



**ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS AND
BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS WITH TOURIST FOOD SATISFACTION,
MALAYSIA**

By

ROGHAYEH SOHRABINEZHADTALEMI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

April 2015

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my husband,

Sobhan,

For his support and patience during my study;

And my beloved daughter,

Romina,

Who gives me the greatest motivation and happiness during my study

I love you two so much.



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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia
in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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April 2015

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Malaysia is a multiracial society where the blend of different traditions and cultural heritage has produced its diverse cuisine. Diversity of Malaysian foods has great potential to attract international tourists who seek culinary pleasures which can place Malaysia as a food tourism destination. However, Malaysian food seems to have been ignored in the tourism industry and food does not play an important role in attracting tourist to visit Malaysia as compared to its neighboring countries like Thailand and Singapore. This might be due to the lack of efficient marketing strategies and tools including the lack of studies that investigate the marketing mix efficiency in developing international tourism interest in Malaysian food and cuisines. In addition, there has been little study about Malaysian food and possible impact of food on the tourism industry. As such, the present study has developed a conceptual framework to address this gap.

The objectives of this study are to (1) examine the relationship between marketing mix (food quality, price, location, promotion, physical environment, employees and process) and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food; (2) investigate the relationship between tourist food satisfaction and their behavioral intentions, and (3) determine the moderating role of destination image in the relationship between tourist food satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

The targeted population of this study was international tourists, who visited tourist attraction areas in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor during the survey period. The collected data were statistically analyzed using SPSS 21 and AMOS 21.

The findings of this study support the hypothesized relationships proposed in the theoretical model. Specifically, the result of Structural Equation Model revealed that there is a relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food. The result of the specific hypotheses tests regarding the association between marketing mix elements and tourist food satisfaction showed that only three elements (food quality, price, and physical environment) have a significant

relationship with tourist food satisfaction. The result also showed that tourist food satisfaction is significantly related to their behavioral intentions. In addition, based on the results of the multiple group analysis by SEM, it was found that destination image moderates the relationship between tourist food satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

This study has contributed new knowledge about the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions in food context. The study also provides a contribution to the literature regarding the moderating effect of destination image on the relationship between tourist food satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The study will benefit the destination marketers, especially restaurant operators in understanding what tourists want and need. Findings from this study provide guidance to design effective marketing strategies to increase tourist food satisfaction as well as to influence current tourists' intentions to return and recommend Malaysian food to others.

Abstrak tesis yang di kemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PERSATUAN ANTARA ELEMEN CAMPURAN PEMASARAN DAN NIAT
TINGKAH LAKU DENGAN KEPUASAN MAKANAN PELANCONG,
MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Pengerusi: Hossein Nezakati, PhD
Fakulti: Ekonomi dan Pengurusan

Malaysia mempunyai masyarakat yang berbilang kaum di mana campuran tradisi dan warisan budaya telah menghasilkan masakan yang pelbagai. Kepelbagaian makanan Malaysia mempunyai potensi untuk menarik pelancong antarabangsa yang mencari keseronokan masakan dan seterusnya boleh meletakkan Malaysia sebagai salah satu destinasi pelancongan makanan. Walau bagaimanapun, makanan Malaysia seolah-olah diabaikan dalam industri pelancongan dan makanan tidak lagi memainkan peranan penting untuk menarik pelancong melawat Malaysia berbanding dengan negara-negara jiran seperti Thailand dan Singapura. Ini mungkin disebabkan oleh kurangnya strategi dan kaedah pemasaran yang berkesan termasuk kurangnya kajian yang mengkaji kecekapan pemasaran campuran dalam membangunkan minat pelancongan antarabangsa terhadap makanan dan masakan Malaysia. Selain itu, hanya terdapat sedikit kajian sahaja yang mengkaji mengenai makanan Malaysia serta kesannya terhadap industri pelancongan.

Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini telah membangunkan satu kerangka konseptual bagi menangani jurang ini. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk (1) mengkaji hubungan di antara pemasaran campuran (kualiti makanan, harga, lokasi restoran, promosi, persekitaran fizikal, pekerja restoran dan proses) dan kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan Malaysia (2) mengkaji hubungan antara kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan dan niat tingkah laku mereka, dan (3) mengenalpasti peranan moderator bagi imej destinasi dalam hubungan antara kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan dan niat tingkah laku.

Populasi sasaran kajian ini adalah pelancong antarabangsa, yang mengunjungi kawasan-kawasan tarikan pelancong di Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor dalam tempoh kajian dijalankan. Data yang dikumpul telah dianalisis menggunakan SPSS 21 dan AMOS 21.

Hasil kajian ini telah menyokong hipotesis yang dicadangkan di dalam model teori. Secara khususnya hasil Structural Equation Model menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan antara pemasaran campuran dan kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan Malaysia. Hasil bagi hipotesis khusus mengenai elemen pemasaran campuran dan kepuasan menunjukkan bahawa hanya 3 elemen (kualiti makanan, harga, persekitaran fizikal) telah secara signifikan mempengaruhi kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan niat tingkah laku.

Kajian ini telah menyumbangkan pengetahuan baru tentang hubungan di antara pemasaran campuran dan kepuasan pelancong dan niat tingkah laku dalam konteks makanan. Kajian ini juga memberikan sumbangan kepada literatur mengenai kesan imej destinasi iaitu moderator bagi hubungan antara kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan dan niat tingkah laku. Kajian ini juga memberi manfaat kepada pemasar destinasi, terutamanya pengusaha restoran dalam memahami apa yang pelancong mahu, perlu dan menyediakan panduan untuk merancang strategi pemasaran yang berkesan bagi meningkatkan kepuasan pelancong terhadap makanan dan juga untuk mempengaruhi niat pelancong untuk kembali semula serta mencadangkan makanan Malaysia kepada orang lain.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 22 April 2015 to conduct the final examination of Roghayeh Sohrabinezhadtalemi on her thesis entitled "Association between marketing mix elements and behavioral intentions with tourist food satisfaction, Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

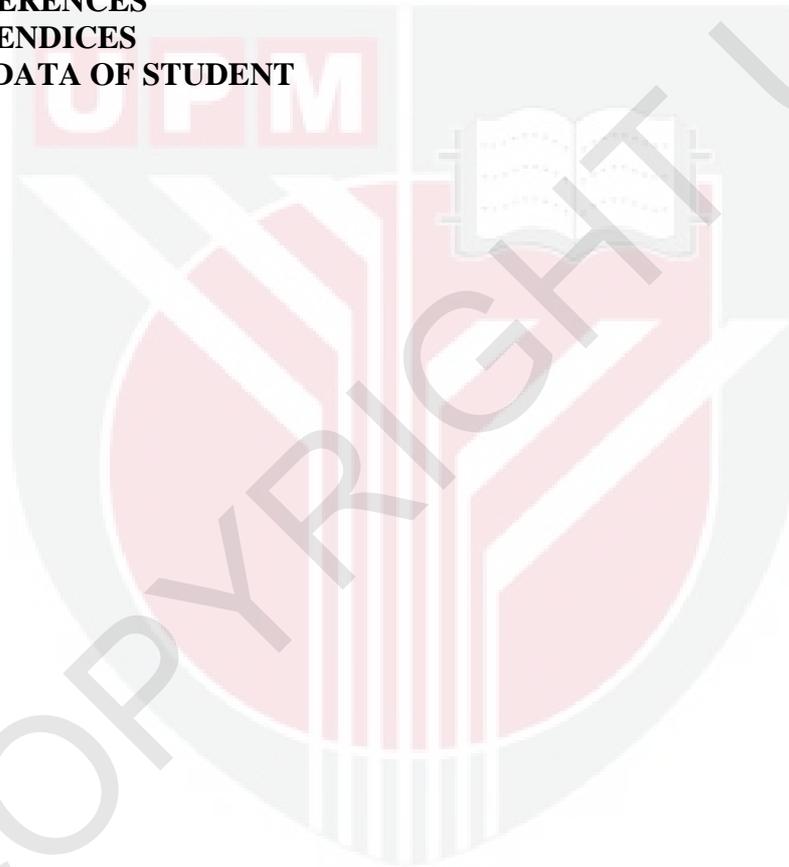
ABSTRACT	Page
ABSTRAK	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
APPROVAL	v
DECLARATION	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
	xvi

CHAPTER

1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Background of the Study	1
	1.3 Problem Statement	4
	1.4 Research Objectives	6
	1.5 Research Questions	6
	1.6 Research Hypothesis	7
	1.7 Significance of the Study	7
	1.8 Definition of Terms	10
	1.9 Organization of the Study	11
	1.10 Summary	11
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	12
	2.1 Introduction	12
	2.2 Tourism Industry in Malaysia	12
	2.3 Food and the Tourism Industry	14
	2.4 Malaysian Food	15
	2.4.1 Malay Food	16
	2.4.2 Malaysian Chinese Food	16
	2.4.3 Malaysian Indian Food	17
	2.5 Food Services in Malaysia	18
	2.6 Role of Restaurants in Tourism Industry	19
	2.7 Marketing Mix	19
	2.8 Tourist Satisfaction	23
	2.9 Marketing Mix and Satisfaction	25
	2.10 Elements of Marketing Mix	26
	2.10.1 Product / Food Quality	26
	2.10.2 Price	28
	2.10.3 Restaurant Location	29
	2.10.4 Promotion	30
	2.10.5 Physical Environment	31
	2.10.6 Employee	33

	2.10.7 Process	34
	2.11 Behavioral Intentions	36
	2.12 Tourist Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions	37
	2.13 Destination Image (DI)	39
	2.14 Summary	41
3	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT	42
	3.1 Introduction	42
	3.2 Past Research and Previous Conceptual Frameworks	42
	3.3 The Proposed Conceptual Framework	44
	3.4 Hypothesis Development	47
	3.4.1 Marketing Mix Elements and Satisfaction	47
	3.4.2 Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions	48
	3.4.3 Destination Image as Moderator	49
	3.5 Summary	49
4	METHODOLOGY	50
	4.1 Introduction	50
	4.2 Research Design	50
	4.3 Population and Sample	52
	4.4 Sample Size	52
	4.5 Sampling Technique	54
	4.6 Research Instrument	54
	4.7 Questionnaire Design	55
	4.8 Pilot Study	61
	4.9 Data Analysis	62
	4.9.1 Reliability Analysis	63
	4.9.2 Validity Analysis	64
	4.10 Summary	65
5	DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	66
	5.1 Introduction	66
	5.2 Preliminary Analysis	66
	5.2.1 Response Rate and Missing Data	66
	5.2.2 Outliers Analysis	67
	5.2.3 Normality of Data	67
	5.2.4 Multicollinearity	67
	5.3 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Characteristics	68
	5.4 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis	73
	5.4.1 Measurement Model	75
	5.4.2 Structural Model Analysis	81
	5.4.3 Moderating Effects of Destination Image between Tourist satisfaction and Behavioral intention	87
	5.5 Summary	92

6	FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	93
6.1	Introduction	93
6.2	Summary of the Study	93
6.3	Study Findings	94
6.4	Discussion on Findings	95
6.5	Theoretical Implications	98
6.6	Practical Implications	99
6.7	Limitations of Research	101
6.8	Recommendations for Future Research	101
6.9	Conclusion	102
	REFERENCES	104
	APPENDICES	127
	BIODATA OF STUDENT	141



LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page	
1.1	Components of tourist expenditure	5
1.2	Tourist expenditure growth	5
2.1	Top most visited countries and the number of international tourists	13
2.2	Total numbers of international tourist's arrival and its revenue	13
2.3	Literature review related to marketing mix elements	22
2.4	Prior research on food quality dimensions	27
2.5	Summarize selected hypotheses related to satisfaction and behavioural intention from various studies	38
4.1	Malaysian stated visited by tourists	52
4.2	Scale items and source of marketing mix elements	57
4.3	Measurements of tourist food satisfaction and behavioral intentions	59
4.4	Destination image measurements	60
4.5	Respondents' demographic profile and travel and dining behaviors with type of scales	61
4.6	Reliability of measurements in the pilot test	62
4.7	Summary of analysis used in the study	63
5.1	Correlation matrix of independent variables	68
5.2	Respondents' demographic profile	68
5.3	Respondents' traveling and dining behaviors	71
5.4	Fit indices for the measurement model (Model 1)	77
5.5	Fit indices for the measurement model (Model 2)	77
5.6	Convergent validity of the constructs in Model 1	79
5.7	Correlation coefficient and square roots of AVE of constructs in Model 1	79

5.8	Convergent validity of the constructs in Model 2	80
5.9	Correlation coefficient and square roots of AVE of constructs in Model 2	80
5.10	Construct reliability for Model 1 and Model 2	81
5.11	Results of hypotheses testing of structural path Model 1	84
5.12	Results of hypotheses testing of structural path Model 2	87
5.13	Compare CMIN between two Model	89
5.14	Nested model comparisons between unconstrained and measurement residual models	89
5.15	Results of hypothesis testing and regression weight from the structural equation model for group 1 (Low destination image) and group 2 (High destination image)	90
6.1	Result of hypothesis testing	94

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
3.1	Model Developed by Hyun (2010)	43
3.2	Model Developed by Leuschner et al. (2012)	43
3.3	The Proposed Conceptual Framework	45
3.4	Hypothetical Model of the Study	47
4.1	Methodological Framework	51
5.1	Model 1: The relationship between marketing mix, tourist food satisfaction and behavioural intentions	74
5.2	Model 2: The relationship between elements of marketing mix, tourist food satisfaction and behavioural intentions	74
5.3	Measurement Model of Model 1	76
5.4	Measurement Model of Model 2	78
5.5	Structural Path Model 1	83
5.6	Structural Path Model 2	86
5.7	The Structural Model for Group (1) with Low Destination Image	91
5.8	The Structural Model for Group (2) with High Destination Image	91

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
AMA	American Marketing Association
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
B	Unstandardized regression weight
β	Standardized regression weight
BI	Behavioral Intentions
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CR	Construct Reliability
CI	Confidence Interval
D ²	Mahalanobis d-squared
df	Degree of Freedom
DI	Destination Image
DV	Dependent Variable
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EMPL	Employee
FQ	Food Quality
4 Ps	Product, Place, Price, Promotion
7 Ps	Product, Place, Price, Promotion, people, process and physical evidence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
GNI	Gross National Income
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
IV	Independent Variable
KL	Kuala Lumpur
LOC	Location
MTTP	Malaysia Tourism Transformational Plan
MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimation

MM	Marketing Mix
n/N	Number of members of sample or population
PRC	Price
PROC	Process
PROM	Promotion
PHE	Physical Environment
R ²	Coefficient of determination
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
S.D.	Standard Deviation
S.E.	Standard Error
STB	Singapore Tourism Board
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
TSAT	Tourist Satisfaction
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food leading to tourist's behavioral intentions. This chapter contains the following sections: background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, research hypothesis, significance of the study, definition of terms and organization of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Currently, the tourism industry is considered as one of the largest growing industries around the world and it is one of the most important industries capable of stimulating economic growth. The importance of tourism is versatile as it seems to have a positive role in transportation, accommodation, catering, entertainment and retailing sectors (Cho, 2003). The total impact of the industry shows that it contributed 9% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or a worth over US\$6 trillion, and supporting 255 million jobs, in 2011 (Chen, Yu, Tsui, & Lee, 2012). The positive impact of tourism on economic growth of a destination leads to increased competition between tourism destinations. The ever-increasing competition among tourism destinations has resulted in the improvement of more interesting attractions to entice potential tourists (Lin, Pearson, & Cai, 2010). Therefore, many countries use food as a source of attraction in order to improve their tourism marketing (Lin et al., 2010).

Food plays an important role for tourists' experience at a specific destination and also food consumption generates revenue for a destination (Long, 2004; Hjalager & Richards, 2002). According to the International Culinary Tourism Association (2006) (cited by Kivela & Crotts, 2006b), during traveling almost 100% of tourists dine out, and each dining opportunity is a chance to become familiar with the local food. In addition, one-third of the total tourist expenditure is spent on food and beverages (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Meler & Cerovic, 2003). Consequently, food is recognized as a powerful promotional tool of a destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002) and many destinations use food as an attraction to entice tourists visit the destination.

For instance, Singapore has established policies to promote its food and develop food tourism (Henderson, 2004). The country offers the slogan "Singapore: the Food Capital of Asia", and in addition treats dining out and food as key factors in its tourism marketing (Horng & Tsai, 2012). Likewise, the Thai government suggested the slogan "Kitchen of the World" besides other promotional projects to help increase Thai food popularity at the international level (Aishah et al., 2010). Similarly, Taiwan promotes its country as a 'food paradise' to entice both domestic

and foreign tourists with the assurance of a unique cultural and gastronomic experience (Chuang, 2009).

Tourism development in Malaysia began since the 1960s and now Malaysia is one of the top tourist destinations in the world. In 2011, Malaysia's tourism was ranked the seventh largest contributor with a Gross National Income (GNI) total of US\$12.3 billion and the third biggest foreign exchange earner after palm oil and manufacturing (Tourism Malaysia, 2012). According to Tourism Malaysia statistics (2014), the numbers of international tourists who visited Malaysia in 2013, was 25.72 million, which has significantly increased compared to previous years.

Malaysia is a multi-cultural and multiracial society that includes Malays, Chinese and Indians. This 'multiculturalism' of the different ethnic groups have added to the potpourri of local foods and have produced special cuisines of Malaysia that are described as "Asia's greatest cuisines meet and mingle" (Othman, Zahari, Hashim, & Ibrahim, 2009). Hence, Malaysia as a meeting place of various cultures has produced a most diverse culinary melting pot that no longer belongs to one single ethnic group, but with respect to each other's religious and cultural sensitivity, it is well accepted as Malaysian food. For example, using Indian and Malay spices in Chinese food and making halal version of Chinese food which is consumable by all groups (Ling et al., 2010). The numerous ethnic restaurants and street stalls in Malaysia that offer such a mixture of foods can prove the variety of Malaysian food (Othman, Zahari, Hashim & Ibrahim, 2009). These can create a great experience for tourists who seek culinary pleasure.

Tourists' most memorable experiences in a destination are often associated with its foods and restaurants (Kivela & Crotts, 2006b). Restaurants play an important role in introducing the nation's cuisine to international tourists and have a crucial role in the maintenance and development of a tourist destination's image (Sparks, Wildman, & Bowen, 2001). Restaurants serve to expose tourists to local cultures and educate them by providing authentic dishes and information, regarding the regions dishes on the menu (Sparks et al., 2001). Sparks et al. (2001) and Sparks, Bowen, and Klag (2003) in their studies emphasize the importance of the restaurant industry to the tourism product and contribution that restaurants make to a tourist destination's attraction and the impact they have on consumer decisions for choosing a holiday destination.

In this competitive market place of tourism, many countries focus on achieving tourist satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction leads to the destination's long-lasting economic progress (Akama & Kieti, 2003) and increasing numbers of tourists and revenue (Ryu & Han, 2009; Akama & Kieti, 2003). Previous studies have found that tourist's satisfaction influence tourist's behavioral intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chen & Chen, 2010; Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001). Additionally, the positive relationship between higher levels of tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit or recommend a destination to others has been evidenced in many studies (González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007; Valle, Silva, Mendes, & Guerreiro, 2006). In the food context, several studies have revealed that the intention to revisit a

destination has a strong relationship with tourists' overall satisfaction with the food experience during a trip (Kivela & Crotts, 2006a; Ryu & Jang, 2006; Ling et al., 2010; Chi, Chua, Othman, & Karim, 2013). Similarly, Henderson (2009) indicated that food has an essential role in tourist satisfaction and decision making. Furthermore, it was suggested that food service plays an essential role in tourist satisfaction (Nield, Kozak, & LeGrys, 2000). Consistent with the foregoing discussion, Sparks et al. (2001) suggested that restaurants also have an important role in tourists' overall satisfaction with a destination. In general, according to the above discussion, it seems that food and restaurants considerably contributed to the tourist satisfaction with a destination. Since satisfaction leads to repeat purchase, long-term profitability and success of companies, so marketing places emphasis on satisfying customer needs and wants.

According to Kotler (2005) marketing provides more value to satisfying customers and also in building a long-term mutually profitable relationship with the customer. To reach this purpose, the organization needs to ensure that the product or service offered will fulfill the customer's expectations and meet the standard instead of just selling the product and increasing market share. Consequently, the firm must be aware and understand their customer's wants, needs and demands. Marketing mix is one of the most substantial marketing elements, which is important to be managed. It is a business tool that is used by the management of businesses to satisfy the needs of a target market and enable them to remain in a worldwide competitive environment (Owomoyela & Oyeniya, 2013). McCarthy (1964) introduced Marketing mix with product, price, promotion and place (4Ps). Booms and Bitner (1981) expanded marketing mix for services as 7Ps by adding people, process and physical evidence to 4P.

Current study considers food quality, price, location, promotion, physical environment, restaurant employees and process as elements of marketing mix to investigate tourist's perception on marketing mix of Malaysian food. According to Sparks et al. 2003 dining out experiences and opportunities, contribute to tourists' pleasure or satisfaction with a destination and intention to return. Consequently, this study investigates the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and assesses the likelihood of return or recommending to others as a result of dining satisfaction.

Furthermore, the current study pays special attention to destination image and its influence in tourist behavioral intentions. This is due to the fact that destination image is an important determinant of tourists behavioral intention (Lertputtarak, 2012; Mohamad, Abdullah, & Mokhlis, 2012). Destination image involves an individual's mental beliefs, emotions and total perception of a specific destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). This study investigates the moderating effect of destination image on the relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and their behavioral intentions.

1.3 Problem Statement

Increasing competition between tourism destinations leads to many destinations using food as a source of attraction to strengthen tourism marketing (Lin et al., 2010). According to Rand, Heath, and Alberts (2003) food contributes to the authenticity of the destination; and also holds much potential to increase sustainability in tourism; and reinforce the local economy.

Due to the importance of food in the tourism sector, Singapore has used the slogan of "the Food Capital of Asia" for marketing culinary tourism and in addition has treated "food" and "dining out" as an important element in its tourist marketing (Henderson, 2004). Hence, the local cuisines have become a major element to attract tourists to Singapore (Hornig & Tsai, 2012; STB, 2007). Thailand is Malaysia's other neighbour, where its food has also gained popularity. The Thai government has played an important role in promoting Thai food globally by supporting the development of thousands of Thai restaurants abroad (Aishah et al., 2010). This has motivated travel to Thailand as tourists sought authentic Thai food experiences (Richards, 2012). Malaysia, in comparison to its neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Singapore is not well known as a world class food destination (Karim, Chua & Salleh, 2009). Malaysian food is less internationally well-known when compared to Thai food (Aishah et al., 2010). In addition, despite the fact that Malaysian and Indonesian cuisines are very similar to each other, yet Indonesian cuisines are so well known globally as compared to Malaysian cuisines (Yoshino, 2010).

According to Karim (2014) the most popular food destinations of the world have been Italy, France and Thailand and their foods are recognised throughout the world. Moreover, he stated that the Malaysian food has the potential to achieve such a reputation. "Malaysian food is delicious and also diverse. However, it is not so well known nor as popular as the three countries. We have to find out why people travel and how food contributes toward travel and tourism. We need to do research on the image of Malaysian food and the ways to commercialise it at various levels and platforms" (NST, 2014).

An analysis of the relevant tourism literature indicate that empirical studies on tourism and gastronomy have been carried out widely in other countries (e.g. Fox, 2007; Ryu & Jang, 2006; Kivela and Crofts, 2006); while in Malaysia the attention is lacking (Karim et al., 2009). In addition, research on food as a tourism attraction is still incomplete or limited. It needs to be done constantly to ensure Malaysia as one of the most well-known, established food image destinations globally (Omar & Karim, 2013). Moreover, in spite of the tourism industry's increasing importance in the Malaysian economy, little attention has been paid to post-visit behaviour intentions on tourism marketing (Mohamad et al., 2012). While few studies have conducted research to assess the possible effects of food on tourists' satisfaction and behavior intentions (e.g. Chi et al., 2013) there is still insufficient data linking tourists' food satisfaction and tourists' revisit intention to the same destination (Ling et al., 2010).

According to statistics released by tourism Malaysia the tourists expenditure in food and beverage segment decrease from 9,716.7 million in 2010 to 8,180.4 million in 2013. Table 1.1 illustrates the Components of tourist expenditure during recent years in Malaysia. As it can be seen from Table 1.2 the tourists expenditure in food and beverage segment doesn't have growth in recent years and even the statistics signifying a reduction in growth rate for example, -1.1 percent decrease from 2011 to 2012 and -15.6 percent decrease from 2012 to 2013. The statistics reveal that this segment of tourism industry has not had adequate growth in compare with other segments in Malaysia. Therefore, new policies should be developed to improve this important part of tourism industry in Malaysia. The former tourism Minister (Dr Ng Yen Yen) (2011) mentioned that the food and beverage is a big contributor in the tourism industry and "we hope to increase tourists expenditure on meals and want Malaysia to be recognized not only for ecotourism and shopping but also for food" (The Star, 2011). In addition, she said the tourism ministry has yet to set a revenue target since it eventually planned to raise the awareness of international tourists on local foods (The Star, 2011).

Table 1.1 Components of Tourist Expenditure

Components	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	%	RM Million						
Accommodation	30.7	17,343.2	30.8	17,961.3	30.8	18,651.5	30.3	19,829.3
Shopping	28.7	16,213.3	30.0	17,494.8	30.7	18,590.9	30.2	19,763.9
Food & Beverage	17.2	9,716.7	16.8	9,797.1	16.0	9,689.1	12.5	8,180.4
Local Transportation	9.6	5,423.3	7.5	4,373.7	6.7	4,057.3	6.8	4,450.1
Entertainment	3.1	1,751.3	3.8	2,216.0	3.0	1,816.7	3.1	2,028.7
Domestic airfares	4.0	2,259.7	4.1	2,390.9	6.1	3,693.9	10.6	6,937.0
Organized Tours	4.3	2,429.2	4.6	2,682.5	4.0	2,422.3	3.6	2,356.0
Miscellaneous	2.4	1,355.8	2.4	1,399.6	2.7	1,635.0	2.9	1,897.9
Total	100	56,492.5	100	58,315.8	100	60,556.7	100	65,443.3

Source: Research Division, Tourism Malaysia with the co-operation of Immigration Department of Malaysia

Table 1.2 Tourist Expenditure Growth

Components	Growth	Growth	Growth
	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
	%	%	%
Accommodation	3.6	3.8	6.3
Shopping	7.9	6.3	6.3
Food & Beverage	0.8	-1.1	-15.6
Local Transportation	-19.4	-7.2	9.7
Entertainment	26.5	-18.0	11.7
Domestic airfares	5.8	54.5	87.8
Organized Tours	10.4	-9.7	-2.7
Miscellaneous	3.2	16.8	16.1

Source: Malaysia Tourism Key Performance Indicators (2014)

Malaysia's various cuisines and different gastronomy products have the potential to entice international tourists who seek culinary pleasures and place Malaysia as a food tourism destination. However, according to Ling et al. (2010) Malaysian food does not appear to play an important role in drawing tourists to visit Malaysia. Malaysian food does not yet provide distinct identification for Malaysia (Karim et al., 2009) and there is a lack of knowledge and information worldwide about Malaysian food (Omar, Karim, & Omar, 2014). Lack of recognition of Malaysian food in the international arena or among the international tourists could be resulted from lack of marketing strategies (marketing mix) undertaken by relevant parties that involved in tourism industry. With that, the understanding on the impact of marketing mix on the international tourists satisfaction toward Malaysian food is crucially important as food tourism in addition to other tourism products may boost up the country economy. While the existing literature has conceptualized the relationship between marketing mix elements (food quality, price, restaurant location, promotion, physical environment, restaurant employee and process) on satisfaction a gap was identified- a lack of understanding on the relationship between marketing mix particularly from the Malaysian food perspective and tourist satisfaction. Consequently, the present study is aimed at uncovering the relationship between marketing mix and its elements, tourist satisfaction towards Malaysian food and behavioral intentions.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and their future behavioral intentions.

The specific objectives of this study are as follow:

- 1) To investigate the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food
- 2) To determine the relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and behavioral intentions
- 3) To examine the moderating role of destination image in relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and behavioral intentions

1.5 Research Questions

Concerning to objectives of the study, following questions were investigated by this study:

1. What is the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food?

2. What is the relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and behavioral intentions?
3. Does 'destination image' moderate the relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and behavioral intentions?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

This study aimed to test the following hypotheses that are going to be discussed in the following chapter.

H1: There is a significant relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food

H1a: There is a significant relationship between food quality and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

H1b: There is a significant relationship between price and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

H1c: There is a significant relationship between restaurant location and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

H1d: There is a significant relationship between promotion and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

H1e: There is a significant relationship between physical environment and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

H1f: There is a significant relationship between restaurant employee and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

H1g: There is a significant relationship between process and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

H2: There is a significant relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and behavioral intentions.

H3: Destination image moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and behavioral intentions.

1.7 Significance of the Study

A considerable amount of literature has been published on food, restaurants and satisfaction in tourism literature. For example, Nield et al. (2000) examined the role of food-services and tourist satisfaction in Romania. The study revealed that there were differences in tourists' perceptions on the attributes of foods such as price, quality of food and service, variety of dishes, food presentation, and the speed of service. Ryu and Han (2009) examined the relationships between food quality, service quality, physical environment quality, price (moderator), satisfaction and

behavioral intentions in quick-casual restaurants. Hyun (2010) investigated the effect of food quality, service quality, price, location, and environment on "relationship quality" (satisfaction and trust) and customer loyalty in the chain restaurant industry. The current study is different from other studies in using marketing mix in the food context. This study considered food quality, price, restaurant location, physical environment, restaurant employee, process, and also promotion as marketing mix elements. Therefore, the unique contribution of this study was bringing all these variables together as marketing mix and considering it as a predictor of tourist food satisfaction.

Yelkur (2000) developed a model that suggests the possible effect of the marketing mix elements on customer satisfaction variables (customer's perception and customer's expectation). Leuschner et al. (2012) investigated the impact of the Marketing Mix 4Ps on customer satisfaction and share of business for primary suppliers and secondary suppliers. Muala and Qurneh (2012) found that there is a positive correlation between the marketing mix and tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Correspondingly, Sarker, Aimin, and Begum (2012) found that six out of seven marketing mix elements were positively related to tourists' satisfaction. These studies have indicated that there is a relationship between marketing mix and satisfaction, but there is a scarcity of research investigating the relationship between marketing mix and tourist food satisfaction. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food.

Several studies have proven that tourist's satisfaction influence tourist's behavioral intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Bigne et al., 2001; Chen & Chen, 2010). Moreover, previous studies have revealed that intention to revisit a destination has a strong relationship with tourists' overall satisfaction with the food experience during a trip (e.g. Kivela & Crotts, 2006b; Ling et al., 2010). However, there is limited empirical research undertaken to examine the relationship between tourist food satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the Malaysian context. Hence, current study aims to enrich the body of knowledge by examining the relationship between tourists' who are satisfied with Malaysian food and their post dining behavior.

Many previous tourism literature revealed the relationship between destination image and behavioral intentions (Bao et al., 2008; Bigne et al., 2001; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005). Castro, Armario, and Ruiz (2007) suggested that tourists' intention to revisit and recommend is both directly and indirectly influenced by destination image. Most studies in destination image have only focused on direct effect of destination image on behavioral intentions. So far, however, there has been little discussion about the moderating role of destination image (e.g. Banki et al., 2014). Thus, another contribution of the current study is examining the moderating role of destination image in the relationship between tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food and their behavioral intentions. The result can provide a foundation for future research on related topics. Moreover, the findings provide direct implications on the following parties: restaurant managers and marketers, and tourism policy makers.

The former Tourism Minister (2011) revealed that tourists spend RM9.7 billion on meals in 2010 (The Star, 2011). Furthermore, she mentioned that tourists spent RM58.3 billion in the country in 2011, and of this, 17.5% or almost RM9.4 billion was on food (The Malaysian Insider, 2012). The above statistics seem a significant amount, so dissatisfaction with food and food service may result in dissatisfaction with the overall tourism experience and would be a significant reason for tourists not returning to a destination. It is therefore useful to study the linkages between food and tourism as an important factor for the tourism industry.

In today's competitive market, many countries promote their food as an exclusive product all over the world in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Food is used as a motivator for tourists (Long, 2004) and encourage tourist to visit a destination; some travellers would return to the same destination in order to taste its unique gastronomy (Kivela & Crofts, 2006b). In addition, restaurants as a tourist destination's attractiveness, has an effect on consumer decisions when selecting a holiday destination (Sparks et al., 2001). Therefore, there is a need to analyse the suitability of Malaysian food and also the restaurants which offer Malaysian food along with the elements that have an effect on tourist satisfaction and tourist's subsequent behavior. For Malaysian restaurant operators and marketers the challenge is in identifying the critical factors that determine tourist food satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Hence, this study would provide an understanding of tourist's perception on marketing mix of Malaysian food and elements that determine tourist satisfaction and influence their behavioral intentions.

This study provides an understanding of how tourists evaluate Malaysian food and restaurant service performance and also identifying the elements contributing to tourist food satisfaction. Therefore, it provides practical knowledge for management to take efficient actions to improve service quality and tourist satisfaction and develop programmes to convert tourists into satisfied and repeat visitors and consequently to enhance sales and profits.

Similarly, the study on tourist behaviour enables a better understanding of why and how individuals make their consumption decisions. By improving this understanding, restaurant operators and marketers are better equipped to predict the factors contributing to tourist food satisfaction and loyalty, so that they are able to carefully deliver appropriate services and products that satisfy tourists' needs and wants and avoid those that undermine their satisfaction.

Additionally, an assessment of the destination image as a moderator besides evaluating tourist food satisfaction could help tourism policy makers identify to what extent destination image can affect the relationship between food satisfied tourists' and their behavioral intentions. Therefore, the current study provides a reference for tourism policy makers to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of destination.

1.8 Definition of Terms

The following definitions are presented to facilitate the understanding of terms used in the literature.

Food tourism

Travel to a region in order to experience and taste its food (Karim & Chi, 2010). Food tourism is visiting food festivals, food exhibitions, restaurants, and particular locations for which food tasting and experiencing food are the main reason for travel (Hall & Mitchell, 2000).

Tourist satisfaction

A comparison between pre-travel expectations with post-travel experience (Chen & Chen, 2010). When experiences compared to expectations result in feelings of pleasure, the tourist is satisfied, but when they result in feelings of displeasure, the tourist is dissatisfied (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Behavioral intentions

The tourist's decision about the probability to return the same destination or the willingness to recommend the destination to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Marketing Mix

A set of the marketing tools that firms use to pursue their marketing objectives in the target market (Goi, 2009). Marketing mix concept is divided into 4Ps for goods marketing and 7Ps for service marketing (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995).

Destination Image

The tourist's subjective perception of a destination's reality (Chen & Tsai, 2007). It is defined also as a total impression that tourists have about a destination (Jeong, 2009).

1.9 Organization of the Study

This section presents the organization of the study. This study is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an introductory background of the study and outlines the problem statement and the research objectives, hypothesis, questions and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature on food, tourism and the restaurant industry, and is followed by the literature on marketing mix and its elements, tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Chapter 3 offers the conceptual framework as a guide for linking the study constructs. This chapter presents two original frameworks which are adopted and combined for this study and includes modifications applied to achieve the study objectives. This chapter ends with the hypotheses developed for this study.

Chapter 4 describes the Methodology employed for this study. It includes research design, sampling design, data collection procedure and a brief overview on how data were analysed.

Chapter 5 elaborates data analysis including preliminary analysis and conducted descriptive analysis, main analysis (SEM), and includes hypothesis testing as well as a report on the respective results.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarizing the findings, discussing the implications, describing its limitations, and providing recommendations for future research.

1.10 Summary

As discussed earlier in this chapter, restaurant operators and tourism policy makers should be able to develop a strategic marketing plan and create conditions to enhance the level of tourist satisfaction toward Malaysian food which leads to tourist behavioral intentions. Therefore, this study aims to understand the relationship between marketing mix and tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions on Malaysian food context. In the following chapter, the review of relevant literature is provided and a discussion of prior research is presented.

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