their establishment as a location to learn about Perlis culture, serve clients with pleasant manners, treat them as if they were at home, and provide a warm welcome that will increase tourist satisfaction. Taste, interacting with friends and family, originality, authenticity, ambience, inexpensive price, and local interactions are all important factors in travellers' positive and memorable local food experiences, according to the research. Food managers should concentrate on the critical variables of food image and food quality satisfaction, which can increase tourist pleasure and encourage good behaviour. Furthermore, the strong links suggest that food image and satisfaction with food attributes are major variables enhancing tourists' behavioural intentions. According to the first proposal, food images projected by destination marketers, travel providers in and through marketing, and media and information sources should all contribute to tourist enjoyment. As a result, local food service providers should offer a suitable choice of local cuisine to best satisfy tourists' special tastes.

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