

STRUCTURING TOURISTS' INTENTION ON LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE: TESTING MEDIATING EFFECT OF SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the factors influencing the tourists' purchase intention of local food by testing the mediating effect of satisfaction. The research employed a self-administered questionnaire of 250 foreign tourists from the major cities in Malaysia. The resulting data were analysed with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques. The result of the data analysis revealed that the mediation effect of tourists' satisfaction plays a partial mediation role in between service quality and purchase intention of the local foods. Interestingly, all the direct relationships were also accepted. The results from this study can be used for looking in-depth nature of service quality, customer satisfaction and their purchase intention under the perspective on food tourism. Thus, the findings of this research may assist the ministry of tourism, higher education scholar and professional bodies to understand in details about the issues of service quality and customer satisfaction under the context of tourists' purchase intention of local foods.

Key words: Service Quality, Customers Satisfaction, Purchase Intention, Tourism

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the most attractive and potential industries in an economy (Som & Badarneh, 2011). In Malaysia, the rate of foreign tourists' has started since 2004 (Kosnan et. al, 2012). As Malaysia consists of diversified culture and loaded with majestic natural resources (Mohd Isa and Ramli, 2014). For the purpose of developing tourism and hospitality sector, the Malaysian government announced to provide RM 2 billion. According to Ujang and Muslim (2014) Malaysia has rapid progressive structures for attracting tourist throughout the year. Due to stable climate and clam nature, foreign people, mostly prefer the places for their holidays and vacations. Therefore, local foods made by different Malay, Indian and Chinese restaurants are the key elements to attract both domestic and foreign tourists in various places in Malaysia. The varioustests and feature of these local foods could play a role which may draw the attention of the tourists. As local food is one of the significant components for expansion of both leisure and hospitality segments of any tourism industry (Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Qian & Rong, 2016).

Therefore the level of consumption of local food purchasing from different restaurants is influenced by the desire service quality and tourists' satisfaction (Cohen and Aioli; 2004; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Correia & Kozak, 2016). On the other hand, the image and test of local food may also play a significant role in structuring destination image as well. As the positive experience of the tourists' in consumption of local food may aid in the sustainable development and strengthen individual country specific identities.

Past researchers in the field of food and tourism perspective have mainly focused on the context of western and European context (Romano & Natilli, 2009; Chen & Huang, 2016; Getz & Brown, 2006; Ali et. al., 2016) However, recent years a number of studies have conducted with structuring tourists' intention through applying service quality and satisfaction variable on different scope of the tourism industry (Su et. al., 2016; Choo et.al., 2016; Nilplub et. al., 2016; Hall et. al., 2016). But the research with the intention of tourist's in purchasing local food embedded by service quality and satisfaction variable have not been highlighted in the details under Malaysian context.

Furthermore, until researchers only investigate food perception by the tourists' through comparison based study, where they have taken Malaysia with other Asian nations like Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand (Altintzoglou et. al., 2016; Frisvoll et. al., 2016; Ma'moun et. al., 2016). So far research also proved that in food business the function of service quality by the restaurant in selling food is profoundly influenced towards the individual intention to purchase (Guesalaga & Pitta, 2016; Del Chiappa et. al., 2016; Messner, 2016).

Despite the central role of holiday experiences in different tourism destination in Malaysia, the attention towards understanding their intention on local food purchase by considering

perceived quality and satisfaction has received less attention in scholarly research. Existing studies including Shah Alam and Mohamed Sayuti (2011) and Mak et. al. (2012), have focused on the nature of Halal food purchasing by the locals and antecedents of tourists' food consumption. Specifically, Ling et. al. (2010) investigated the relationships between the Malaysian food image by considering tourist satisfaction and their behavioural intentions. On the other hand, Karim et. al. (2009) investigated the Malaysian destination under the perspective of tourism destination and international tourist's perspective. These constitute a knowledge gap that needs to be filled by this empirical study.

The motivations for the research are twofold: firstly, This research addresses one of the gaps that exist in tourists' intention to purchase local food in Malaysia. Although Malaysia has promoted their tourism sectors for nearly two decades there is not enough empirical research on tourists' intention to purchase local foods. As a result, this research makes a valuable contribution by highlighting on tourists' purchase behaviour in Malaysia. Second, this study is intended to build a model embedded with perceived quality and satisfaction towards intention which explains in more in-depth understanding of the functions of quality as an independent construct and satisfaction as a mediating construct in between the relationship of perceived quality and intentions. Therefore, the researcher's belief that the findings of this research will provide a vital role to explore on local food preferences which could be a useful indicator for food suppliers to understand the kind of local food stuff on high demand on the tourism market. As Mitchell et al. (2000) suggest that the research on consumer behaviour is important for the related industry and the stakeholders to provide valuable insights on what is food tourist and how the restaurants and owners can effectively segment, target and develop their markets.

Hence it is clear that tourists purchase local foods from the destinations where they visit, their intention of purchasing determine the different components of perceived service quality from the restaurant they expect. Therefore this research work propose to investigate the nature of the relationship of service quality and the tourists' intention of taking the mediation function of satisfaction under the context of buying local food. The unit of the analysis in this study was the individual tourists. The outcome of this research assists the policy makers and managers of the restaurants to restructure their service quality to attain positive intention from the tourists' under the perspective from local food consumption. Also, this research has also helped to the related industry understand the expectation of the visitors which may assist them to gain a competitive advantage among others to capture more customers for their restaurants.

However, this research will answer the following research questions:

- In what extent the relationships exist between the perceived service quality towards tourists' intention in purchasing local foods in Malaysia?
- How does tourist satisfaction play a mediating role in these relationships?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

The tourism and food industry mainly associated with the number of theoretical debate and empirical investigation (Henderson, 2016; Yeoman et. al., 2015; Henderson, 2015; Everett & Slocum, 2013). Chheang (2011) found that tourist intention is positive when their experiences are beyond their expectations. Verbeke and Lopez (2005) explored the perception of Latin-American ethnic food through nine food attributes: such (price, colour, charm), experience (taste, spicy, convenience) and credence (cleanliness, safety, healthiness). Qing-Chi et al. (2013) also revealed that the image of local food should have some multidimensional factors, including with food quality, presentation, diversity, accessibility, and singularity. Service quality has been distinguished as the measurement of expectation of usages, durability, features that meet the requirement of the customer for a special period regarding expenditure (Injac, 1998). Researchers claim that purchase intention of a buyer mostly influenced by service quality (Colgate and Lang, 2001). Studies also confirmed that overall satisfaction of customers is extremely linked to perceived service quality (Sofi et. al., 2016; Wu & Liao, 2016; Jang & Namkung, 2009).

Research has also shown that local food is one of the most important factors for the tourist's overall experience and intention that may contribute to the purpose of visiting the place and purchase behaviour (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). Boulding et. al., (1993) identified tourists' perceived service quality and demonstrated its influence their intended behaviours. In this regard, Bigné et al. (2001) also added that perceived service quality lead to overall satisfaction and close towards the behavioural intentions.

Meanwhile, satisfaction is a sensation of pleasant experience that is felt by an individual while he or she uses or purchase any product or service from the seller (Hussein, 2016). Tat et. al. (2011) looks into the connection between satisfaction and purchase intention in hotel and restaurant industry. Intention to purchase is the experience of a customer that they buy any product or get any services from a particular organisation (Reynolds & Arnold, 2000). Dmitrovic et al. (2009) explored a model to conceptualise the tourist's satisfaction at the destination level and tested empirically. The model identified eight latent constructs where the construct of quality, image, value, costs and risks were proved as the primary antecedents of customer satisfaction. This research adapted Dmitrovic et al. (2009) research to measure the customer satisfaction scale. Also, the research from Chen and Tsai (2007) also developed a tourist behavioural model embedded with destination image and perceived value under the perspective of "quality-satisfaction-behavioural intentions" paradigm. The researchers explored that the role of destination image has both direct and indirect effects on the behavioural intentions of tourists'. However, the research also proved the relationship of "destination image-trip quality-perceived value-satisfaction behavioural intentions". Therefore, the current research adapted Chen and Tsai (2007) research to operationalise the perceived service quality scale. Above all, the study from Zeithaml et al. (1996) revealed that service quality relates to the purchase intention of the consumers at the aggregate level. As this research adapted Zeithaml et al. (1996) research to operationalise tourists' purchase intention scale.

The satisfaction derives from tourism experiences mostly refers to the emotional state of the tourist who has received the chance to see some particular tourist place (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Kotler (2016) claimed that satisfaction is the individual's perceived feelings regarding enjoyment and displeasure resulting from comparing a product or services are perceived performance (or outcome) about one's first moments.

Tourist satisfaction with facilities, ease of accessibilities, consumptions of the right products and services, foods have been identified the most imperative factors that profoundly linked with the development and attraction in the tourism business (Ryu & Jang, 2006; Chen and Tsai, 2007). De Oña (2016) highlighted that a high quality of product and services relate to the satisfaction of the tourists.

By referring to the discussions, following hypotheses for this research are developed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship exists between perceived service quality and tourist's satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship exists between tourist satisfaction and intention to purchase.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship exists between perceiving service quality and tourists' intention to purchase local food.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between perceived service quality and tourist intention to purchase mediated by tourist satisfaction

The conceptual framework includes independent variables, mediating variable and dependent variable. The independent variable of the research is perceived service quality, which is presented in Figure 1 on the left side in a rectangular box. The mediating variable of the study is tourist satisfaction which shows in the middle of the framework. Finally, the dependent variable is the tourist intention to purchase shown on the right side of the framework in a rectangular box.

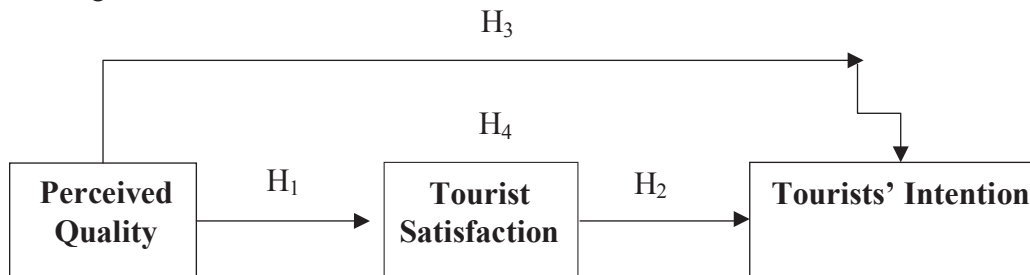


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Structuring Tourists' Intention on Local Food Purchase Methods

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

The research was selected the main cities of Malaysia for conducting the data collection procedure. The survey mainly covered Kuala Lumpur and Selangor area where multicultural peoples' are living, and most local from another state, foreign tourists have been seen. The

study questionnaire was distributed among 250 local and international tourists. The details demographic information of the respondents is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the respondents

Demographic Information	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	113	45.2
	Female	137	54.8
Origin	Local	170	68
	Foreign	80	32
Age	Less than 20 years	28	11.2
	20 to less than 25 years	25	10.0
	25 to less than 30 years	70	28.0
	30 to less than 35 years	60	24.0
	35 to less than 40 years	40	16.0
	40 years and above	27	10.8
Marital Status	Single	111	44.4
	Married	130	52.0
	Divorced/Widowed	5	2.0
	Separated	4	1.6

MEASUREMENT DEVELOPMENT

This research adapted different measurement scales to understand the hypothesised relationships between the constructs. The studies measure perceived service quality using five items from Chen and Tsai (2007) research. The tourist satisfaction scale was measured by using five items modified items adapted from Dmitrovic et al. (2009) research. Lastly, tourist purchase intentions were assessed by five items adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996) research. This study applied 5 point scale to assess the rating of the respondents. The scale rating 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), for Perceived quality (1=Very Unsatisfactory, 5=Very Satisfactory), for tourist perception (1=Very Low, 5=Very High) and finally, intention to purchase 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The study conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to acquire the measurement model that shows the unidimensionality of the research construct. Later, the study performed structural equation modeling (SEM) to identify the full structural model to assess the direct and indirect relationships among the constructs. As this research applied MLE (maximum likelihood estimation) to understand the estimate of the parameters in the proposed model (Hair et. al., 2006). To identify the model fitness the study used Chi-square, goodness-of-fit (GFI), AGFI, CFI RMSEA and normed chi-square (Bollen, 1989; Joreskog & Sorbom, 1979). The research conducted mediation test through examination of total, direct and indirect effect among the exogenous and endogenous variables.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Measurement Model of the Research

The study examined measurement model through CFA analysis to identify the unidimensionality and the factor loadings of each item among the constructs. In order to check the multicollinearity correlations analysis among the construct were conducted. The outcomes indicate that all the constructs correlations are in acceptable level which is not more than 0.85. This model shows there is no interrelationships were found that exceed the value of 0.85 (see Figure 2). It means the model confirms that there is no issue of multicollinearity. The measurement model shows that good fit indices to the data: ($\chi^2 = 213.222$; $DF = 86$; Relative chi-square = 2.479; $CFI = .891$). An overview of the measurement model is displayed in Figure 2.0 below. From the model it has found that the CFI is closer to 1, and the Normed chi-square upper limit is 3 or 5. All the indication shows good fit. The measurement model represented in Figure 2.

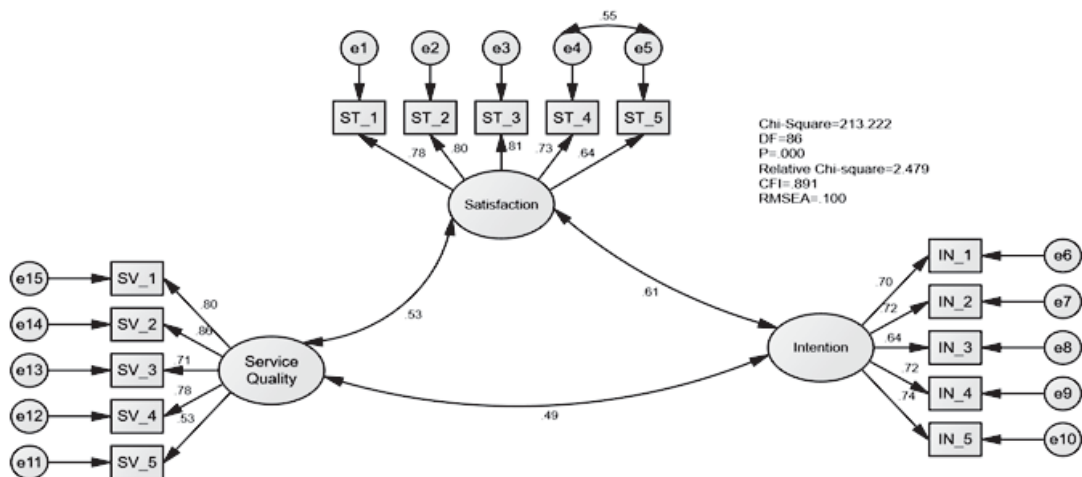


Figure 2: Measurement Model of the Research

Table 2: Correlations Matrix among the constructs

Construct Relationship			Estimate
Tourist Satisfaction	<-->	Intention to Purchase	.614
Tourist Satisfaction	<-->	Perceived Service Quality	.529
Intention	<-->	Perceived Service Quality	.489

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ASSESSMENT:

This study successfully meets the validity test assumptions for each construct. The Table presents that all the loadings of the items under each construct are in expected level (Hair et al. 2010). The researchers also calculated Cronbach’s alpha of perceived service quality, tourist satisfaction and intention to purchase. The value of Cronbach’s alpha is 0.80 or higher for each construct (See Table 2).

Table 2: Composite Reliability and distribution of factor loadings

Variable	Loading	Cronbach’s Alpha
Perceived Service Quality	0.80	0.815
	0.80	
	0.71	
	0.78	
	0.53	
Tourist Satisfaction	0.78	0.801
	0.80	
	0.81	
	0.73	
	0.64	
Tourist Intention to Purchase	0.70	0.866
	0.72	
	0.64	
	0.72	
	0.74	

STRUCTURAL MODEL OF THE RESEARCH

After confirming the measurement model the study employed SEM for exploring the relationships among the independent, mediating and dependent variables. The structural model shows that good fit indices: ($\chi^2 = 213.222$; $df=86$; Relative Chi Square = 2.479; CFI=.891). An overview of the measurement model is displayed in Figure 2.0 below. From the model it has found that the CFI is closer to 1, RMSEA is in between.05 – 0.10, and the Normed chi-square upper limit is 3 or 5. The indication shows the fit of the model. Figure 3 presents the structural model of the research.

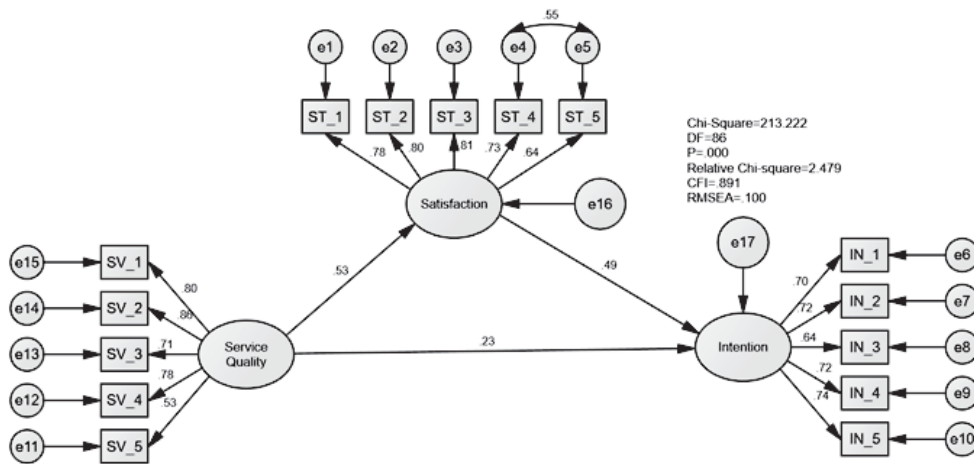


Figure 3: Structural Model of the Research

Table 3 highlights the hypothesised path coefficients of the suggested model. The table presented all the hypothesised paths, coefficients and p-values. The significance tests for the structural path model parameters were used for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses of the proposed relationship. According to Hair et al., (2010) all the path coefficient value should be minimum 0.15 and above to consider as statistically significant.

There is a significant positive relationship exists between perceived service quality on local foods and their satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 is supported(standardised path coefficient=. 732). The research also explored the significant positive relationship exist between satisfaction and intention to purchase local foods (standardised path coefficient =.289). Thus, hypothesis 2 are also accepted. Table 2 shows the standardised path coefficient between tourist satisfaction and intention to purchase is 0.289 ($p \leq 0.05$). In summation, the research also confirms hypothesis 3, where the outcome of the SEM analysis shows that there is a significant relationship exist between perceived service quality and purchase intention. Thus, all the direct relationships of the research hypotheses are confirmed by empirical justifications.

The research conducted mediation test according to the suggestions by Baron and Kenny's (1986). Based on the literature on mediationtest, this study revealed that the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction is significant ($\beta = .732$, $CR = 4.572$, $P=0.000$). The relationship between tourist satisfaction and intention to purchase is also significant ($\beta =.453$, $CR = 4.371$, $P= .000$). So, when these two relationships were controlled for, a previously significant relationship between the exogenous variables and the endogenous variable is also significant. As a consequence, this research explored that the tourist satisfaction plays a partial mediator in between the relationship of service quality and intention to purchase local foods from a restaurant (See Table 3). Therefore, the hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Table 3: Regression Weights

Construct Relationship			Estimate	S.E	C.R.	P	Label
Tourist Satisfaction	<---	Service Quality	.732	.160	4.572	***	par_15
Purchase Intention	<---	Service Quality	.289	.133	2.167	.020	par_14
Purchase Intention	<---	Tourist Satisfaction	.453	.104	4.371	***	par_16

The outcome of this research establishes that the restaurants who sell local foods need to focus both domestic and foreign tourists. The study also explored that the main reason for intention-behaviour of the tourists to purchase foods from a restaurant is the service quality of the restaurant. As Rahman et al (2012) noted that the significant variety of consumer perception about the quality of foods provided by the restaurants has also impacted on the development of the hospitality industry. However, perceived service quality is not only the sole antecedent of purchase intention rather the players need to look for the customer's satisfaction as well in their every step of operation (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996; Kettinger & Lee, 1994). For this reason, it is necessary to understand the critical antecedents of purchase intention of local foods to develop and restructure their strategy regarding making and selling the product in more convenient ways. Ultimately, this research holds the aim to confirm that both local and foreign tourists are aware of the local foods and don't hesitate to buy it if the standards meet their expectation. As tourism as an experience of learning, appreciating and consuming of locally branded things (Gössling et. al.,2012; Scott et. al.,2008). Based on that, local food plays an important role of cultural, reflecting the character of the destination. Thus the findings from this research suggest that satisfying physical needs through the facilitating of local foods from the destination restaurants may create an opportunity to ascertain about the local community and the related people in that industry (Buhalis, 2000; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Chang et. al., 2010).

This research may contribute to the wider discussion on local food purchase intention by the tourists and relates to service quality and customer satisfaction construct in a combined model. Therefore, this research explored the significant relationship among the variables which may assist the tourism planners, academicians, policy makers and managers from the perspective of Malaysian as well as another country. The researchers also agreed that the optimisation of service quality in the delivery of local foods by the restaurant owners to the tourists might fulfil the desire, expectation of the tourists' in purchase intention of the local foods produced by the local community.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATIONS:

The outcome of this research also recommends that any ordinary visit to a restaurant is not considered as a food tourism rather it involves more on culinary, gastronomy, gourmet or cuisine. So based on that, the ministry and the related industry may organise different food festivals around the year in a particular location to improve the overall service quality and tourist satisfaction.

The findings from this research explored that understanding tourists' local food selection intention may serve as a valuable input for the food retailers in destinations where tourism plays a major role in the national development. As this research considered both local and foreign travellers so their choice of selection could be a pointer of the foods have the highest demand in the existing market. With particular reference to Malaysia, the result from the statistical analysis showed that perceived service quality and satisfaction play a significant role on the intention. Therefore, the ministry of tourism requires supporting the improvement in the quality of Malaysian traditional foods by improving the infrastructure of the local food industry. As consumer research is an ongoing process which involves the assessment of current service quality perceived by the customers and enhances the level of satisfaction over time. Therefore, the present research in line with the marketing practices to understand the nature of service quality and satisfaction to determine the perception of local and international tourists' intention of local food purchase in the Malaysian context. As a result, this research would help to draw a corrective strategy to address the gaps in the tourism industry, particularly from Malaysian context.

This research yields scientific data that can form the basis of Malaysian local food purchase intention from tourist's perspective. As Quan and Wang (2004) argued that an in-depth understanding of tourists' food preferences and their behaviours are required to enable managers of hospitality businesses to face the challenge of how correctly portray and present their local cuisines as an attraction for their target market. Therefore the findings from this research suggest that there is a substantial market of food-interested visitors that need to be nurtured in Malaysia. The current awareness and interest in Malaysian local foods need to be sustained by improving the service quality.

The findings of this research also identify the factors influencing the local food purchase intention by the tourists, so that restaurants need to be located in a tourist destination places by assuring the optimum service quality to fulfil the expectation of the tourists. As a result, the marketing strategies of the restaurants need to more on service quality centric. The researchers also believe that intention to purchase is influenced by many other components. This research used only two determinants of the intention to purchase; they are namely; perceived service quality and tourist satisfaction. This research has confirmed that all these three predictors are significantly influenced tourist's intention to purchase local foods under the perspective from Malaysian environment. This study is based on a cross-sectional survey. So the future research needs to look at the data collected from different times. As the sample size of the current study is below 300 so future research may conduct on a larger sample size to generalise the findings.

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