

PRELIMINARY STUDY OF MALAYSIAN STREET FOOD ACCEPTANCE IN THAILAND

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Article history

Received date : 18-6-2020
Revised date : 19-6-2020
Accepted date : 18-3-2021
Published date : 25-3-2021

To cite this document:

Sabeetha, S., Hasimah, H. A., Syed Abdul Bari, S. O.,
Dayana, A., & Shahril Faizal, A. J. (2021). Preliminary
Study of Malaysian Street Food Acceptance in
Thailand. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and
Development (JISED)*, 6(35), 1 - 8.

Abstract: *The preliminary study of Malaysian food acceptance was conducted in the Malaysia Street Food Lover programme in conjunction with Malaysia Fest event held in Bangkok, Thailand from 20 to 23 June 2019. This study attempts to measure Malaysian food acceptance and popularity of the food among Thailand respondent. Beside of that, this study aims to analyse the factors that influencing choice of the food. The questionnaire was given after the respondent had finished eating and being helped by a trained enumerator. Among 429 respondents from Thailand, 254 of them knew about Malaysian food before the event. In addition, social media is the best platform of publicity to promote the event compare to others. Presentation of food including authenticity, price and description of food are the most factors that influence respondent to spend here. Other than that, almost half of respondents highly satisfied with Malaysian food taste. For the desire continue buying Malaysian food, more than half of respondents agreed to buy again. The most favourite and popular Malaysian food is Nasi lemak, Satay and Roti Canai. As conclusion, level of acceptance of Malaysian food among Thailand respondents is well received and that has several factors influenced the preference of the food.*

Keywords: *Malaysian food, street food, food acceptance, food preference*

Introduction

Street food is defined as ready to eat food or drink that located in a street by food truck, vendor or hawker (FAO, 2019). The types of street food vary between cultures and regions in different countries around the world. In certain areas, the street food market is readily prepared as an initiated from the government as tourist attraction. According to Alima (2016) the street food usually cheaper price compared to fast foods and sold by using stands or at busy streets in either urban or rural areas.

Nowadays, street food is among the options of food choice. People are willing to purchase the street food items due to several reasons, such as more reasonable price, delicious food, quick served and some of them want to try the new cuisines. Mak et al. (2012) explains that there has five factors influencing the food preference. There are cultural and religious, socio-demographic, motivational, personality and past experience.

The cultural and religious factor is important to certain person who practices their religious orders such as a Muslims only eat *Halal* food (Atinkut et al. 2018). For demographic factor, variables like age, gender, education level and so on are important element involved in food choice (Kim et al. 2003). Aging people with the higher income and educational level are more concerned about the healthy food (Kim et al. 2009).

Physical, cultural, interpersonal and statue are the motivational factors that affect people food choice (Fields, 2002). Food choices, eating and drinking are influenced by complex of human behaviours (Koster and Mojet, 2016). Corresponding of this point, some people enjoy experimenting new food and trying to escape from routine with the new experience. Apart from that, the personality characteristic also related to affect the food preferences. Tarik Sengel et al. (2015) has examined that the neophobia people may reject to try unfamiliar foods, while the neophilia always curious to taste new foods. The past experience also affects the food preference of people. The experienced person might be willing to try or avoid the food regarding on their last experience of the food. In can influenced their food choice. Study of Thienhirun and Cheng (2017), consumers preferred the taste between flavours and presentation of food.

National and regional food is important as attraction for promotion to tourism due to visitor always choose the authentic production of the food. Thus, promotion of the national and popular cuisine to others country is one step forward of tourism and business segment. As a multiracial country, Malaysia has been recognised as a place of variety of food and the famous tagline "*Malaysia, Truly Asia*". In many multi-cultural countries, to have a commonly accepted food identity to represent the image of a nation is important especially in term of tradition and authenticity (Adilah et al., 2017). Malaysia also has rigorously applying gastrodiplomacy (culinary ambassadors) practices, using our Malaysian cuisine cuisines as a method to promote their countries, cultures, foods, attract foreign tourists and build political relations (Nahar et al. 2018). 'Malaysia Kitchen for the World' programme (MKP) was introduced by government in 2006 to promote Malaysian cuisines and Malaysian restaurants overseas with the aim of increasing the interests of the international consumers towards Malaysian cuisines and to increase the affinity towards Malaysian food products. With that, it will eventually help in increasing the exports of processed food, food ingredients, agriculture produce, and attract tourists to Malaysia (Nordin, 2010; Bernama, 2012).

As a starter, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of Malaysia (MAFI) takes the street food programme as a challenge to bring the local entrepreneur and established the Malaysian popular street food to Bangkok, Thailand. Beside to gain experience and knowledge, this is known as kicked start to expand the overseas market. The Malaysian food acceptance study was conducted in the Malaysia Street Food Lover programme in conjunction with Malaysia Fest event held in Bangkok, Thailand from 20 to 23 June 2019. Objectives of the study were

to determine the Malaysian food acceptance, popular and to analyse the factors that influencing choice of the food among locals and tourists in Bangkok, Thailand.

Methodology

This survey was conducted in the Malaysia Street Food events during Malaysian Fest on 20th to 23rd June 2019 at Central World, Bangkok Thailand. This methodology used in this study was based on the random selection respondent and people who had experienced the food and beverages on their buying at the Malaysian event here were identified through a criteria-based snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects (Breakwell et al., 2000). For example, once interviewed, participants were asked whether they knew of any others with the required characteristics. The sampling criterion for the selection of participants was limited to adequate levels of experience of Malaysian food and beverages: that is, people who had bought a food and had ate or taste the food in the event. The respondent was chosen randomly and the questionnaire was handed after their finished their meals and being informed by a trained enumerator. The questionnaire was ready in both languages (Thailand and English) and the questionnaire was verified by the committee of agroculinary division in Malaysia Ministry of Agriculture. Total questionnaire was 15 questions consisting of responds about socio-demographic characteristics of respondent, open-ended questions, yes or no answers and answers choices based on a 5-point Likert scale to determine the perception of the food and event. All form collected were organised and the descriptive analysis, the variance analysis (ANOVA with multiple post hoc comparisons were analysed using the SPSS for Windows 19.0 program (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA).

Results and Discussion

The socio-demographic frequency of the countries for gender, age and education level involved 716 respondents was shown in Table 1. From the survey, 429 of respondents were from Thailand and categorised as highest number of respondents. Most of respondents were around 21 to 49 years old and holding the tertiary education (at least diploma or degree). There are evidence that the socio demography status influenced the choice of the food consumption and exploration of new foods (Tse and Crott, 2005). According to Khan (1981), food preference at the individual level, including age and sex is a function of several interrelated aspects of personality and mental health, and socio-economic factors, such as education determine various aspects of people's lifestyle.

Table 1: Socio-demography criteria of respondent among country at Malaysia Street Food Lover (MSFL) 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

Socio-demographic criteria	Thailand (n=429)	Malaysian (n=120)	Asean(exc. Thai&Mas) (n=77)	Asia(exc. Asean) (n=54)	Others (n=36)	Total (N=716)
Gender						
Men	184	70	37	26	15	332
Female	208	49	39	28	21	345
Others	37	1	1	-	-	39

Age						
< 20	45	13	7	3	1	69
21- 49	354	97	68	45	30	594
> 50	30	10	2	6	5	53
Education						
PhD/Master	83	28	14	9	14	148
Degree/Dip	272	67	45	15	12	411
High School	42	45	10	7	4	75
Others	32	13	8	23	6	82

From the survey on table 2, almost two thirds of respondents knew about Malaysian food before coming to MSFL, Bangkok 2019. Food acceptance literature acknowledges that exposure to certain foods tends to increase preference for those foods, as familiarity increases with repeated exposure (Birch et al., 1987; Luckow et al., 2006; Pliner, 1982; Stein et al., 2003). Past experience with a food also can significantly affect food preferences behaviour. Ryu and Jang (2006) found that past experience of the food is one of the significant predictors of people intention to select a cuisine from other destinations. In addition, social media – whether Facebook, bloggers and others related is the best medium of publicity to promote MFSL as the majority of respondents followed the update of MSFL due to a good connection of internet and the latest update with the attractive images of the foods and programme.

Table 2. Total respondent among country that knew about Malaysian Food and factor of promotion for Malaysia Street Food Lover (MSFL) Bangkok 2019

Country	Know Malaysian Food		Publicity/ promotion			
	Yes	No	Social media	Hotel /travel agency	Friend	Others
Thailand	254	175	227	7	113	82
Malaysia	107	13	57	1	36	26
Asean (exc. Thai&Mas)	61	16	28	4	20	25
Asian (exc. Asean)	24	30	10	12	15	17
Others	18	18	11	2	10	13
Total	464	252	333	26	194	163

Other than that, presentation of the food, the name of the food and the price were three important factors that influenced the respondent to buy Malaysian food here (Table 3). Some of respondent was not familiar with the name of food because most of the food was name using Malaysian language and quite difficult to translate to Thai. According to Santich (2007), accepting the needs and knowledge among people in terms of food selection was importance to culinary businesses. Providing the appropriate buying experiences can lead to respondent satisfaction and at the same time will be promoting the event successfully.

Table 3. Factor that influencing the respondent among country to choose before buying the food at MSFL Bangkok 2019

	Factor to choose before buying the food					Total
	Price of food	Name of food	Presentation of food	Portion of food	Others	
Thailand	90	112	147	19	61	429
Malaysia	42	36	28	6	8	120
Asean (exc. Thai& Mas)	28	24	19	4	2	77
Asian (exc. Asean)	11	14	18	6	5	54
Others	5	8	17	1	5	36
Total	176	194	229	36	81	716

As shown on table 4, the mean level of satisfaction of respondents for the most variables using the Likert scale was at scale 3, which is the average value. Location of the events showed the highest scale, which is the slightly satisfied. Variety, price and presentation of foods provided a significant difference and interaction in the mean number of the satisfaction level of variables among respondents (p less than 0.05).

Table 4. Means of satisfaction level of respondents among MSFL variables (Likert scale (1: very dissatisfied and; 5: Very satisfied))

	Thailand (n=429)	Malaysian (n=120)	Asean (exc. Thai&Mas) (n=77)	Asia (exc. Asean) (n=54)	Others (n=36)	Total (N=716)	Statistic (p)
Location	3.86	4.17	4.23	4.35	4.22	4.01	0.691
Activity	3.67	3.78	3.86	4.00	3.86	3.74	0.153
Cleaness	3.71	3.89	3.73	3.57	3.92	3,74	0.444
Service	3.72	3.87	3.96	3.80	4.06	3.79	0.202
Variety of foods	3.83	3.78	3.91	4.28	4.28	3.88	0.01*
Taste of food	3.58	3.78	3.73	3.91	4.03	3.67	0.081
Price of food	2.90	3.06	3.38	3.56	3.89	3.08	0.047*
Presentation of food	3.66	3.64	3.58	3.83	4.17	3.69	0.016*
Food quality	3.63	3.55	3.58	3.98	3.97	3.66	0.060
Portion of food	3.55	3.67	3.66	4.06	4.22	3.66	0.307

p < 0.05 showed that has significant difference among variables

Figure 1 show that most respondent are willing to buy nasi lemak, roti canai and satay again, which is categorised as popular Malaysian food. The reason for this might be attributed to the fact that this food always available in all places in Malaysia and most of the respondent familiar with the name of the food. Other than that, the factors that influenced respondent to accept and willing to repeat buying for this food because the tastes of the foods are not totally different with the food at Malaysia. Most of respondent prefer to select and accept the Malaysian

traditional and popular food and not so interested to try the new foods here. Study of Thienhirun and Cheng (2017), Thailand consumers preferred the adapted taste between flavours and presentation of food should be in clear container with label.

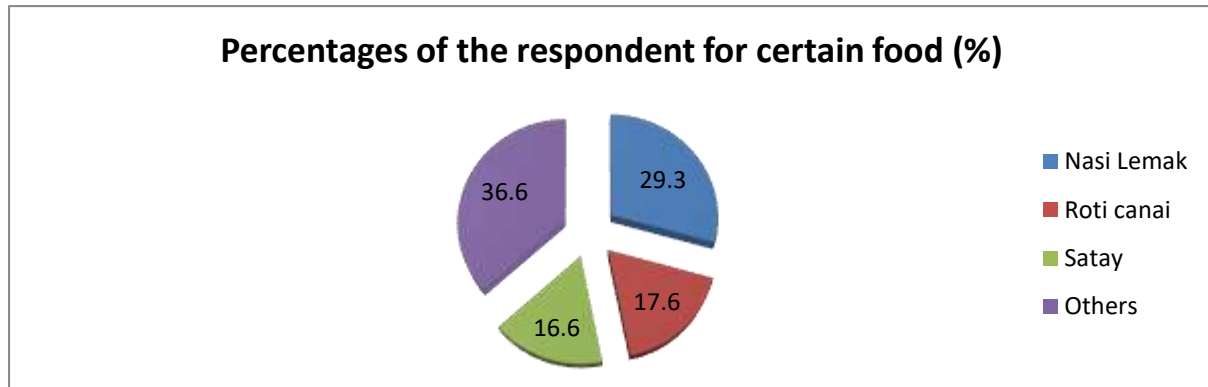


Figure 1. Percentages of respondents on returning to buy Malaysian food

Conclusion

This study is a first trial to gain knowledge and impact of Malaysian street food consumption in a other destination, rooted in the theoretical foundation of food acceptance, hospitality and tourism research. Here, a lot of multi factors shows tentative explanation of the influence on how Malaysian food and beverages preference and consumed by local people and tourist in other overseas destination. This study also identified that social demographic status and other factor such as price, variety and presentation of the food is the most influenced factor that will contribute to preference of selecting and buying of the food.

As conclusion, the level of acceptance of the Malaysian street food in Bangkok, Thailand is well received. Most of the visitors were averagely satisfied with the food and others factor that contributing to the event. In addition, Nasi Lemak, Roti Canai and Satay were selected as a popular Malaysia food that respondents willing to buy again.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to consider during the study. The non experience entrepreneur, limited food variety and poor marketing of product as example no testing food, the presentation items not so attractive and difficulty of language should be taken to account for future research. As the research area of this study consisted from central Bangkok, the results cannot be generalised for all population of Bangkok and tourists. Performing the study on a large sample and a lot of sample areas would be useful. Interpretation of the results is limited due to responses being self-reported, which are prone to subject bias.

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