

Ethnic food as community pride to support tourism sustainable development

Dewi Eka Murniati

Yogyakarta State University

Indonesia

Ethnic food brings the identity of local culture. It represents a unique characteristic and authenticity, which leads to community pride. The study aims to investigate Indonesia ethnic food potential as an ethnicity portray. A survey of 400 foreign tourists was taken place in ethnic restaurants in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Ethnic food attributes included the examination on traditional features of the place origin. Descriptive statistics associated with means was developed to analyze the data. The results illustrate that the ethnic food bears culture distinctiveness. Moreover, traditional characteristic as an ethnic food attributes in the questionnaire achieved the highest respond. Yogyakarta, as one of thousand tribes in Indonesia, owns a strong culture that reflects on its ethnic food. In turn, the ethnic food's role in supporting the sustainable development and the destination competitiveness should be taken into account. More detailed findings and recommendations for further research are also discussed.

Keywords: ethnic food, tourism sustainable development, destination competitiveness, Yogyakarta Indonesia

Introduction

Tourism experiences at the destination cannot be separated from food consumption during their stay. At the destination, tourists spending on food reaches one-third of its total expenditure (Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis, & Cambourne, 2003). Food is an important part of the holiday, therefore, restaurants visit tends to be a peak experience to the tourists (Blichfeldt, Chor, Ballegaard, 2010). Experiencing ethnic food can be categorized as one of gastronomy tourism activity (Green & Dougherty, 2009), which reflects travelers intention on local food (Romeo, 2005). The differences in food ways are created to both reflect and shape human experiences (Dusselier, 2009). By exploring and getting experience to the destination's food and beverage (Wolf, 2002 cited in Kivela & Crofts, 2005), gastronomy tourists actually consume the destination culture itself (Beer, 2008). This type of tourists is a meaningful and might become a highly loyal market segment (Kivela & Crofts, 2005). Likewise, Bessiere (1998) as cited in Green & Dougherty (2009) says, tourists are more likely to have authentic experiences which bring them back to the nature. Molz (2007) also emphasizes that culinary tourism is not about only to know and experience another culture, but also to perform a sense of adventure, adaptability, and openness.

Ethnic food has at least two big opportunities to offer. Firstly, as the growing numbers of tourist that do care about local cultures and heritages, thus eating ethnic food might be one of the best way to know about local cultures and heritages (Sims, 2009). In the other words, the desire to travel and taste unique and authentic dishes is becoming one of the biggest motivation in the tourism industry (Kim, Goh, & Yuan, 2010). Food consumption in tourism can be considered a pull factor as well as a marketing and merchandising tool that must not be neglected (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Tourists' food consumption experience can be a powerful tool for promoting the destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2005). Secondly, offering ethnic food to tourists will benefit the development of the destination itself, encourage positive destination

image, and strengthen local food system in a whole (Green & Dougherty, 2009). Research has shown that food plays vital role to sustainable tourism (Sims, 2009). An increasing tourist consumption of ethnic food lead to multiplier effect that will benefit the local economy (Torres, 2002 cited in Sims, 2009).

Experiencing ethnic foods through demonstration or competition is a way to give the tourist a deeper appreciation for local culture (Smith & Costello, 2009b). Consuming foods or drinks that are considered “local” while on holiday is not only search for something different but also get a taste of the place (Sim, 2009). In addition, this assumption comes from the reason that ethnic food is about original product, the place and culture that created them. In this way, in respect to above reason, ethnic foods and drinks can improve the economic and environmental sustainability for both tourism and host community by supporting sustainable agricultural practices, supporting local business and developing ethnic food and drink brand that can benefit the destination itself. Food is culture, a true transition from seed to soul (Gibson, 2007 cited in Beer, 2008). Further, Falk (1994) cited in Beer, 2008 states that consuming food through mouth will create the relationship between food, self, culture, and landscape (Hjalager & Richards, 2002 cited in Smith & Costello, 2009a) which then create memorable travel experience atmosphere. Moreover, Mak, Lumbers, & Eves (2012) point out that tourists’ food consumption aims to find out the food symbolic meaning and relate it to the local characteristics, as well as to local history and culture (Fonte, n.d) and also as a symbol of belonging to a family, a community, a destination. Even more, local food reveals a life-style identifier (Fonte, n.d). Further, Hjalager and Richards (2002) cited in Kim, Goh, & Yuan (2010) point out that food tourism is promoted to publicize the destination’s identity and culture, and support sustainable tourism, generate opportunities for local food producers by adding the value and creating a special experience for tourists afterwards.

However, inspite of its vital role to the destination, the ethnic food are sometimes underestimated by the local community. Rather, locals prefer cuisine from mass-marketed global food product (Wilk, 1999) such as McDonalds and other western global-chained foods (Blakey, 2012 ; Wilk, 1999). In Indonesia, which comprises of extensive ethnic diversity that is reflected in the multi-cultural inflection of Indonesian cuisines, the local community itself do not see it as a privilege. More importantly, ethnic food promotion on the government's tourism website is still lack of attention. Instead, cultural heritage and natural resources are the most popular tourist attraction that are offered by government. The research highlights how the international tourists perceive Indonesian ethnic food as culture and local representative. tourist perception and acceptance on the food of destination can draw tourist motivation to come. Positive perception and acceptance will encourage tourists to revisit the destination in the future (Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Mongkhonvanit, 2008), while negative perception and acceptance will give opposite impact. Some tourists would revisit the same destination to enjoy its unique gastronomy (Kivela & Crotts, 2009).

Indonesian ethnic food

Benefited from its diverse multicultural ethnics and region, Indonesian food has a variety of spices, local cooking techniques and ingredients which are gained from the influences of India, China, the Middle East, as well as Europe (Embassy of Indonesia, n.d). Rice is the staple food for most Indonesia regions. It comprises not only for meal, but also holds the country's culture. Corn, sago, cassava, and sweet potatoes are the other staple foods for the eastern part of the country. As Indonesia benefited from its ocean, fish and seafood are one of the major source for meals. Specifically, the country also have tahu (*tofu*) and tempe for both meals and snacks in almost all regions. It is used from soybean with controlled fermentation process. Tempe is regarded as one of Indonesian food uniqueness. The other famous Indonesian food is its condiment, which is called sambal. Made from chili, shallots,

garlic, and shrimp paste, it is usually served for a side dish next to the main course. Tropical fruit and vegetables are also an important content of the Indonesian dish. As a dessert, fruit is usually served in fresh or mixed with palm sugar sauce. Meals are usually cooked in the morning for the rest of the day. Traditionally, meals are eaten by using the right hands however nowadays fork and spoon are widely preferred. Each ethnic and region throughout Indonesia owns their particular popular dishes. Specifically, Yogyakarta, as the only region in Indonesia which is ruled by the king, possesses a great number of historical background which is reflected in its cuisines. Located in the heart of Central Java, in Java Island, an island with the most density population throughout Indonesia, Yogyakarta becomes one of top most destination in Indonesia, and holds special privilege as Special Region of Yogyakarta.



Figure 1. The Map of Java

The city is famous with its cultural heritage since it played important part during Indonesia independence era. Up to now, the city becomes the only kingdom region in Indonesia which holds several privileges to be applied in its regional government. Moreover, the existence of two famous temples (Borobudur, the biggest Buddhist temple in the world; and Prambanan, Hindu's temple) attracts visitors to keep coming for cultural motivation.

Yogyakarta is one of the regions ruled by the king long before Indonesia independence era. Timothy (1999) also argues that Yogyakarta has been known as a centre of classical Javanese fine art and culture.

Apart from being cultural city, Yogyakarta is also well-known as a city of education (Ramdhani, Istiqomah, Aridyanti, 2012). Not only because of the city owns one of the oldest and the top universities in Indonesia, but also as it has several historical education movements since the Dutch colonial era. The other remarkable symbol of Yogyakarta is its cuisine. As ruled by kings up to now, the city has rich of cuisines as the king's heritage. Each king has his own ethnic cuisine preference, depends on the personal taste and the changing circumstances during the colonial era. The 7th king, Hamengku Buwono VII for instance, he struggled for fighting the Dutch colonial, therefore his food preference was authentic food from Yogyakarta, continuing previous tradition from prior kings. However, the 8th king, Hamengku Buwono VIII, would like to engage in cooperation with the Dutch colonial hence some of his food preference was western-like foods, which contain milk and cheese (Rukmini, 2010). Moertjipto (1993) states that the kingdom (Sultanese) of Yogyakarta played crucial role on the heritage of ethnic foods of the city, offering the Sultan's favorite foods, which are Gudeg, Paru Goreng, Ayam Goreng, Ayam Betutu, Bakpia, and Abon. These foods nowadays became the main menu in the ethnic restaurants all over the city (Dinas Pariwisata, 2010). The ethnic food uniqueness of this special region has been also declared clearly in the new constitution of special regional government authority (Perda Istimewa, 2013).

International tourists perception on Indonesian ethnic food

Yogyakarta has enormous and variety of food service providers, which are offered at food stalls, small restaurants (called *warung*), and also in the high class restaurants. Nevertheless, as tourists prefer to dine in high quality restaurants to experience its local food (Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007), therefore the study was conducted in well-defined ethnic

restaurants in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. A set of questionnaire has been distributed to 400 international tourists who dine in the well-defined ethnic restaurants in Yogyakarta. The likert scale employed in the questionnaire ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). There were six attributes of ethnic food being asked to confirm the international tourists perception, including appearance, sensory characteristics, variety of choice, value for money, healthiness, and traditional characteristics. The findings showed that traditional characteristics attribute achieved the highest mean score in terms of international tourists' perception and acceptance. The finding implies that international tourists appreciate and recognize Indonesian ethnic food. In other words, the ethnic food in the well-defined restaurants in Yogyakarta can be considered as a good representative of local culture uniqueness. The table below shows the mean of perception and acceptance of each item in the questionnaire.

Ethnic food attributes	N	Mean of Perception	Mean of Acceptance
Appearance	400	5.6218	5.7131
Sensory characteristics	400	5.6094	5.8361
Variety of choice	400	5.4792	5.4590
Value for money	400	5.9212	5.9508
Healthiness	400	5.1780	5.4426
Traditional characteristics	400	5.9462	6.0000

Table 1. Ethnic food attributes mean of perception and acceptance

In details, the mean values and interpretation of each item in the questionnaire are as follows.

Ethnic food attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Appearance		
The ethnic food is served clean.	5.70	1.102
The ethnic food is prepared hygienically.	5.34	1.239
The ethnic food served on the plate is well-arranged.	5.68	1.089
The garnish (i.e. fruit, vegetable, leaves, flower) of the ethnic food is in the appropriate size and shape.	5.64	1.056

The ethnic food has attractive colors.	5.74	1.068
The ethnic food has attractive decorations on the plate.	5.37	1.165
The garnish (i.e. fruit, vegetable, leaves, flowers) of the ethnic food is edible (can be eaten).	5.60	1.146
The ethnic food gives an enjoyable feeling.	5.89	.977
The garnish (i.e. fruit, vegetable, leaves, flower) of ethnic food is fresh.	5.75	1.047
The condiments (i.e. chili sauce, soybean sauce) of ethnic food are fresh.	5.52	1.108
Sensory characteristics		
The ethnic food is eye-catching.	5.56	1.144
The ethnic food has a good taste.	5.99	.972
The ethnic food is spicy.	5.19	1.428
The ethnic food is well-cooked (i.e. not over-cooked).	5.71	1.048
The ethnic food smells good.	5.80	1.045
The aroma of ethnic food attracts the appetite.	5.75	1.071
The ethnic food is tender (easy to cut and chew).	5.71	1.073
The ethnic food has the right temperature when served.	5.15	1.260
Variety of choice		
The ethnic food offers variety of choice on the menu.	5.47	1.218
The ethnic food uses a variety of raw ingredients (i.e meat, vegetables, fish, egg).	5.38	1.245
The ethnic food uses a variety of cooking methods (i.e. grilled, stir fried, boiled).	5.59	1.198
Value for money		
The price of the ethnic food is reasonable.	6.04	1.000
The portion of ethnic food size is appropriate.	5.80	1.098
Healthiness		
The ethnic food uses fresh ingredients.	5.71	1.006
The ethnic food uses high quality ingredients (i.e grade A meat).	5.12	1.259
The ethnic food is nutritious.	5.44	1.168
The ethnic food is not oily.	4.97	1.526

The ethnic food is light (i.e. low fat, low calorie, sugar free).	4.65	1.579
Traditional characteristics		
The ethnic food represents the culture.	6.10	.857
The ethnic food is unique.	5.79	1.162

Table 2. Ethnic food perception mean values

From the figures above, it can be described that the degree of perception of the international tourists on ethnic food attributes are mostly positive on the agree level (more than 5.31). As can be seen, all items in the traditional characteristics achieved the highest mean score.

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The result confirms that the ethnic cuisine of Yogyakarta, Indonesia should not be underestimated. The ethnic food belongs to and represents the culture therefore it ought bring community pride. As a special region with long and rich history, the local community must appreciate customs and cultural heritages as their own identity. The recent king emphasizes the importance to preserve and to be proud of the specialty of Yogyakarta, including its ethnic food (Perda Istimewa, 2013). By being pride, ethnic food service providers can enhance visitor's enjoyment, local host community involvement and economic benefit, and the destination distinction potentials. A destination; in the intense competition among destination in order to offer difference and attract visitors; should promote high quality food or distinctive local product.

By relying on local food products as tourists attraction, it will promote environmental sustainability (Yurtseven, n.d) and strengthen the culinary heritage identity (Bessiere, 1998, Fronchet, 2003 cited in Barkat & Vermignon, 2006). In order to enhance the nationalism, strengthen local identity is an urgent issue to face culture globalization (Jenkins,1994; Tobin 1992 cited in Wilk, 1999). In the massive difussion of food globalization, ethnic food needs to be locally and authentically preserved and differentiated. By being unique, ethnic food can

stand out to be “other” distinctive cuisine (Blakey, 2012) and to be competitive (Hjalager & Richards, 2002 cited in Blakey, 2012) among other destinations attractiveness. Furthermore, Wood (2001) cited in Barkat & Vermignon (2006) believes that in the economy system, ethnic food will support community pride and the local identity as it facilitate the local culture promotion and maintain the culture tradition. Even more, focusing on ethnic food production will benefit local economy especially farmers and the agriculture system itself (Yurtseen, n.d). Rand, Heath, & Alberts (2003) emphasizes that ethnic food is capable to enhance tourism sustainability development at the destination.

Conclusion

Ethnic food experience comprises of tourists intention of consuming ethnic food in the destination. This activity is not only as a way to satisfy their hunger, but more importantly, it also facilitate to be involved with the culture and the region itself. Moreover, as a cultural heritage, ethnic food is strongly capable to boost up community pride, which is likely to be disappear in the massive culture globalization era. In turn, the community prideness will support the sustainable tourism development at the destination. In this way, the destination’s environment as well as its economy system will be able to line up together within the community.

This study has some shortcomings. Firstly, the study highlights the ethnic food potential to be community pride to support sustainable tourism development from the ethnic food perspective only. In fact, to achieve sustainable tourism development, several ethnic food stakeholders such as farmers, ethnic food service providers, regional government, as well as the community should be involved in the study. Secondly, the study employed a quantitative data collection which lack of interpretation on whether international tourists perception on ethnic food as culture representative can be further clarified. Hence, to help this limitation, a qualitative data collection which invites the ethnic food stakeholders can be

taken into consideration to obtain more useful explanation and understanding. Further research might elaborate cross cultural studies between Asian countries in order to make comparative study on how ethnic food stakeholders in each region facilitate community pride as well as support sustainable tourism development accordingly.

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