

# Chapter 1

## Marketing and Branding Initiatives for Local Food and Tourism Identity of Terengganu, Malaysia

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter focuses on Terengganu and seeks to explore its local food and tourism development as well as marketing and branding initiatives. Within the context of local food, tourism, and destination marketing and branding studies, scholars continuously contest the truth of food as the core traveling purpose among tourists to visit a particular tourist destination. It was found that, recently, many tourist destinations have utilized local food as part of marketing and branding initiatives to position and stimulate appealing image in every tourists' eyes and mind. Therefore, using the case of Terengganu in Malaysia, this chapter explores and discusses the details of local cuisine and tourism employed by Tourism Terengganu (i.e., the state tourism board – STB) to market and brand the state worldwide. Terengganu is located in between two states (i.e., Kelantan and Pahang) on the east coast region of West Malaysia. Keropok lekor, nasi dagang, satar, akok, nasi kerabu, laksam, ketupat sotong, and lempeng nyior are among local food specialties in Terengganu. These dishes are often being displayed and marketed worldwide in various tourism marketing and used as promotional tools to speak about Terengganu and its tourism identity. Results from archival documents analysis have found that Tourism Terengganu employed various types of marketing and branding initiatives to promote Terengganu's local food and tourism industry domestically and internationally. All of these create and establish local food and tourism identity of Terengganu as part of destination branding efforts.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Combining food with tourism by creating an awareness of the local food in a specific region is a strategy to build a tourism experience and establish a destination brand. As described by Richards (2012), food routes and trails are becoming popular marketing initiative at tourist destinations to brand itself. Choosing the right marketing initiatives through relevant advertising and promotional materials including conventional (i.e. brochures, poster, and travel guides) and contemporary (i.e. television, radio, websites, and social medias) is important to communicate implicit and explicit ideas about local food (Dieck, Fountoulaki, & Jung, 2018; Horng & Tsai, 2012; Jalis, 2016; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Such marketing efforts, however, require a comprehensive planning, particularly when involving various tourism stakeholders as part of the whole marketing and branding process (Jalis, 2016; Okumus & Cetin, 2018; Tsia & Wang, 2017). Further discussion between tourism stakeholders including local authorities and marketers on the sort of tourism product information is necessary before committing to final decisions, in the form of strategic marketing plans. Not only that, deeper understanding on local food integration into tourism marketing strategies could be clearly understood especially on its roles to brand a place/region and establish tourism identity.

Prior exploring on the symbiotic relationship between local food and tourism, it is crucial to have some ideas on the concept of local food and a place/region identity. Local food refers to meals or dishes that are locally produced based on availability of ingredients, geographical location, cooking methods, and cultural as well as religious differences of a particular tourist destination (Civitello, 2011; Higman, 2011; Jalis, 2016). Local food is believed to be capable of conveying deeply rooted meanings and specific concepts that reflect the special characteristics of a geographic area (Lin, Pearson & Cai, 2011). One example is provided by an article written by Hashimoto and Telfer (2006). They found that the most effective way to sell Canada's culinary tourism was through distinct culture attributes. Defining national identity based on a singular culture has been contested by modern theorists because of the movement among today's people and the migration of significant numbers of people (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006). To sociologists, the term culture that has been used as a reference to social identity has become a political issue due to rivalry between tourist destinations (Burns & Novelli, 2006). This forces tourism authorities to adopt strategies that are more complex or based on consumer demands and trends (Henderson, 2016; Horng & Tsai, 2012). Nevertheless, both societal and national characteristics provide a significant contribution in tourist destination identities construction.

The most common way of highlighting a destination's identity is to have a clear tourism theme such as cultural and heritage tourism (e.g., Scotland), natural and

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