Understanding How Gastronomy Behaviours Influence the Repatronage Intention of Malaysian Muslim Tourists' toward Japanese Street Food Vendors

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Abstract - The paper investigates the influences of gastronomy behaviours on the repatronage intention (RI) of Malaysian Muslim tourists toward Japanese street food vendors. The present literature review showcased multiple studies on street food vendors at various destinations. Despite this fact, there is a lack of information concerning Malaysian Muslim travellers and Japanese street food vendors. Notably, Malaysian Muslims love to travel to Japan due to its visa-free travel, the availability of various Muslim-friendly facilities, and its delicious street food. Street food is described as ready-to-eat food or drinks sold by hawkers or vendors in streets or any other public spaces (such as markets, fairs, or carnivals) for immediate consumption, including finger food and fast food. In general, people buy street foods because of factors such as convenience, reasonably-priced flavourful food, samples of ethnic cuisines, and nostalgia. Most importantly, street food reflects the local culture and appeals to many palates. Nowadays, savouring authentic local dishes of certain places has become a tourism trend. Moreover, statistics showed that millions of tourists have decided to revisit familiar locations to enjoy their local gastronomic culture. In fact, gastronomy is among the main factors that affect tourists' destination choices. Based on current literature, this study theorised that gastronomy

attractiveness (GA) and past gastronomy experience (GE) indirectly affects the repatronage intention (RI) through gastronomy satisfaction (GS). Furthermore, gastronomy knowledge (GK) and gastronomy motivation (GM) are direct predictors of RI. In this study, the analysed data showed significant relationships between GA, GE, and RI through GS and between GM and RI. However, GK and RI had an insignificant relationship.

Keywords: Gastronomy; Japanese Street Food; Malaysian Muslim; Repatronage Intention

1. Introduction

For over 1400 years, Japan is warmly known as the land of the rising sun or "Nihon" in the Japanese language. People have been portraying Japan as a mysterious place full of exceptional charm and attraction. It is the country of samurai and anime, home to the most significant technologies and the brightest culture and rituals ("Japan," 2018). Japan is also a major hub for commerce, technology, cuisine, popular culture, and shopping, recently witnessing a boom in its tourism industry (McKinsey Japan and Travel, 2016). Malaysians truly enjoy Japanese food, noticeable with the influx of Japanese restaurants particularly in their major cities. However, The Japan National Tourism Organisation claimed that Malaysians are able to genuinely enjoy the unique culinary culture and traditional cuisine only in Japan, which is part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) Intangible Cultural Heritage list (Japan National Tourism Organisation, 2017). Most significantly, Malaysian Muslims love to travel to Japan due to its visa-free travel, the availability of various Muslim-friendly facilities, and its delicious street food. Primarily, street food is defined as ready-to-eat food or drink sold by hawkers or vendors in streets or other public spaces (such as markets, fairs, or carnivals) for immediate consumption ("Street Food," 2018). Street food such as Yaki-Imo, Saba Noodles, Okonomiyaki, Mochi, Takoyaki, Crepes, and various others are abundant and readily available all over Japan.

Examples of street foods include finger food and fast food. In addition, the common reasons people buy street foods are due to factors such as convenience, reasonably price flavourful food, sample ethnic cuisines, and nostalgia ("Street Food," 2018). Admittedly, street food reflects the local culture and appeals to many palates (Nurfatin, 2018). Nowadays, savouring authentic local dishes of certain places has become a tourism trend (Quee-Ling, Karim, Awang, & Bakar, 2017). Statistics showed that millions of tourists decided to revisit familiar locations to enjoy their local gastronomic culture (UNWTO, 2012, as cited in Quee-Ling et al., 2017). This phenomenon confirmed the study by Kivela and Crotts (2006), where they posited that gastronomy greatly influenced tourists' experience at a destination, where a majority of them would return to savour its unique gastronomic experience again. Besides, gastronomy is among the main factors that affect tourists' destination choices (Sormaz et al., 2016). The current literature review presents various studies on street food vendors at various locations (e.g., Ayodele & Panama, 2016; Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017; Hakeem & Lee, 2018; Suphaphon & Agmapisarn, 2019). Nevertheless, there is scant information concerning Malaysian Muslim tourists and Japanese street food vendors. Hence, this paper aims to fill the gap and investigate the influences of gastronomy behaviours on the repatronage intention of Malaysian Muslim tourists toward Japanese street food vendors.

2. Literature Review

Gastronomy

"Gastronomy is reasoned knowledge about what we eat and how we eat" (World Tourism Organisation, 2019, p.8). This field of study concentrates on the "physicochemical, cultural, and socio-economic processes in which human beings cultivate, process, distribute, and consume good foods and beverages which affect their physical, mental, and social wellbeing" (World Tourism Organisation, 2019, p.8). It can be observed that gastronomy has turned into one of the most significant attractions of travel destinations (Galvez, Lopez-Guzman, Buiza, & Medina-Viruel, 2017). Gastronomy further elevates the quality of a tourists' experience (Perez-Priego, García-Moreno García, Gomez-Casero, Caridad y López del Río, 2019). Moreover, gastronomy is an excellent promoter of a tourist's destination (Perez-Priego et al., 2019).

Repatronage Intention

Past studies have emphasised the invaluable contribution of repeat visitors to a destination's economy by increasing revenues and marketing dollar savings (Jang & Feng, 2007). An intention to repatronage (or revisit) a destination is described as the willingness to return to the same place in the future. Chen, Peng, and Hung (2015) added that individuals who aim to revisit a destination would also recommend it to others, typically by spreading positive word of mouth (Gyte & Phelps, 1989, as cited in Perovic et al., 2018). Thus, the RI in this study describes the willingness of Malaysian Muslim tourists to revisit the same Japanese local street food vendors in the future due to multiple benefits (e.g., satisfaction, consumption emotion) that they have experienced.

Gastronomy Attractiveness (GA)

In the face of intense global competition, the attractiveness of a destination is the key to success of a tourism destination. Additionally, the richness of the destination's heritage and its cultural diversity are main features that elevate its attractiveness (El Hafid et al., 2018). Guan and Jones (2014) stated that local cuisine is a significant factor influencing a tourist's perception of destination attractiveness. Based on Hillel, Belhassan, and Shani (2014), a location should highlight the locals' authentic lifestyle around food to make the destination more gastronomically attractive. Also, the gastronomic attraction of the location depends on the uniqueness of its food, its diversity, prepared from traditional recipes, and served in a conventional way (Kowalczyk, 2014). Empirical evidence suggested a significant connection between GA and satisfaction (Quee-Ling et al., 2017). Thus, this study proposed the following:

H1: GA has a positive effect on GS.

Past Gastronomy Experience (GE)

Individuals believe they should indulge in pleasurable and memorable culinary experiences while travelling, which is also a significant part of a holiday experience (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). According to Quee-Ling et al. (2017, p.578), tourists can be "deeply involved and highly engaged" with the local society and gain insights into their culture through a distinctive gastronomic experience at a certain destination. On top of that, tourists could experience diverse sensory and intellectual cultures by consuming local food at a location (Rahayu, 2019). Earlier studies stated that tourists "cognitively"

use remembered experiences" to plan their future travels (Bjork & Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014, p.295). Thus, an integral part of the whole travel experience is indulging in the local gastronomy since it is one of the known elements that ensure tourist satisfaction (Sanchez-Canizares & Lopez-Guzman, 2012). Hence, this study proposed:

H2: Past GE has a positive effect on GS.

Gastronomy Satisfaction

In general, tourist satisfaction deals with the extent to which the destination satisfies tourists' performance criteria (Correia, Moital, Ferreira, & Peres, 2008). Basically, the way tourists behave at locations is a direct reflection of their satisfaction level. Akdag, Guler, Dalgic, Benli, and Cakici (2018) highlighted the opinions of past researchers, stating that tourists' GS is influenced by factors more complex than those affecting home dining. In this sense, Hendijani (2016) revealed that tourists' GS at destinations is valuable information to attract international tourists to visit the locations. Numerous studies debated that GS is confined to food consumption and includes symbolic, social, and entertainment aspects (Correia et al., 2008). Therefore, this study forwarded the following hypothesis:

H3: GS has a positive effect on RI.

Gastronomy Knowledge

Undoubtedly, food is one of the mainstays in the tourism sector, particularly for destinations well-known for their delicious local cuisines, such as Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Italy, France, and many others. Gastronomy also includes knowledge and information transfer regarding the visited destination, particularly about the people, culture, traditions, and its identity (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). Field (2002) agreed that a person's knowledge of a location's local gastronomy is from their previous dining experience with the local food place. Past studies established that food-related knowledge directly impacts individuals' food consumption and behavioural intention (Sang-Mook, Naehyun, & Hak-Seon, 2018). Several studies have also mentioned that behavioural intention is a function of knowledge (Deshpande, Basil, & Basil (2009); Meehyang, Jung-Hoon, & Daecheol, 2018). Thus, this study posited:

H4: GK has a positive effect on RI.

Gastronomy Motivation (GM)

Tourists' motivation to travel to destinations and leisure choices depends on the numerous information sources that individuals seek to satisfy their needs (Khanna, 2016). The internal (push) and external (pull) motivation factors coexist in any travel decision. The former is on the desire to travel to the location, whereas the latter revolves around the destination attributes leading to travel decisions (Khanna, 2016). Additionally, needs, motives, and drives function as push factors (Tikkanen, 2007). The pleasurable consumption experience of local food is a pull factor since it creates those "feel good" factor (Crompton, 1979, as cited in Khanna, 2016). Brokaj (2014) and Allan (2016) proposed that authentic experience and cultural experience are the primary motivational factors that attract tourists to consume local food. Allan (2016), Tsai and

Sakulsinlapakorn (2016) discovered that motivation significantly predicts tourists' behavioural intention. Hence, the following is hypothesised:

H5: GM has a positive effect on RI.

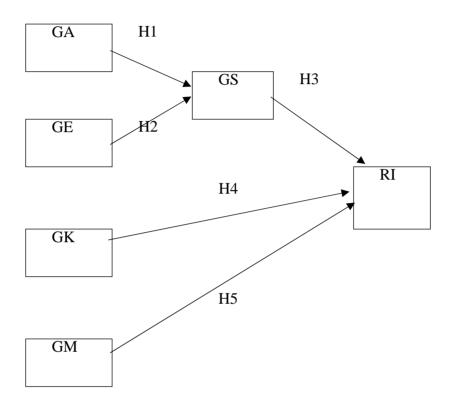


Figure 1: The Study's Theoretical Framework

3. Methodology of Study

The targeted respondents are Malaysian Muslim individuals who have travelled to Japan. The survey website's hyperlink was circulated through social media platforms, namely Facebook and WhatsApp Messenger. These platforms provide access to a broader coverage, cheaper and faster method. Furthermore, the items GA, GE, GK, GM, GS, and RI were the lists of questions as revised by Quee-Ling et al. (2017). In this study, thirty (30) Malaysian Muslim respondents were selected for the pilot test. Generally, the rule-of-thumb for good reliability should be at least 0.70, in which higher reliability denotes the existence of internal consistency (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2010). The pilot test result showed that the reliability of all variables' items was between the range of 0.616 to 0.938. Nonetheless, past studies indicated that the value of 0.6 and higher is acceptable (Stanley, Ridley, Olds, & Dollman, 2014).

This study also applied a six-point Likert scale to measure all variables. Every item was categorised into the following answers: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (moderately disagree), 3 (disagree), 4 (agree), 5 (moderately agree), and 6 (strongly agree). The purpose of this scale is to collect responses from the respondents without worrying about neutral answers. This study also employed the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 23) and

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via analysis of a moment structures (AMOS) version 24. Hoelter (1983) forwarded that 200 respondents are the critical sample size for adopting SEM for data analysis. In this study, 305 usable responses were received, which is considered appropriate for the study to perform the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS.

4. Result

The results specified that 41% and 59% of the sample demographics were males and females, respectively. Most of the respondents were between 31 to 30 years old (58.7%), 82% are single, and 81% have tertiary level education. Many of them (92.5%) have travelled to Japan for holidays either with family or spouse (47.9%) or with friends (45.2%).

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Constructs

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	Std.
					Deviation
					(SD)
Gastronomy Attractiveness (GA)	305	3.20	6.00	4.8144	0.67419
Past Gastronomy Experience (GE)	305	3.40	6.00	4.9062	0.63864
Gastronomy Knowledge (GK)	305	1.20	6.00	4.3318	0.89564
Gastronomy Motivation (GM)	305	3.40	6.00	4.8223	0.61390
Gastronomy Satisfaction (GS)	305	3.40	6.00	4.6807	0.63778
Repatronage Intention (RI)	305	3.00	6.00	5.0892	0.69693

In Table 1, the mean values for all predictive variables are between 4.3318 to 4.9062. The main influence on Malaysian Muslim tourists' desire to consume Japanese street food again is past GE (M = 4.9062, SD = 0.63864). Other contributing factors are GM (M = 4.8223, SD = 0.61390), and GA (M = 4.8144, SD = 0.67419). The finding also demonstrated that Malaysian Muslim tourists have high intentions to revisit Japanese street food vendors (M = 5.0892, SD = 0.69693). The reliability for the actual survey in Table 2 demonstrated that all variables' items were between the range of 0.748 and 0.879, denoting internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

No.	Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Gastronomy Attractiveness	5	0.728
2	Past Gastronomy Experience	5	0.868
3	Gastronomy Knowledge	5	0.864
4	Gastronomy Motivation	5	0.749
5	Culinary Satisfaction	5	0.748
6	Repatronage Intention	5	0.879

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Output

Indices	Desirable Range	Result
GFI	\geq 0.90 (good fit); 0.80 < x < 0.90(acceptable fit)	0.859
RMSEA	$0.05 \le x \le 0.08$ (acceptable fit); Value up to 0.1 and not less than 0.05 is accepted	0.083
CFI	\geq 0.90 (good fit); 0.80 < x < 0.90(acceptable fit)	0.890
TLI	$x \ge 0.90$ (good fit); $0.80 < x < 0.90$ (acceptable fit)	0.871
CMIN/df	$1 \le x \le 5$	3.112

Source: Hair et al., 2010

The CFA outcomes (Table 3) signifies that the proposed structural model appropriately fits the observed data. Hence, the CFA results permitted the study to draw conclusions. Table 4 specifies that H1 (β = 0.481, p < 0.05), H2 (β = 0.528, p < 0.05), H3 (β = 0.242, p < 0.01), and H5 (β = 0.742, p < 0.01) were supported. These results indicated that there is existence of significant positive relationships among the variables. On the other hand, H4 (β = -0.043, p > 0.05) was not supported as it showed an insignificant relationship between the constructs.

Table 4: Regression Weight

	Estimate	S.E	C.R	P	Result
GA < GS	0.431	0.165	2.611	0.009	H1: supported
GE < GS	0.528	0.156	3.374	***	H2: supported
GS < RI	0.242	0.111	2.184	0.029	H3: supported
GK < RI	-0.043	0.048	-0.910	0.363	H4: not supported
GM < RI	0.742	0.151	4.903	***	H5: supported

^{***} p < 0.01

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Findings from the regression weight proved that GA, GE, GM, and GS explain the RI. Nevertheless, GK did not predict Malaysian Muslims' RI, as per Afina and Retnaningsih (2018). Primarily, RI is the function of GA and GE through GS and GM. Meanwhile, GM is the most significant predictor of RI. This result is identical to that of Prapasawasdi et al. (2018), where it was found that GM is the most crucial factor that influences tourists' behavioural intentions. In terms of contribution, the results offer insight into the behavioural intention of Malaysian Muslim tourists toward Japanese street food vendors.

It can be observed that Malaysians have a food obsession, and these days food from Japan, Korea, and the Middle East has entered the local food scene to boost the offering of multicultural cuisines in the country (Soon & Lazaroo, 2017). Japanese food such as ramen, sushi, udon, sashimi, and many others are trending in Malaysia. It is a dream come true for every Malaysian who is passionate about all things Japanese when Family Mart opened its door in the country, where they flocked to this convenience store to grab their favourite Japanese food and snacks (Gowri, 2017). Therefore, could be concluded that this passion for Japanese food includes its street food. The descriptive statistics analysis in this study displayed the willingness of Malaysian Muslim tourists to revisit Japanese street food vendors (M = 5.0892, SD = 0.69693), further validating this assumption. Sahin (2015) elaborated that gastronomy adds value to any tourism-related activities. It should be noted that Japanese street food is not Halal-certified and merely regarded as Muslim-friendly (Nurfatin, 2018).

Basically, the Muslim-friendly or Halal-friendly concept has no legal reference in Islamic law since the product is either Halal, Halal-compliant, or non-Halal ("Halal Friendly," 2015). Islam demands its followers who travel to non-Muslim countries to abide by Islamic teachings, such as consuming Halal (permissible) food and drinks, whenever and wherever possible (Adidaya, 2016). In this sense, relevant Japanese tourism agencies and Islamic bodies should take more proactive steps to address and alleviate the Halal concern of its street food among Muslim tourists. On top of that, this study offers an essential source of information for local travel and tour agencies together with the Japan National Tourism

Organisation. This fact allows them to restrategise their marketing efforts by highlighting Japan's delicious street food as one reason Malaysian Muslims must visit the country.

Booking.com, a popular travel site, revealed that 80% of Malaysian travellers are motivated to go on holiday due to the opportunity to eat new foods. Hence, gastronomy plays a significant role in tourist destinations' marketing plans (Sahin, 2015). Furthermore, the symbolic nature of the local cuisine is an element of destinations' competitive advantage (Sahin, 2015). Japan is projected to welcome one million Muslim tourists in 2020, mainly from Southeast Asia. Essentially, Southeast Asia will be the primary market source for Japan, representing nearly 70 per cent of the total number of Muslim inbound travellers (Benner, 2015). In sum, this study proposes a future study focusing on Muslims from other Southeast Asian nations to determine the consistency (generalisation) of this study's outcomes.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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