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I see, and I hunt

The link between gastronomy online reviews, involvement and behavioural intention towards ethnic food

Behavioural
intention
towards ethnic
food

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Abstract

Purpose – Despite the growth of social networking websites as hybrid promotional tools, the empirical research that is currently available in explaining the consequences of gastronomy online reviews on ethnic food behavioural intention is limited. The purpose of this paper is to adopt a novel approach to explore Gen-Y tourists' behavioural intention by proposing "involvement" as a mediator in improvising Wang *et al.*'s model. In other words, the more tourists enjoy reading gastronomy online reviews and gain benefits like inspiring taste desire, forming taste awareness and facilitating interpersonal interaction, the more they will become actively involved in searching gastronomy online reviews for ethnic food, subsequently manifesting in higher behavioural intention.

Design/methodology/approach – To test the research model, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to Gen-Y tourists in Malaysia using the purposive sampling technique. Partial least squares–structural equation modelling was applied to analyse the data collected from a sample of 748 responses.

Findings – This study provides empirical findings based on the direct relationship between gastronomy online review dimensions and the behavioural intention towards ethnic food. In addition, the indirect influence of the constructs for behavioural intention through involvement and the moderating effect of variety seeking were found. Indeed, when involvement increases as a result of reading online reviews, behavioural intention is enhanced. In fact, if the individual is a variety seeker, the behavioural intention could likewise be enhanced.

Practical implications – This paper provides suggestions and valuable insight for tourism authorities and ethnic food eateries in using gastronomy online reviews for promoting ethnic food and gastronomy tourism. For example, food eateries can motivate reviewers to include attractive and useful content by facilitating how the gastronomy reviewer retrieves information (e.g. ingredients, price, and food health value and food tradition) concerning the eatery. Additionally, rewards and incentives such as offering vouchers to reviewers in order to gain attractive and interesting reviews could be considered. Finally, the variety-seeking goal of tourists can be attained by relocating ethnic food restaurants or stalls at centralised or designated areas, where a variety of ethnic foods are conveniently accessible to tourists.

Originality/value – This paper systematically discusses how gastronomy online reviews influence the behavioural intention of tourists to taste ethnic food in the context of Malaysia. The inclusion of the mediator (involvement) and moderator (variety seeking) added a significant increment to the total variance explained in behavioural intention.

Keywords Involvement, Behavioural intention, Ethnic food, Gen-Y, Gastronomy online reviews, Variety seeking

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

In recent years, gastronomy tourism has evolved as a unique form of tourism helping to drive the growth of the hospitality and tourism industry globally (Li *et al.*, 2018; Kivela, 2017). The term “gastronomy” is derived from the Greek word, “gastros” which refers to the “stomach”, whereas “nomos” refers to rules or regulation (Scarpato, 2002; Santich, 2004). Gastronomy tourism refers to a trip that is inspired by the tourist’s interest in exploring foods and drinks available at the host destination (Hjalager and Richards, 2003). Numerous studies have reported that ethnic food serves as a significant factor in framing the identity of a particular destination (Ting *et al.*, 2019; Burgess, 2014). Therefore, the search for ethnic foods has become one of the most important itineraries and drawcards for tourists while travelling, with almost half of their budget spent on exploring and searching for exotic foods (Boyne *et al.*, 2002). As a consequence, gastronomy can become a prime selling point in reinforcing a country’s tourism image and promoting its cultural heritage. Gastronomy tourism is quickly gaining popularity within the Asian region particularly in Thailand, Vietnam, Korea and Japan where they have consistently integrated and promoted their unique blend of ethnic foods as a means to attract tourists (Henderson, 2009).

Given its diversity, Malaysia is regarded as a melting pot of various gastronomic products in Southeast Asia. The multi-ethnic Malaysian society (i.e. Malay, Chinese, Indian and other indigenous groups) has quite successfully created exclusive gastronomic products, each having unique tastes (Hutton, 2000; Jalis *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, the states of Melaka, Perak, Penang, Sarawak and Sabah have been highlighted as “the states for gastronomy” (Zainal *et al.*, 2010). According to a poll conducted by a travel site, around 60 per cent of tourists considered Malaysia as being a “Food Paradise” where they can experience and taste a variety of delectable ethnic foods representing different religions and cultures. Ethnic foods are derived as foods prepared using essential Malaysian ingredients. For example, Peninsular Malaysia is popularly associated with various ethnic foods such as Nasi Lemak, Nasi Dagang and Satay, these are popular Malay ethnic food. Meanwhile, Banana Leaf Rice, Nasi Kandar and Roti Canai are typical Indian ethnic foods, while chicken rice, Char Kway Teow and Popiah are Chinese ethnic cuisines. Similarly, Dayak and Kadazandusun cuisines are popular in Sabah and Sarawak.

In the current digital era, online reviews from social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.) serve as an important means of communication via the internet, enabling individuals to disseminate information and exchange their buying experiences (Laseter and Rabinovich, 2016; Wei and Lu, 2013). Likewise, gastronomy online reviews have arisen as a primary source of information utilised by tourists in deciding their culinary choices by obtaining details on restaurant names, contact details, menus, food types and the overall opinion of foods and service quality from the diner’s perspective (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Accordingly, a better comprehension of online reviews can be extremely beneficial to both academics and practitioners in developing gastronomy tourism strategies, especially for promoting local ethnic foods. However, despite the growth of gastronomy studies in the hospitality and tourism domain, most research has focussed on developed countries with less focus on developing countries (e.g. Malaysia).

Given the dearth of literature available in this field, this study discusses specifically on how gastronomy online reviews influence tourists’ behavioural intention towards ethnic foods in the context of Malaysia. Previous studies have mainly reported that the perceptions of tourists are integral in determining the success of tourism (Stone *et al.*, 2018; Cocosila and Igonor, 2015). Among the various tourist categories, this study focusses on Gen-Y tourists given they are reported to be more adept at learning and are more technologically proficient, with many of this cohort relying on information accessible via the internet (Laseter and Rabinovich, 2016; Wang and Herrando, 2019). Therefore, the connection between Gen-Y

tourists and gastronomy online reviews with respect to tourism emerges as an exciting area of research to explore. Specifically, three categories of antecedents are identified for gastronomy online reviews: inspiring taste desire, forming taste awareness and facilitating interpersonal interaction. The mediating effect of involvement and the moderating role of variety seeking are also added in response to the Involvement Theory and Arousal Theory.

Wang (2011) investigated how gastronomy blogs can influence behavioural intention to taste foods and beverages using blog readers as the respondents in Taiwan. However, the study appears to have two apparent limitations. First, the study targeted only a small group of blog readers ($n = 329$) in Taiwan. Second, the study only examined the direct relationship between the factors of gastronomy blogs towards behavioural intention, thus, underestimating the overall predictive power. Indeed, this model can be improved by incorporating the indirect effect which assists practitioners in understanding the underlying mechanism that drives the intention to visit a gastronomic location while the moderator may provide fruitful insight in identifying the type of customers who are more likely to display a high intention in tasting the recommended food.

As an extension to Wang's (2011) research, this study incorporates involvement as a possible mechanism to explain the indirect effect of gastronomy online reviews on the behavioural intention of tourists' towards ethnic food. This is underpinned by Andrews *et al.*'s (1990) model of involvement. Accordingly, the concept of involvement is acknowledged as a key driver that influences an individual's behavioural intention. Aertsens *et al.* (2009) argued that involvement plays a significant role in individuals' mental processing needs especially when involving food consumption research. Similarly, Bezençon and Biliç (2010) mentioned that involvement should be incorporated in decision-making processes in order to better comprehend its impact on consumer behaviour. In light of this, this study responds by incorporating involvement as the link in explaining how gastronomy online reviews influence tourists' behavioural intention towards ethnic foods when visiting a host destination.

In fact, adding to the above, several pieces of evidence have suggested that the direct relationship between involvement and intention was not always significant. For instance, Teng and Lu (2016) asserted that there is a positive relationship between these two variables, whereas Huang *et al.*'s (2010) finding suggested there is no significant relationship between involvement and intention. The inconsistency of results from past studies has suggested the possibility of a moderating role. Therefore, this study proposes variety seeking as a possible factor influencing the strength of the relationship between involvement and behavioural intention. Even though the involvement–intention relationship has been well established (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Marshall and Bell, 2004), some personal characteristics may change the strength of the relationship. For instance, as proposed by the Arousal Theory, an individual's search for arousal differs (Berlyne, 1960), whereas variety-seeking behaviour is a concept that captures one's arousal appetite and is defined as one's tendency to seek diversity in the buying decision (Kahn, 1995).

This study is organised into the following sections. Section 2 presents a detailed literature review founded on the primary theory. In this section, the Involvement Theory that underpins this research and hypotheses are developed. Section 3 describes the methodology employed in this study. Section 4 discusses the findings of this study. Finally, Section 5 presents suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1 Theory of involvement

The Involvement Theory over the past century has received significant attention, applied in a variety of behavioural studies, such as in the context of marketing and consumer behaviour. A plethora of consumer behaviour models has also expanded the employment of the involvement concept (Huang *et al.*, 2010). In consumer behaviour research, involvement

was found to be an important construct in explaining related behavioural relationships (Harrigan *et al.*, 2018; Cui and Wu, 2016).

At present, there are three dominant involvement models. Houston (1978) initiated the “involvement conceptual and methodological perspective model”, whereas Zaichkowsky (1986) proposed the “involvement conceptualising model” and Andrews *et al.* (1990) postulated the “involvement conceptualising and measuring model”. All three models addressed one common issue, which is examining how the involvement concept may be used to understand and explain consumer behaviour.

Houston’s (1978) model of involvement articulates three types of involvement: situation involvement, enduring involvement and response involvement. Situation involvement describes how the consumer reacts to objects or things under certain situations when the main focus is on non-personal factors. On the other hand, enduring involvement emphasises on personal characteristics, with a focus on the consumer giving attention to objects or things for relatively long periods. In contrast, response involvement describes the combination of non-personal involvement and personal involvement factors that result in consumer decision making through a complex cognitive and behavioural process (Huang *et al.*, 2010).

Zaichkowsky (1986) conceptualised involvement into three domains: product involvement, ad involvement and purchase involvement and suggested three antecedents of involvement: personal factors; stimulus or objects related to the physical characteristics of communication media; and situational factors. Andrews *et al.* (1990) suggested that involvement comprises three major properties: intensity, direction and persistence. They further articulate that antecedents of involvement can be attributed to two domains: personal needs, goals and characteristics; and situational and decision factors. Andrews *et al.* (1990) proposed that personal or situational factors influence involvement.

Therefore, based on the above discussion, this study defines involvement as “an unobservable state of motivation arousal, or interest towards the consumption (activity) of a product category (object)”. Moreover, consistent with the involvement model postulated by Andrews *et al.* (1990), the involvement concept is the immediate predictor to behavioural intention. For instance, when consumers demonstrate high involvement towards a product, they will process the information more in depth (Burnkrant and Sawyer, 1983), experience more elaboration (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) and are more eager to manifest positive outcomes (Krugman, 1965). Similarly, several empirical assessments have reported the relationship between involvement and consumer behaviour, for example, behavioural intention to purchase travel products (Huang *et al.*, 2010), behavioural intention to try organic food (Teng and Lu, 2016) and behavioural intention towards online retailers (Kim, Fiore and Lee, 2007). Thus, there is a gap in exploring whether involvement is equally relevant in explaining tourists’ behavioural intention to taste ethnic food.

2.2 *Inspiring taste desire*

Prior studies have revealed that attractive photos, images or videos can inspire consumer awareness, evoke a high level of interest and empathy and create a positive effect on individual intention (Kim, Agrusa, Lee and Chon, 2007; Lin and Huang, 2006). Following the study by Wang’s (2011) conceptualisation, in the context of gastronomy online reviews, inspiring taste desire is assessed via two factors: experiencing appeal and generating empathy.

Experiencing appeal. Experiencing appeal is defined as the degree to which gastronomy online reviews can trigger readers’ mental and emotional vibration (i.e. excitement, curiosity, attraction and persuasion), in driving tourists’ desire to taste (Wang, 2011). Given the advancement of technology, visual media available online can help to stimulate an individual’s perceptions: visually, mentally and emotionally. Specifically, armed with professional cameras or high pixel smartphones, food bloggers can capture appetising images and invariably stimulate readers’ appetites and desires. Rust and Oliver (2000)

posited that an individual's taste intention is strongly linked with excitement seeking given it generates favourable expectations towards food. Likewise, Sparks *et al.* (2003) highlighted that excitement and curiosity are the stimuli to hunt for new foods. Hence, gastronomy online reviews using attractive images and favourable reviews can trigger tourists' experience appeal thereby influencing their behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Experiencing appeal has a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

Generating empathy. Generating empathy is the extent to which images and descriptions in gastronomy online reviews can arouse readers' affection and cognition, in driving tourist's desire to taste (Wang, 2011). This provokes the readers' expectation and aspiration to taste the various cuisines recommended by reviewers. Other than attractive headings, breath-taking photographs play a significant role in generating empathy and inspiring consumers' attention (Lin and Huang, 2006). Boyne *et al.* (2002) suggested that attractive images in a tourist guidebook can inspire tourists to spend more by visiting the location and trying the local cuisines. Nowadays, promotions of gastronomic locations can spread more efficiently through online reviews, simultaneously generating individuals' emotions and intellectual identification. By using these platforms, all information can be instantly and seamlessly shared. Indeed, live video recording in restaurants is fast becoming an effective medium for diners to share their real culinary experiences, where readers can relate to (i.e. empathy). Hence, generating empathy could trigger tourists' behavioural intention when exploring ethnic food. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Generating empathy has a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

2.3 Forming taste awareness

Gastronomy online reviews offering information associated with ethnic food and culinary destinations using social media are considered as one of the most important resources that provide awareness to tourists. The studies by Wang (2011) and Lin and Huang (2006) showed that forming taste awareness is derived from three factors: providing image, delivering knowledge and presenting guides.

Providing image. Providing image refers to the degree in which gastronomy online reviews provide readers with an impression of a gastronomic location that incorporates food quality, service quality, eating ambience and food safety (Cohen and Aviel, 2004; Mehta and Maniam, 2002), in forming taste awareness. In performing restaurant surveys, researchers have revealed three commonly accepted attributes for measuring restaurant experiences such as food quality, service quality and atmosphere (Ha and Jang, 2010; Jang and Namkung, 2009). Likewise, food quality is frequently cited in influencing diners' satisfaction and selection (Liu and Jang, 2009; Qin and Prybutok, 2008). Aside from that, physical environment and service quality are important factors that diners use in their decision to visit restaurants (Mehta and Maniam, 2002; Yüksel and Yüksel, 2003). Notably, gastronomy online reviews which are effective in helping tourists obtain information on ethnic food will undoubtedly increase tourists' behavioural intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Providing image has a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

Delivering knowledge. Delivering knowledge through gastronomy online reviews refers to the extent in which the reviews provide beneficial information and deliver knowledge relating to local food traditions and habits, eating manners and local cuisines (Wang, 2011), in forming taste awareness. In this situation, tourists can learn about the eating habits and the table manners practised by locals when enjoying ethnic cuisines during their travel.

Indeed, there are diverse eating habits globally, especially between the east and west. For example, in Chinese culture, most dishes are shared with others, whereas in western cultures, individual dishes are common. Since, there is growing interest in studies stating that some tourists might avoid trying unfamiliar foods (Verbeke and Poquiqui López, 2005; Babicz-Zielińska, 2006), gastronomy online reviews may help to act as an effective tool in reducing this fear as they can obtain immense knowledge about the local ethnic food from different perspectives. According to a study by Ting *et al.* (2016), food neophobia is one of the factors that deter tourists from trying ethnic foods. Sparks (2007) claimed that learning knowledge is one of the critical steps that people take when they intend to explore or try new things. Therefore, this study perceives that a high positive evaluation of delivering knowledge will enhance tourists' behavioural intention to taste ethnic food by proposing the following hypothesis:

H4. Delivering knowledge has a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

Presenting guides. Presenting guides can be used to describe the various features of gastronomy online reviews which provide useful information that assists readers in forming taste awareness (Wang, 2011). As mentioned earlier, gastronomy online reviews can invariably include a guide containing restaurants' phone numbers, addresses, operating hours, the menu as well as the overall opinion of their food and service quality which assists diners in their culinary journey. Consequently, gastronomic online reviews are considered as expert opinions (Parikh, 2013), which notify and inform diners of both the advantages and disadvantages of restaurants. These reviews are often useful for tourists given they can obtain independent feedback from a wide variety of reviewers or food bloggers before they try the local cuisines (Parikh *et al.*, 2014). Bowman and Vinyard (2004) revealed that most tourists tend to have a pre-conceived idea before consuming the ethnic food of a host destination. Hence, presenting or offering guides from gastronomy online reviews can help to pre-determine the experience of ethnic food suited to their taste. It is also expected that presenting guides will play a significant role in influencing tourists' behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5. Presenting guides have a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

2.4 Facilitating interpersonal interaction

Numerous studies have revealed that blogs help to facilitate social group formation and interaction by creating a perception of attachment (Hsu and Lin, 2008). By adopting Wang's (2011) concept, facilitating interpersonal interaction in gastronomy online reviews is explained using two constructs: social influence and cyber-community influence.

Social influence. Social influence refers to the extent to which people are likely to be influenced by others in facilitating interpersonal interaction (Wang, 2011). According to Venkatesh *et al.* (2003), the term social influence encapsulates three main concepts, namely, subjective norm, social factors and social image. The emergence of the online review function in social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) has enabled tourists to develop connections and provide the ability to share culinary experiences with others (Parikh *et al.*, 2014). Taylor and Aday (2016) reported that approximately 97 per cent of tourists pay closer attention to recommendations from family and close friends rather than from promotions received from restaurants when making their dining decision. For example, if a person's family and friends have visited a restaurant based on the recommendation from the gastronomy online reviews, it is likely that the person will follow similar behaviour. Similarly, social influence demonstrates a significant positive association in shaping consumer intention (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). Likewise, in this study, we anticipate

that the social influence element in gastronomy online reviews will have a positive influence in influencing the behavioural intention of tourists to taste ethnic food. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. Social influence has a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

Cyber-community influence. The second construct is the influence of the cyber-community influence. This term emphasises the connection with gastronomy online review communities in providing the opportunity to network and to meet people with common and shared interests, whilst it allows the interchange of comments regarding culinary experiences in facilitating interpersonal interaction (Wang, 2011). Anecdotal evidence has suggested that community identification and interaction are two aspects used to predict an individual's behavioural intention (Zheng *et al.*, 2013; Hsu and Lin, 2008). Pantelidis (2010) posits that tourists will consult not only with friends or relatives but also regarding reviews from cyber-communities when planning their culinary destination. In this situation, tourists believe that the influence of cyber-communities is an advantageous alternative for them to gain advice, share experiences and identify solutions in planning their travel (Ridings and Gefen, 2004). For instance, tourists could ask a question online and receive answers from the cyber-community without wasting time to search themselves. Regarding gastronomy online reviews, if the reviews are considered credible, the opinions exchanged between members of the respective cyber-community will undoubtedly influence the tourist's behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. Accordingly, the hypothesis is posited:

H7. Cyber-community influence has a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

2.5 Involvement and behavioural intention

Zaichkowsky (1986) defined involvement in gastronomy online reviews as the person's perceived relevance of the object or product based on their inherent needs, values and interests. In this respect, the ongoing search for product information can assist consumers in forming a view or opinion of the consequence of using the products, and eventually, influence their purchase intention (Richins and Bloch, 1986). Prior research has recommended the role of involvement in explaining consumer eating behaviour (Marshall and Bell, 2004). For example, Teng and Lu (2016) found that a higher level of involvement was significant in affecting the buying intention towards organic food. Therefore, tourists who are actively involved in searching for ethnic foods through reading gastronomy online reviews are more likely to taste ethnic food during their travelling based on these reviews. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8. Involvement has a positive relationship with behavioural intention.

2.6 The mediating effect of involvement

Baron and Kenny (1986) revealed that mediation effects would arise when a predictor influences the outcome through its effect on or as a result of a mediator variable. In the context of consumer behaviour, involvement is a primary element in comprehending and scrutinising how a person interacts with products or in purchase decisions (Zaichkowsky, 1986). In this regard, the literature suggests that focussing on the mediating role of involvement concerning consumer intention is vitally important (Teng and Lu, 2016). Principally, an individual will be driven by a certain level of involvement if the product's attributes are identical with their consumption motives, thereby triggering a positive outcome (Schmidt and Frieze, 1997). Bravo *et al.* (2013) reported that in addition to the direct effect of consumption motives on consumer behaviour, the tendency of food consumption could be influenced by the person's perception regarding the importance of a particular food.

Notwithstanding, founded upon Andrews *et al.*'s (1990) model of involvement, this study postulates that gastronomy online review dimensions (i.e. experiencing appeal, generating empathy, providing image, delivery knowledge, presenting guides, social influence and cyber-community influence) which act as "situational and decision factors" could heighten tourists' level of involvement; importantly, strengthening their behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. In line with this reasoning, this study proposes that involvement is a mediator that bridges the relationship between gastronomy online reviews and behavioural intention. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H9a.* Involvement mediates the relationship between experiencing appeal and behavioural intention.
- H9b.* Involvement mediates the relationship between generating empathy and behavioural intention.
- H9c.* Involvement mediates the relationship between providing image and behavioural intention.
- H9d.* Involvement mediates the relationship between delivering knowledge and behavioural intention.
- H9e.* Involvement mediates the relationship between presenting guides and behavioural intention.
- H9f.* Involvement mediates the relationship between social influence and behavioural intention.
- H9g.* Involvement mediates the relationship between cyber-community influence and behavioural intention.

2.7 Moderating effect of variety seeking

Variety seeking is defined as "the tendency of individuals to seek diversity in their choices when selecting services or goods" (Kahn, 1995, p. 139). This construct illustrates on the individual's desire to try something novel (Bigné-Alcañiz *et al.*, 2009; Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984). Similarly, the Arousal Theory explains that an individual's desire and search for a certain level of arousal leads to exploratory behaviours (Berlyne, 1960). Moreover, variety-seeking behaviour is driven by a curiosity tendency which is inherent within the person and who is willing to try something new as compared to consistency seekers (Murphy and Dweck, 2016). Therefore, in this study, variety seeking is proposed as a moderator that influences the strength between involvement in gastronomy online reviews and behavioural intention. High variety-seeking tourists will possibly demonstrate a stronger relationship between involvement in gastronomy online reviews and behavioural intention to taste ethnic food compared to low variety-seeking tourists. In other words, individuals who are more involved and prone to food searching (might due to their personal emphasis on food as a source of happiness), and who happen to prefer exploring new food, are more likely to have stronger behavioural intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H10.* Variety seeking moderates the relationship between involvement and behavioural intention, where the positive relationship between involvement and behavioural intention is stronger in a high variety-seeking situation than in low variety seeking.

3. Research method

3.1 Sampling method and respondent profile

In order to test the research model developed for the present study, a total of 748 questionnaires were distributed and collected from Gen-Y tourists in Malaysia using purposive sampling.

The sample size of 748 was considered sufficient for the use of structural equation modelling (SEM), (Kock and Hadaya, 2018) to represent a population for a research study of this nature. Two screening control criteria were developed and applied in selecting the respondents: the respondent must be aged between 18 and 35 years old (Wang and Herrando, 2019); and must be actively engaged in reading gastronomy online reviews at a minimum of 1 h each week. The respondents who fulfilled the criteria were then invited to participate in the survey. Data were collected over six months in 2018 comprising of respondents from different states in Malaysia to achieve a broad representation of respondent types.

The demographics of the respondents are tabulated in Table I. Concerning gender, the ratio of females (52.70 per cent) to males (47.30 per cent) was slightly more. The majority of respondents were of Malay ethnicity (50.30 per cent). About 46.93 per cent of respondents spent between 1 and 3 h per week reading gastronomy online reviews and about 75.8 per cent preferred browsing via online social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Interestingly, around 42.9 per cent of respondents often tried food recommended through gastronomy online reviews.

3.2 Measurement scales

All measurement items for the constructs were adapted from previous studies. Based on the literature reviews, the dimensions which formed the gastronomy online review such as experiencing appeal, generating empathy, providing image, delivering knowledge, presenting guides, social influence and cyber-community influence were adapted from Hsu and Lin (2008), Huang *et al.* (2008), Sparks (2007), Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) and Wang (2011). The variety-seeking

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 354 | 47.30 |
| Female | 394 | 52.70 |
| <i>Ethnicity</i> | | |
| Malay | 376 | 50.30 |
| Indian | 88 | 11.80 |
| Chinese | 262 | 35.00 |
| Others | 22 | 2.90 |
| <i>Time spent on reading gastronomy online review (per week) (hours)</i> | | |
| 1–3 | 351 | 46.93 |
| 4–6 | 297 | 39.70 |
| 7–9 | 83 | 11.10 |
| > 10 | 17 | 2.27 |
| <i>Platform for reading gastronomy online review</i> | | |
| Online social media | 567 | 75.80 |
| Travel/Food blogs | 93 | 12.40 |
| Travel/Food guides (e.g. TripAdvisor) | 41 | 5.50 |
| Online newsletters | 37 | 4.90 |
| Others | 10 | 1.30 |
| <i>Frequency of trying food recommended in gastronomy review</i> | | |
| Sometimes | 263 | 35.20 |
| Frequently | 321 | 42.90 |
| Usually | 103 | 13.80 |
| Always | 61 | 8.20 |
| Total | 748 | 100.00 |

Note: $n = 748$

Table I.
Demographic
attributes

construct in the present study was operationalised applying scale developed by Adjei and Clark (2010) and Manning *et al.* (1995). Cheung and To's (2011) scale was adapted in order to operationalise the construct of involvement. Additionally, the scale measuring behavioural intention was adapted from Wang's (2011) study. Indeed, different measurement scales were used in measuring those items to reduce the issue of common methods bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). As such, all exogenous variables were assessed using the five-point Likert scale, while the constructs of involvement, variety seeking and behavioural intention were measured using the seven-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Notwithstanding, a pilot test was also conducted on 50 Gen-Y tourists before the actual data collection process began. The number of respondents for the pilot test was considered sufficient in line with the suggestion by Sekaran (2003). The result of the pilot test indicated that all measurement items were adequate and relevant.

4. Data analysis and results

The SEM technique was selected to test the proposed model. Among that partial least squares (PLS) approach, which emphasises prediction in estimating statistical models (Wold, 1982; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2017), was selected for data analysis. The measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity of the constructs, followed by utilising structural model to examine the theoretical explanatory power of the model as well as the significance levels of the hypothesised relationships (Figure 1).

4.1 Common method bias testing

Given the data were collected based on the respondents' self-reported subjective perceptions, common method bias might compromise the credibility of the results. In this regard, Harman's single-factor technique was selected to assess common method bias. The results demonstrated that no single factor dominated as the total variance explained by the most significant factor was 38.05 per cent (< 40 per cent), indicating that common method bias was not present in this study (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

4.2 Measurement model

Regarding the measurement model, the internal reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed to assess both reliability and validity of the constructs. Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's α were the predominant indicators used to measure internal

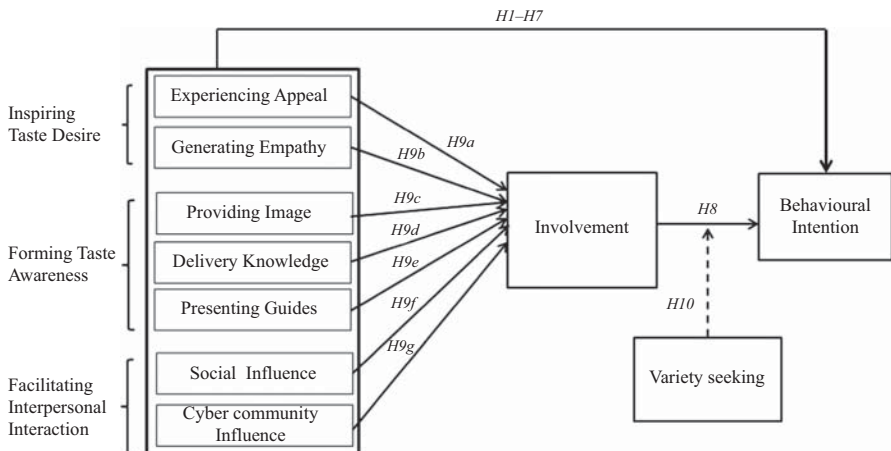


Figure 1.
The proposed model

reliability, where the recommended value for both should be greater than 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Table II depicts that Cronbach's α ranged between 0.704 and 0.941 and the CR values ranged between 0.818 and 0.952, therefore suggesting that all constructs had good reliability. Next, convergent validity was assessed via factor loadings and using the average variance extracted (AVE). Hair *et al.* (2017) suggested that loading scores and AVE values should exceed the threshold values of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively. Table II shows that all constructs met the convergent validity requirement.

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is distinctly different from other constructs. Among the methods suggested, Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was chosen to estimate the true correlation between the two constructs. By following the HTMT criterion, HTMT scores higher than HTMT_{0.85} (Kline, 2011) or HTMT_{0.90} (Gold *et al.*, 2001) indicate a discriminant validity issue. Table III depicts that all values were below HTMT of 0.85; hence, the constructs were significantly different.

4.3 Structural model

In the structural model, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values were calculated to assess multicollinearity among the constructs. Table IV shows that the VIF values for all constructs were below the stringent threshold of 3 (Becker *et al.*, 2015; Mason and Perreault, 1991), suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern in this study.

Table IV also shows that providing image, presenting guides and cyber-community influences have positive and significant effects on behavioural intention with path coefficients at 0.090 ($t=2.066$), 0.178 ($t=4.853$), 0.187 ($t=3.965$), respectively. Hence, *H3*, *H5* and *H7* were supported. In addition, involvement in gastronomy online reviews demonstrated a significant relationship between behavioural intention and path coefficient at 0.316 ($t=7.802$), thus supporting *H8*. Overall, the gastronomy online reviews factors explained a large proportion of the variance (51.30 per cent, $R^2=0.513$) in behavioural intention, while explaining 38 per cent ($R^2=0.380$) of the variance in involvement.

To measure effect size (f^2), Cohen's (1988) guideline was adopted. Three of the constructs, namely, cyber-community influence ($f^2=0.028$), involvement ($f^2=0.127$) and presenting guides ($f^2=0.027$) illustrated small effect sizes on behavioural intention, whereas delivering knowledge ($f^2=0.004$), experiencing appeal ($f^2=0.002$), generating empathy ($f^2=0.004$), providing image ($f^2=0.006$) and social influence ($f^2=0.003$) displayed trivial effects in yielding R^2 of behavioural intention (refer Table IV).

The assessment of the predictive relevance was analysed based on Stone–Geisser Q^2 approach (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974). By using the blindfolding procedure, the results showed that Q^2 for both endogenous variables was above the threshold value of 0 (i.e. involvement = 0.273 and behavioural intention = 0.380), therefore supporting predictive accuracy of the model. In addition, the predictive relevance of the model was examined using the PLS Predict for out of the sample prediction (Shmueli *et al.*, 2016). As displayed in Table V, the result of PLS Predict indicates that the model has predictive relevance where the Q^2 value generated by the PLS estimation is larger than the LM model which further supports the model's predictive ability. Also, by adopting the guidelines proposed by Shumuli *et al.*, the finding can be summarised in two points. First, as two (i.e. BI1 and BI3) out of three indicators for behavioural intention construct in the partial least squares–structural equation modelling (PLS–SEM) estimation generated higher prediction errors compared to the LM model, this indicates that the model has low predictive power. Accordingly, the researcher in future may consider adopting a different source of measurement items when measuring the behavioural intention construct. Second, none of the indicators for the involvement construct in the PLS–SEM estimation had higher RMSE (or MAE) scores compared to the LM model, therefore, indicating that this model has high predictive power. In other words, the involvement measurement scale used was deemed appropriate.

| BFJ | Items | Outer loading | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE |
|-----|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| | <i>Cyber-community influence</i> | | | | |
| | CC1 | 0.738 | 0.814 | 0.878 | 0.644 |
| | CC2 | 0.846 | | | |
| | CC3 | 0.789 | | | |
| | CC4 | 0.829 | | | |
| | <i>Delivering knowledge</i> | | | | |
| | DK1 | 0.782 | 0.807 | 0.874 | 0.634 |
| | DK2 | 0.834 | | | |
| | DK3 | 0.813 | | | |
| | DK4 | 0.753 | | | |
| | <i>Experiencing appeal</i> | | | | |
| | EA1 | 0.816 | 0.772 | 0.854 | 0.594 |
| | EA2 | 0.720 | | | |
| | EA3 | 0.762 | | | |
| | EA4 | 0.782 | | | |
| | <i>Generating empathy</i> | | | | |
| | GE1 | 0.748 | 0.727 | 0.830 | 0.551 |
| | GE2 | 0.625 | | | |
| | GE3 | 0.794 | | | |
| | GE4 | 0.792 | | | |
| | <i>Involvement</i> | | | | |
| | INV1 | 0.888 | 0.900 | 0.931 | 0.771 |
| | INV2 | 0.888 | | | |
| | INV3 | 0.906 | | | |
| | INV4 | 0.827 | | | |
| | <i>Presenting guides</i> | | | | |
| | PG1 | 0.711 | 0.704 | 0.818 | 0.529 |
| | PG2 | 0.775 | | | |
| | PG3 | 0.687 | | | |
| | PG4 | 0.736 | | | |
| | <i>Providing image</i> | | | | |
| | PI1 | 0.598 | 0.841 | 0.884 | 0.562 |
| | PI2 | 0.725 | | | |
| | PI3 | 0.773 | | | |
| | PI4 | 0.796 | | | |
| | PI5 | 0.805 | | | |
| | PI6 | 0.780 | | | |
| | <i>Social influences</i> | | | | |
| | SI1 | 0.787 | 0.802 | 0.871 | 0.628 |
| | SI2 | 0.805 | | | |
| | SI3 | 0.791 | | | |
| | SI4 | 0.786 | | | |
| | <i>Behavioural intention</i> | | | | |
| | BI1 | 0.895 | 0.865 | 0.917 | 0.787 |
| | BI2 | 0.892 | | | |
| | BI3 | 0.875 | | | |

Table II.
Results for
measurement model

(continued)

| Items | Outer loading | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE | Behavioural intention towards ethnic food |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------|-------|---|
| <i>Variety seeking</i> | | | | | |
| VS1 | 0.828 | 0.941 | 0.952 | 0.737 | |
| VS2 | 0.872 | | | | |
| VS3 | 0.872 | | | | |
| VS4 | 0.813 | | | | |
| VS5 | 0.872 | | | | |
| VS6 | 0.878 | | | | |
| VS7 | 0.874 | | | | |

Notes: CR, composite reliability > 0.70; AVE, average variance extracted > 0.50

Table II.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|
| 1. CCI | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Delivering knowledge | 0.728 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Experiencing appeal | 0.661 | 0.466 | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Generating empathy | 0.747 | 0.699 | 0.845 | | | | | | | |
| 5. Behavioural intention | 0.696 | 0.510 | 0.582 | 0.658 | | | | | | |
| 6. Involvement | 0.604 | 0.483 | 0.515 | 0.654 | 0.678 | | | | | |
| 7. Presenting guides | 0.863 | 0.777 | 0.736 | 0.799 | 0.740 | 0.607 | | | | |
| 8. Providing image | 0.746 | 0.808 | 0.699 | 0.781 | 0.616 | 0.499 | 0.866 | | | |
| 9. Social influences | 0.870 | 0.739 | 0.655 | 0.769 | 0.667 | 0.633 | 0.838 | 0.766 | | |
| 10. Variety seeking | 0.648 | 0.570 | 0.500 | 0.644 | 0.584 | 0.818 | 0.596 | 0.540 | 0.644 | |

Notes: CCI, cyber-community influence; HTMT < 0.85

Table III.
Discriminant validity

4.4 Mediating effect of involvement

The mediating effect of involvement in gastronomy online reviews was evaluated using a bootstrapping approach (with 5,000 re-samples). Table IV shows that involvement significantly mediated the relationship between generating empathy ($\beta = 0.077$, $t = 4.435$), presenting guides ($\beta = 0.035$, $t = 2.331$), social influence ($\beta = 0.068$, $t = 4.340$) and cyber-community influence ($\beta = 0.048$, $t = 2.804$) towards behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. According, $H9b$, $H9e$ – $H9g$ were supported (refer to Figure 2).

4.5 Moderating effect of variety seeking

To investigate the interaction effect of variety seeking, a two-stage approach was adopted. The initial R^2 (0.513) for the main effect model was compared with the new R^2 (0.521) with an increment of 0.008. This demonstrated that variety seeking had a moderate explanatory power of 0.8 per cent. Subsequently, based on the effect size calculation ($f^2 = 0.021$), it can be concluded that variety seeking exhibits a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Moreover, by proceeding with bootstrapping, the result indicated that variety seeking plays a moderating role between involvement in gastronomy online reviews and behavioural intention (t -value = 3.008, p -value = 0.001) and therefore, $H10$ was supported. Further, the interaction effect was demonstrated using an interaction plot as recommended by Dawson (2014). As illustrated in Figure 3, the line labelled high variety seeking has a steeper gradient compared to low variety seeking, confirming that the positive relationship between involvement in gastronomy online reviews and behavioural intention is stronger in the high variety-seeking individual as compared to low variety seeking.

Table IV.
Results for
path relationship

| Path relationship | Direct effect | Indirect effect | SE | t-value | p-value | Confidence interval | VIF | Effect size |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------|---------|---------|---------------------|-------|-------------|
| H1: experiencing appeal → BI | 0.046 | | 0.038 | 1.209 | 0.114 | (-0.019, 0.108) | 2.002 | 0.002 |
| H2: generating empathy → BI | 0.065 | | 0.044 | 1.469 | 0.071 | (-0.008, 0.137) | 2.366 | 0.004 |
| H3: providing image → BI | 0.090 | | 0.043 | 2.066** | 0.020 | (0.012, 0.153) | 2.674 | 0.006 |
| H4: delivering knowledge → BI | -0.066 | | 0.044 | 1.478 | 0.070 | (-0.139, 0.005) | 2.194 | 0.004 |
| H5: presenting guides → BI | 0.178 | | 0.037 | 4.853** | 0.000 | (0.116, 0.235) | 2.427 | 0.027 |
| H6: social influences → BI | 0.063 | | 0.042 | 1.506 | 0.066 | (-0.009, 0.127) | 2.569 | 0.003 |
| H7: CCI → BI | 0.187 | | 0.047 | 3.965** | 0.000 | (0.111, 0.263) | 2.543 | 0.028 |
| H8: INV → BI | 0.316 | | 0.041 | 7.802** | 0.000 | (0.247, 0.382) | 1.613 | 0.127 |
| H9a: EA → INV → BI | | 0.015 | 0.015 | 0.969 | 0.333 | (-0.011, 0.050) | | |
| H9b: GE → INV → BI | | 0.077 | 0.018 | 4.435** | 0.000 | (0.044, 0.115) | | |
| H9c: PI → INV → BI | | -0.019 | 0.017 | 1.147 | 0.264 | (-0.054, 0.012) | | |
| H9d: DK → INV → BI | | 0.006 | 0.015 | 0.015 | 0.373 | (-0.025, 0.038) | | |
| H9e: PG → INV → BI | | 0.035 | 0.015 | 2.331* | 0.020 | (0.007, 0.066) | | |
| H9f: SI → INV → BI | | 0.068 | 0.016 | 4.340** | 0.000 | (0.042, 0.101) | | |
| H9g: CCI → INV → BI | | 0.048 | 0.017 | 2.804** | 0.005 | (0.016, 0.083) | | |
| H10: variety seeking × INV → BI | 0.080 | | 0.027 | 3.003** | 0.001 | (0.036, 0.124) | | |

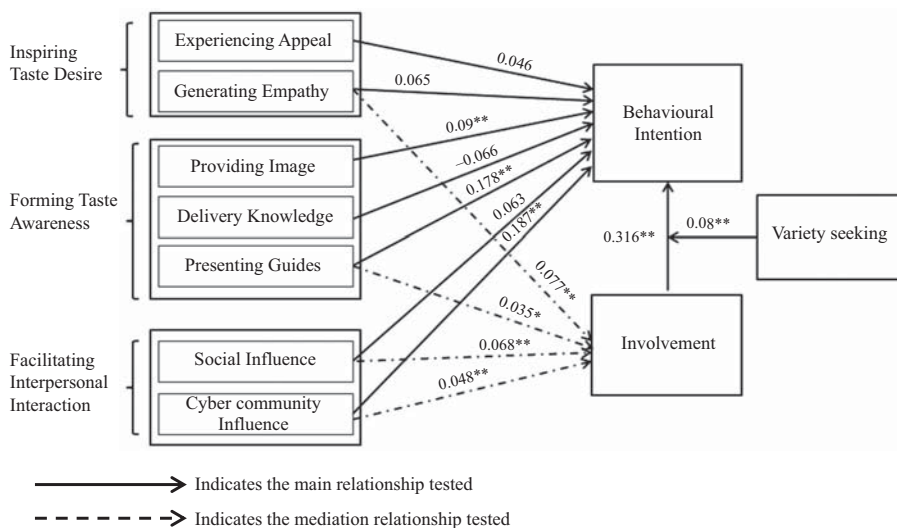
Notes: EA, experiencing appeal; GE, generating empathy; PI, providing image; DK, delivering knowledge; PG, presenting guides; SI, social influencers; CCI, cyber-community influence; INV, involvement; BI, behavioural intention. VIF < 3.33; effect size (> 0.02: small; > 0.15: medium; > 0.35: large). ** $p < 0.01$

| | RMSE | PLS MAE | Q ² | RMSE | LM MAE | Q ² | RMSE | PLS-LM MAE | Q ² |
|------|-------|------------|----------------|-------|-----------|----------------|--------|---------------|----------------|
| BI1 | 0.877 | 0.681 | 0.359 | 0.867 | 0.670 | 0.374 | 0.01 | 0.011 | -0.015 |
| BI2 | 0.873 | 0.670 | 0.352 | 0.890 | 0.679 | 0.327 | -0.017 | -0.009 | 0.025 |
| BI3 | 0.849 | 0.663 | 0.321 | 0.848 | 0.663 | 0.323 | 0.001 | 0.000 | -0.002 |
| INV1 | 1.008 | 0.784 | 0.285 | 1.027 | 0.802 | 0.258 | -0.019 | -0.018 | 0.027 |
| INV2 | 0.990 | 0.785 | 0.27 | 1.005 | 0.793 | 0.248 | -0.015 | -0.008 | 0.022 |
| INV3 | 1.022 | 0.822 | 0.293 | 1.041 | 0.829 | 0.267 | -0.019 | -0.007 | 0.026 |
| INV4 | 1.081 | 0.841 | 0.273 | 1.104 | 0.855 | 0.243 | -0.023 | -0.014 | 0.030 |

Behavioural
intention
towards ethnic
food

Notes: PLS result of RMSE and MAE metric must produce smaller value than LM, thus result negative value from PLS-LM. PLS result of Q² metric must produce larger value than LM, thus result positive value from PLS-LM

Table V.
PLS Predict
assessment



Notes: *,**Coefficient is significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively

Figure 2.
Output of models

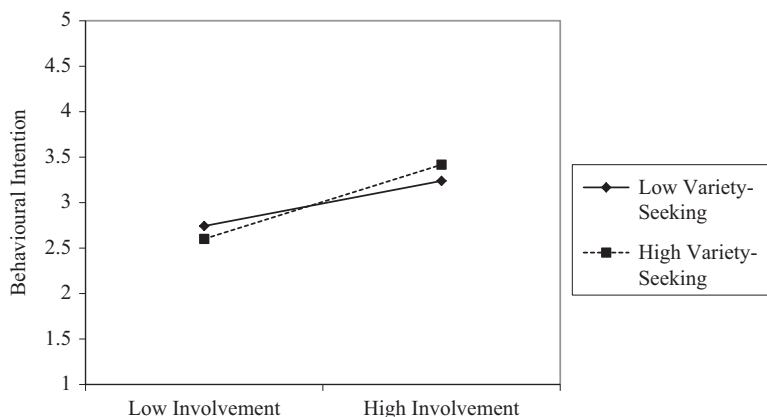


Figure 3.
Interaction of
involvement × variety
seeking

5. Discussions and implications

Assessing gastronomy online reviews from the perspective of Gen-Y tourists can provide significant insights for both academicians and practitioners. This study has extended the knowledge and provided additional value to the ethnic food literature through the aspect of gastronomy online reviews, similar to Wang (2011). Of the seven gastronomy online review factors in this study, four antecedents were found to directly influence behavioural intention, which supports Wang's (2011) work, that online reviews directly lead to behavioural intention. However, different from Wang (2011), this study broadens the comprehension of the connection between online reviews and behavioural intention by using involvement as a mediator. This significant linkage provides added support to the Involvement Theory (Andrews *et al.*, 1990), thus extending Wang's (2011) research work by providing more in depth understanding and insight on the process in how gastronomy online reviews link to behavioural intention. Furthermore, this study found that high variety seeking can strengthen the involvement-behavioural intention link. Indeed, this information supports the Arousal Theory (Berlyne, 1960) in that individuals seek a different level of novelty in the context of ethnic food.

Through undertaking a more in-depth investigation, the present study discovered that the influence of providing guides and that of the cyber-community were partially mediated by involvement, while generating empathy and social influence were full mediators. So, what does this mediation result mean to practitioners? Importantly, it implies that without involvement, generating empathy and social influence components of gastronomy online reviews failed in generating Gen-Y tourists' behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. In other words, generating empathy and social influence approach are only effective if involvement is aroused. This study also confirms that of Malone *et al.*'s (2014) findings where involvement in trying ethnic food can be aroused through highlighting the authenticity of the food as well as the personal values that emphasise food as a fun source of happiness. That is to say, ethnic food eateries are encouraged to highlight on hedonism, fun and happiness values when promoting ethnic food on their website.

Conversely, the total influence of presenting guides and cyber-community influence on behavioural intention can be enhanced if involvement is fundamentally aroused. That is to say, presenting guides and the influence of the cyber-community will, directly and indirectly, affect behavioural intention. When involvement is managed, the indirect effect of presenting guides and the cyber-community influences through involvement is achieved. Thus, the total effect (indirect + direct) of presenting guides and the cyber-community influence on behavioural intention was shown to be higher in the presence of a mediator (i.e. involvement). This finding is likened with theories and past empirical studies (i.e. Inoue *et al.*, 2017; Huang *et al.*, 2010). This finding provides insight to practitioners that, when involvement is triggered, Gen-Y tourists' behavioural intention to taste ethnic food will be heightened as a result of the indirect effects brought by presenting guides, cyber-community influences, generating empathy and social influence.

Collectively, it can be concluded that the five components in gastronomy online reviews influence Gen-Y tourists' behavioural intention directly and indirectly except for experiencing appeal and delivering knowledge. Thus, ethnic food eateries could help to encourage gastronomy reviewers by highlighting these components (i.e. generating empathy, providing image, presenting guides, social influence and cyber-community influence) when promoting ethnic food in their gastronomy websites or blogs. Similarly, tourism authorities (e.g. the Department of Heritage of Malaysia, Penang Global Tourism and Sarawak Tourism Board) could engage with gastronomy reviewers through round-table discussions or dialogue to acknowledge their respective roles in promoting ethnic food.

Notwithstanding, to achieve inspiring taste desire, generating empathy techniques could be employed in stimulating (i.e. arousing) tourists' behavioural intention to taste ethnic food.

In fact, tourism authorities and ethnic food eateries could stimulate tourists' empathy by encouraging attractive reviews in their gastronomy websites or blogs (e.g. Cheng and Jin, 2019; Xiang *et al.*, 2017; Schuckert *et al.*, 2015). For example, they can promote the use of attractive images and creative video clips by offering incentives and giving rewards such as meal vouchers to individuals who share reviews about ethnic food.

In forming taste awareness, employing techniques such as providing images and presenting guides are an effective approach (Wang, 2011; Lin and Huang, 2006; Rust and Oliver, 2000). If gastronomy online reviews can assist tourists in collecting useful details (e.g. service quality, food quality, food tradition value and dining environment) about the gastronomic location and presenting guides (e.g. food budget), this would undoubtedly enhance behavioural intention. Moreover, tourism authorities could facilitate the sharing of information by encouraging ethnic food eateries to display information on their websites. Although in contrast to the initial prediction of this study, delivering knowledge showed an insignificant influence on behavioural intention. This possibly reflects that delivering knowledge (e.g. table manner practice and eating habits) could be removed from gastronomy online reviews, which corresponds to Wang's (2011) finding. Notably, from the Gen-Y tourists' standpoint, delivering knowledge makes the review content becoming too lengthy, which might overshadow the more interesting aspects of the gastronomy reviews, such as taste, service quality and culinary experience.

In facilitating interpersonal interaction, the cyber-community influence was a significant factor as per social influence can influence behavioural intention, both directly and indirectly. This finding was consistent with past studies (Wang, 2011; Hars, 2002). Importantly, online reviews provide a platform for Gen-Y tourists to interact with other people who share a common interest. Thus, tourism authorities and ethnic food eateries can enhance their online visibility and interaction (Smithson *et al.*, 2011) by encouraging tourists to perform online "check-ins" when visiting their restaurant or by leaving feedback after their visit. This, in turn, may trigger further interactions and enhance the behavioural intention of tourists to taste ethnic food. Inevitably, the interaction between tourists and eateries can be fostered by responding to this feedback promptly.

The moderating effect in this study implies that Gen-Y tourists who are novelty seekers having active involvement with gastronomy online reviews are more likely to demonstrate higher behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. This result provides support to the Arousal Theory where individuals seek different levels of variety (arousal) in the context of consumption (Berlyne, 1960). Therefore, tourism authorities and ethnic food eateries could adapt this information in order to attract high variety seekers by encouraging reviewers to highlight the uniqueness of the experience, newness or the variety of food served to arouse Gen-Y tourists' behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. Finally, the variety-seeking goal of tourists can also be achieved by relocating ethnic food restaurants at designated areas or locations, where a variety of ethnic food is conveniently accessible to tourists.

6. Conclusion, limitations and future research

It is anticipated that this study will greatly assist researchers in justifying the effectiveness of online reviews in the context of gastronomy tourism as well as comprehending the factors that drive tourists' behavioural intention to taste ethnic food. Additionally, this study is further beneficial for tourism authorities and ethnic food eateries to better manage and administer gastronomy online reviews as a key element of their business and marketing strategies when promoting ethnic food and gastronomy tourism.

However, several limitations are inherent in this study. The first limitation is that this study only investigated the general ideas and perceptions of Gen-Y tourists' regarding gastronomy online reviews. To overcome this limitation, scenario-based experiment research is proposed for future studies in order to attenuate the respondents' biases when delivering their opinion.

Second, it is also worth to concern about halal gastronomy tourism given that the Muslim market is emerging as the fastest growing tourism segment globally (Yousaf and Xiucheng, 2018). Finally, Aaker and Maheswaran (1997) asserted that the style of processing information is quite distinct between Asians and westerners. The research implies that westerners mostly prefer analytic information based on formal logic, whereas Asians tend to be more holistic by relying on experience-based knowledge (Nisbett *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, future research is recommended to explore the cultural differences in gastronomy online reviews.

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Experiencing appeal

- EA1 I think the content of gastronomy online reviews makes me feel excited
 EA2 I think the presentation of gastronomy online reviews makes me feel curious
 EA3 I think the photos of gastronomy online reviews make me feel attracted
 EA4 I think the messages of gastronomy online reviews are persuasive to me

Generating empathy

- GE1 I think gastronomy online reviews make me dream of tasting the delicious ethnic food
 GE2 I think gastronomy online reviews inspire my expectation of tasting exotic ethnic food
 GE3 I think gastronomy online reviews make me want to taste the ethnic food
 GE4 I think gastronomy online reviews make me have the same feeling as the food review writers

Providing image

- PI1 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to know the latest ethnic food offered by an ethnic food restaurant
 PI2 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to know the fresh and healthy ethnic food offered by an ethnic food restaurant
 PI3 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to understand the service quality offered by an ethnic food restaurant
 PI4 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to know the eating environment offered by an ethnic food restaurant
 PI5 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to understand the comfort level offered by an ethnic food restaurant
 PI6 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to gain an objective evaluation of an ethnic food restaurant

Delivering knowledge

- DK1 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to understand local traditions and habits that are related to an ethnic food
 DK2 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to know about the table manners that are related to an ethnic food
 DK3 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to understand how to consume ethnic food
 DK4 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to reduce worrying in tasting unfamiliar ethnic food in advance

Presenting guides

- PG1 I think gastronomy online reviews provide suggestions of ethnic food items in a restaurant
 PG2 I think gastronomy online reviews provide ethnic food budget suggestions for their restaurants
 PG3 I think gastronomy online reviews provide useful information of restaurants (e.g. phone number, address, map, business hour)
 PG4 I think gastronomy online reviews help me accomplish my plan of an ethnic food journey

Social influencers

- SI1 People who are important to me have visited an ethnic food restaurant recommended by gastronomy online reviews
 SI2 People who influence my behaviour have tasted ethnic food suggested by gastronomy online reviews
 SI3 Some of my friends have adopted suggestions from gastronomy online reviews when explore on ethnic food journey
 SI4 People whom I respect have visited prestigious ethnic food restaurants that have been promoted by gastronomy online reviews

Cyber-community influence

- CI1 I think gastronomy online reviews would enhance my chance to meet people with the same interest
 CI2 I think gastronomy online reviews enable me to discuss ethnic food related issues with other reviewers

BFJ

- CI3 I think gastronomy online reviews are channels to share and exchange ethnic food experience
CI4 I think gastronomy online reviews are advantageous channels for me to express my personal feelings about ethnic food

Involvement

- INV1 Trying new food is very important to me
INV2 New foods are continually of interest to me
INV3 New foods are a great concern to me
INV4 I am highly involved in searching and reading information about new food

Variety seeking

- VS1 I find myself spending a lot of time checking out new food
VS2 I take advantage of the first available opportunity to find out about new food
VS3 I like to go to places where I will be exposed to information about new food
VS4 I like gastronomy online reviews that introduce new food
VS5 I frequently look out for new food
VS6 I seek out situation in which I will be exposed to new and different sources of food information
VS7 I am usually seeking new food

Behavioural intention

- BI1 In the future, I intend to taste ethnic food that has been recommended by gastronomy online reviews
BI2 In the future, I predict that I would taste ethnic foods featured in gastronomy online reviews
BI3 In the future, I plan to try the ethnic food promoted by gastronomy online reviews

Table AI.

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