Different food related experience among tourists with different mode of travelling: The case of Malaysia

Roozbeh Babolian Hendijani & Huey Chern Boo
Faculty of Food Science & Technology
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Introduction
Tourist behaviour has been a major topic of research for decades under assessment in tourism studies (Huang & Xiao, 2000). What tourists do, and why they do it has interested researchers in tourism industry. Analysing travel markets by mode of travel represents a relatively new but potentially powerful means of providing a more in-depth understanding of tourist behaviour. Previous studies compared backpack and mass tourists in terms of their purchase behaviour (Richards & Wilson, 2004), choice of accommodation (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995), and socio-demographic (Vogt, 1976). The importance of food and eating out on trips and holidays is supported by previous researches (Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Telfer & Wall, 2000). Food was documented as one of the most enjoyable activities that tourists undertook during their holiday (Ryan, 1997). It was recently found that food is an essential component in the tourist experience (Hall & Sharple, 2003). None of the previous researches compare these two groups in term of different aspects of food related experiences at destination. Therefore, this research was undertaken to identify the differences of food related experiences between backpackers and mass tourists to Malaysia.
Methodology

To measure the differences of food related experiences among tourists during their stay in Malaysia, self-administrated questionnaires were collected by 2 trained enumerators which were through distributed randomly to tourists waiting for their flights in the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and other popular touristic areas in Kuala Lumpur. The self-administered questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section includes 9 questions of different food related experiences items (Jalis et al., 2009; Yang & Wall, 2009; Buruk et al., 2008; Yu & Goulden, 2006; Locker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). 4 socio-demographic questions (gender, marital status, number of coming, and mode of travelling) were measured in the second section. The questionnaire was prepared in three languages – English, Chinese, and Arabic. Independent sample t-test was employed to compare differences between backpacker and mass tourists in terms of different food related experiences items. Descriptive analyses were also performed.

Results

A total of 397 (83.8 % response rate) responses were used in the analysis. The distribution of backpackers and mass tourists was almost equal with backpackers slightly higher (n=206, 51.9%). Most of the respondents were first time visitors (70.3%). Result of the marital status analysis shows that the number of married respondents was slightly higher (51.1%) than singles. The findings show significant differences (ρ<.05) between backpackers and mass tourists in respect to most of food related experiences. Findings revealed there is a significant difference between items and mode of travel; except there was no significant difference between modes of travel with regards to have a unique experience after trying Malaysian food (t=1.663, ρ= .097). The results support the previous findings which mentioned backpackers are more adventurous and like to add their knowledge by having new experience with different activities in destinations (Yang & Wall, 2009; Yu and Goulden, 2006; Richards
Clearly, the results reveal the differences of food related experiences among tourists who came with different mode of travelling and therefore it will help marketers by providing the basis for developing ideas for food positioning and advertising strategy development.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the findings from this research provide support for the current definition of food related experiences among tourists based on their mode of travelling. Previous findings also revealed that backpackers and mass tourists have dissimilar behaviour in destination (Poria, Biran, and Reichel, 2009; Yang & Wall, 2009). Each of these two segments comprises a significant portion of the vacation market. Furthermore, significant differences occurred across most of the measured variables in terms of food related experiences. This research suggests that while food may carry various important meaning for some visitors, at the same time it may have no significant meaning to others. Consequently, it appears that Cohen’s conceptualization (1979) of tourists seeking desired levels of novelty by using various levels of tourist infrastructure supplies a useful basis for segmenting the tourist market based on mode of travelling in Malaysia. Results will help tourism organizers, stakeholders, and NGOs to be knowledgeable about different tourists market and conduct effective target marketing.

**References**


Hall, C.M. and Sharples, L. (2003). The consumption of experiences or the experience of consumption? An introduction to the tourism of taste. In C.M. Hall, L. Sharples, R.


