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Tourist's preferences in selection of local food: perception and behavior embedded model

Muhammad Sabbir Rahman, Mahmud Habib Zaman, Hasliza Hassan and Chong Chin Wei

Abstract

Purpose – *Locally derived foods from the lens of restaurant settings play an important source of tourist attraction. Surprisingly, research into this sector is quite scarce. The aim of the paper is to develop and empirically examine a conceptual framework on tourist's preferences in selecting local foods. The framework includes tourists' satisfaction, quality of food, tourist's perception, purchase intention and purchase behavior among tourist's selection for local foods.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The research is designed as quantitative in nature. A sum of 280 usable questionnaires was used from 300 distributed instruments by using convenient sampling techniques.*

Findings – *The results show that the relationship of tourist satisfaction and behavior is mediated by purchase intention, whereas tourist's satisfaction and perception have a positive and significant impact on the intention of purchasing local foods. There is also a significant relationship between tourist's satisfaction and perceived quality toward the tourist's perception of local foods. Moreover, a significant relationship exists between tourist's intentions and tourist's purchase behavior.*

Research limitations/implications – *The study derived the purchase behavior dimensions of local foods by the tourists through literature and verified the conceptual model through empirical testing. Based on these findings, managers of local food restaurants require maximizing the purchase behavior of the visitors by considering satisfaction and perceived quality. In summation, they also should consider perception and behavioral intention of tourists. The limitation of this research relates to the sample, where data were collected from the major city of a tourist-friendly country. Future research could investigate the perceived value and gender variance as moderating variables in and between purchase intention and purchase behavior.*

Practical implications – *Managers and policymakers may use the outcome of this research as a guideline to understand the depth of tourist's behavior. By identifying the antecedents of the behavioral factors may assist the managers to strengthen the restaurant's competitive position within the industry. Finally, policymakers may use the research to assess tourists' perceptions of local foods acceptability in promoting the nation's culture to other parts of the world.*

Originality/value – *This work adds to tourism behavior research by exploring the effect of satisfaction, perceived quality, perception and intention on behaviors associated with local foods purchase behavior. In particular, the study highlights the relationships between tourist's perception, perceived quality of local foods and satisfaction of local foods to measure tourist's behavior through purchase intention for local foods from the perspective of restaurant settings, which have received less research attention.*

Keywords *Satisfaction, Quality, Perception, Malaysia, Intention, Local food, Purchase behavior*

Paper type *Research paper*

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Introduction

Service industries contribute significantly to the world economy, and tourism, among them, is considered one of the most financially attractive and potential revenue-generating sector (Sharma *et al.*, 2016; Guimarães and Silva, 2016; Som and Badarneh, 2011). Tourism is

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defined as a unique combination of products and services which relate to nature and everything that tourists experience including both food and destination tourism (Kandampully, 2000; Yeoman and McMahon-Beatte, 2016). Therefore, countries such as Malaysia are continuously investing on different tourism-related projects (i.e. from the Sixth Malaysian Plan period to the Seventh Malaysia Plan period) (Amin and Ibrahim, 2016; Moscardo, 2016; Henderson, 2003).

Malaysia is situated in the southeast of the Asian continent, with an approximate population of about 30 million people. The country is divided into West and East Malaysia. Due to its midst position in the Asia-Pacific region, Malaysia enjoys a strategic location for the perfect tourist destination with numerous beaches and million-year-old rainforests (Marzuki *et al.*, 2014). Sadi and Bartels (1997) argued that the trend of tourism growth in Malaysia will continue, and it will surpass manufacturing sector. Subsequently, with the initiatives of tourism industry of Malaysia, incoming of foreign tourist has mainly started since 2004 and is at a growth (Kosnan *et al.*, 2012).

As a result of the expansion in the tourism industry, many other activities by the tourists have grown such as foods and beverages consumption, accommodation, entertainment and shopping activities (Poon and Lock-Teng Low, 2005). Among these activities, food tourism is one of the major components of the tourist's behavior toward a particular destination where the experience with local foods is the central sphere (Getz *et al.*, 2014). Malaysia is home to various ethnic groups (i.e. Malay, Chinese, Indian), each having their own unique and distinctive foods which are marketed to tourists, making Malaysia a unique destination (Jalis *et al.*, 2009b; Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, 2013).

The uniqueness of local foods consists of the variety of taste ranging from mild to spicy to sweet to sour, reflecting the country as one of the best places for food tourism experiences (Yusoff *et al.*, 2013). For example, Malay dishes often contain beef, chicken, mutton or fish, whereas Chinese dishes often contain pork. Indian dishes often have vegetarian dishes with no beef items (though some Indians do eat chicken, mutton and fish). Most dishes are served with some vegetables, either mixed through the dish or served as a side dish. Interestingly, the word Mamak (street site food) is a common figure in Malaysia which refers to Tamil Muslims-owned restaurants. These types of eating places are popular among the tourists due to the availability of various local foods combined with reasonable price, quality foods and beverages being served 24/7, making these places ideal spot for hanging out among locals and tourists.

According to Jalis *et al.* (2009b), local foods help to enhance visitors' experience and create pleasant vacation experiences while traveling to Malaysia. In addition, Malaysian local foods (restaurants and street settings) are also perceived as one of the important attractions for travelers who intend to visit a particular destination (Yusoff *et al.*, 2013).

Thus, competition among the destinations places requires understanding tourist's satisfaction, perceived quality, perception and intention to understand the tourist's purchasing behavior of local foods. The outcome will generate marketing, positioning and differentiation among tourist's behavior to reveal a credible and unique image for the particular destination (Seo and Yun, 2015). However, Bessière (1998) explained that the consumption behavior of local food by the tourists is not only entertaining but also a cultural activity. Thus, local/traditional foods can attract tourists to particular destinations because consumption behavior of local foods could become an integral part of the traveler's experience (Seo and Yun, 2015).

As local food is one of the important factors in building tourist's experience to add value to revisit a particular destination (Quan and Wang, 2004), numerous studies have also produced evidences of tourists' overall behavior that is influenced by local foods and cuisines (Jalis *et al.*, 2014; Jalis *et al.*, 2009a; Karim *et al.*, 2010; Roozbeh *et al.*, 2013; Chi *et al.*, 2013). Despite the importance of local foods in promoting a destination image

(Hall *et al.*, 2003), there have been only limited number of studies examining the antecedents of the purchase behavior of local food on tourist's behavior in Malaysia. Few, if any, have researched the travelers' purchase behavior of local foods about from an Asian point of view (Okumus *et al.*, 2007; Rajaratnam *et al.*, 2015). Thus, understanding the behavior of tourists with respect to local food consumption is required by the tourism industry, policymakers and researchers to gain insights into tourist's behavior, where research is scarce (Babolian Hendijani, 2016; Kivela and Crotts, 2009).

This study was primarily centered in and around Kuala Lumpur (KL) city, as it is the sprawling capital of Malaysia. KL city is home to colonial buildings and busy shopping malls, making KL one of the first tourist's destination hotspot. Eating in various local restaurants is generally cheaper than buying ingredients from hypermarkets or cooking the traditional dishes at home. The presence of strong national policy for tourism development cities such as KL has experienced an outstanding growth, indicating that tourism should be seen as one of the main pillars of the country's economic development (Amin and Ibrahim, 2016; Moscardo, 2016). As a result, promoting local foods by the restaurants may play a significant role in fostering positive association among frequently visiting tourists and their level of behavioral intentions, which this research has addressed.

This research also addresses practical implications by recommending relevant marketing strategies for the restaurant's managers who are selling varieties of local foods to the international tourists'. Understanding the local food quality and satisfaction through perception and intention is an important criterion in promoting the local food industry (Jalis *et al.*, 2014; Jalis *et al.*, 2009a).

The uniqueness of local foods, irrespective of country of origin, could be a better prospect to draw great attention for the foreign tourists (Henderson, 2009, 2014). Nevertheless, the extent to what tourists really recognize and distinguish the Malaysian local cuisines requires a lot of discussions and empirical examinations (Jalis *et al.*, 2014). Accordingly, the aim of this research was to formulate a conceptual framework to investigate the relationship of tourist's satisfaction, perceived quality, their perception and intention toward overall purchase behavior. In addition, the outcome of this research also provides an insight into the international tourists' behavioral intention in perspective local foods purchasing behavior served by local restaurants. As a result, the current research serves as a diagnostic tool for the local food vendors and restaurants, respectively. Therefore, the objective of this research is to explore the relationship between customers' satisfaction, service quality, perception, intention and purchase behavior of local foods. In addressing these above mention objectives, a concise synthesis of the extant literature on the constructs development and methodology are discussed below.

Literature review

Local foods are considered as an important component of tourism products, creating memorable travel experience for the tourists (McKercher *et al.*, 2008; Robinson and Getz, 2014). Literature suggests that there is a strong relationship between local foods and tourism experiences, which reflect intangible cultural heritage, destination image, tourist lows toward a destination (Henderson, 2014; Renko *et al.*, 2010; Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Jones and Jenkins, 2002). As numerous researchers also indicate that local foods use as a competitive criteria to enhance the image of a destination for tourist's revisit intention (Pestek and Cinjarevic, 2014; Okumus *et al.*, 2007, Quan and Wang, 2004; Ab Karim *et al.*, 2009; Ab Karim *et al.*, 2011).

Customer's satisfaction is one of the leading antecedents for determining the purchase behavior while considering perception and intention toward a particular product or service (Vavra, 1997). Lovelock and Wright (1999) describe customer satisfaction as a short-term emotional reaction to a specific service performance. Researchers thus have explained the

role of customer satisfaction in determining the overall satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) from the consumer's pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase evaluation (Engel *et al.*, 1990).

However, in tourism literature, satisfaction is explained through the characteristics of tourism services offered by industry operators. Researchers typically create a number of attributes and ask the respondents to evaluate them on a "satisfaction scale" (ranging, for example, from "delighted" to "terrible" (Kozak, 2001) or from "wholly satisfied" to "not satisfied at all" (Fuchs and Weiermair, 2003). The construct (i.e. customer satisfaction) is then observed individually according to research scope in measuring tourist's satisfaction (for example, by using confirmatory factor analysis [CFA]). Previous research has also confirmed that customer satisfaction also affects behavioral intentions through consumer's perception (Dmitrović *et al.*, 2009; Baker and Crompton, 2000). Therefore, customer satisfaction significantly leads to positive perception to purchase intention which ultimately influences overall purchase behavior of the consumers (Poon and Lock-Teng Low, 2005; Gallarza and Gil-Saura, 2006; Timm, 2008; Ferrel and Hartline, 2010). The "satisfaction" derived from tourism experiences mostly refer to the emotional state of the tourists' visiting a particular destination (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Jayawardena, 2002). Kotler (2000) claimed satisfaction as the individual's perceived feelings toward enjoyment and displeasure, resulting from comparing a product or services which are perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to one's expectations.

Therefore, tourists' satisfaction has been identified as one of the most imperative factors in associating the development and attraction of tourism business. Thus, tourism industry has tremendous effects on choice of tourist's destination, facilities, ease of accessibilities, consumption of products and services along with local foods (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). A number of research findings confirmed the relationship of satisfaction with respect to tourists' behavior (Prayag *et al.*, 2017; Suhartanto and Triyuni, 2016). According to Hui *et al.* (2007), revisiting and the likelihood of recommending a particular place are mostly influenced by tourist's satisfaction. Studies focusing on experiences of tourist's satisfaction for local foods reveal experiences of tastes creating a positive perception and an increased level of satisfaction among both the local and international tourists' intention to revisit (Ryu and Jang, 2006; Ling *et al.*, 2010). For example, Ling *et al.* (2010) investigated on the relationship of tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention from the perspective of purchasing local foods in Malaysia. This positive perception will lead to positive imagery in the mind of the consumers and boost their level of satisfaction.

The concept of consumer's behavioral intentions refers to the chance of a customer's returning attitude to a service provider whose services offerings have already consumed (Othman *et al.*, 2013; Wu, 2015). Overall, the action of behavioral intention is embedded by service quality, customer's satisfaction and positive perception of a service provider (Othman *et al.*, 2013; Kitapci *et al.*, 2014; Chen and Chen, 2010; Ha and Jang, 2010).

According to Steenkamp (1990), perceived quality is defined as a distinctive value judgment with respect to the capacity for the consumption based upon the consumers conscious and/or unconscious perception of quality cues; this with relation to the relevant service quality attributes create context for personal and situational variables. In addition, quality has identified as the measurement of expectation of usages, durability and features that meet the demands of the customers' (or users) for a particular time period in terms of consumption behavior (Injac, 1998).

Research also suggests that the purchase intention of buyers is mostly influenced by product or service quality (Colgate and Lang, 2001). Both local and foreign tourists' are concerned about the quality of foods (QLFs) which they purchase from a particular destination (Jang and Namkung, 2009; Ruetzler, 2008). Moreover, customer satisfaction is the sense of pleasurable experiences which are fulfilled by a product or service offered by a service provider (Ruetzler, 2008). Previous research also shows that the relationship

between satisfaction and the intention to purchase under the scope of restaurants and hotels is significantly related (Tat *et al.*, 2011). Reynolds and Arnold (2000) define purchase intentions are the customer's emotional reaction while purchasing from a firm.

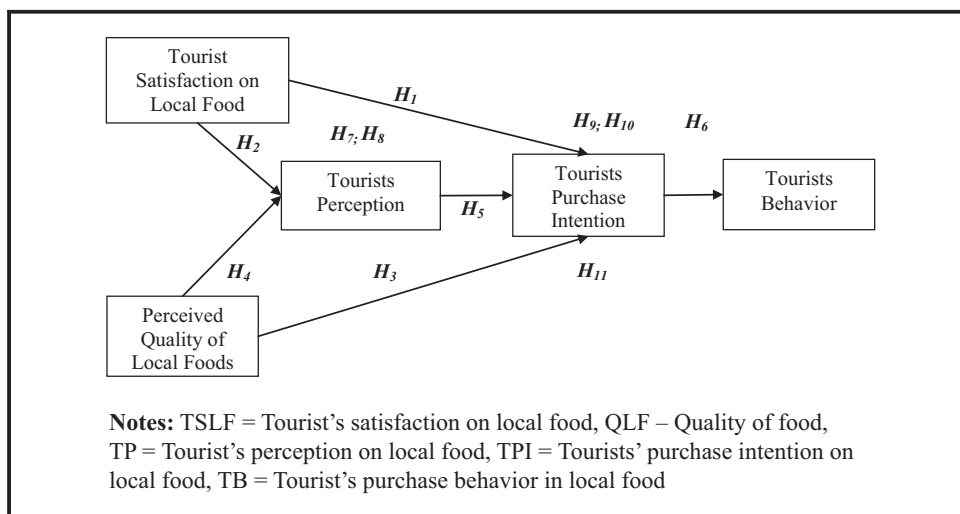
With respect to food and tourism literature, most studies have concentrated on countries such as Italy (Romano and Natilli, 2010), Bosnia (Pestek and Cinjarevic, 2014), Spain (López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012), Canada (Getz and Brown, 2006), USA (Jang *et al.*, 2009) and so on. However, research conducted to identify the tourists' purchase behavior of local foods by considering satisfaction, perceived quality, perception and intention is still not investigated till date.

The tourism and food industry are mainly associated with the number of theoretical debate and empirical investigation focusing on the extent of local foods characteristic that influences brand image (for the destination) for predicting tourist behaviors (Tikkanen, 2007). Chheang (2011) found that tourists' perception and experiences are positive when attached with cultural enrichment through local people exhibiting friendliness, hospitality facilitated through local foods. For example, Verbeke and Poquiviqui López (2005) examined the perception of Latin-American ethnic food among Belgians based on the nine food attributes: search (price, color and appeal), experience (taste, spiciness, convenience) and credence (cleanness, safety, healthiness). Local foods must also adhere to multidimensional factors including food perceived quality, satisfaction, presentation, perception, diversity, accessibility and uniqueness (Chi *et al.*, 2013). Previous research has also shown that local foods are one of the prime factors in forming the perception that contributes to the purchase behavior of tourists' (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). Boulding *et al.* (1993) stipulates tourists' perceived quality of experience is a major factor that influences tourist's behavior. In this regard, Bigne *et al.* (2001) also added that perceived quality would lead to overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Based on the above discussion, the researchers have developed a comprehensive theoretical model (Figure 1) presenting a conceptual framework addressing the relationship among the tourist's satisfaction, perceived QLF, tourists' perception, tourists purchase intention and tourist's behavior in purchasing local foods (TB). The model also applied the mediation role of tourist's perception and intention among the relationships.

By referring to the above conceptual model, following hypotheses for this research are developed for further empirical examination:

Figure 1 Conceptual model of the tourist's behavior in selection of local foods



Direct hypotheses

- H1. There is a significant positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and tourists' purchase intention.
- H2. There is a significant positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and tourist perception.
- H3. There is a significant positive relationship between perceived quality of local food and tourists purchase intention.
- H4. There is a significant positive relationship between perceived quality of local food and tourist perception.
- H5. There is a significant positive relationship between tourist perception and tourist intentions.
- H6. There is a significant positive relationship between tourist intentions and tourist purchase behavior.

Indirect hypotheses

- H7. The relationship of tourist satisfaction and tourists purchase intention mediated by tourist perception.
- H8. The relationship between perceived quality of local food and tourists purchase intention mediated by tourist perception.
- H9. The relationship of tourist satisfaction and tourists purchase behavior mediated by tourist purchase intention.
- H10. The relationship of perceived quality of local food and tourists purchase behavior mediated by tourist purchase intention.
- H11. The relationship of tourist perception and tourists purchase behavior mediated by tourist purchase intentions.

Research methodology and data analysis procedures

Sampling and data collection process

Ideally, to obtain an exact measure of the purchase behavior toward local foods by the tourists offered by various restaurants in KL, Malaysia. By using convenient sampling procedure, survey instrument were distributed to travelers who frequent visits KL. As KL is a multi-cultural city inhabited by Malay, Chinese, Indian and other ethnic origins, it serves as a cultural masterpiece of a city possessing unique characteristics by itself. On the other hand, the megastructure of twin tower and the overall facilities actually make this city vibrant and stimulates holidaymakers (local and international) (Ujang and Muslim, 2014).

According to the KL Structure Plan 2020, the Government of Malaysia has already used up a considerable amount of planning for the tourism development in the city with good facilities, high-tech infrastructure services, launching various international tourism programs and actions. As result, KL is now a friendly destination for all types, tourists (Ujang and Muslim, 2014).

The researchers used 26 items, which was pretested using a convenience sampling procedure. A total of 15 international tourists participated in the pretest to ensure validity of the instrument along with diagnosing possible shortcomings, doubt and with the reliability of the construct's items (DeVellis, 2003). The pre-test also supported construct validity further assisting the researchers to manage the items which were conceptually inconsistent

(Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). Based on this pilot study, the researchers adjusted the ambiguous words and deleted one items from tourists' satisfaction on local food (TSFL) variable to make a suitable for describing the constructs (TSLF, QLF, TP = tourist's perception on local food, TPI = tourist's purchase intention on local food, TB). In total, 25 items were finalized. The questionnaires were written in English. The data for this research were collected using shopping mall intercept procedure where a number of restaurants in KL are established and selling various local food.

In addition, the researchers also collected data (March 2016) from various tourists spots in KL, where considerable restaurants are present. The data were collected through self-administered questionnaire through a well-trained graduate research assistant whom asked if they would be interested in participating in a survey about Malaysian local foods that are selling through restaurants and hotels.

A total of 300 respondents participated in this survey, from which 280 respondent's responses were used for further analysis. In all, 20 instruments were excluded due to incomplete or ambiguous information; out of 280 total respondents, 180 respondents were Muslims, and remaining 100 respondents were non-Muslims participants. An inspection by the demographic variables revealed that 60 per cent of the respondents were male, whereas 40 per cent were female participants. Among the 280 respondents, 70 per cent were married, and 30 per cent were single. The research also revealed that 70 per cent of the respondents were between 30 to 40 years of age categories, 30 per cent were in between 20 to 30 years of age and only 10 per cent of the respondents were above 40 years. In all, 40 per cent of the participants were from Bangladesh followed by 15 per cent of the respondents from India, 10 per cent of the respondents from Pakistan and 5 per cent of the respondents from Singapore nationals. In addition, 20 per cent were from Australia, and 10 per cent were from various European countries.

Operationalization of the instrument

This research adapted a total of 25 items to formulate and design the questionnaire. The questionnaire included constructs pertaining to perceived quality of local foods (five items), tourist satisfaction with local food (five items), tourist's perception (five items), tourist's intention (five items) and tourists purchase behavior of local foods (five items). The questionnaire for this study was developed based on the previous literature and was adopted by the researchers by using the relevant literature review and adjusted for the content validity. The variable tourist's satisfaction was measured by five items adapted from the research by Kivela *et al.* (1999). In addition, the researchers adapted instrument from Rahman (2012) research to measure tourist's perception, intention and behavior. Each construct (tourist's perception, intention and purchase behavior) were measured by five items. Furthermore, the variable perceived quality measured by five items where the items under this construct were adapted from Jang and Namkung (2009). The measurement of the items was tested through a five-point Likert scale (1 = extremely disagree and 5 = extremely agree). This scale has been widely used by the marketing researchers to measure the consumer behavioral direction (by agree or disagree) and intensity (by strongly agree or strongly disagree) (Rocereto *et al.*, 2011). The details of mean and standard deviation of the items are depicted in Table I.

Data analysis procedure

The conceptual framework of this research was examined using CFA and structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. Data were analyzed by two-step approach suggested by (Anderson and Gerbing (1998) and Bagozzi and Yi (1989). This research applied CFA to measure the adequacy of the proposed measurement model (Chang, 1998). In the second

Table I Descriptive statistics for the constructs

Variables name	Variables code	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Tourist satisfaction from local food	TSLF_1	280	1.00	5.00	2.7400	0.88560
	TSLF_2	280	1.00	5.00	2.8400	0.93464
	TSLF_3	280	1.00	5.00	2.7267	0.91883
	TSLF_4	280	1.00	5.00	3.0267	0.89702
	TSLF_5	280	1.00	5.00	2.9733	0.98271
Perceived quality of local foods	QLF_1	280	1.00	5.00	2.3533	0.92784
	QLF_2	280	1.00	5.00	2.3200	0.95059
	QLF_3	280	1.00	5.00	2.1267	0.76234
	QLF_4	280	1.00	5.00	2.2133	0.84016
	QLF_5	280	1.00	5.00	2.1933	0.81674
Tourists perception	TP_1	280	2.00	5.00	4.1000	0.69272
	TP_2	280	1.00	5.00	4.0600	0.69736
	TP_3	280	1.00	5.00	4.0333	0.69915
	TP_4	280	1.00	5.00	4.0333	0.67968
	TP_5	280	1.00	5.00	4.0800	0.67077
Tourists purchase intention	TPI_1	280	1.00	5.00	3.4933	0.97448
	TPI_2	280	1.00	5.00	3.4733	0.92466
	TPI_3	280	1.00	5.00	3.5867	0.92821
	TPI_4	280	1.00	5.00	3.8133	0.75429
	TPI_5	280	1.00	5.00	3.4533	0.91656
Tourists behavior	TB_1	280	2.00	5.00	3.9467	0.59963
	TB_2	280	2.00	5.00	3.8600	0.65569
	TB_3	280	2.00	5.00	4.1267	0.55920
	TB_4	280	1.00	5.00	3.8800	0.66474
	TB_5	280	1.00	5.00	3.7000	0.73958
	Valid N (listwise)	280				

steps, this research tested full structural model by using SEM to detect the causal relationship among the variables. To test the overall model fit this research applied six criteria including chi-square test statistics, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), root mean square residual, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and χ^2/df (Steiger, 1990; Bollen, 1989). Further, a test of mediation effect on intention and purchase behavior was checked by examining direct, indirect and total effect procedure. This allowed researchers to assess the stability of the parameter estimates in the proposed model.

Results and findings

The validity of the questionnaires was assessed through the instrument validity procedures. Thus, the researchers used expert's opinion consisting of five academics and five professional tourist guides who had reviewed the questionnaire to confirm the validity of the items. By considering their suggestion, the study adjusted instrument by improving the content validity via modifying the language for ease of understanding by the target respondents. Moreover, the reliability of the constructs (i.e. tourist's satisfaction from local food, perceived quality of local food, tourist's perception, tourist's purchase intention, tourist's behavior) was tested by using Cronbach's alpha. The result indicates good reliability for the individual construct. The Cronbach's alpha values were acceptable (above 0.70) which are shown in Table II. Therefore, the criterion validity of each construct in this research is also considered satisfactory.

Afterward, the researchers applied confirmatory factor analyses to ensure the construct validity. The measurement model shows how the latent variables are reflected by the observed variables. The model describes the measurement properties of the observed variables with respect to the latent variables (i.e. TSLF, QLF, TP, TPI and TB). The result of

the CFA is highlighted in [Tables III and IV](#). In addition, the research also adjusted the measurement model by deleting one item from the TB construct due to the low loadings of the item (TB_5) ([Figures 2 and 3](#)).

Through the result of CFA, this research also tested convergent, construct and discriminant validity of the instrument. All the items in the measurement model were significant with higher loading (>0.60) that justify the convergent validity of the instrument adapted in this study. In addition, the result of average variance extracted values under each construct's is greater than 0.5 confirming the convergent validity. The revised measurement model ([Figure 3](#)) also achieved the construct validity as all the fitness indexes level were satisfactory ([Table IV](#)). Above all, the revised measurement model ([Figure 3](#)) is free from the redundant items as one of the items under TB was deleted due to its low loadings (TB_5). The results from the CFA analysis show that the correlations are all greater than zero and large enough to proceed with discriminant validity. Therefore, the variables in this research confirmed the construct, convergent and discriminant validity.

After CFA, this research applied an SEM approach which is a multivariate statistical process that incorporates both observed and latent variables ([Aldawani and Palvai, 2002](#)). In our proposed conceptual framework, TSLF, QLF, TP and TPI are considered as exogenous variables, whereas TB is considered as an endogenous one.

Moreover, TP and TPI served as endogenous and exogenous variables (i.e. mediating factors). The results extracted from the SEM analysis indicate that all the direct relationships among the independent variables toward their respective dependent variables were significant except the QLF and TPI (i.e. *H3*) ([Figure 4](#)). Thus, this research confirmed that the relationship between QLF and TPI was not significant ([Table V](#)); therefore, *H3* was rejected. To test the effect of mediation, the researchers revised the model by deleting the insignificant path (QLF \rightarrow TPI). By using the path analysis, the predicted relationships

Table II Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the measurement of questionnaire reliability

<i>Variables name</i>	<i>No. of items used</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha (α)</i>
Tourist satisfaction from local food	5	TSLF_1	0.870
		TSLF_2	
		TSLF_3	
		TSLF_4	
		TSLF_5	
Perceived quality of local food	5	QLF_1	0.821
		QLF_2	
		QLF_3	
		QLF_4	
		QLF_5	
Tourists perception	5	TP_1	0.840
		TP_2	
		TP_3	
		TP_4	
		TP_5	
Tourists purchase intention	5	TPI_1	0.712
		TPI_2	
		TPI_3	
		TPI_4	
		TPI_5	
Tourists behavior	5	TB_1	0.782
		TB_2	
		TB_3	
		TB_4	
		TB_5	

Table III CFA result for revised measurement model

Construct name	Item code	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha (α)	CR (construct reliability)	AVE
Tourist satisfaction from local food	TSLF_1	0.64	0.870	0.874	0.582
	TSLF_2	0.74			
	TSLF_3	0.77			
	TSLF_4	0.75			
	TSLF_5	0.76			
Quality of local foods	QLF_1	0.78	0.921	0.923	0.706
	QLF_2	0.82			
	QLF_3	0.88			
	QLF_4	0.86			
	QLF_5	0.85			
Tourists perception	TP_1	0.80	0.940	0.940	0.759
	TP_2	0.82			
	TP_3	0.91			
	TP_4	0.93			
	TP_5	0.82			
Tourists purchase intention	TPI_1	0.76	0.912	0.915	0.683
	TPI_2	0.87			
	TPI_3	0.85			
	TPI_4	0.88			
	TPI_5	0.76			
Tourists behavior	TB_1	0.76	0.825	0.829	0.548
	TB_2	0.74			
	TB_3	0.74			
	TB_4	0.71			
	TB_5	Item deleted due to low factor loading			

Table IV Overall CFA result

Measurement model	RMSEA	GFI	CFI	Chi-square/df
Default	0.046	0.904	0.967	1.716
Revised	0.045	0.908	0.969	1.729
Comments	Within the range 0.05 to 1.00 thus, the required level is achieved	The required level is achieved	The required level is achieved	The required level is achieved

among exogenous and endogenous constructs were tested by using maximum likelihood estimation method to estimate the structural parameters of the proposed new model (Figure 5). The revised model proved acceptable fit to the data as suggested by Hu and Bentler's (1999) range, i.e. normed chi-square = 2.62; $p < 0.05$; RMSEA = 0.057; CFI = 0.92; GFI = 0.91; NFI = 0.93 and AGFI = 0.90.

All the structural path estimates were significant at the 0.01 level (Table VI). As predicted, $H1$ is supported by the data significantly in this research; satisfaction on local food had a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.396$, $t = 6.697$, $P = 0.00$). The structural result also supported that TSLF was positively related to TP (i.e. $H2$) ($\beta = 0.256$, $t = 5.287$, $P = 0.00$), and QLF was also significantly influenced by TP (i.e. $H4$) ($\beta = 0.115$, $t = 2.469$, $P = 0.014$). Furthermore, it was also found that TP was significantly related to TPI ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 5.949$, $P = 0.000$); thus, this research accepted $H5$. Meanwhile, TPI was

Figure 2 CFA result for the default model

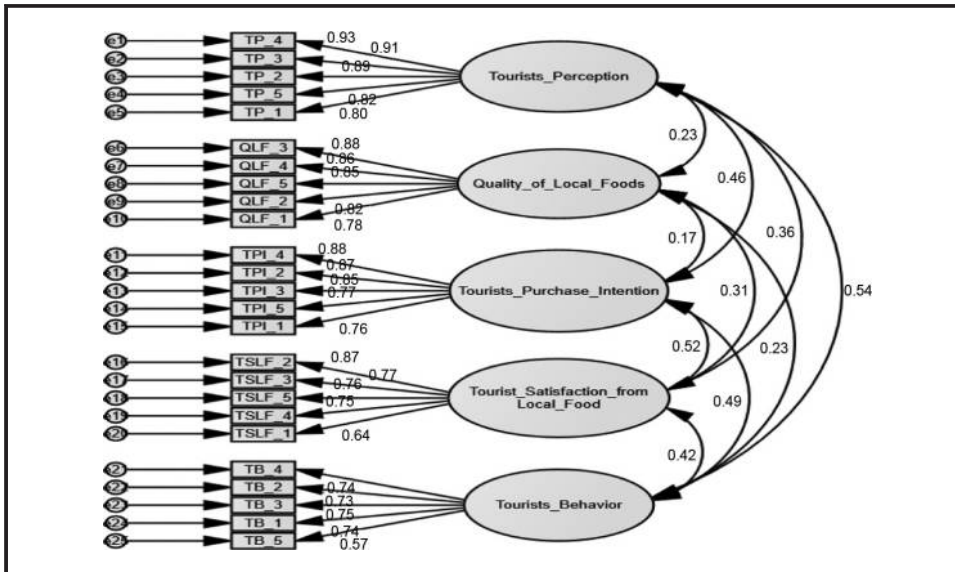
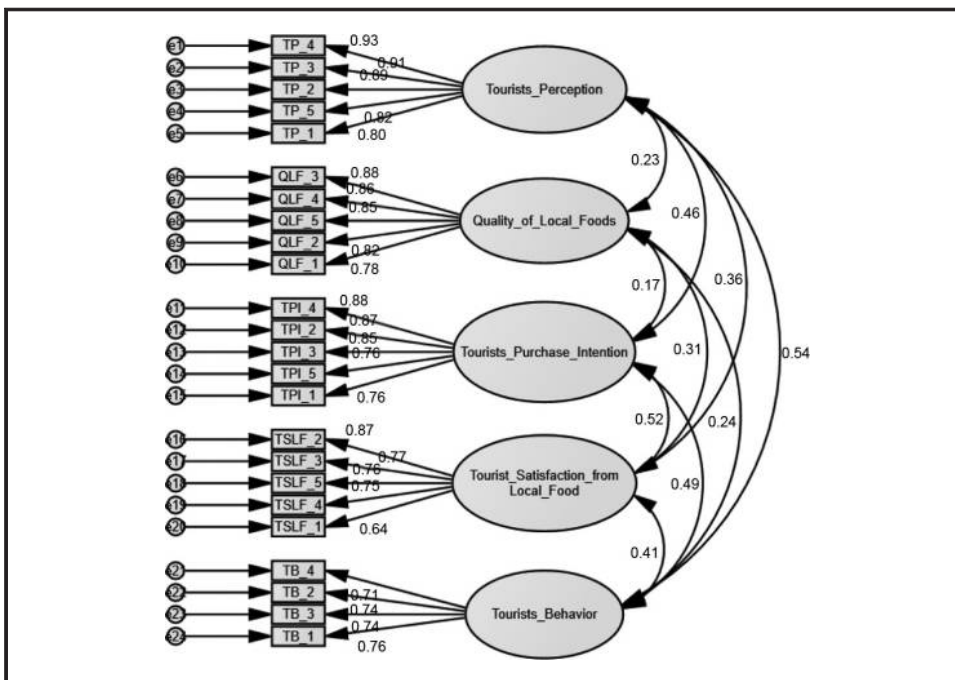


Figure 3 CFA result of the revised model



influenced by TB ($\beta = 0.341$, $t = 7.950$, $P = 0.000$) (i.e. $H6$). Therefore, the research accepted all the direct hypotheses (i.e. $H1$, $H2$, $H4$, $H5$ and $H6$) except $H3$.

The mediating effects of TP and TPI in the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1) were tested by using Baron and Kenny's methods (Baron and Kenny, 1986). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation effect on the relationships between an independent variable and dependent variable takes place when four conditions are met. First, each of

Figure 4 Structural model of the proposed relationship to test the direct effect among the variables

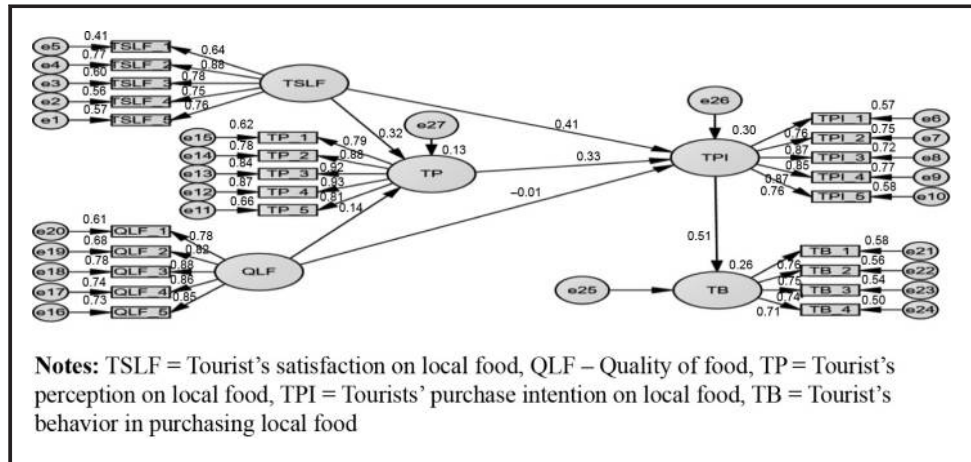


Table V The direct effect of the construct

No.	Hypothesis path	Beta estimate	SE	CR	p-value
H1	TSLF → TPI	0.399	0.060	6.613	***
H2	TSLF → TP	0.256	0.048	5.283	***
H3	QLF → TPI	-0.014	0.052	-0.278	0.781
H4	QLF → TP	0.115	0.047	2.470	0.014
H5	TP → TPI	0.413	0.070	5.929	***
H6	TPI → TB	0.340	0.043	7.948	***

Note: *** $p < 0.05$

Figure 5 Revised structural model after deleting insignificant path of the proposed relationship to test the direct effect among the variables

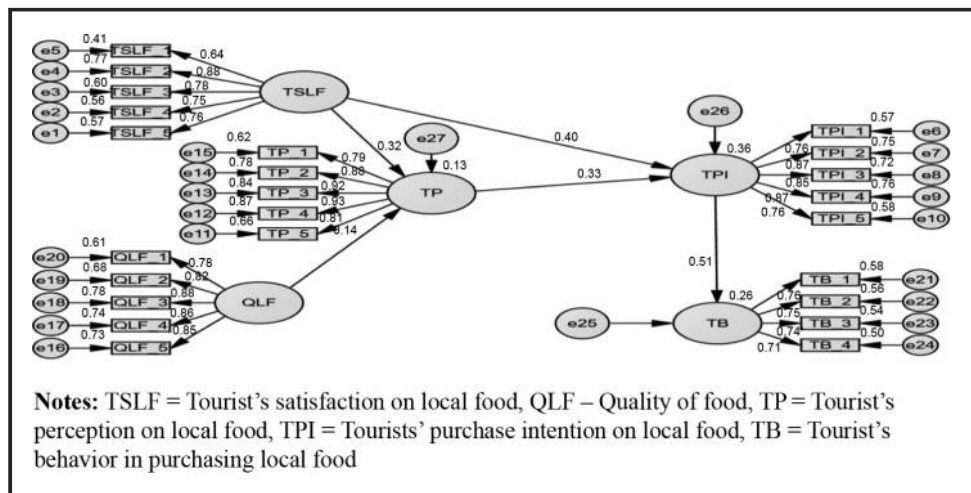


Table VI Revised structural model after deleting insignificant path of the proposed relationship to test the direct effect among the variables

No.	Hypothesis path	Beta estimate	SE	CR	p-value	Result
H1	TSLF → TPI	0.396	0.059	6.697	***	Sig
H2	TSLF → TP	0.256	0.048	5.287	***	Sig
H3	QLF → TPI	Path was deleted due to insignificant path				
H4	QLF → TP	0.115	0.047	2.469	0.014	Sig
H5	TP → TPI	0.410	0.069	5.949	***	Sig
H6	TPI → TB	0.341	0.043	7.950	***	Sig

Note: *** $p < 0.05$

the independent variables significantly has an effect on the corresponding mediators. Second, the mediators have a significant effect on the corresponding dependent variable (TPI). Third, each of the independent variables significantly has an effect on the dependent variables with the absence of the mediators. Fourth, the effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable is significantly reduced upon the addition of the mediator variable (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Table VII represents the results of the mediation analysis. Based on the results extracted from SEM analysis, this research revealed that the role of mediation of TP is insignificant in between TSLF and TPI. As a result, this research rejected H7. H8, H10 and H11 were also proved insignificant. Thus, this research revealed that the mediation effect of TP is not significant in between the relationship of QLF and TPI. Meanwhile, the result also supports that the relationship of QLF and TB mediated by TPI is not significant. Furthermore, the relationship of TP and TB mediated by TPI is not significant. Interestingly, the mediation role of TPI in between TSLF and TB proved significant. Thus, this research accepted H9 (Figure 6, Tables VI and VII).

Discussion

This study focused on the TB by the tourists and contributed to research on food-related experience in the tourism industry while addressing satisfaction, perceived quality, perception and intention by empirically examining contributing factors for travelers confirming to local food-related behaviors. The study was conducted at KL, as it attracts numerous visitors and is considered a high food traffic destination city (especially for traditional foods).

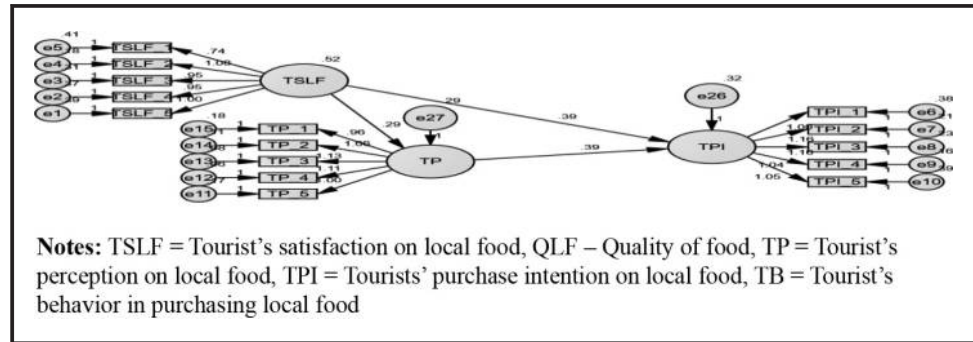
The researchers agreed that local food needs to be served in restaurants to enhance a restatutant's image and create high level of satisfaction and positive quality perception. As Malaysia is a country with diversity and excitement and reflects local food with three major cultural paradigms, the researchers believe that local food can potentially become one of the main attractions for the travelers, especially in a city with high volume of tourists visits such as KL.

In general, the policymakers need to promote local food through promotional activities to differentiate the process of sustainable local food tourism development (Sims, 2009).

Table VII Summarize the degree of mediation variables

Hypotheses no.	Hypotheses path	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Degree of mediation	
H7	TSLF → TP → TPI	0.288	0.000	0.288	No mediation	
H8	QLF → TP → TPI	Path was deleted due to insignificant path				
H9	TSLF → TPI → TB	0.393	0.112	0.504	Mediation	
H10	QLF → TPI → TP	Path was deleted due to insignificant path				
H11	TP → TPI → TB	0.388	0.000	0.388	No mediation	

Figure 6 Meditation test



As food is an indispensable component of the travelers' behavior and is an essential part of the tourist's daily routine activities, comprising major expenses by tourists' (Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000), understanding factors such as satisfaction and perceived quality are important for restaurants (selling local food) to influence tourist's purchase behavior (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2012; Swanson and Timothy, 2012).

Conclusions

The SEM results supported 6 research hypotheses out of 11. Based on the results, managers of restaurants need to understand tourist's perception and satisfaction, along with the perceived quality of local foods and purchase intention (local food) which are demonstrated as being significant factors in influencing tourist's purchase behavior of local foods. Thus, it is essential to provide well-perceived quality by ensuring a higher level of satisfaction which will influence perception and intention toward purchasing local foods toward a specific restaurant in KL. The research also revealed that the food sellers should stress upon tourist's purchase intention to enhance the relationship between satisfaction and purchase behavior.

TSLF is significantly influenced by TPI in consuming local foods. The results thus provide an empirical support to prior scholarly findings which suggest that a positive relationship exists between tourist's satisfaction and purchase intention (Okumus *et al.*, 2007; Kim *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, the findings also indicate that satisfaction constructs and purchase intention along with perceived service quality and perception are significantly related to each other (Nummedal and Hall, 2006; Henderson, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2009).

Additionally, the structural result also demonstrates the relationships between perceived quality of local foods and tourist's perception; tourist's perception and intention to purchase; and lastly tourist's intention to purchase and tourist's purchase behavior of local food are significant and positive (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Kim *et al.*, 2011; Weiermair, 2000; Alexandris *et al.*, 2002).

The study also found that tourist's purchase intention has a mediation effect between tourist's satisfaction and tourist's purchase behavior of local foods at a particular destination (i.e. KL), thus providing strong empirical support (Zabkar *et al.*, 2010; Del Bosque and San Martín, 2008; Lee *et al.*, 2008). For instance, QLF (freshness) was considered an important issue serving as an intrinsic cue for international tourists. Moreover, purchase intention and satisfaction was related to tourist's behavior. For example, the concern of halal foods revealed as a perceived quality paradigm rather than a requirement.

The research findings revealed that positive perception may influence intention which ultimately has an effect on purchase behavior of local foods. Therefore, information about local restaurants must be visible to the tourists via promotional tools (i.e. social media, billboard, various consumer engagement programs) to enhance purchase behavior.

Meanwhile, tourists are satisfied only after forming a positive perception about the quality of local foods. Thus, the unique features of the foods and the places where it is served are also important factors to create a positive perception to enhance the intention to form tourist's purchase behavior.

While travelers value original, local test and healthy foods, perceived quality (of the local foods) is also considered a fundamental aspect of food purchasing behavior in a tourist destination such as KL. Thus, the study indicates that tourists will purchase local foods once satisfied. Moreover, the perceived quality of local food must also be within the expected level of the tourists.

Theoretical implications

One of the main contributions of this research is confirming the relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived quality which affects tourist's purchase behavior of local food. In addition, the research further contributes by confirming satisfaction and purchase behavior strongly relates in the presence of purchase intention. Previous researchers have shown the significant role of food from the perspective of other countries (Gyimóthy and Mykletun, 2009). This research, however, highlights the antecedents of the purchase behavior of local foods embedded by satisfaction, perceived quality, perception and intention constructs in "one size fits all" framework for a high visitor traffic city such as KL.

In terms of theoretical contribution, the study has identified factors contributing to purchase behavior of international tourists, namely, satisfaction, perception, perceived quality and intention to purchase local food in KL, Malaysia.

Among the several theories, the current research also contributed to the theory of reasoned action (TRA) which seems to be more appropriate as the core theoretical foundation of the present study to better understand and develop the conceptualization of behavioral intention to purchase a particular goods or services (Lujja *et al.*, 2017). TRA was developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and is widely accepted by scholar to explain behavioral intention that reflects the antecedents of consumer's intended behavior (Davis *et al.*, 1989). As, Barnes (2014) argued that TRA is one of the theories that assist the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of consumer behavior, attitude and intention toward purchasing a products or services.

In view of the theory, to enhance the individual TBs, restaurants (selling local food) need to develop promotional activities such as generating positive word-of-mouth focusing on advertising and public relations activities. Similarly, hotel authorities should develop strategies focusing on understanding tourist's behavior which is shaped by satisfaction, service quality, perception and intention constructs (Buttle and Bok, 1996). Above all, the current research also contributes to tourist satisfaction and purchase behavior (López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Canizares, 2012) by reflecting tourists' intention to purchase local food.

Managerial implications

Malaysia is a country of diverse culture and is embedded with diversified natural resources (Mohd Isa and Ramli, 2014). Therefore, local foods represent a key element which attracts both local and foreign tourists from various destinations (Karim *et al.*, 2009; Rahman, 2012; Jang and Namkung, 2009), especially in a tourist hotspot such as KL. The outcome from this research not only generates theoretical implications but also makes some practical implications. For example, by understanding the significant role of local foods affecting the

purchase behavior of tourists, hospitality and tourism industry players may benefit from the findings.

The role of local food characteristics, such as perceived quality and satisfaction needs to be considered to create a positive perception and intention toward purchase behavior of tourists (with regards to local food).

The finding from this research may also assist the tourism promoters to consider the constructs of the proposed model (Figure 1) when developing marketing strategies for selling and positioning their local food through restaurants and hotels in KL. Therefore, the research outcome can be used by the players in the industry to promote local foods by optimizing customers satisfaction through enhancing local food-related tourism packages by travel agencies (i.e. travel guides, brochures, online social networks, the ministry of tourism websites, hotel websites).

Thus, marketing efforts need to focus on tourists perception by improving local foods consumption through the following:

- improving serving methods;
- restaurant environment;
- presenting local foods variety; and
- other sensory properties that influence tourist's intention to purchase local foods from the restaurants or hotels.

Hence, integration and collaboration of food operators with tourism ministry and other government authorities are vital to strengthen the industry in promoting local foods. The result also reflect that attracting and motivating potential tourists traveling to a destination require various awareness programs to build the identity and the uniqueness of the local foods offered by restaurants and hotels in major tourist's destination.

This research also suggests that industry players need to devote attention to television food-related programs (cooking) in countries where a prospective number of tourists' may intend to visit the destination such as KL, Malaysia. Above all, travelers also expect the food to be authentic, with locality flavor, sense of uniqueness in tastes, healthiness and potential safe (i.e. Hygienic); thus, promotional attention by the stakeholders is vital.

Consequently, the dimensions of perceived service quality, satisfaction, perception and intention should support and enhance the tourist's purchase behavior to create a long-term loyalty to enhance re-visit intention of tourists. Furthermore, the findings of this paper will also assist Malaysian ministry of tourism in developing new strategies to further enhance the Malaysian local food industry serving as an engine for growth in the Malaysian economy.

Direction for further research

This study is one of the pioneers attempt to investigate the antecedents pertaining to purchase behavior of local foods within the tourism industry in KL, Malaysia. Although the researchers highlight some limitations, these can be fruitful avenues for future research. First, this study was conducted in KL and applied convenience sampling method with 280 usable respondent's response. Further research in this area could use a larger sample size or multiple countries to compare similarities or differences in TB of other tourist destination cities within Malaysia. Second, the current study only considers satisfaction, perceived quality, perception and intention constructs to measure the purchase behavior of local foods. Future studies may cover local foods of their destinations as well as various nationalities of tourists. In addition, research may also investigate the determinants that change the perception due to the destination of local

foods before, during and after a trip. Other studies may test the moderating effect of perceived value, gender role and other demographic variables in between the relationship of purchase intention and purchase behavior. Future research is also needed to address the identities of various tourist's specification which falls beyond the current prescribed behavioral typologies of this study. For example, future research could be conducted on how mothering can affect behavior and preferences of foods while travelling toward specific destination. Research may also be extended to address various food allergies that can affect purchase intention and satisfaction. Lastly, the research has emphasized on managers of restaurants to sell local food but not street food. As street foods are "ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors or hawkers especially in the streets and other similar places" (Privitera and Nesci, 2015, p. 718), it was not considered in this study. Researchers may indulge in addressing this issue. Despite these limitations, this research contributes to the local food-related tourism studies by measuring tourist's purchase behavior in regards to local food based on a rigorous empirical examination.

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