

BUILDING CUSTOMER'S BUYING INTERESTS TO TRADITIONAL NUANCE RESTAURANTS: A MODEL OF PROPOSED STUDY

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Abstract

Indonesia is an archipelago country which is one of the connecting countries of the Asian-Australian continents, and the Indian-Pacific oceans. Since it has 1,331 tribes and cultures, this country has great culinary tourism potential, however, this potential has not been explored and managed properly yet. One of the attractions of the bustling tourist destinations is the culinary tourism (traditional restaurants) which exists in every region, with their typical regional uniqueness but still traditional management. These culinary businesses, mostly managed by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), still need help in the development of their businesses. The study of culinary marketing for small and medium restaurant businesses is very rare in Indonesia. It is imperative that a study presenting a model of successful marketing of small and medium restaurants be conducted so that they can grow very well. The main issues to note are the factors driving the public interest to visit these restaurants. The factors of food quality, interactions, and physical environments have roles to increase the visit interests. Those can be built through the establishment of the perceived authenticity and the visitors' attitudes toward the restaurants. This paper attempts to explore these variables through a literature review to build a model that can explain the phenomenon of traditional restaurants in Indonesia. Thus it will be able to provide input to the government to find important factors in the effort of developing SMEs in this culinary field.

Key Words: Attitude, Food, Interaction, perceived authenticity, physical environments, purchase intention

1. Introduction

Culinary is one element determining the attractiveness of tourist destinations (Horner et al. 2016; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen 2014). Moreover, the Indonesian territory consists of 1331 tribes scattered on various islands. Of course, it has a lot of culinary diversity. Each tribe in each region has a food tradition which is partly the daily diet of the community. The uniqueness of the food can be the symbol of the region and become the hope of potential tourism when tourists visit those areas. These foods are commonly referred to as traditional food of cultural heritage of certain ethnic groups (Kwon 2015; Kwon 2017), most of which, in Indonesia, are marketed by SMEs.

Tourism, one of the economic growth sources, has labour absorption in the field of hotels and restaurants as much as 1,259,096 (Central Bureau Statistics, 2015). In fact, it has the opportunity to grow bigger. Although there are no exact figures, it is estimated that over 5000 restaurants are scattered in various regions of Indonesia (Central Bureau Statistics, 2015) and this number always increases every year. Some of the management is done by small and medium entrepreneurs. The foods offered are authentic Indonesian cuisine with a traditional/ethnic atmosphere. These help to encourage Indonesian tourism. Therefore, this potential should be utilised by the government and traditional restaurant entrepreneurs, so that the restaurant industry can support tourism and increase labour absorption.

There is a wide variety of creative, innovative and unique food menu innovations made by traditional restaurant entrepreneurs. The food menu from regional traditions or ethnic groups is one source of inspiration for the development of their servings. Some of them make modifications or creations to the food, so it is feared to affect the attitude of some customers. That may be the case, inasmuch as a food is one of the most important factors in giving the impression of an authenticity of the traditions felt by consumers (Kim & Jang 2016; Tsai & Lu 2012). But on the other hand, serving something without change and just repeating the type of food certainly can cause a boring impression and can change consumer attitudes toward the restaurant. It may happen inasmuch as the dynamic tastes of consumers will affect the quality of food perceived. Several related studies on diet show the role of food quality, especially presentation, menu, taste, freshness, and temperature, in predicting customer satisfaction (Namkung & Jang 2007; Hwang & Ok 2013a).

In addition to the food aspect, the atmosphere of restaurants' physical environment and service interaction is also designed in such a way as to show ethnic identity in accordance with the food served. This environment is created to provide comfort, fun and atmosphere that customers expect. The M-R model suggests that the environment shapes the emotional of individuals and will influence their attitude whether to approach or avoid the environment (Mehrabian & Russell 1974). The physical environment should follow the authenticity of the traditions represented, and often from innovations in a utilisation of building materials and spatial layout so as to have a distinct impression of ethnic originality. This causes marketers to deal with the choice of either to maintain authenticity or to follow the developments so those ethnic restaurants are more preferred by customers. Likewise, the service interaction also provides identity

and appeal for restaurant consumers who can also predict the intention-behaviour of subsequent consumers (Filo et al. 2011).

From the explanation above there is an issue of business policy, whether the restaurant tradition can be developed by including elements that are not derived from the ethnic, thus changing its authenticity. On the other hand, marketers also need to provide something that suits the change in customer desires based on the experience they feel on consumption in a modern restaurant. For that reason, it needs to be explained by developing a theoretical model of how the development of restaurants' offers on food, physical environment and service interaction in building customers' purchase intention in traditional restaurants by taking into account the role of authenticity perceptions and attitudes towards restaurants.

2. Aim and Contribution of the Study

This paper seeks to assist traditional restaurant marketers in the face of a dilemma in the development of their marketing strategies, either modifying restaurant offerings or staying with traditional authenticity guidelines. Modifications that follow the development of the restaurant will generally raise concerns of reduced authenticity of products offered that they can impact on the attitude of customers to the restaurant. A theoretical model will be developed to confirm further empirical research. This model will be able to explain the determinants among food variables, physical environment and dominant interactions affecting perceived authenticity, so that it can be figured out which aspects of the offers must be maintained their cultural authenticity, or which aspects can be modified freely.

3. Indonesian traditional restaurants

With a large population, Indonesia is a big market for businesses such as restaurants. The purpose of food is the basic necessity of every person, and some people get it through food or restaurant transactions. The phenomenon that occurs today, food or drink is not just a fulfilment of basic necessities, but food and beverage also become a new lifestyle among the community (Fotopoulos & Krystallis 2002; Silva et al. 2014). Changes in lifestyle which make people prefer to eat outdoors not only occur in big cities, but also in most all regions in Indonesia. So this can be the trigger of an increase in the restaurant market. This development level will certainly be higher in major cities than in small cities in Indonesia.

The growth of this market makes the appeal for entrepreneurs to participate in this business, thus encouraging the birth of new restaurant businesses in considerable number. That growth can be faster, in that it is very easy to enter markets in densely populated locations, relatively low capital requirements and ease of business permits, especially for SMEs. In medium and large enterprises, restaurant businesses can achieve a 20% growth rate in the last ten years (Bank of Indonesia 2015). Seen the increase in growth, it can be ascertained that the business competition will be more stringent and not a few will entrepreneurs open the restaurant adjacent to other restaurants. The

number of restaurants will cause more choices, so it requires a strong effort to grow and develop. Therefore, restaurant entrepreneurs try to find out how their restaurants' brand can be an option among other restaurants.

Efforts to build Impressions and Restaurant Quality

Taken into account the increasing number of traditional restaurants in Indonesia in the [Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2014](#) i.e. 3-4% per annum, providing traditional/ethnic food, tradition nuance restaurants, is one of SMEs entrepreneurs' choices to enter and utilise this market and strive to grow and develop. This means that most of these businesses are SMEs inasmuch as that number is too small to serve the needs of the community. In fact, it can be found that along the road are restaurants which are sometimes close to one another. The types of foods and ways of presentation also vary, including the accentuation of tradition elements.

Creating creativity by modifying or changing food into something unique and new is one of the ways culinary entrepreneurs attract customers to visit. Another way is to do a combination of simple food menu with other ingredients so it becomes a menu that is favoured by visitors. Another creativity of the restaurant / eating place at this time is to display a menu with unique food names, such as *bakso mercon* (firecracker meatball), *nasi goreng gila* (crazy fried rice), *keripik setan* (satan chips), *mie keriting* (curly noodles) and others. Several related studies on diet show the role of food quality, especially presentation, menu, taste, freshness, and temperature, in predicting customers' satisfaction ([Namkung & Jang 2007](#); [Hwang & Ok 2013a](#)).

In addition to the creativity of the food menu, restaurants are made as attractive as possible with a design which makes customers comfortable in the restaurants. Most restaurants today describe restaurant designs through a restaurant brand, for example, Pop art restaurant in Bintaro area. As the name implies, the interior design of the place is filled with pictures of people who are inspirational in the world drawn in pop art forms. This strategy is done so that customers are curious with the food menu and uniqueness in terms of the interior design of the restaurants and they will come to the restaurants to taste the foods in their menu. In order not to be outdone by its competitors, traditional restaurants follow these trends so as to include elements which are not characteristic of the ethnic. This can be justified considering the research [Han & Ryu \(2009\)](#); [Hwang & Ok \(2013a\)](#) shows that the physical environment (using decoration and artefacts, spatial, and ambient conditions) creates more customer satisfaction and appeal. So, the culinary business people must create something creative as an effort to attract customers.

Another strategy that can be done by entrepreneurs, in addition to terms of the food menu, they give the brand name and interior design. The restaurant marketers make an innovation in how customers interact to improve the quality of service. The use of uniform or traditional clothing, a sequence of communication techniques with customers, certain language and much more can improve the quality of service. The unique and exciting service quality used is expected to build the good impression of customers to keep visiting the restaurants regularly. The quality of service is believed to

be an important factor in running a culinary business as [Kim & Ok \(2010\)](#) notes that interactional quality has an important role in the restaurant business.

Clearly, there are 3 aspects of the marketer's attention in developing the restaurant: the aspect of foods, restaurants' physical environment and interaction of waiters and customers. Those aspects create the perception and impression of the restaurants in shaping the perception of quality. And the perception of quality will explain what and how the restaurant is in the visitor's views. While these aspects, of course, have roles and influence on consumer assessment of the public consequences of the consumption action of visitors relevantly ([Freestone & McGoldrick 2008](#)). Therefore, a traditional restaurant or not, will certainly establish an attitude in determining the customers' purchase intention, and visited or not ([Eagly & Chaiken 1993](#)).

Customer's Perception of Food, Physical environment, and service interaction

Food is the core of the overall restaurant management experience ([Kivela et al. 1999](#); [Kivela et al. 2000](#); [Raajpoot 2002](#); [Hwang & Ok 2013a](#)). This is the main product that customers expect to get from a restaurant. [Namkung & Jang \(2007\)](#) also suggests that the presence of food is important in pleasing the customers. How customers' perceptions of the foods which restaurants offer are important in shaping the likes or dislikes of those foods ([Padberg et al. 1997](#)). Various attributes used to assess food such as taste, aroma, freshness, innovation, portion, texture, design, appearance, and diversity ([Raajpoot 2002](#); [Wang 2013](#); [Liu & Jang 2009](#); [Hwang & Ok 2013b](#)). This perception which meets the customer expectations of food will determine the quality of the food. Therefore, the success of the restaurant is very dependent on the customer's perception of the food offered. The attribute will also be perceived by the consumer to the conclusion of the food category either as traditional or modern foods.

The consumers' experience of consuming the food will make them able to compare between traditional and modern foods which can be recognised from a combination of appearance, and texture, which may affect the conceptual understanding of whole food products ([Favalli et al. 2013](#)). Some food authenticity markers are discussed in the literature, such as cooking methods, flavours, and ingredients needed ([Cohen & Avieli 2004](#); [Zibart et al. 1995](#)). Cognitive processes also play a role in creating the concept of social culture so as to provide a certain meaning, semantic meaning. Thus, food becomes a symbolic object which provides the consumer identity (individuals and groups). However, retronasal perception can be a key point of the uniqueness of traditional and modern food. By observing and perceiving the food the restaurants offer, consumers can recognise whether the food is authentic food or not. Based on the above, a proposition 1 is formulated: that food affects consumers' attitudes toward restaurants and propositions 2 is formulated: that food affects the authenticity of traditional foods.

The physical environment presented by the restaurant is an essential ingredient of the culinary business and gives the customer first impression. Specifically, the customer spends considerable time in the physical environment from entering through check out of the restaurant he or she visits. Once customers enter a restaurant, they receive a description of the restaurant before they even eat or receive employees' services. [Kotler](#)

(1973) suggests that positive perceptions of the physical environment can evoke positive emotions, leading to a positive perception of actual service and employees' services. Bitner (1990) also suggests that a superior physical environment makes customers feel better, improving their perception of a product or service. A good perception will shape the consumer's positive attitude toward the restaurant.

The physical environment of the restaurant will also provide the identity of the restaurant and the type of food served there. How the look of the restaurant building and its layout will shape the restaurant's perception and branding that comes from the influence of the consumer's experience in recognising the design and structure of tradition (Johnston & Baumann 2007; Bhatia 2003). The interior arrangement of the restaurant with its traditional setting using unique regional tradition architecture (Kim & Stepchenkova 2015) is transformed into a facade, layout, material selection, to decorate the interior spaces adopting multi-dimensional corners (Cui & Guo 2016), aimed at shaping perception and meaning on the restaurant (brand). The development of brands today has begun to shift from the communication process and a commodity trade to a reflection of feelings and a design (Gobé 2007). Design in the context of the branding process is a process of translating the results of the company's strategy analysis into a form that can be touched, seen and felt by consumers (Wheeler 2013). The suitability of the design and layout of the restaurant with the food served; helps to reinforce the perception of the authenticity of traditional food served (Mkono 2013). In this case, proposition 3 is formulated: that the physical environment affects consumer attitudes toward restaurants, and proposition 4 is formulated: that the physical environment affects the perception of traditional authenticity.

The interaction between customers and waiters in service marketing is a topic most frequently discussed in the service industry (Brady & Cronin Jr 2001). Some studies have shown that interactional quality influences attitudes toward restaurants (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Batra & Ahtola 1991; Steenkamp et al. 2003; Hwang & Ok 2013b). Willingness to help customers in fast service will provide benefits perceived by customers. Furthermore, performing a promised service reliably and accurately will give customers a positive attitude towards the restaurant. Employees' performance also greatly influences the customers' emotional response (Van Dolen et al. 2004; Liu et al. 2011; Chen et al. 2013; Hwang & Ok 2013b; Wong & Aspinwall 2004; Hwang & Ok 2013a). When employees provide high-quality services, customers are more likely to feel happy, satisfied, or happy so as to provide a positive response that shapes the trend of favourable restaurant behaviours.

Culture not only gives birth to a unique type of food and fondness of food (Garvey et al. 2011) but also forms ways to interact with others. How to use verbal and body language will vary from one culture to another (Beattie & Ellis 2014; Burgoon et al. 2016; Matsumoto & Juang 2016). How to present oneself in front of people including in the way of dressing is also determined by the culture. Thus, if a restaurant declares selling a particular ethnic food, then the ordinance used should take into account the cultural identity so that cultural meaning and social structure are not disturbed (Dana et al. 2014). Consumers will doubt the authenticity of a restaurant (Kovács et al. 2013), if the procedures for interacting with the service do not show the original identity of the territory. The more different the impression interaction the consumers feel, and then the

less the customer will feel the nuances of tradition described by the food being served. From the above study, the following propositions can be taken. In this case, proposition 5 that service interaction affects attitudes to restaurants and proposition 6 is formulated that service interaction affects perceived authenticity.

Perceptions of Authenticity, Consumer Attitudes, and Purchase Intention.

Some of the reasons consumers buy food in traditional restaurants can be grouped into 2 reasons, part of the culture or looking for a change to enjoy different foods from consumers' daily routines (Kamarulzaman et al. 2016; Solomon 2014). Therefore, the issue of authenticity becomes important for customers when enjoying traditional food dishes which are out of the habitat (Anderson & Benbow 2016). Considering the difference in place of origin and social environment, the traditional restaurant has difficulty providing authentic cultural objectives as something that is believed and accepted as facts and real cultural representation (Taylor 1992; Grayson & Martinec 2004).

For traditional food-seekers, this is not just a food necessity but a perceived authenticity (Kim & Jang 2016) that will determine the attitude towards the restaurant (Wang et al. 2015). Restaurants which are considered not true in terms of food, physical environment, and service interaction, will be addressed as an ordinary restaurant and can never fulfil their desire for a traditional one. This can happen to consumers who have cultural experience or have lived in that cultural environment. Since eating out in a traditional restaurant can be driven by a desire to fulfil the longing and nostalgia for culture when it is long outside the cultural group (Duruz 1999). In some widespread studies, it is reported that there are significant influences of perceived authenticity on consumer behaviour (Liang et al. 2017; Liu & Jang 2009; Tsai & Lu 2012; Mattila & Ro 2008). This discussion leads us that perceived authenticity has an effect on purchase intention.

Attitude is an element of consumer behaviour in determining a product desirable for consumption (Weiner 2000). The better the customers' attitude toward a particular product is, the higher their purchase intention for it. So it also applies to a traditional restaurant, if it is responded very positively by the customers, it will have a high potential to be visited by consumers. As perceived authenticity contributes to customer attitudes, it can also directly affect purchase intention. Consumers who seek fulfilment of longing or nostalgia, perceived authenticity become determinants of their interest to consume the foods in that restaurant (Duruz 1999). So perceived authenticity influences purchase intention directly or through the formation of their attitude towards the restaurant. In this case, the proposition 7 is formulated: that perceived authenticity affects attitude to restaurants, the proposition 8 is formulated: that perceived authenticity affects purchase intention and proposition 9 is formulated: that consumers' attitudes affect purchase intention.

4. Proposed Theoretical Model

Based on the theory and discussion above and considered the hypothesis obtained, it can be presented a framework of thought or proposed model to explain how consumers' purchase intention is built by traditional restaurants through attitudes and perceived authenticity by controlling the food factors, physical environment, and service interaction. The relationship pattern can be simplified in the form of the image shown in Figure 1.

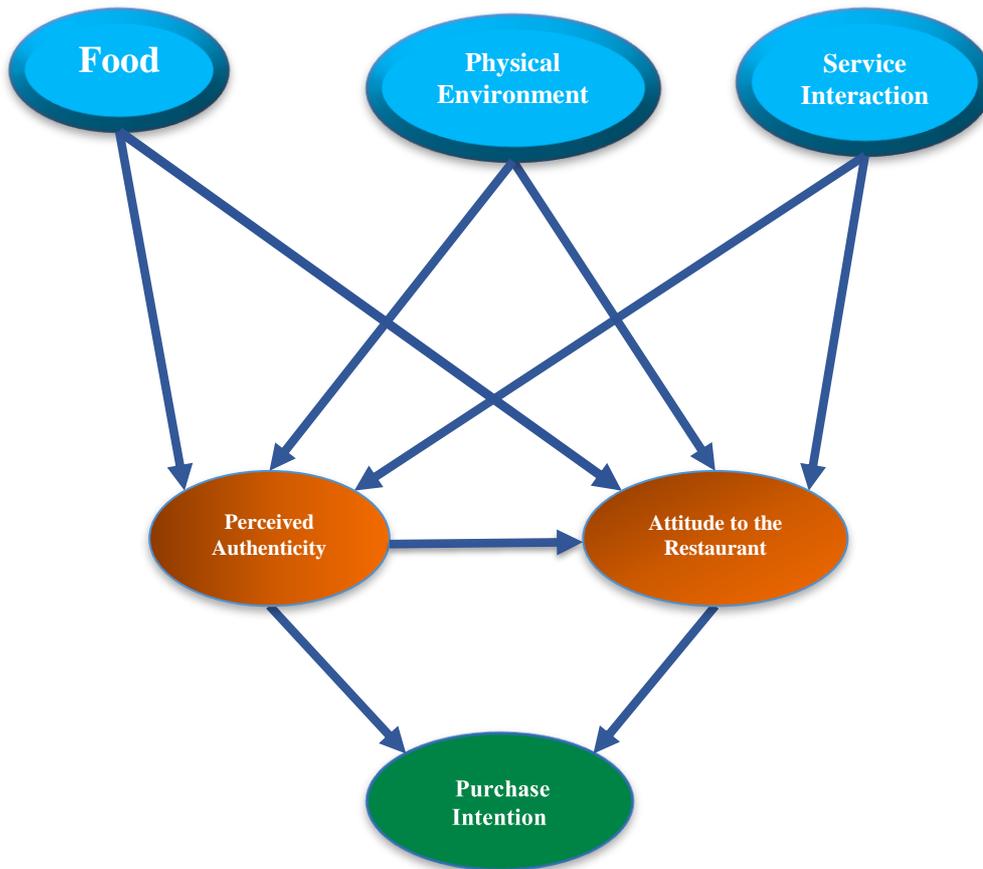


Figure 1: The Theoretical Model

5. Conclusion

From the above study, it can be concluded that there is a strong correlation between consumer perception toward the elements of quality of restaurant service toward the establishment of authenticity and attitude which in turn will encourage consumers' purchase intention to traditional restaurants. These elements can be regarded as control variables for restaurant marketers to drive their business performance by increasing interests in restaurants. Two important things which must be maintained for marketers are how the consumers' perceptions of the authenticity of restaurant products and their

attitude so that their purchase intention can be maintained and increased. Of course, the above models still need to be tested in an empirical study on different cultural environments.

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