

Ethnic food and its implications for destination tourism in Asia

As the Guest Editors of this special issue in *British Food Journal* on *Ethnic Food and Its Implications for Destination Tourism in Asia*, we are pleased to present 18 articles from researchers across Asia, Middle East and European countries. As our main areas of research are marketing and consumer behaviour, we have been very much interested in issues pertaining to food-related behaviours and tourism activities as well as methodological advances to provide better estimations about the phenomena under investigation (Cheah *et al.*, 2018; Ing *et al.*, 2019; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2019; Shmueli *et al.*, 2019; Ting *et al.*, 2016, 2017, 2019). These experiences led us to propose and come out with this special issue. It covers the current behavioural issues in ethnic food marketing and destination tourism such as food choice motives, perceived risks and values, consumption intention, regulatory focus, food neophobia, online reviews, words of mouth and destination imagery processing. The manuscripts were submitted to us through the submission system of Emerald Publishing and went through peer-review process to ensure their relevance and quality. Moreover, we did our best to not desk reject any manuscripts and provided authors the opportunity to resubmit as a new submission whenever necessary. Subsequently, 18 revised manuscripts were accepted for publication in the special issue. Out of all these published articles, 11 of them adopted quantitative approach, three adopted qualitative methods, three used mixed-methods design and one appropriated a systematic review approach.

The first article, *Using food choice motives to model Pakistani ethnic food purchase intention among tourists*, examines the impact of different food choice motives on tourists' attitude and subsequently the impact of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on the purchase intention towards Pakistani ethnic food. In order to understand such phenomenon, the study integrates food choice motives theory and theory of planned behaviour (TPB). Mood, familiarity, natural content and price are found to be significant predictors of attitude while attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control are found to positively affect intention to purchase Pakistani ethnic food. The study also confirms the mediating role of attitude in the relationships between the determinants (mood, familiarity, sensory appeal and price) and purchase intention.

The second article titled *Food authenticity as one of the stimuli to world heritage sites* examines the relationships between authenticity, attachment and intention to recommend. Two Malaysian-based world heritage sites, namely, Melaka and George Town, are used as the focal destinations. The authors first utilise qualitative approach to discover the authenticity dimensions and later examine the dimensions' capacity in predicting attachment and intention to recommend using a quantitative approach. The three sub-dimensions of authenticity, namely, objective, existential and food authenticity, are significant stimuli of intention to recommend. The relationships between objective and existential authenticities and intention to recommend are mediated by attachment. Grounded on the push-pull motivation theory, the authors further examine the moderating effect of cultural motivation, highlighting that the impact of objective, constructive and existential authenticities on attachment differs by tourists' cultural motivation level.

The third article with the title *I see, and I hunt: The link between gastronomy online reviews, involvement and behavioural intention towards ethnic food* examines how gastronomy online reviews influence the Gen Y tourists' intention to taste ethnic food. It also looks into involvement as a mediator and variety-seeking as a moderator in the hypothesized relationships. Gastronomy online reviews are examined based on how these reviews inspire



taste desire, taste awareness and facilitate interpersonal interaction. While the study confirms the mediating role of involvement and the moderating role of variety-seeking, it further reveals that generating empathy and social influence approach are only effective to younger tourists if involvement is strengthened. Approaches to generate empathy is likely to inspire taste desire and induce intention to taste ethnic food.

The fourth article is about understanding the relationship between experience economy and ethnic cuisine. Titled *Experience economy in ethnic cuisine: a case of Chengdu cuisine*, the study explores the effect of experience economy on tourists' word-of-mouth through satisfaction and memory. By examining the experience economy components such as aesthetic, escapism, education and entertainment, the study confirms the relationship between experience economy and memory as well as the effect of satisfaction and memory on word-of-mouth amongst the tourists who have consumed Chengdu cuisine. Integrating the three senses towards Chinese cuisine (i.e. sight, smell and taste), aesthetic is found to be the antecedent of the three realms of experience economy, while these realms significantly influence memory. Local restaurateurs are thus recommended to utilise aesthetic and entertainment aspects to exemplify the characteristics of local culture and ethnic cuisine.

The fifth article, *A dining table without food: the floral experience at ethnic fine dining restaurants*, is about a study conducted on international tourists who visited Malacca for healthy signature food, and most of them are advanced in age. Adopting Schmitt's experience module, this study investigates the aesthetic experience of restaurants. Sensory stimulation within the restaurant atmosphere is found to have a specific emotional impact on tourist experience which in turn reinforces the restaurant's brand image. The findings indicate that most tourists prefer European floral design styles in restaurants. Adopting the floral style preference scale and a tourist floral experience scale, they not only view restaurant environment with floral arrangement as relaxing but also correlate it to various aspects of touring experiences positively.

The sixth article with the title *Food tourism destinations' imagery processing model* adopts qualitative research method in building a theoretical model of food tourism destination imagery processing. To examine how destination imagery is processed in tourists' memories upon the reception of verbal stimuli, online multilingual responses in 36 languages are collected and a comparative analysis is used to compare the imagery of food tourism destinations held by Asians and Europeans tourists. Differences are found between the type of destinations and the imagery processing by European and Asian tourists. Destination imagery is found to lean towards the holistic dimension when triggered by a food tourism destination stimulus, and the functional attributes are the dominant factors. The study also argues a possible relationship between cultural background and destination imagery processing characteristics. It is surmised that European destination marketers should highlight regional promotion and the Asian counterparts should focus on city destinations.

The seventh article examines the influence of personality traits such as food neophobia and domain specific innovativeness on tourists' revisit intention towards food festivals in India where unfamiliar food items are served. Titled *The relationship between food neophobia, domain-specific innovativeness, and food festival revisit intentions: a structural equation modeling approach*, the collected data were analysed using the covariance-based structural equation modelling technique. The findings indicate a significant and positive influence of domain specific innovativeness on consumers' revisit intention towards food festival. Food neophobia, however, is found to be an insignificant determinant. This is likely due to the higher level of familiarity towards the food items as well as the socio-demographic factors. High income status and educational level could lead to greater exposure to culturally diverse cuisine, hence resulting in lower resistance to foreign food.

The eighth article, *Experiences of international tourists with healthy signature foods: a case study in Malacca*, investigates the experiences of international tourists with healthy signature

food at a cultural destination, and explores the perceptions of food providers regarding the preparation of dishes. Healthy signature food at tourist destinations has become a crucial factor that can determine tourists' revisit intention towards a destination. Grounded on the Urry's tourist gaze theory, semi-structured interview is used to elicit four themes, namely, memorable food experiences, food hygiene consciousness, cultural values and tourist happiness. These themes or factors are found to have a direct impact on tourists' satisfaction and intention to revisit. Other aspects, such as type of trip, trip frequency and the purpose of trip, also influence tourists' experience with healthy signature food.

The ninth article is about an ethnic food in Borneo. Titled *Touring destination and intention to consume indigenous food: a case of Kadazan-Dusun food in Sabah*, the article investigates the factors contributing to indigenous food consumption amongst the tourists from China, European countries and non-Sabahan Malaysians. Data are collected at the tourist spots in Sabah and are analysed using the partial least squares structural equation modelling. The findings demonstrate that tourists from China and Europe possess some similarities in which they enjoy trying indigenous food in Sabah even if they are not or less familiar with it. In addition, the findings also show that sensory appeals in term of fragrance, look and taste are critical to the Chinese tourists. Malaysian tourists, in turn, are more dependent on their mood when consuming indigenous food.

The 10th article, *Exploring the food tourism landscape and sustainable economic development goals in Dhofar Governorate, Oman: maximising stakeholder benefits in the destination*, explores the food tourism landscape and sustainable economic development goals in Oman using mixed methods design. This includes the identification of the natural and human resources needed to expand food tourism pathways to achieve sustainable economic development. Combining both quantitative and qualitative research, the study uses case study, trend analysis, pilot key government stakeholder survey, direct and participative observation, factory tours as well as interviews with key executives of the respective factories to explore the subject matter. Evidently, the study considers seasonality issues and options for expanding main tourism season as well as highlights the importance of placing food tourism development on a sustainable footing.

Moving to East Asia, the 11th article explores the characteristics of risk, namely, likelihood and consequence of risk perception and its influence on tourist future travel intention to Macau. Titled *Travel destination choice: does perception of food safety risk matter*, the study confirms that the characteristics of risk have a significant impact on the likelihood and consequence of risk perception and subsequently travel intention. Interestingly, demographics amongst tourists play an essential role. For instance, women are more concerned about food risks than men; and similarly, the older tourists are risk-averse more than the younger ones. While likelihood of occurrence is measured by physical loss and social loss, consequence of occurrence is determined by time loss and social loss. The study thus concludes that social loss is an important component of food risk perception. Government and travel industry should improve and regulate food hygiene standard to prevent the occurrence of food risk and to better manage the consequences.

Hungry for more: understanding young domestic travellers' return for Penang street food, the 12th article investigates the process that leads to revisit behaviour to Penang for its multi-ethnic street food. Utilising the ABC model of attitude and the theory of consumption values, it looks into the predictive role of value dimensions on attitude and intention amongst the young domestic travellers. Taste value is found to be the most salient variable to influence their attitude towards street food, followed by emotional value. Epistemic value is found to be less influential in determining their attitude towards street food. The study also establishes the mediating role of place attachment in the attitude–intention relationship. Interestingly, health value and price value are not a concern to the young travellers. It is hence concluded that a destination revisit for street food consumption is greatly affective driven. Emotional

bond or connection with a destination is just as crucial as the good taste of the food consumed in a destination.

The 13th article, *When in Rome, do as the Romans do: Factors influencing international students' intention to consume local food in Malaysia*, looks into a huge and potentially lucrative segment product of the tourism industry in Malaysia, namely the local Malay food and its relation to education tourism. The study examines the international students' intention to consumer local food utilising the TPB. Drawing on the theory, it examines the effect of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control of the international students on their intention to consumer Malay food when studying in Malaysia. All three components of TPB are found to influence intention to consume local food significantly, with subjective norm as the most influential predictor. The findings provide the implications about food and destination selection amongst the foreign students when they are studying abroad.

Titled *Regulatory focus and message framing's effects on intention to consume ethnic food in China*, the 14th article examines the factors motivating consumers' intention to consume ethnic food with food neophobia as the mediator and message framing as the moderator. By conducting two lab experiments in China, it exhibits that regulatory fit encourages higher intention to try ethnic food. People with promotion-focus tend to have higher food neophobia, which leads to lower intention to eat ethnic food. While they also tend to have higher intention to eat ethnic food in a gain-framing situation, prevention-focus individuals show higher intention to try in a loss-framing situation. The authors hence propose the importance of utilising effective regulatory focus and message framing in market destinations for different regions with diverse cultural backgrounds through appealing message framing. The study also suggests to put more effort on promotion-focus consumers rather than those with prevention-focus consumers when promoting the consumption of ethnic foods.

The 15th article with the title *Being a vegetarian traveller is not easy* utilises a mixed-methods approach to examine the interrelationships of vegetarian travellers' travel motivations, travel constraints, constraint negotiations and behavioural intentions with special reference to the extent dietary constraints deter them from travelling. The sample includes vegetarian travellers who are either lacto-ovo vegetarians or vegans. Another group of travellers are further sampled and data are collected by means of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Predominated by the non-vegetarian travellers, there is less research attention paid to these groups of travellers who have special food intake requirements. The findings indicate that though some vegetarian travellers have effectively negotiated their food intake constraints, their travelling intention is greatly deterred by their dietary constraints, notably in the company of non-vegetarians. In such event, they might have to compromise their dietary requirements or change their travelling plans consequently.

The 16th article explores the interactions of experience, intimacy and embodiment from the lens of alternative tourism and Asia as a destination image. Different from the other articles pertaining to the scenario in Malaysia which are quantitative in design, *Eat, work, love: alternative tourists' connection with ethnic food* adopts qualitative approach by means of focus group interviews to explore young tourists' experiential learning trips and spiritual journeys across Asia Pacific region. From the study, the authors develop the Ethnic Foodies Perspective-Ethnic Food Destination Image matrix by examining the interaction of experience, intimacy and embodiment in the case of alternative tourism. In addition, the study also confirms that the younger tourists view Asian food as something decorative, pretty, nice, cheap and having quality nutrients. They enjoy discovering food by themselves without the presence of the hosts and significant others. Spiritual attachment is found to be an important factor in determining the acceptance of ethnic food.

Moving to South Asia, the 17th article with the title *Factors influencing tourist's satisfaction, loyalty and word of mouth in selection of local foods in Pakistan* investigates the relationships between tourist satisfaction, loyalty and word-of mouth in selecting local food in

Pakistan in the tourism context. A quantitative approach by means of questionnaire-based survey is adopted to collect data from tourists in Pakistan. The findings confirm the significant influences of satisfaction on loyalty and subsequently, loyalty on words of mouth. With the exception of interpersonal interaction quality, food quality, perceived environmental quality, perceived value and service quality are also found to have a significant and positive impact on tourist's satisfaction.

The final article, titled *Destination food research: a bibliometric citation review (2000–2018)*, delves into destination food research. A total of 176 articles published on hospitality and tourism journals during the period 2000–2018 and the bibliometric data downloaded from the ISI Web of Science are reviewed. The authors use bibliometric analysis, citation network analysis and content analysis to demonstrate the development and trends of destination food research as well as address the limitations of prior systematic literature reviews. Amongst the interesting findings are: (1) qualitative research method remains the most prominent research approach; (2) USA and China are the two main contributors to the destination food research; (3) travellers' perspectives and strategic food tourism development are the main research hotspots and (4) six research themes are identified, namely, destination food image and destination choice, the food experience and destination image, food experiences during travel, information sources of destination food, food festivals and local food in destinations. This review can be used as a reference guide for future destination food research.

Asian consumers are known for their diversity and uniqueness. A better understanding of this market or segments of consumers is pivotal to destination marketing in tourism and hospitality research and practice. We hope that our special issue contributes to the extant literature on ethnic food and destination tourism as well as provides useful information, and guidance to researchers and practitioners in the relevant fields and sectors. To conclude this Editorial, we would like to thank to all those submitted their manuscripts for publication consideration and the reviewers who took up their precious time to provide constructive feedbacks and comments.

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