



***SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION OF MIDDLE EASTERN
TOURISTS TOWARD MALAYSIAN RESTAURANTS***

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**SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION OF MIDDLE EASTERN
TOURISTS TOWARD MALAYSIAN RESTAURANTS**

By

SAFAEIMEHNEH SARA

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

August 2018

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family, Zohre, Hassan, Sanaz, Forugh and Narges, for their endless love, support, and encouragement.



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

SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION OF MIDDLE EASTERN TOURISTS TOWARD MALAYSIAN RESTAURANTS

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August 2018

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Satisfaction as the heart of marketing which influences behavioural intentions of customers has been neglected regarding the exploration of fast growing Middle East tourists in Malaysian restaurants. Therefore this study intended to investigate the Middle Eastern tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions toward restaurants in Malaysia as a step to cover this gap. Since satisfaction in hospitality is multidimensional and it is a combination of both products and service, multi-attribute scales are the most appropriate method for measuring customer satisfaction in this segment. The dimensions of Food, Service, Environment, and Other was chosen as independent variables base on their frequency in previous studies. Considering both regression results, which are statistical in nature, and IPA (Importance-Performance Analysis) results, which are descriptive, this study provides a more comprehensive picture for Malaysian restaurant operators. The IPA shows that Malaysian restaurants were successful in delivering serve food as ordered, accurate check, neat and well-dressed staff, cleanness of the restaurant, as most important attributes in contributing to satisfaction. Likewise serve food as ordered, operation hours, cleanness of the restaurant, and pleasing aroma in the restaurant were most important attributes in contributing to behavioural intention. The IPA results concluded that taste of food, healthiness of food, quality of the food, freshness of the food ingredient and prompt and quick service are the most important areas where Malaysian restaurateurs, can make improvements to satisfy customers and quality of the food, taste of food, freshness of the food ingredient, prompt and quick service and well communicating staff are important areas where Malaysian restaurateurs, can make improvements to generate positive behavioural intentions among Middle East tourists. Overall, this study indicates that taste of the food and environmental cleanliness are two pivotal attributes to create satisfied customers and quality of the food, taste of food and location of the restaurant are essential for positive post-dining behavioural intentions.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

KEPUASAN DAN TINGKAH LAKU PELANCONG TIMUR TENGAH DI RESTORAN MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Kepuasan sebagai pusat pemasaran yang mempengaruhi niat perilaku pelanggan telah diabaikan pada kajian berkaitan pertumbuhan pengunjung pelancong Timur Tengah ke restoran-restoran Malaysia. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat kepuasan dan niat tingkah laku pelancong Timur Tengah terhadap restoran-restoran di Malaysia sebagai satu langkah untuk menampung kekurangan ini. Oleh kerana kepuasan dalam hospitality adalah bersifat multidimensi dan merupakan gabungan kedua-dua produk dan perkhidmatan, skala pelbagai sifat merupakan kaedah yang paling sesuai untuk mengukur kepuasan pelanggan dalam segmen ini. Dimensi Makanan, Perkhidmatan, Alam Sekitar, dan Lain-lain telah dipilih sebagai pemboleh ubah bebas berdasarkan kekerapan penguraian pemboleh ubah ini dalam kajian terdahulu. Memandangkan kedua-dua keputusan regresi, yang bersifat statistik, dan hasil IPA (Importance-Performance Analysis), yang bersifat deskriptif, kajian ini memberikan gambaran yang lebih komprehensif untuk operator restoran Malaysia. IPA menunjukkan bahawa restoran-restoran Malaysia berjaya menyampaikan hidangan makanan sebagai makanan yang pantas, pemeriksaan yang tepat, kakitangan yang kemas dan berpakaian dengan baik, kebersihan restoran, sebagai sifat yang paling penting dalam menyumbang kepada kepuasan. Begitu juga pesanan makanan seperti yang di pesan, jam operasi, kebersihan restoran, dan aroma yang menyenangkan di restoran adalah sifat yang paling penting dalam menyumbang kepada niat tingkah laku. Keputusan IPA menyimpulkan bahawa rasa makanan, kesihatan makanan, kualiti makanan, kesegaran bahan makanan dan perkhidmatan cepat dan tepat adalah perkara yang paling penting di mana restoran-restoran Malaysia, boleh membuat penambahbaikan untuk memenuhi kehendak pelanggan. Kualiti makanan, rasa makanan, kesegaran ramuan makanan, perkhidmatan segera dan pantas serta kakitangan yang berkomunikasi dengan baik adalah bidang penting di mana restoran-restoran Malaysia, boleh membuat penambahbaikan untuk menjana niat tingkah laku positif di kalangan pelancong Timur Tengah. Keseluruhannya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa rasa makanan dan kebersihan alam sekitar adalah dua atribut penting untuk mewujudkan kepuasan pelanggan yang berpuas hati dan kualiti makanan, rasa makanan dan lokasi restoran adalah penting untuk niat perilaku positif selepas makan.

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Thank you

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سپاسگزارم

شکرا

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation
CS	Customer Satisfaction
H&T	Hospitality And Tourism
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ATM	Arabian Travel Market
MATTA	Tour And Travel Agent's
KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
D/ECT	Expectation-Dis/Confirmation Theory
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
IPA	Importance Performance Analysis
VIF	Variance Inflection Factors

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter presents an overview of the research study. First, there is a brief background of the research study. In addition, the problem statement is described. Then, the purpose of the study is stated followed by research questions and objectives of the study. Afterward, the significance of this Study is highlighted. And at the end, the summary of the chapter is provided.

1.2 Background of Study

The heart of marketing in any business is customer satisfaction (Ananthanarayanan Parasuraman et al., 1988). Customers learned to care more about the experiences that are provided by marketers, and are willing to pay for a satisfactory experience (Chang & Horng, 2010). Importance of customer satisfaction attracts more attention than before since customers have higher expectations, a greater number of choices and other channels to pursue them.

As Homburg et al. (2006) mentioned the long-term benefit of a company, including sustained profitability and customer loyalty, is a generated result of satisfied customers. While Customers who are dissatisfied with unfulfilled expectations will quietly leave or endorse a negative Word-of-Mouth (Kim et al., 2009). It could be a frustration for the company since retaining an existing customer will be more economical and resourceful than attracting and acquiring new customer (Xu et al., 2007; Helm et al., 2010).

Tourism and hospitality industry has an experiential nature, success in this business is critically depend on creating unforgettable experiences for visitors (Oh et al., 2007). Tourists are increasingly demanding a higher standard for quality of services, particularly in food and hospitality. Therefore it's vital to the success of this business to know its customer's desires and needs to satisfy them.

In tourism and hospitality industry food is among the most important issues in the satisfaction of tourists and an important motive for tourists to return to a place (Rimington & Yüksel, 1998; Enright & Newton, 2005; Jakša Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). For tourists, food is not simply a physiological need but a concern about overall tourism destination planning (R. C. Chang et al., 2010). When tourists decide on the attractiveness of a destination, food ranks among significant attributes with climate, accommodation, and scenery (Y. Hu & Ritchie, 1993). Hence it can be used as a deliberate marketing tool for drawing attention of more tourists (Du Rand & Heath, 2006; Henderson, 2009; K.-H. Lee & Scott, 2015).

Travel dining can enhance tourists' experience and can be the most memorable part of the trip (Quan & Wang, 2004). A positive dining experience can shape the consumer's pleasure not only with the restaurant but with the tourism location. The importance of food and dining in destination make it obvious that a superb tourist's dining experience can capture visitors loyalty as well as their willingness to return and endorse positive Word-of-Mouth (Jakša Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Wickey, 2013).

In the tourism experience, the attributes brought by the visitor are as important as the attributes provided by tourism suppliers. Tourist's cultural background can affect visitors' choice of a touristic destination (Kay, 2009). Especially with the increasing number of tourist destinations and increasing competition between tourist destinations, it seems vital to consider it for the development of effective marketing strategies for particular tourism destinations in attracting the future market of tourism.

Muslim tourism is a growing worldwide trend and it is a prospective market (F. Khan & Callanan, 2017). Many of the Muslim population are living in Asia and the Middle East, regions undergoing rapid economic growth and development and it's driving a surge in investment and consumer expenditure which exceeds global averages. Emerging Muslim tourist market is a huge and prosperous market that seems like an opportunity for a number of tourism industry players. Accordingly, Muslim friendly hospitality services have become one of the fastest growing segments of the travel and tourism industry to meet the needs of Muslim travelers.

Middle East tourism is a small but fast-growing market, which showed the strongest growth in the world with a 9% increase in 2015. The report revealed that this market went up 48 percent over the last five years while international travel and tourism market grew only by 24 percent (ITB Berlin, 2015). Malaysia stands for 7 years in a row on top of Muslim-friendly destinations (MasterCard and Crescent Rating, 2017) and on the peak of five countries with long-haul visit by Middle Eastern as a part of this huge Muslim market (Salman & Hasim, 2012).

1.3 Problem Statement

Even though the popularity of travel in Islamic and the Middle East countries is increasing but not much is known about their travel and recreation behaviours (Reisinger & Moufakkir, 2015; Moufakkir & AlSaleh, 2017). For time being that Malaysia has witnessed a massive growth of tourist arrivals from this market. In addition to the importance of Middle Eastern tourists to Malaysian economy, this High-spending Middle East market tuned to be the particular target of Islamic Tourism Centre of Malaysia's National Tourism Organisation (Henderson, 2016). Therefore, it appears that it's time to make a special investigation on this market more than ever before.

Since customer satisfaction is not global phenomena, regional and cultural characteristics besides specific needs must be taken into consideration when planning for a successful marketing (Pizam et al., 2016). Regarding the Middle East market, from the limited

studies available, they are known for a rapid growth rate of arrivals, high level of spending, and a long length of stay. While on the other side they have a high taste (Salman & Hasim, 2012), demanding an excessive level of service during their visit and difficult to satisfy in all aspects of traveling (Ariffin & Hasim, 2009; F. Khan & Callanan, 2017).

Studies in Middle East tourists hospitality behaviors in Malaysia were mostly in general or hotel section (Zakariya et al., 2007; Ibrahim et al., 2009; Yusoff et al., 2009; Forozia et al., 2013; Shafaei & Badaruddin, 2017). The implemented works rarely determine the influence of attributes or restaurant experience on their satisfaction and behavioural intention specifically in dining settings. Therefore, considering the importance of tourist's dining as a component in developing tourism marketing strategies (Isaac, 2008) has delineated the need to seek better understanding regarding the factors that perceived importance by these specific tourists at restaurants and the factors that lead to overall satisfaction as well as behavioural intentions. That's why the current study intends to focus on the Middle East' perceptions and importance of restaurant attributes.

Research in Middle East restaurant behaviours would contribute to the limited body of knowledge regarding Middle Eastern tourists. As well as it helps Malaysian restaurants by suggesting the most appropriate ways and practices to improve the quality of service as a means to earn more profit and costumers. Hence, this research will attempt to close the gap mentioned, by looking specifically at the perceived important attributes in addition to attributes which affect the overall dining satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Additionally, this research will help the particular group of Middle East tourist by clarifying their requirements for the restaurant owners and managers, who will create a better service for them in the future.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The contributions of this study can be discussed from two perspectives: theoretical and practical.

From the theoretical perspective, this study has the potential to contribute limited academic literature available on the Middle Eastern tourist behaviour in regard to the restaurant industry. It will define the context of Middle Eastern tourists restaurant preference and satisfaction, which is highly demanded due to the market strong growth in the last few years (MasterCard and Crescent Rating, 2017).

This study also has the capacity to contribute to the research of restaurant satisfaction studies and expand the body of academic literature on customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions in restaurants. This topic is one of the most important and most researched areas in the hospitality industry (Oliver, 2014; Pizam et al., 2016).

This study also has the potential to the practicals of restaurant management and owners. A greater understanding is needed of what is Middle East tourists' requirements in Malaysian restaurants to help industry entrepreneurs and managers who want target this market and need assistance in uncovering what factors are important to this customers. So for contributing to the industry's improvement and create a profitable business, they can cater to them precisely and avoid resource expenditure in areas that are not important to these customers.

Additionally, it also seems like a great opportunity for investing in other touristic destination countries (Henderson, 2016). With considering the cultural and regional difference other countries which are willing to invest in this segments can take the results to handle this particular markets of tourists (Reisinger & Moufakkir, 2015; Moufakkir & AlSaleh, 2017).

1.5 Research Objectives and Questions

The overall purpose of this study is to identify the key attributes affecting Middle Eastern tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions in Malaysian restaurants. More specifically, our research questions are:

- (1) Which attributes are perceived as important for Middle Eastern tourists when selecting a restaurant in Malaysia?
- (2) What is the Middle Eastern tourists' perception of performance regarding the Malaysian restaurants' attributes?
- (3) Which Malaysian restaurant attributes' performance significantly influence Middle Eastern tourist overall satisfaction?
- (4) Which Malaysian restaurant attributes' performance significantly influence Middle Eastern tourists' behavioural intentions (Word-of-Mouth and intention to return)?

And objectives are:

- To identify attributes which are perceived as important to Middle Eastern tourists' when selecting a restaurant in Malaysian.
- To investigate Middle Eastern tourists' perceptions regarding the performance of Malaysian restaurants.
- To measure the Malaysian restaurant attributes' performance which influences Middle Eastern tourist overall satisfaction.
- To analyze the Malaysian restaurant attributes' performance which influences Middle Eastern tourists' behavioral intentions (Word-of-Mouth and intention to return).

1.6 Scope of the Study

The research's focus is on tourists from 20 countries of Middle East (Shoup, 2011; (Beaumont et al., 2016) who visited Malaysia and have dined and experienced any of Malaysian dining settings which is under the definition of a restaurant.

An understanding of what attributes of restaurant that supposed to satisfy the customers and lead them to preform behavioural intentions is vital (Pettijohn et al., 1997; Canny, 2014).The scope of this study is to identify the importance of various restaurant attributes included in four dimensions of food, service, environment, and other to Middle Eastern tourists in Malaysia. We also aim to find out about how Middle Eastern tourists perceive the performance of the same attributes of Malaysian restaurants.

Afterward the study determines the influence of restaurants' attributes performance on Middle Eastern tourist's satisfaction and their future behaviours. Behaviours such as intention to return to the resturant or recommendation of the restaurant to others are critically important since behavioural intention is the best measurement for service quality (Kuruuzum & Koksai, 2010) and which in return will lead to improved profitability and other financial outcomes (Zahorik & Rust, 1992; Rust et al., 1995; Zeithaml, 2000).

1.7 Terms and Definitions

Tourist

This study hires the definition of tourist from the World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) in collaboration with Statistical Division of United Nations. They define tourism as: "the activities of a person travelling to and staying in place outside her/his usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes". It can include, holiday, leisure and recreation, business, health, education or other purposes (United Nations, 2010; UNWTO, 2010).

Middle Eastern

Middle Easters in this study are those who were originated and grown up in any of 20 countries located in West Asia and part of north Africa including Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and The Palestinian Territories. As well as, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya (Tibi, 1989; Shoup, 2011; World bank, 2017).

These tourists were chosen from those who stayed at least one day in Malaysia as part of their travel. They should've dined in any Malaysian restaurants and should've been

above 18 so they would have a clear idea about their experience and could express their opinions.

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has been defined variously by different authors with almost similar meanings. World Tourism Organization define customer satisfaction as a psychological concept that involves the feeling of well-being and pleasure that results from obtaining what one hopes for and expects from an appealing product and/or service (as cited in Pizam et al., 2016). Oliver (1977) states that satisfaction is customer's fulfilment response, a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment provided by judgment a product or service feature, or the product or service itself. Well along (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003) interpreted Oliver's definition to mean that satisfaction is a customer judgement of a product or service feature (service or product itself) to provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment. (Choi & Chu, 2001) consider satisfaction as the evaluation of customers that if the service or product they have received is as good as what they expected to be.

Behavioural intention

Customer satisfaction has a sturdy positive association with customer retaining (Bowen & Shoemaker, 2003) and spreading positive Word-of-Mouth (Boulding et al., 1993). These behavioural intentions are known to be the most common consequences of customer satisfaction (Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008; V. E. Ozdemir & Hewett, 2010). Customer satisfaction with restaurant attributes form a powerful prediction of customers' revisit intention (Weiss, 2003). Also, a Word-of-Mouth recommendations from family members, colleagues, or friends who are satisfied with a company or restaurant have a measurable impact on the business (Rust et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2009).

1.8 Thesis Organization

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of five chapters; including this introductory chapter.

Chapter 1: The Introduction has deliberated the background of this study, which is customer satisfaction and highlighting the tourism and Middle East tourist's behaviours. In this chapter, the study's problem statement, research questions and objectives of the study, scope of the study, its significance and key definitions for the terms used in this study, were highlighted. An overview of all chapters is also included.

Chapter 2: The Literature Review chapter begins with an indication of the key terms used in the study in details. The review continues with an overview of tourism and Malaysian tourism, then it overlook the Middle East tourist's behaviour and their arrivals

to Malaysia, including the push and pull factors which caused them to choose Malaysia for their travel. The next section discusses the literature on customer satisfaction and the main theory applied in this study. It discusses the application of this theory in customer satisfaction in hospitality and particularly in restaurant industry. This section also discusses the main component of customer satisfaction in restaurant. The third section depicts the behavioural intention. The importance of predicting the behavioural intention and the influence of the behaviours on profitability and continuity of the business. It explains the most important behavioural intentions which include Word-of-Mouth and revisit intention. Through this chapter, several empirical studies relating to customer satisfaction and behavioural intention, specifically in a restaurant context, will be discussed. Finally, the conceptual framework and hypothesis of the study that were identified from the literature review will be discussed and shows how this research intends to close the research gaps discussed in chapter one.

Chapter 3: This chapter discusses the Methodology and research design of this study. Firstly, the research design and research method of this study will be discussed. Next, the researcher briefly discusses the data collection method, sampling method, sampling design, and sampling procedure. Next questionnaire design and measurement for the constructs of this study, followed by pilot study will be discussed. After that the data analysis of this study will be debated in details. Finally, the validity and reliability of the constructs will be deliberated too.

Chapter 4: The research findings. This chapter starts with a discussion on response and data screenings. Then descriptive statistics containing respondents' demographic profiles and characteristics of visit to restaurants will be presented. Next, the researcher discusses the results and findings of the research; primarily, the results from Importance-Performance analysis and Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis will be explained. A discussion on those findings will also be explored. In the end, hypothesis testing will be presented.

Chapter 6: This chapter discusses the Conclusion of this study. A brief summary will be presented followed by a discussion on the implications of this study. Subsequently, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies will also be discussed. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter was the foundation and introduction of the research project and a brief overview of the research study. The chapter clearly defined the research background and talked about the importance of assisting the satisfaction in any business success. The importance of food in the hospitality industry was mentioned and the importance of cultural difference in evaluating the food and dining experience was stated. It was said that why Middle Eastern tourists are important and why Malaysia is an interesting destination for them so it has the potential to take advantage of this upgrading market. The next chapter, literature relevant to this study will be reviewed.

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