

Gastronomy Tourism Growth in Malaysia: A Case Study of Malay Restaurants Performance in Klang Valley

Raja Puteri Saadiah Raja Abdullah

Department of Foodservice Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor, Malaysia
put@uitm.edu.my

Siti Suriawati Isa

Department of Recreation and Ecotourism, Universiti Putra Malaysia
ssuria4@upm.edu.m

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Abstract

Today one of the most popular niche tourism markets is gastronomy tourism. The popularity of gastronomy tourism is also called as soft power approaches by some tourism scholars. This niche market is part of cultural and ecotourism market. Malaysia is recognized as a multi-ethnic and multicultural country that includes countless ethnics such as Malay, Chinese, Indian and others. Although Malay leads the major ethnics in Malaysia, Malay restaurant less likely can stay longer in the industry. There are several factors from previous cases involve in Malay restaurants that result to this ethnic's restaurant fail to survive. Since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country the food in Malaysia have combination from all ethnics and unique in its own way. Each state in Malaysia has their own dishes and some dishes may differ from another state. Since Malay or Bumiputra ethnic comprises the biggest ethnic in Malaysia with more than half of the country's population, the objective of this study was to analyze the internal factors affecting business growth performance in Malay ethnic restaurant. Survey questionnaires were distributed to selected Malay restaurants to find out about their growth rate performance.

Corresponding Editor
Ramesh Raj Kunwar
kunwar.dr@gmail.com

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Findings in this study found that the internal factors are consisting of management orientation, organizational culture, technology orientation, alliance and cooperation and market orientation.

Introduction to gastronomy tourism

This article can be divided into four main section. The first section will discuss the introduction followed by literature review, than methodology, after that result and discussion will be presented and finally conclusion and recommendation. Tourism Malaysia states that the multiculturalism has made Malaysia a gastronomical paradise and home of hundreds of colourful festivals (Tourism Malaysia 2019). Malaysia have fourteen states and in each state of Malaysia, it has its very own unique traditional food (Omar, Mohd Adzahan, Mohd Ghazali, Karim, Abdul Halim & Ab Karim 2011) due its multiethnicity. Malaysia total population is estimated 32.68 million according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia in 2020. The biggest ethnic is Malay or Bumiputra (69.3%), followed by Chinese (22.8%), Indian (6.9%) and others (1.0%). The country is well known as the melting pot of Asia and most multicultural nations in southeast Asia (Webster 2010) since the 16th. century. As a result, most of Malaysian culture including dishes and food have mixture from these ethnics. They influence each other to some extent and that is the significant different of Malaysian food compared to other countries although some might have similar names. For example, Malaysian *sate* and *rendang* dishes have similar names with Indonesia dishes but the ingredients, preparations and taste are different. Based on the uniqueness of Malaysian food many scholars agree it has great potential to become one of the country's attraction for tourists. Food or gastronomy tourism also help to boost up the tourism industry of one country and serve as soft power for the country (Hussin 2018). For example, many scholars agree food can be a useful soft power vehicle such as, hamburgers associated to the United States, sushi link to Japan and tomyam associated to Thailand, and when applied correctly can produce control and coercion in both the political and social spheres (Reynolds 2012).

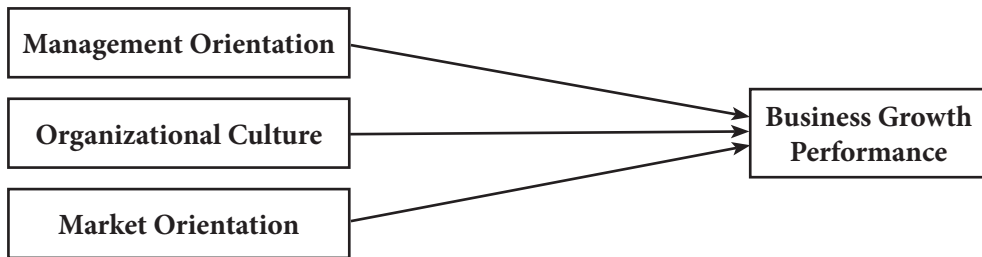
In Asia, food play a significant role in their culture and lifestyle. For example, in Malaysia, people eat almost 24 hours and as a result there are many 24 hours eateries all over the country including in small towns. Also, it is common for Malaysians to have six meals a day particularly during special events and food price is still reasonable even in big cities. When Malaysians hosted their guests one of the most important aspects is to serve their guests with a lot of good food. Although food play a significant role in Malaysia but Malaysian food is underrated and not getting the global recognition it deserves (Calderon 2017) compared to her neighbour like South Korea, Vietnam and Thailand. International market are more aware with kimchi and spicy noodle (South Korea), tomyam and somtam (Thailand), and Vietnam roll (Vietnam). As a result, in 2009 Malaysian government under the then Ministry of Tourism and Malaysia External

Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) introduced Malaysia Kitchen program to the international market. They started with the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and China. The main aim of this program is to generate publicity about Malaysian cuisine, restaurants, and also food and beverage products (The Star 2013). They received positive response from these countries and as a result the international market starting to recognise Malaysian dishes such as; nasi lemak, rendang and sate. All of these dishes are part of Malay ethnic traditional cooking which also represent Malaysian culture and these dishes have different taste, ingredients and preparations compared to Indonesian dishes although the names are similar. Nonetheless, the popularity of Malay ethnic dishes domestically and internationally does not represent the sustainability of their restaurants in the market. Malay ethnic restaurants have the lowest life span of business in the market (Othman, Zahari, & Radzi, 2013).

According to Says Malaysia (2016), seven restaurants that are still on going for business in Malaysia for over five decades mostly come from Chinese ethnic restaurants although their population is much lower than the Malays. On one hand, the Chinese ethnic are stated to eat outside more often compared to other ethnics in Malaysia (Dass, 2019). On the other, this can be an indicator to represent that Malay restaurant is still lacking in many aspects in order to grow and develop within this business sector. Although there are a few Malay ethnic restaurants that are successful in Malaysia such as; Sate Kajang Hj Samuri and Tam Nasi Ayam both started their eatery businesses in Klang Valley but their numbers are significantly low as compared to Chinese and Indian ethnic restaurants. There are several factors from previous cases which involved Malay restaurants that are failed to survive. According to Parsa, Self, Njit, and King (2005), managerial perspective, such as the managerial restrictions and lack of skills, is the factor that can lead to restaurant failure. In addition, the organization culture also has become the issue of restaurant failure. O'Donnell and Boyle (2008) state that, organizations' culture compresses the things that the company has practiced before. According to Othman, et al. (2013), Malay restaurants were unable to operate for a long period due to lack of customers' interactions with the staffs, low in service quality and service offers which are always being criticized with the overall of given lowly service delivery in restaurant. Besides that, although Malay restaurants are remained to growth quickly, however, these restaurants persist with troubles in terms of service delivery especially in waiting times for customers to receive their meals (Othman et al. 2009); Othman, et al. (2013). Whereas the success of Indian ethnic especially "Mamak" (Indian Muslim) restaurants in Malaysia is due to factors such as; good location, environment, product, facilities, service and price (Othman, Kandasamy, Abu Bakar, & Chua, 2018). Hence, Othman et al. (2018) suggested that food operators in Malaysia should emulate the strategies and practices of Mamak restaurants' management to maximise the potential of their business.

Therefore, since the problems that caused Malay restaurants failed to sustain in the industry have been identified, there is a conceptual framework that can be developed to overcome this issue. This research attempted to investigate the internal factors in Malay ethnic restaurants to grow, stay competitive and remain their business in foodservice industry for a long term period. The specific research objectives would be: 1) to determine the relationship between management orientation and business growth performance; 2) to identify the relationship between organizational culture and business growth performance and 3) to identify the relationship between market orientation and business growth performance. The conceptual framework for this study has been developed based on Storey (1994) model as a guideline in order to investigate the internal factors in Malay ethnic restaurant (refer figure 1).

Figure 1: The conceptual framework



Source: Storey (1994)

Literature review

In this section discussion on related literature will be presented. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2015), travel and tourism industry is developing more rapidly compared to all broader economy and other important sectors like automotive, financial services and health care at recent years. Statista (2016) reported that food and beverage industry in Malaysia was revenue with amount of US\$17 billion in September 2016 and it is forecasted to be US\$71 billion in 2021 by the annual advance rate of 33.6 % from the market volume. In addition, many types of food service establishments have emerged in Malaysia in the earlier decades such as fine dining, specialty, fast food, casual, theme, ethnic restaurants and even mixture of more than one category (Othman et al., 2013). The main ethnics in Malaysia (Malays, Chinese and Indians) have developed their own ethnic restaurants as to serve the meals to own ethnics and portray their culture and heritage to other citizens and foreign tourists. These restaurants play the crucial role to attract the tourists to know more about the Malaysia and at the same time to enhance the economy. However, the minority ethnics such as; Middle Eastern, Portuguese and Thais also have their own restaurants establishments all across Malaysia.

Each ethnic has their popular dishes and gained recognition in the local and international market. Among the popular Malay ethnic dishes are such as; nasi dagang, nasi kerabu, nasi lemak (figure 1), rendang and sate. While Chinese ethnic is popular for their char kueyteow, dim sum and steamboat dishes. The Indian ethnic is well known for roti canai, mee goreng mamak and nasi kandar. All of these dishes are becoming the country's image and everyone enjoy eating them. Unfortunately, Malaysian food is still unknown to the international market whereas it is one of the most remarkable and exciting cuisines in the world because it has roots in so many cultures and ethnics in Malaysia (Leesan, 2019). In addition, Malaysia has always been in the top 20 most visited country in the world for the past 20 years. However, that is not the main issue of this study. The main issue of this study to find out the business growth performance of Malay ethnic restaurant that is hard to sustain in the market although they have many popular dishes locally and internationally. In addition, a government funded initiative program to promote Malaysian cuisine called *Jom Makan* (Lets Eat) restaurants open in Britain and Japan was deemed a failure. All the restaurants closed down after only a few years of operation (Kosaku, 2010). Whether there is connection between the program and Malay ethnic restaurants is something future research need to address.

Figure 2: The traditional nasi lemak in Malaysia



Source: *bakewithpaws.com* (2018)

This study has come up with a modified conceptual framework from Storey (1994) has been adopted by this study as shown in figure 1. There are three elements this study identified to look at;

Management orientation

Management orientation is defined as management process of anticipating, identifying and satisfying requirements profitability which consist of several objectives including; increase sales volume, growth rate, market share, market penetration, minimise return on investment, promote social responsibility and promoting positive company image (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2014). An organization's decision of reaction within the environment depends on its beliefs about the environment and its beliefs on regardless of whether its activities can have an effect on the environment. A number of researchers have examined the relationships between specific, tangible organizational variables and firm level performance. McGahan and Porter (2002) found that industry association, business specific impacts, and corporate-parent impacts positively anticipated financial performance, yet were subject to change after some time.

Organizational culture

Titiev (1959) found the culture should be learned in the organization. Schein (1990) defined organizational culture is about what a group learns over period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problem of internal integration. Restaurant operators are very concern with the organizational commitment that affects between the employees. Jorritsma and Wilderom (2012) stated that improving service through organizational culture change is important to the survival and growth in the companies. According to Koutroumanis, Watson and Dastoor (2012) the main elements of organizational culture is relating to service quality and customer intentions. Pantouvakis & Bouranta, (2013) added that the role of employee job satisfaction is related to organizational learning culture and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, successful leadership can raise employee commitment and brand supporting behaviours (Wallace, de Chernatony & Buil, 2013).

Market orientation

Altinay (2010) define market orientation as values concept of people and state that it portrayed the visualization, the strategic way, and orientation of a firm. Market Orientation has been rationally created as applicable to whole commerce performance (Perry, 2014). Furthermore, Mujahid Hilal and Mubarak (2014), in their research identified that the market orientation is one of the critical elements to corporate management as well as production or cost orientation and employee orientation as it can lead to the corporate success. Protcko and Dornberger, (2014) prove that the previous research by Narver & Slater (1990), where they found that market orientation is correlated to return on assets (ROA). Mokhtar (2014) also stated that, the multi-functional of market orientation also include that the communication, interpretation, and spreading of marketing information must occur towards some

important functional areas of the organization.

Although there are other elements in business growth performance used by other studies but for this study management orientation, organisational culture and market orientation are sufficient enough to measure the issue of this study. Researchers such as; Storey (1994), Tuan and Takahashi (2009) also used three factors in their conceptual framework to measure the business growth performance. Hence, this study decided to follow their example.

Research methodology

Quantitative method was used by this study in order to get the data needed. The questionnaires was designed based on the conceptual framework of business growth performance discussed earlier and taking into consideration the three objectives set by this study. The main reason why questionnaires is used to gather the data for this study are because; inexpensive, practical, fast results, scalability, comparability, easy analysis, validity and reliability, standardized, no pressure and respondent anonymity (refer Bryman and Bell 2015). Due to that questionnaires is the best option for this study due to the nature of the topic.

The sample populations of this study were among the management staff of Malay restaurant located around Shah Alam, Selangor. Shah Alam is the capital city of Selangor state which located in Klang Valley and identified to have one of the highest Malay ethnic population group in Malaysia also known as “Malay City”. Based on Department of Statistics Malaysia 2010 census 65.5% of the city population are from Malay ethnic. As a result, the number of Malay ethnic restaurants in Shah Alam is significantly high. Since the topic of this study is focusing on Malay ethnic restaurant Shah Alam is the best choice to conduct this study. The sample size of response was calculated based on the total number of Malay restaurants in Shah Alam registered with Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) until 2017. In addition, the researchers also identify few characteristic before distributing the questionnaires in order to get the best sampling for this study. For instance, the restaurant has to provide at least 80 percent of Malay food, the restaurant must have established at least 2 years and above, and also the respondent shall be among supervisor, managers and above. In addition, the restaurant should have a staff of over 10 employees. From the total number of Malay restaurants in Shah Alam, only 35 were chosen as the sample size for this study with 102 respondents. Sekaran (2013) defined sampling a process of selecting an enough essential features from the population, so that the study of the sample and an understanding of its characteristics would make it possible for the researcher to generalize to the population.

The questionnaires was distributed by hand directly to the supervisors, manager and above at their restaurant establishment with the presence of enumerator of this

study for the period of three months. This is to make sure the respondents answer the questionnaires immediately once they received the questionnaires and to guide them in answering the questions better. As a result, this study managed to get good respond rate from the respondents. All data is analysed using SPSS software package for questionnaires.

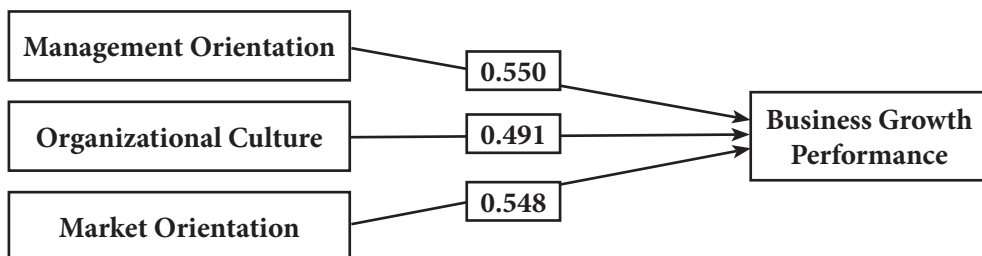
Results and discussion

In the demographic section, there were 55 female respondents with 53.92% of total respondents and 47 (46.08%) were male respondents. There are seven groups of respondents in the restaurant which involve; (1) owner, (2) senior management, (3) manager, (4) executive, (5) supervisor, (6) officer and (7) others. The highest frequency respondents role in restaurant is supervisor with the frequency of 28.43% (n=29) and followed by the owner of the restaurants with 24.51% (n=25). Besides that, about 19.61% (n=20) represent the respondents with the others role in the restaurant despite than management team and 16.67% (n=17) is the frequency from respondents with manager of restaurant. Apart from that, respondents of senior management frequency is 4.90% (n=5) followed by executive and officer roles of the restaurant from respondents have the frequency of both 2.89% (n=3). There are three kind of concept in this result includes; (1) Original concept (never existed in or out Malaysia), (2) Originated from an existing concept in Malaysia and (3) others concept. The highest frequency of restaurant concept of Malay ethnic restaurant is originated from an existing concept in Malaysia with 92.16% (n=92) followed by the others concept as with the frequency of 4.90% (n=5) and lowest is original concept (never existed in or out Malaysia) with the frequency of 2.94% (n=3). Since Malay ethnic restaurant is the well-known ethnic food service establishment in Malaysia, therefore, the concept of most of the respondent's current working restaurant is the originated from an existing concept. Five type of restaurant's legal status have been grouped in this study which including (1) sole proprietorship, (2) joint liability, (3) limited liability, (4) partnership, (5) joint venture and (6) professional. Within this study, sole proprietorship is shown the highest frequency with 88.24% (n=90). Besides that, the frequency of partnership in restaurant is shown 9.80% (n=10) followed by the joint liability and joint venture both were recorded 0.98% (n=1). Meanwhile, the other restaurant business entities such limited liability and professional are none within in this study.

In this study, the researcher used multiple regression analysis to answer the research questions appropriately where it involves several predictors and dependent variables. The results from the output shows that the R Square values was 0.302, which means 30.2% of the variation in business growth performance value can be explained by the dimensions of independent variable which is the management orientation. This analysis was being used with the aim to explore the relationship between the

management orientations towards business growth performance in Malay Restaurant. Based on the analysis, the p-value for the management orientation was 0.00, which is less than 0.05. Hence, researcher are able to conclude that there were a significant effect and relationship between the management orientation and business growth performance. Meanwhile, Beta coefficient score measures of the total variation in the dependent that was explained by the independent variable (Pallant, 2013). Above, the figure showed the score of beta coefficient for management orientation was 0.550 (refer figure 2). It reflects that 55.0 percent of the total variation of business growth performance value was influenced by the dimension of management orientation. Thus, it also indicates that the management orientation has become one of the contributor to business growth performance value in the Malay restaurant. This analysis used in order to explore the relationship between the organizational cultures towards business growth performance in Malay Restaurant. From the results, it shows that the R Square values was 0.241, which means 24.1% of the variation in business growth performance value can be explained by the dimensions of independent variable which is organizational culture. Based on the analysis, the p-value for the organizational culture was 0.00, which is less than 0.05. Hence, researcher are able to conclude that there were a significant effect and relationship between the organizational culture and business growth performance. Meanwhile the figure showed the score of beta coefficient for organizational culture was 0.491 which reflects that 49.1 percent of the total variation of business growth performance value was influenced by the dimension of organizational culture. Further, it also displays that the organizational culture has become one of the contributor to business growth performance value in the Malay restaurant. The analysis shows that the R Square values was 0.300, which means 30.0% of the variation in business growth performance value can be explained by the dimensions of independent variable which is the market orientation and the figure showed the score of beta coefficient for market orientation was 0.548. It reflects that 54.8 percent of the total variation of business growth performance value was influenced by the dimension of market orientation. Thus, it also indicates that the market orientation has become one of the contributor to business growth performance value in the Malay restaurant.

Figure 3: Result for internal factors



Above, the figure showed the score of beta coefficient for each internal factors and management orientation was said to be the highest one which was 0.550. It reflects that 55 percent of total variation of business growth performance value was influenced by dimension of management orientation. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that all hypothesis under all dimensions were supported and accepted. It could be concluded based on the result that the internal factors which is management orientation, organizational culture, and market orientation provided by the Malay restaurant does influence the business growth performance value.

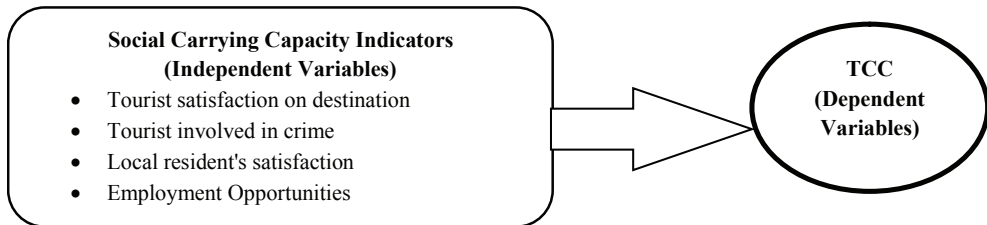
The findings suggested that food service leaders are aware with the effective organizational culture that could determine the level of future operational success. Culture also involve employees, the power of a strong culture to guide business success become more obvious, happiness, better to co-workers and high morale. Jorritsma & Wilderom, (2012) found that improving service through organizational culture is an essential tool to the survival and growth in the companies. According to Koutroumanis, Watson and Dastoor (2012) the main components in the organizational culture includes service quality and customer intentions. Organizational learning culture and customer satisfaction have the relationship with the role of employee job satisfaction (Pantouvakis and Bouranta, 2013). According to the data collected, this study found that, market orientation is crucial as to enhance the business development and performances. This result also portrayed that, about 54.8% of management teams of Malay ethnic restaurant come to an agreement that the internal factor of market orientation has influenced the positive business development performances.

Conclusion

The research objectives were to investigate the relationship of management orientation, organizational culture and market orientation toward business growth performance in Malay restaurant. Explicitly, it shows that the management staff in Malay restaurant agree that management orientation has become one of the primary factors that contribute to business growth performance. Based on the result, researcher also conclude that organizational culture and market orientation had a positive and significant relationship towards business growth performance Malay restaurant. In addition, Malay ethnic restaurants can learn from the success of ‘Mamak’ restaurant in Malaysia. Not only most of ‘Mamak’ restaurants able to sustain in the market for a long time but they also managed to expand their restaurant business by opening many branches all over Malaysia. Chinese ethnic restaurants also are not as successful as the ‘Mamak’ restaurant in expanding their businesses and branches all over Malaysia.

The outcome in this study has emerge the new knowledge that can be beneficial for industry and academician based on the internal factors such management orientation, organizational culture and market orientation towards the business

growth performance. Within this study, the researcher manages to get the positive significant relationship for all internal factors onto business growth performance



in Malay ethnic restaurant. Therefore, this finding shown positive outcome as well as proven from the previous study had made with differ factors in the business context and differ demographic data. Lastly, it is recommended that the owner or management must using professional development such as doing the business market research. Business market research is the process of collecting data to decide whether a particular products or services will satisfy the needs of the competitors. Market research is important because it can build a stronger business such as understand customer needs and wants, identify the new opportunities, develop marketing strategies, minimises risk and can help to make a better decisions and gain advantage against the competition.

Future research must do in dept study to better understand the problem of this topic due to the nobleness of the topic. As such mixed method should be used by future researchers. By using mixed methods the study will get robust data from both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings will be better with good representation from psychological aspect and statistical. Also, mixed method will be able to provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. Hence, by using mix methods the strengths of each approach can make up for the weaknesses of the other (FoodRisc Resource Centre 2016).

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