

The growth of food tourism in malaysia tourism essay



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The tourism industry is one that is rapidly growing and constantly expanding in the 21st century. There seems to be an increase in the amount of people travelling and exploring all the wonders this world has to offer. According to an article published by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in September of last year, the International Tourism percentage grew by almost 5 percent in the first 6 months of 2011 and this exceeded the 6.6 percent growth difference in that of 2010. The article goes on to say that this growth in tourism in such times needs to be examined and looked closely and they urge that countries make tourism as a priority in national level policies.

There are many terms to specifically define tourism but in general and simple terms; tourism is the activity of a person travelling from one place to another for not more than a year. To add to this, tourism can be divided into many different branches, for example, adventure tourism, sports tourism, medical tourism, leisure tourism and many more. However, with this growth in tourism, there is a new aspect of tourism that is slowly making its mark and it is known as Food Tourism. Food tourism simple means the act of people visiting a particular place for the purpose of partaking in food festivals, or trying out of different food and restaurants in that particular country (Hall and Mitchell 2001). This new aspect of tourism was never famous but with the aid of new technologies, increase in accessibility and awareness, food tourism is slowly but surely rising. In Malaysia, this aspect of tourism is rising with more and more tourist travelling to Malaysia for reasons other than leisure and this in return has reflected the local economy of this country. Malaysia, being a country that is rich and diverse in its culture and heritage, has become an ideal place for tourist not only to experience the lifestyle and culture but to also partake with the local lifestyle

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and one example of doing so is by experiencing the food. There have been many attempts by the relevant industries in Malaysia to promote this growth of food tourism to make it an ultimate destination for food lovers around the world. This paper will outline an in-depth look at the meaning and definition of food tourism, and how this aspect of tourism is on the rise here in Malaysia and how this growth has effects on the tourism sector of this country.

1. 1 Research Objectives

The tourism sector is moving into a new phase in present times. There are many new aspects of tourism that is on the rise, namely, heritage tourism, medical tourism, adventure tourism and now, food tourism. Gastronomic Tourism (as it is known scientifically) or Food tourism is defined as the visit to a particular place for the purpose of food festivals, or to try out and experiment different types of foods and restaurants (Hall, Sharples and Mitchell 2001). In Malaysia, food tourism is on the rise as there are more tourist visiting Malaysia for reasons other than leisure. This country has become a leading holiday destination among tourist everywhere with the blend of the three different races (Malay, Chinese and Indian) and the cultures these three races offer. Not only that, the location and climate of this country being warm and tropical year round adds to the many reasons to visit this country. With the blend of different cultures and heritage, the birth of different foods sets Malaysia apart from any other country allowing it to become a food lover's paradise. According to an article by the News Straits Time paper in September 2010, it says that Malaysia has been ranked as the 9th most travelled tourist destination with around 23. 65 million

tourist and this research was done by the United Nations World Tourism Organization. The article goes on to say that potential tourist visiting Malaysia will spend around RM10. 13 billion on food and beverage. The tourism ministry in Malaysia is working on making food as one of the main choices for tourist to visit Malaysia and there have been on-going initiatives being done by the relevant parties to help ensure that this aspect of tourism continues to grow and in time is able to sustain its own self. The objectives this research paper aims to achieve are:

To outline the growth of food tourism in Malaysia

As said earlier, Malaysia has managed to gain the upper hand in becoming one of the tourism destination spots. There are so many things that this country is able to offer and food is one of them. However, this aspect of food tourism is not widely known yet in Malaysia as there have been more studies and analysis carried out in other countries (Fox, 2007; Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Ryu and Jang, 2006); but the over the past years, the leaders and relevant parties have begun to recognise how Malaysia and its food is able to influence and has an impact on the tourism industry. Findings from this research will show how there has been a shift in the growth of food tourism in Malaysia and how this growth has impacted the local tourism industry.

How this growth has resulted in positive and negative impacts on the country

Growth in any form is good and healthy but with growth there comes positive and negative impacts and these impacts must be examined clearly to avoid any form of issue and to plan for future goals. This paper will outline how the growth in food tourism in Malaysia has resulted in a few positive and

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negative impacts and how these impacts can be interpreted to support and ensure this aspect of tourism continues to grow.

How this growth has affected the tourism sector and the initiatives taken to ensure continuous growth in the future

The tourism sector in Malaysia has been booming over the past few years and food tourism is even more so growing. In the latter part of the research, it will outline how this food tourism growth has had an impact on the tourism industry both positive and negative and how the government and the tourism sector have come up with ways and means to sustain this growth and ensure continuous growth in the future.

1. 2 Significance of the study

The Kuala Lumpur tourism industry has seen a tremendous growth over the past few years with the number of international tourist arrivals rising up to 0.6% in 2011 compared to the previous years. One of the major motivations for tourist to visit Malaysia is because of the culture and heritage that Malaysia possesses and this is expressed in our food and local delicacies. People from other parts of the world are eager to know, learn and understand how is it that people with different races are able to live under one roof and allow their cultures to blend together. When people visit Kuala Lumpur, they are immediately thrown into a cultural explosion and one of the ways they are able to experience and learn about the different cultures is thorough the tasting and partaking of the local food.

The main significance and importance in conducting this research is that, there seems to be a rising pandemic in the food tourism sector. There has

been a shift in the factors that influence the main reason tourist visit Kuala Lumpur, and food happens to one of the reason. There have not been many past researches and literature debate about the growth of food tourism in Kuala Lumpur as most of them are general and give an overview. This is why this research is important because this paper is able to highlight the growth of food tourism in Kuala Lumpur and how tourist have changed their motivational factors to visit Malaysia.

1.3 Limitation of study

The limitation of the study is that, it is only focused and limited to food and the role it plays in the tourist decision making process. Other influences such as cultural, or heritage or personal reasons to visit are minor and they will not be focused much on. The other limitation to this study is that, the questionnaires will be answered by tourist and not local people because this paper aims to examine the tourist reasons to visit Malaysia and does food play a role in their decision. The problem to that limitation is that the tourists are scattered all around the city so to target a large number and obtain different feedback, will be a challenge.

The other limitation that will be faced is that this research is only limited to the Kuala Lumpur surroundings and the tourist that stay within this area. This is because most of the tourists that travel to Malaysia stay within the city center and most of the attractions and local food can be found within the city limits. Besides that, by narrowing it down to just this area, there will be a better and clearer understanding of the objective that is being achieved.

1. 4 Research Questions

This paper aims to outline the growth of the food tourism industry in Malaysia and how will it affect the tourism sector of Malaysia. When dealing with this topic, there are a few questions that will arise and it is through the results of the questionnaires and other literature findings that these questions will be answered.

The first question that will arise while conducting research on this topic is that, when and how did this growth in food tourism come about in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia? This paper will determine how food tourism came into the scene in Kuala Lumpur and how has it been since it started. The next question that needs to be answered in this research paper is the impacts that these growths in food tourism have on the tourism sector in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In any form of growth, there is bound to be certain impacts both positive and negative and this paper will aim to outline those impacts and how they affect the local tourism sector. The next question that will arise while conducting research on this paper is, will there be a future for the food tourism industry and if so, how will it be? This is where the question of sustainability will arise whereby, even though there is a growth in the food tourism industry now, will it still be the same in the future? All these questions will be answered in the latter part of the research paper.

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

Malaysia is slowly rising to become one of the key destination spots among tourist worldwide. This is largely due to the fact that Malaysia is a country that is developed, diverse, tropical and rich in its culture and heritage and

this can be found in the traditional dances, beliefs, food, practices and many
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more. In addition, food tourism is slowly but surely on the rise here in this country. With the blend of the various cultures and beliefs, food seems to be the best expression. When debating about food tourism and its growth here in Malaysia, there has to be a separation in order to gain a better understanding. There has to be a clear definition of food, tourism, food and tourism in Malaysia and how it has an impact on the local tourism sector.

2. 1 What is Food?

What is food? This may be a simple question yet, it plays a large importance in our daily life. Food is simply defined as a nutritious substance that people eat or drink in order to maintain a healthy life and growth. Food is an essential item in order to continue with life. The first and main importance of food in our everyday life is to provide our body with the necessary energy in order for us to carry out our daily routines such as working, walking, breathing, digesting and so on. Besides that, food helps to regulate the body's processes and also to help fight against infections and diseases. In basic understanding, food is simply needed in order to live and carry on with life; however, there has been a great deal of change in the evolution of food.

2. 2 What is tourism?

Tourism is an industry that is rapidly growing in the 21st century. More and more people are developing an interest in travelling and exploring all that the world has to offer. However, many fail to really understand the true meaning of tourism and what it really comprises of. Tourism is said to be the act of people or a group of people that lead them from one place to another, from one country to a different country, to perform something specific or to visit a place for the point of leisure, entertainment, business and so on. The <https://assignbuster.com/the-growth-of-food-tourism-in-malaysia-tourism-essay/>

World Tourism Organization defines tourism as the activities undertaken by and individual or a group of individuals that travel and move away from their usual place of comfort and environment and this has to be more than a period of 24 hours or more. The reasons behind their travel can be because of leisure, entertainment, business and other activities that are different from their daily routines. Tourism on the other hand can also include the relevant businesses or industries that are involved in providing services, activities, and facilities to the tourist that travel to their country

Tourism in any country is important and crucial. For countries like Egypt, America, Australia, Italy, Malaysia, India and China, a large portion of their earnings and income depend on the tourism industry. Tourism is important because, it stimulates economic growth for a country. When people travel to a particular place, they are bound to spent large sums of money on the flight, lodging, domestic travel and food in the particular country they are in. When you spend money in a country, it in return helps the economic growth for that country because the money spent there goes to help out and to cover the cost of development and in the sustaining of the country and its people. The second importance of tourism to a country is that it helps to promote development within that country. Countries around the world constantly strive to develop and be in the front lines in terms of development. Tourism is an industry that acts as a motivational factor for development to occur. When there is a demand and a rise in the amount of tourist that travel to a country, the need for new and modern facilities and activities will rise and this is where the country is able to gather its resources and develop the country so that it is able to cater to this growing demand.

For example, Bangkok, Thailand has seen a major boost in its international tourist arrival and the tourism industry has seen this phenomenon and there has been an increase in the amount of lodging facilities to help cater to this demand. They have built new hotels and guesthouse that are modern, clean and affordable for the growing tourist market. The next importance of tourism to a country is that in terms of sociocultural, it helps to create new job opportunities and career prospects for the locals of that country. When there is any form of development in the country, there is bound to be new facilities and activities to help cater to the demand that is growing and when there are new facilities and developments taking place, the need for man power and job opportunities will arise and this is where the country is able to use the citizens of the country to help ensure that these developments in the tourism facilities and activities are sustained for years to come.

2. 2. 1 Tourism and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The tourism industry in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia is rapidly growing in these present times. The tourism industry has registered 11. 63 million tourist arrivals in the first half of the year 2012 which is a 2. 4% increase compared to the same period in 2011. This growth in tourism in Kuala Lumpur is largely due to the fact that, Malaysia is located in such an ideal location whereby the weather and climate of the country is tropical the whole year around with minimal rain which makes it easy to get around and explore the city. Besides that, Malaysia in itself is a country that is diverse and rich in its culture and heritage and this is expressed in our daily routines, local attractions, food and beliefs and this gives us a upper hand because no other country in the world can boast and say that they have 3 different races (Malays, Chinese

and Indians) living under one roof and to add, we are all able to get along. This is something that foreign tourist find amazing and they are intrigued by and that is why they want to visit Kuala Lumpur.

2.3 What is Food tourism all about?

There are many branches to the tourism industry and food tourism is another aspect of tourism that is on the rise. Many people may argue and debate that food and tourism have no relationship to each other what so ever but in reality, food and tourism coexist and help each other because part of tourism is largely related to food and vice versa. One may look at food as a minor role played in the field of tourism but in reality, food is vital to ensure the full circle of a traveller's experience. Hall and Sharples (2003) say that food is an integral part of the experience and how it contributed in a big sense to a person's vacation. They go on to say that before, food was not taken into consideration as something that is important but of late it has been widely debated about. The book says that food acts as an expression of identity and culture which is in reality true. When travelling to another country, one is motivated to immerse themselves in the local culture of that place and subsequently this involves food. For example, it would be ridiculous if one travels to India and experiences the various cultures without tasting their local food. As mentioned, tasting and immersing in the local delicacies will help give a better understanding about the country and its culture. Over the years, the recognition of food tourism has increased and it is seen as a valuable asset the tourism sector has to offer. Even if there are some barriers because of some tourist that are not attracted by the local food, it

still represents a vital and competitive advantage for some destinations (Cohen and Avieli, 2004).

2. 3. 1 Tourism Motivation: Is food one of it?

In basic travelling, there has to be somewhat of a motivational factor that causes people to travel to that particular place. In her book, *Tourism Development* (A K Bhatia 1985), she broke down the basic motivational factors for travelling into four different aspects:

Physical Motivators – This is related to the physical aspect of the destination, the activities offered and others.

Cultural Motivators – Individuals in this category are motivated by the beliefs and cultural heritage (the art, music and dance) that particular destination offers.

Interpersonal Motivators – This motivation is to visit family members, relatives, or to meet new people.

Status Motivators – This is derived from the need to accomplish certain activities to boost self-esteem or for personal development.

These however are the basic motivators for travelling but these motivators change when talking about travelling for food based purposes. Travelling for food based purposes can be linked to the cultural motivators (as seen above) or it can be classified as separate aspect all on its own. The motivator for food tourism can be linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1943). In this hierarchy, there are 5 different levels of needs that are to be

accomplished and they are physiological, safety, love, and esteem. For instance, if a person is lacking love or food or safety, they would probably yearn for food the most because in reality, food is needed to survive and the other needs come over time. But the real question that is to be asked here is that, is food the main motivation for ones decision in travelling? Are they travelling to fulfil their needs and desires? Or are they travelling to immerse themselves in different cultures? Or even are they adventure seekers and they want to try new things? According to Sajna (2005) she conjured up 4 different concepts as to why people participate in food tourism, namely:

Food Neophobia - This is related to how adventurous and open one is to trying new foods. According to Pliner and Hobden (1992), food neophobia is a personal trait defined as the reluctance to eat or avoid novel foods.

Variety- Seeking Tendency - This is related to ones desire for variety that is due to factors such as change in taste, constraints and feasible alternatives.

Hedonic Consumption - An aspect of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of a person's experience with a certain product.

Enduring Involvement - The involvement of the tourists in the buying and participation of the travelling and tourism experience.

So in conclusion, food does and will play a role in the decision making process of the tourist when they visit a country. For those tourists that have a love for food and diversity would be motivated to travel to a country to

experiment and try out their local delicacies and it is this act that is known as food tourism.

2. 3. 2 Food Tourism in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Malaysia is a country that is rich in its heritage and culture with the combination of 3 different races living under one roof namely Malays, Chinese and Indians. With the blend and combination of these many cultures and ethnic background creates a haven of many different festivals, sights, heritage and FOOD. Because of all these variety in cultures and heritage, Malaysia has become a top choice of destination for tourist when it comes to their travel agenda. According to an article in the New Straits Times paper (2010), in the year 2009, Malaysia was ranked as 9th as the most travelled tourist destination United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with 23. 65 million tourist and the Tourism ministry of Malaysia plans to increase that number to 36 million tourist in the near future. This phenomenon can be due to many reasons such as the many historic sights to witness, the green landscape Mother Nature has to offer and also the endless shopping available to cure ones addiction. But other than that, food also plays an important role as one of the motivators for tourist to travel to Malaysia. Malaysia is known as a country that eats 24-hours a day with eating outlets ranging from traditional and authentic food to modern day cuisine and from road side delicacies to five star fine dining outlets. Anything you want to eat can be found in Malaysia. No doubt that other country has their own unique blend of food but Malaysia is well known for its diverse mix in food ranging from Malay to international dishes.

Tourism in Malaysia is rapidly growing every year. More and more foreign tourists from all over the world want to visit Malaysia to experience first hand all the country has to offer. Food tourism another aspect of tourism is also on the rapid rise in Malaysia. There are many reasons to this phenomenon the first being that Malaysia is a country that is full and vast in its heritage and culture due to its blend of different races and religions living under one roof. Foreign tourist want to experience what it is like to be living in a country that has many rich and diverse mix of culture because they are unable to experience that in their own country. Take Australia or America or even Arab Saudi, these countries have only one main culture or heritage that they are exposed to where else when they visit Malaysia, they are able to experience maybe 3 or more cultures all under one roof. Because of this rich and diverse mix of cultures in Malaysia, food has also been a major pull factor for tourist. Just like everything else in Malaysia, food in Malaysia is a blend of many diverse cultures that add up or transcend into something that is very unique and that fits for all demographics. Even though Malaysian food may lack somewhat of sophistication, or design compared to that of the western world, it still meets the culinary requirements. There are so many different restaurants that cater to the Malaysian visitor that they can never get bored off. The next reason that can contribute to the rise in food tourism in Malaysia is because of the increase in the infrastructure of the country. It is now easier to get to places in a short time frame with the help of the many public transport systems such as the monorail, Hop-on Hop-off, LRT, busses and taxi services. With the increase of the number in tourist arrivals, the government has taken the initiative to expand its infrastructure to help cope with the stated rise in tourism thus, making it easier and cheaper for tourist

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to get around the country. Another reason why food tourism is easily accessible in Malaysia is because of the many different and affordable accommodations available from guest houses to 5-star hotel accommodations all located at a central area making it easy to get around the city.

Food Festivals In Malaysia

Because there is a rise in food tourism in Malaysia, many initiatives are being taken to ensure that this aspect of tourism is prolonged and not just for the present time. In order to do that, the Tourism Ministry of Malaysia has come up with many different showcases and festivals and attractions to draw in the foreign market to part-take in food tourism in Malaysia.

Malaysia International Gourmet Festival

This event was introduced in September 2001 and it is a collaboration of 13 five-star fine dining restaurants. The reason this event is held every year is to popularize the fine dining scene in Malaysia as many people perceive fine dining to be something that is very expensive and a waste of time. Even though Malaysians love dining out, they usually go for more traditional and known food rather than this type of a cuisine. Each year, the restaurants put aside their differences to come together in a collective effort to help market fine dining. Many people have taken interest into this event and it is growing every year.

Malaysia International Food and Beverage Trade fair

This fare has existed for more than 10 years and it has become the leading trade event for the food and beverage industry. It has become one of the most anticipated events in the country. This event offer new products, services and opportunities for the food industry enthusiast from all over the world. The highlights of this event range from the Malaysian Indigenous food and beverage as well as it gives the chance for foreign producers to dive into the local and worldwide food market place.

Food and Fruit Fiesta Malaysia

This event usually takes place in the month of July and it comprises of a wide spectrum of Asian and International cuisine together with a blend of tropical, subtropical and temperate fruits and food. Apart from this event being a past time among Malaysians, it has become a shared event.

Fabulous Food 1Malaysia

This is a 3 month food drive that has been organized by the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia and Tourism Malaysia that aims to celebrate and make known Malaysia's unique and diverse culture represented in their cuisine with a series of exciting activities to draw the taste buds of all Malaysians and also the foreign market. According to the minister of tourism, this event not only highlights Malaysia as an eating destination full of culture and heritage but also as a country that is united through the blend of different types of food.

Apart from local events, there have been several occasions in which food festivals were held in countries outside Malaysia to highlight to those foreign

market that are unable to visit Malaysia about Malaysia and its heritage and culture expressed through food.

Malaysia Night at Trafalgar Square

This is a famous tourist destination spot and it is located in central London. A festival on Malaysian street food was held at this square to give the local people there a small glimpse about Malaysian street food. The free food festival features around 20 different stalls from all over Malaysian restaurants and also some live entertainment. Besides food, art and craft were also displayed at the festival together with some live performances of Malaysian traditional and contemporary dance,

Malaysian Food Festival, Sydney

The Grace Brassiere located in Sydney, Australia recently had a Malaysian food festival to present and showcase to the local people in Australia about Malaysian food. Several cooking styles from mamak to the very aromatic lemak, were provided to cater to all the different pallet present. The festival was not only for those foodies but for everyone.

A Malaysian Food Celebration in New York City

New York has always been blessed with an array of different Asian cuisine ranging from Chinese Dumplings to Japanese Sushi and also South Asian Food. Recently, a Malaysian food festival was held in the Big Apple and this thrilled not only the Asians there but also the country's residents. This event was sponsored by Malaysia Kitchen whose aim is to make Malaysian food

well known. There was an array of many different kinds of food displayed to please every palate present.

The Malaysian Food Festival, Taj Banjara Hyderabad

In an effort to spread the ' Truly Asian' hospitality, Tourism Malaysia, Malaysian Airlines together with The Taj group hotels recently had a nine day food festival on Malaysia. Truly Malaysian cuisine was served at the festival with the help of chef Ishaq from the Crown Plaza hotel. Besides food, people gathered were also treated to some Malaysian entertainment.

As stated, there is a collective effort being made to promote Food Tourism in Malaysia, Food tourism not necessarily has to be done by the locals but it can also be undertaken by everyone be it locals or foreigners. Not only in Malaysia but food festivals about Malaysia are being held everywhere in the world to spread the news about Malaysia and its food. Through proper and effective marketing and promotion, Malaysian food is able to reach across many borders. It's only in recent years that the Malaysian government has recognised the increase in food tourism in Malaysia and it has now come up with various plans and strategies to further increase this aspect of tourism. Because of this, more and more foreign tourists are flooding Malaysia to experience first hand all that Malaysia has to offer and Food Tourism is one of them