

# THE ROLE OF AUTHENTICITY IN FOOD TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN TWO HISTORIC CITIES IN MALAYSIA

A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY BETWEEN GEORGE TOWN, PENANG AND IPOH, PERAK



MASTER THESIS BY ANNE PLADDET



Master thesis for the Master Leisure, Tourism and Environment

Thesis code: GEO-80436

Author: Johanne Marringje Pladdet

Student number: 900307654090

Contact: [annepladdet@gmail.com](mailto:annepladdet@gmail.com)

Supervisor: dr. Arjaan Pellis

Examiner: Prof. dr. René van der Duim

Wageningen University and Research

Department of Environmental Sciences

Cultural Geography Chair Group

August 2019

*Disclaimer: This thesis is a student report produced as part of the Master Program Leisure, Tourism and Environment. It is not an official publication and the content does not represent an official position of Wageningen University and Research.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of this master thesis started a long time ago, to be precise in March 2015. It has been a journey that I have enjoyed and hated at the same time, but after all I'm grateful for the whole journey because it taught me a lot about academics, food tourism in Malaysia and myself. Due to various reasons it has taken me a long time to finalize this thesis, therefore I'm really happy to be able to finally end this journey and see what is next for me after graduating from the master Leisure, Tourism and Environment at Wageningen University and Research.

I would like to thank a few people who played a major role in finalizing this thesis. First, I would like to thank my two supervisors. In 2015 I started this project with dr. Meghann Ormond as my supervisor. I would like to thank her for all her help, mentoring and support, but unfortunately we were not able to finish this thesis together. In 2018 dr. Arjaan Pellis took over the role as my supervisor and I would like to thank him for all his time, his patience with me, listening to all my stories about food tourism and Malaysia, but mostly for all his help, feedback and pushing me to finish this thesis. Second, I would like to thank my friends and family who supported me during this whole journey, were so understanding about the whole situation and lend me an ear when necessary. Special thanks to my parents and brother who were always there for me helping me to push through the hard moments. Last, I would like to thank all the people who made me feel welcome in Malaysia, shared a tremendous amount of food with me and made it possible for me to do my research with a special shout out to Howard.

So here we are, the end of the journey that was called 'my master thesis'. I hope you enjoy reading this thesis and get inspired to explore the great culinary heritage of Malaysia and the rest of the world.

Anne Pladdet

Amsterdam, 18 August 2019

## ABSTRACT

Food tourism is a niche of tourism that can be categorized as a form of heritage tourism and is often used as a development tool for destinations with a rich culinary heritage. What is identified as (culinary) heritage is defined by discourses around heritage, which in the same time also define the role of authenticity in identifying and judging heritage. Nevertheless, heritage and authenticity are concepts that are socially constructed and can therefore differ at different places, which means that heritage and authenticity do not hold the same meaning everywhere.

George Town and Ipoh are two historic cities with a rich culinary heritage located in Malaysia. Both cities are in a different stage regarding food tourism development and went through a different development process. The object of this study is to understand how culinary practices have become socially constructed and harnessed as authentic culinary heritage and to understand the role of authenticity in context of food tourism development in two historic cities in Malaysia. The goal of this study is to further understand the discursive dissonance in the ongoing construction of authentic culinary heritage in George Town and Ipoh in order to get an insight in how both cities could develop (further) as food tourism destinations. A comparative case study was conducted to compare the different discourses around heritage and authenticity at play at both cities, the role of authenticity in food tourism development and look at what lessons could be learned from both cases.

The data for this study was collected in George Town and Ipoh with the use of four different collection methods: inventory of current food tourism resources, participatory observation, interviews with local actors and a focus group with different actors in Ipoh.

The results of this study show that the culinary heritage of both George Town and Ipoh are a reflection of their history and historical mobility of the inhabitants of the cities, but what is identified as culinary heritage is determined by the dominant heritage discourses at both cases. Authenticity plays a different role at both destinations in food tourism development, since they are in different food tourism development orders.

*Keywords:* Malaysia, food tourism, heritage discourse, culinary heritage, authenticity

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements.....  | 3  |
| Abstract .....   | 4  |
| 1. Introduction.....   | 8  |
| 1.1 Background .....   | 8  |
| Food tourism .....   | 8  |
| Food tourism in Malaysia .....   | 10 |
| 1.2 Problem statement.....   | 10 |
| 1.3 Research objectives and questions.....   | 11 |
| 1.4 Scientific and empirical relevance.....  | 12 |
| 1.5 Outline .....  | 12 |
| 2. Conceptual framework.....   | 14 |
| 2.1 Heritage discourses.....   | 14 |
| Authorized Heritage Discourse.....   | 15 |
| Heritage From Below .....  | 18 |
| Sub-conclusion .....   | 19 |
| 2.2 Culinary heritage.....   | 19 |
| Safeguarding culinary heritage .....   | 21 |
| Sub-conclusion .....   | 22 |
| 2.3 Authenticity.....  | 23 |
| Authenticity within the context of food tourism.....                                 | 26 |
| Sub-conclusion .....   | 27 |
| 2.4 Overview conceptual framework.....   | 28 |
| 3. Methodology .....   | 29 |
| 3.1 Research design.....   | 29 |
| 3.2 Data Collection .....  | 30 |
| Inventory of current food tourism resources in George Town and Ipoh.....             | 30 |
| Participatory observation of George Town and Ipoh as a food tourism destination..... | 31 |
| Interviews with local actors .....   | 31 |
| Focus group with different actors in Ipoh.....                                       | 34 |
| 3.3 Data analysis.....   | 35 |
| 3.4 Positioning .....  | 37 |
| Role of the researcher.....  | 37 |
| Selection of participants .....  | 38 |
| 3.5 Research limitations .....   | 39 |
| 4. Findings .....  | 41 |
| 4.1 George Town .....  | 41 |
| The culinary heritage of George Town.....  | 41 |
| The food tourism pathway of George Town.....   | 46 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| The role and discourses of authenticity in George Town.....  | 52 |
| 4.2 Ipoh.....  | 56 |
| The culinary heritage of Ipoh .....  | 57 |
| The food tourism pathway of Ipoh.....  | 64 |
| The role and discourses of authenticity in Ipoh.....   | 71 |
| 5. Conclusion and discussion .....   | 75 |
| 5.1 Conclusion.....  | 75 |
| The practices and discourses related to the development of culinary heritage and food tourism in George Town and Ipoh .....  | 75 |
| The role of authenticity in the development of culinary heritage and food tourism in George Town and Ipoh .....  | 76 |
| What can be learned from both case studies in terms of the construction and harnessing of culinary heritage in relation to their unique food tourism developments..... | 78 |
| Conclusion table.....  | 79 |
| 5.2 Discussion of the findings.....  | 80 |
| References.....  | 83 |
| Appendix 1: Invitation for the Forum on Food, Festival & Tastebud Tickling Tourism.....  | 87 |

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

### FIGURES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 Visual overview conceptual framework .....   | 28 |
| Figure 2 Map of Malaysia. Retrieved from: Google Maps .....   | 41 |
| Figure 3 From top to bottom: Assam Laksa, Nyonya Kuih, Otak Otak. All images retrieved from:<br><a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/travellingfoodies">https://www.flickr.com/photos/travellingfoodies</a> .....         | 42 |
| Figure 4 From top to bottom: Char Koay Teow, Penang Hokkien Mee, Chee Cheong Fun and Oh Sien. All images<br>retrieved from: <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/vkeong/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/vkeong/</a> ..... | 43 |
| Figure 5 From top to bottom: Nasi Kandar, Roti Canai and Teh Tarik, Mee Goreng. All images retrieved from:<br><a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/vkeong/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/vkeong/</a> .....               | 44 |
| Figure 6 Map of Ipoh. Retrieved from Google Maps.....   | 57 |
| Figure 7 Dim Sum, Egg Tarts, Chee Cheong Fun, Hakka Mee, Salted Chicken and Sar Kok Liew. All images<br>retrieved from: <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/</a> .....       | 59 |
| Figure 8 White Coffee (top) and Beansprout Chicken (bottom). Images retrieved from:<br><a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/</a> .....  | 60 |
| Figure 9 From top to bottom: Kacang Putih, Nasi Ganja, Curry Mee All images retrieved from:<br><a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/</a> .....                                | 62 |
| Figure 10 Fun Map of Perak. Retrieved from: Tourism Perak.....  | 65 |

### TABLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1 Three different types of authenticity according to Wang (1999).....    | 24 |
| Table 2 Background interviewees George Town and Ipoh .....                     | 32 |
| Table 3 Thematic guide semi-structured interviews DMOs and policy makers ..... | 33 |
| Table 4 Thematic guide unstructured interviews.....                            | 33 |
| Table 5 Background participants focus group Ipoh.....                          | 35 |
| Table 6 Seven steps of open coding.....  | 36 |
| Table 7 Code tree of the analysis.....   | 36 |
| Table 8 Food Tourism Resources George Town .....                               | 48 |
| Table 9 Food Tourism Resources Ipoh.....                                       | 67 |
| Table 10 Conclusion table.....   | 79 |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Tourism destinations all over the world are competing with each other to attract visitors. In order to do so, tourism destinations have to distinguish themselves from others by developing a range of goods and services that make them unique (Sims, 2009). For many destinations, food tourism is becoming increasingly important for attracting tourists and for differentiation in a competitive tourism market. In this, food tourism is seen as an emerging market for many tourism destinations (Horng & Tsai, 2012). In this introduction the general concepts of food tourism, foodways and food tourism destinations will be introduced before I zoom in on Malaysia as a food tourism destination.

#### FOOD TOURISM

Food tourism is a recent global phenomenon that finds its origin in culinary tourism, is part of wider cultural heritage (Bessière, 1998; Boyd, 2015) and can be categorized as a form of heritage tourism. Food tourism falls within 'new tourism' as described by Poon (1993). In new tourism the tourist is looking for flexibility, segmentation and authentic tourism experiences. In contrast, 'old tourism' can then be characterized as the typical mass, standardized and packaged forms of tourism. Around the year 2000 the shift from 'old tourism' to 'new tourism' was well established by travellers and the industry. Within 'new tourism' the needs of the customer seem to become more recognized next to target groups being acknowledged. Food tourism could emerge as a form of niche tourism, with food tourists as the target group (Boyd, 2015), where food tourists are willing to travel to experience *authentic memorable food related experiences*.

Different scholars give different definitions to food tourism in their work. They do not agree on whether food has to be the prime motivation to travel to be able to call it food tourism (Hall & Mitchell, 2001), or whether food tourism is only about experiencing the food of the Other (Long, 2004) or also about people travelling back to the country or region where they grew up with the prime incentive to consume and experience food of their youth (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). But they do all agree that food or culinary heritage, which can be singular food or drink items, a cuisine, or eating style (Long, 2004), plays a major role in this segment of tourism and is in some way motivating tourists to travel to a specific place. Either it is the prime incentive or the second or third, food can be explored and experienced in many different ways: from consuming, preparing, purchasing food to related activities such as food tours, food festivals and farm or winery visits (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). In this study, food tourism is seen as a form of heritage tourism, an experiential journey in which the tourists are engaging in food related activities and have the ability to experience insights into different cultures and history.

This experiential journey [food tourism] is related to a particular lifestyle that includes experimentation, learning from different cultures, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the qualities or attributes related to tourism products, as well as culinary specialties produced in that region through its consumption. (UNWTO, 2012, p. 6)

Concluding from the different definitions mentioned, food tourism is a form of tourism where (local) food and participation in food related activities seem key. Furthermore, it is the main or the secondary/partial motivation to travel, and the food tourist can experience an exploratory and experiential journey in which he or she can learn something from a culinary system and its corresponding (place based) culture. Nevertheless, food tourism should not only focus on international tourists who want to experience 'the other', but should also include domestic tourists who are visiting friends and relatives or visiting their hometown who are maybe not experiencing the Other, but 'the self'. When excluding these domestic tourists, especially within Malaysia, a big group of tourists is excluded that travels specifically for food



within their own country. Food tourism can thus both tell a story about the Other and facilitate a way to experience the self.

---

#### FOODWAYS

Food is more than just a necessity and a form of nutrition, it is an art, entertainment, pleasure, a hobby, a cultural artefact, an identity, and a celebration (Blakey, 2012). The relationship between food and tourism is, and always has been, very close, regardless of the tourism segment. Tourists simply have to consume food during their trip wherever they are, so food cannot be separated from tourism, even when a tourist does not want to focus their holiday or trip around food or local food experiences. In fact:

Food organizes the tourist's day. A large proportion of most tourist experiences are spent either consuming food and drink, or deciding what and where to consume. However, many of these experiences are taken for granted, because we often regard eating as a necessity rather than a leisure activity. (Richards, 2002, p. 11)

What makes food tourism, and therefore a food tourist, different from just consuming food while travelling is that the travel destination and its culture is experienced via food (Horng & Tsai, 2012). Food is able to tell a story and give insight in the culture it represents. Food, in all its forms, became an important tourist attraction and is either central to the tourist experience or enhances the overall tourist experiences (Henderson, 2009). A region or destination can sell its cultures and histories through its cuisine and food (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006), so some foods or cuisines can be seen as cultural artefacts and serve as the main messengers of culture and history in food tourism. With food tourism particular products and cuisines specific for a destination or a region becomes a means to attract tourists and to differentiate destinations (Hall & Gössling, 2016). Food tourism got a prominent role in the development of tourism products and in place promotion strategies and marketing (Henderson, 2009).

Culinary heritage and foodways - the eating habits and culinary practices of people, a region, or a historical period- can be seen as one of the foundations of food tourism. Without the story behind the local food, the only benefit the food can bring to a tourist is nourishment and a potential tasty experience. The interests of tourists in foodways of other cultures/groups/ethnicities and their aim to experience this other cuisine, made it possible for the food tourism segment to emerge.

---

#### FOOD TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Food tourism destinations can be countries, regions, cities, resorts, restaurants or events. The overall narrative is that food tourism is based on local culinary heritage, which differentiates a destination and becomes a means to attract tourists. Getz et al (2014) state that even though probably every destination can develop some sort of food tourism with the right use of culinary heritage, but that "it is unreasonable to think that every city or country can be a mecca for food tourists" (p.121).

Food tourism destinations do develop over time and according to Hjalager (A. Hjalager & Richards, 2003) food tourism destinations can be considered to be in one of the four development stages. Within these four development stages of food tourism the main resources used, the expected tourist behaviour, strategies, and collaborative structures differ. Food tourism resources play an important role in the development of food tourism destinations. According to Smith and Xiao (2008) food tourism resources can be categorized into four categories: facilities, activities, events and organisations. The food tourism resources together form the food tourism product and play a role in attracting food tourists to the food tourism destination.

---

## FOOD TOURISM IN MALAYSIA

This study will focus on food tourism in Malaysia, a country that is known for its variety of food, a country where people plan their days around food. There are different ethnic heritage cuisines and the first question asked by local people is often: *'have you eaten?'*

The food and cuisines that can be found in the country in Malaysia is a mix and representation of the different ethnicities living in Malaysia. The three main ethnicities that can be found in most historic cities in the country are Malay, Chinese and Indian. Often there are designated areas in these cities that are specifically known for its Malay, Chinese or Indian food. There cannot really be spoken about one distinguished national cuisine in Malaysia. The diverse ethnic populations all bring their own input, which results in different local cuisines through the whole country. The food that can be found in the cities reflects the ethnicities and clans that live in the city.

Malaysia is becoming increasingly popular as a food tourism destination. Kuala Lumpur and George Town are the cities that get the most attention when it comes to food tourism and are well-known by food tourists. George Town, often referred to as *'the food capital of Malaysia'*, is one of the major food tourism destinations in Malaysia where an increasing number of food festivals, markets, workshops and tours are organised that attracts many food tourists. George Town is located 350 kilometres north of Kuala Lumpur and inhabits 220 thousand people. It is well known for being a melting pot of different cuisines in one city. George Town is a highly developed food tourism region, which is struggling with how to remain authentic in terms of culinary heritage while still serving the demands of the locals and the food tourists.

Another Malaysian city that has a rich culinary heritage and is well known by domestic tourists for the food is Ipoh, one of the largest cities in the country and the capital of the state of Perak. Ipoh is located 200 kilometres north of Kuala Lumpur and has a population of over 657 thousand inhabitants. At the moment Ipoh is mainly known as a *'touch and go area'*, domestic tourists stop there on their way to either Penang or Kuala Lumpur to have lunch, or just go up for the day and spend a whole day eating and go back home. Domestic tourists find their way to Ipoh and are attracted by the food, but international tourists still are generally not aware of Ipoh as a food tourism destination. Ipoh is nevertheless said to have potential to become a well-known food tourism destination for both domestic and international tourists. Ipoh is known within Malaysia and Singapore for its great food; nevertheless, it is not very high on the list of culinary food destinations of Malaysia by other international tourists. Ipoh has the ambition to grow in similar ways as George Town but has not yet succeeded.

This thesis will study the development of food tourism in both George Town and Ipoh, to better understand how culinary practices in George Town and Ipoh are socially constructed and how both cities can learn from each other's development as a food tourism destination.

### 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since it is believed that food tourism can be developed in places with rich culinary heritage, potential food tourism destinations, such as Ipoh, are looking into ways to develop its food tourism to attract (more) tourists and benefit from the economic benefits it can bring. Ipoh is a destination that, despite its rich culinary heritage, struggles in developing further as a food tourism destination and attract international tourists next to the domestic tourists it already attracts. George Town on the other hand is already a well-known food tourism destination, that built its food tourism on its rich culinary heritage. However, since the food tourism destination is attracting many domestic and international tourists, the destination is often critiqued for *'losing its authenticity'*.

Where one case site of this study struggles with the right direction and strategy of food tourism development, the other case site might become overdeveloped as a food tourism destination and is

therefore facing threats of becoming commercialized and less attractive for food tourists. Therefore, this study can, by comparing the development of food tourism at both George Town and Ipoh, give insight in how food tourism can be developed from the first development order and also the threats a food tourism destination faces when it goes down the road of development.

The three main ethnicities of Malaysia – Malay, Chinese and Indian, are all represented in both George Town and Ipoh, and all seem to have their own culinary heritage. How heritage is constructed by experts such as state governments and tourism officials, has political value and determines which heritage is used in the development of (food) tourism. In two cities that are predominantly Chinese in Malaysia, there can be identified discursive dissonances when it comes to the ongoing construction of authentic culinary heritage. The questions are which heritage is constructed as culinary heritage in both cases and what the implications are of this for food tourism development.

### 1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The goal of this study is to further understand the discursive dissonance in the ongoing construction of authentic culinary heritage in George Town and Ipoh in order to get an insight in how both cities could develop (further) as food tourism destinations. Both cities are in a different stage regarding food tourism development and went through a different development process, therefore this study will look at what lessons can be learned from both cases regarding food tourism development and the construction of authentic culinary heritage. The following research questions are formulated:

**Central question: How have culinary practices in George Town and Ipoh become socially constructed and harnessed as authentic culinary heritage in context of their unique food tourism pathways?**

1. What are the discourses and practices related to culinary heritage and food tourism in George Town and Ipoh?
  - a. What is considered as culinary heritage in George Town and Ipoh and according to whom?
  - b. How is culinary heritage constructed and used in George Town and Ipoh for food tourism development?
2. What role does authenticity play in the development of culinary heritage and food tourism in George Town and Ipoh?
  - a. What discourses regarding authenticity exist in context of the development of culinary heritage and food tourism in George Town and Ipoh?
  - b. How is authenticity of culinary heritage socially constructed and harnessed in George Town and Ipoh?
3. What can we learn from both case studies in terms of the construction and harnessing of culinary heritage in relation to their unique food tourism developments?

Food tourism pathways stand here for a hybridization of foodways with tourism development. The concept of foodways tells a story of culinary heritage and the value that food holds in the mind of people, either local or non-local. Foodways can be defined as eating habits and culinary practices of people, a region or a historical period. Foodways as such describe what is eaten, when it is eaten, in what way food is consumed, which role traditions play, and most important what the underlying reason is for executing these eating habits and culinary practices. Foodways furthermore have the ability to connect people to a geographic region, climate, period of time, ethnic or religious groups, and also family. Since foodways are considered important cultural markers of identity in societies, they offer a medium to understand social relations, family, ideology and cultural symbolism (Timothy & Ron, 2013). How such foodways interrelate with tourism development is explored further in this thesis.

#### 1.4 SCIENTIFIC AND EMPIRICAL RELEVANCE

First of all, this study is of scientific relevance as it will contribute to the academic discussion on the role and importance of authenticity in the context of food tourism development. Within discussions around heritage tourism, the concept of authenticity is essential. The study is able to give insight in the importance of authenticity for food tourism development at two food tourism destination in Malaysia. Timothy and Boyd (2006) suggest that future studies should be “aimed at understanding what visitors perceive as authentic in different contexts and how community stakeholders attempt to portray their places as authentic” (p. 6-7).

This study has a discursive approach to explore the role of the construction of authenticity of culinary heritage in the context of food tourism development at two food tourism destinations with different (ethnic) communities in Malaysia. According to Wu & Hou (2015) studies with a discursive approach to heritage studies are able:

to explore different cultural and historical discourses about ‘heritage’, delineating how the past is understood, conceptualized, managed and used in varied local (especially Indigenous) contexts and at different historical moments [. . .] for alternatives to rethink present heritage discourses and practices (p.47).

Research in this field can challenge cultural politics on heritage. Therefore, this study will look at which discourses around heritage and authenticity are dominant in multi-ethnic country in South East Asia with a colonial past. This study can give insight in how heritage and authenticity are constructed in George Town and Ipoh, how these constructs are challenged by other discourses and how this influences food tourism practices and development. As Malaysia is a country with three main ethnicities, where not all ethnicities hold the same privileges, the insights of this study could potentially help: “making heard, and thereby promoting, cultural, historical understandings of ‘heritage’ that are largely marginalized, silenced and neglected in the global heritage movement. As such, it can facilitate true cultural diversity in heritage, in terms of both practice and research” (Wu & Hou, 2015, p. 45).

Next to the academic relevance of this study, it also holds empirical relevance. This study can give insights on how to use authentic culinary heritage in the context of food tourism development. Both George Town and Ipoh are looking into ways to (keep) develop(ing) food tourism. Because of the exploratory multi case study design of this study, the comparison of both cases and the lessons drawn can be used to develop food tourism and compete with other food tourism destinations (and each other).

Authenticity is a concept that is used widely in the scientific field of heritage and tourism studies and as a result tourism-related agencies, organisations and businesses use the term in marketing campaigns, slogans, and itineraries (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). For example, destinations, cultures and food are sold as ‘authentic’ to tourists, since it is believed this is what they are looking for. From a scholarly perspective there is not just one type of authenticity, it depends on the dominant discourse on authenticity how the concept is defined and used to develop and market tourism. By giving an overview of some of the types of authenticity and linking these to the findings of George Town and Ipoh, this study can give insight in the question if the discourses around authenticity corresponds with what the tourists are actually looking for in their food tourism experience, which can be of potential relevance for both case sites but also other food tourism destinations more generally.

#### 1.5 OUTLINE

This thesis consists of five chapters: introduction, conceptual framework, methodology, findings, and conclusion and discussion. In chapter two, the conceptual framework will be discussed. The conceptual framework comprises three concepts looking at the social construction of *heritage discourses*, *culinary*

*heritage* and *authenticity*, which are used to explore the (development) practices of food tourism and the role of authenticity in both George Town and Ipoh.

The third chapter elaborates on the methodology used in this study: an exploratory multiple case study. How the data was collected with four different data generation methods to get the full picture of food tourism at both case studies is explained, followed by how the collected data has been analysed. As research comes with certain potential biases, the position of me as a researcher is discussed and how the participants have been selected. This research came with some limitations, which are discussed in the last section of the methodology chapter.

In the fourth chapter the findings of the case studies are described. First, discourses observed in George Town will be discussed regarding local culinary heritage, the pathway of (food) tourism development, and the role of authenticity in food tourism development. Second, the same approach is performed for Ipoh. Since this study looks at different discourses present in both case studies, the aim is not to find 'the best discourse' or best practices for food tourism development, but to analyse the impact that these different discourses have on food tourism development.

This report concludes with the fifth chapter, namely the conclusion and discussion. The research questions become answered here by looking into the main findings, their correspondence with the conceptual framework, and a discussion of key lessons learned in this thesis.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this conceptual framework the following constructs related to food tourism will be looked into: heritage discourses, culinary heritage and authenticity. The choice to look at these constructs comes from the relation these constructs have to the overall concept of food tourism and the research questions.

Food tourism is a form of tourism in which tourists are attracted to a destination because of the food that is offered, the story it is able to tell and the insight it can give in local culture. Food and food practices can be a window into the past and can therefore be seen as a form of heritage and is often referred to as culinary heritage.

The construct of heritage and how this actually becomes formed through heritage discourses will be discussed in the next section. The concept of culinary heritage will be elaborated on in relation to food tourism and its development in the second section. The final construct discussed here is authenticity as a construct that is often seen as 'what tourists are really looking for'. Nevertheless, there are different perspectives on what authenticity means, how it can be defined, and what role it plays in the experience of tourists. The different types of authenticity will be explained next to examining how these different types fit in the context of food tourism.

### 2.1 HERITAGE DISCOURSES

It is useful to understand the overall concept of heritage and the different discourses of heritage in order to understand what is (and what is not) seen or identified as heritage, and how discourses constitute and mould the various representations of heritage. As Wu and Hou (2015) state:

to critically understand what heritage is and does in the present, how local contexts, historical moments and different cultural traditions shape and use it, it is tremendously helpful to probe into the discursive (re)production of heritage and consider how such (re)production is manifested on the global-local interface (p.37).

When thinking of heritage, one can think of old, grand, monumental and aesthetically pleasing sites, buildings, places and artefacts: heritage sites worth visiting which can tell a story about the past and show the importance of the past. However, it is argued that heritage is not an identifiable thing, but actually a discourse that is constructed strategically for political, economic or ideological goals (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014). Indeed, "the past is always represented and constructed in the present social and political context for some particular interests" (Wu & Hou, 2015, p. 39).

#### TEXTBOX 1. DEFINITION OF DISCOURSE IN THIS STUDY

Discourse is a loosely defined concept and has many different meanings (Wu & Hou, 2015). In this study discourse is defined as a particular way by which people typically communicate and construct social realities – "discourse produces the world as we know it" (Wu & Hou, 2015, p.38).

Discourse shows how language is used to enact activities and identities (Gee, 2005). As such, discourse captures what a group sees as moralities and truths. The discourse of some groups may seem as universalised and hence become interpreted as 'the truth' instead of 'their truth', which gives certain discourses the power to construct one truth at the expense of another (Foucault, 1971; Hook, 2001). Discourse holds knowledge and power, it regulates what can and cannot be said and constructs how people talk about and understand the world. In this way discourse contributes to shaping and transformation of social, cultural and historical realities (Wu & Hou, 2015).

Correspondingly, Laurajane Smith opens the first chapter of the book *Uses of Heritage* by stating: 'there is, really, no such thing as heritage' (2006, p. 11). She states that heritage is generally not something to simply gaze at, but a set of values and meanings and defines heritage ultimately as follows: 'a cultural practice, involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings' (L. Smith, 2006, p. 11). In other words, heritage is a concept representing the past that exists through discourse and is socially constructed.

So, heritage, and how one looks at heritage, is actually constructed by a discourse that shapes how heritage is identified, interpreted, valued, managed and used. A heritage discourse validates the popular set of practices and performances regarding heritage conservation. But in the same time such a discourse also undermines alternative ideas and practices of heritage. The discourse of heritage is crucial for the way we look at heritage and how heritage is managed and conserved. The various representations of heritage are created and shaped by heritage discourses (Wu & Hou, 2015). Some heritage discourses are dominant and have the power to define heritage and in the same time how it is managed and conserved.

---

#### AUTHORIZED HERITAGE DISCOURSE

The most dominant heritage discourse is generally referred to as Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) and this discourse tends to powerfully constitute the way people think, talk and write about heritage. The origin of AHD lies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when heritage was specifically used in Europe to produce a national identity and show cultural achievements with the use of heritage property, monuments and museums. Heritage was seen as a reflection and representation of values and sensibilities of national identities which could educate 'the public' about these national values. Since heritage was used for the formation of a national identity, only what was considered 'great and good' was chosen to represent the past, giving this heritage value and therefore worth saving and preserving (L. Smith, 2006). According to this discourse, heritage is something **inherited** from the past, that needs to be **conserved** and passed on to the **next generation** (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014), often referred to as the European 'conserve as found' ethic (L. Smith, 2006).

The focus of AHD is on tangible heritage sites, such as buildings, monuments, artefacts, sites, places and landscapes, which current generations must take care of and protect, so it can be passed on to the next generations in order to be educated about the past and be the basis of a shared identity based on the past (L. Smith, 2006). AHD furthermore produces authorized experts who are often seen as the "spokespersons" of the past and have the power and ability to speak about what can be identified as heritage and what not. Often these experts are historians, architects and archaeologists that can be heritage practitioners, national governments and supranational organisations (like UNESCO). It is critiqued that AHD is mainly based on Western (elite) cultural values from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and within the discourse it is assumed that they are universally applicable (L. Smith, 2006; Wu & Hou, 2015).

#### TEXTBOX 2. USE OF AHD AROUND THE WORLD

The European standards regarding conservation of heritage, based on AHD, also found its way outside of Europe and were first adapted by the United States of America in order to protect their heritage and create patriotism followed by Australia. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century. AHD and its corresponding principles regarding conservation of heritage were also brought to the British colonies as part of colonial rule in order to conserve buildings for their historical and archaeological value - from a British perspective. This was the beginning of imposing the European conservation ethic and principles to non-Western nations. It was ignored that within other cultures and parts of the world other discourses regarding heritage could be dominant. The European principles were seen as superior and 'common sense' (L. Smith, 2006).

AHD can actually be seen as a self-referential discourse, meaning that this discourse continues to refer to itself by building upon previous similar discourses that help to make repetitive claims and justify the discourse and the values and ideologies on which it is based. Within AHD, heritage can only be judged and identified by authorized heritage experts. Only these experts are perceived to have the right ability, knowledge and understanding to identify historically important sites and places. Experts hold great power defining heritage and their values and ideologies are privileged over those of non-experts. As the past can only be identified and judged by experts according to AHD, the situation was created where heritage became the subject of analyses and responsibility of a group of heritage experts. The heritage experts got the ability and authority to speak about heritage and decide about the meaning and nature of heritage. These experts hold great power in defining heritage and its values and meanings, following the management or interpretation of heritage sites. Since the heritage discourse is self-referential, Smith (2006) discussed that there are a number of consequences. One of them is the need to construct a material reality around heritage; as a result heritage within AHD must be something from the past, but 'the past' is a very vague concept and can be multiple interpreted. The material reality and heritage experts are constructed by the heritage discourse and as a self-referential discourse continually legitimizes itself and the values and ideologies on which it is based (L. Smith, 2006).

Within AHD heritage was traditionally seen as a site, object, building or structure with identifiable boundaries, something objective, neutral and universal (Wu & Hou, 2015). As a result, heritage could be mapped, surveyed, recorded and placed on national or international registers. The concept of heritage was therefore reduced to material reality, distinct locations, could be 'managed' and only included tangible heritage. By limiting heritage to tangible objects this also helped to: "reduce the social, cultural or historical conflicts about meaning, value or nature of heritage, or more broadly the past, into discrete and specific conflicts over individual sites and/or technical issues of site management" (L. Smith, 2006, p. 31). The focus on tangible heritage within AHD came from the believe that material or tangible heritage provides a physical representation of 'the past', which could be linked to a sense of place, self, belonging and community. In this way heritage holds importance and a symbolic representation of identity that is linked to the past.

AHD not only constructs the 'idea' of heritage, but also its practices. There are two important sets of heritage practices constructed by AHD: a. management and conservation of heritage sites, places and objects and b. economic practices of visitation of sites and institutions within tourism and leisure. The discourse steers which heritage is constructed as heritage and therefore what is managed, conserved and visited by tourists (L. Smith, 2006). The practices and meanings of heritage are constructed by the discourse, but are also reflecting on them. In the end all the heritage practices are involved in the negotiation and regulation of a range of cultural and social values and meanings.

The heritage discourse constructs the concept of heritage as something that visitors (or the public) engage with passively, which can be justified since heritage was originally seen as historical sites/buildings or exhibitions at museums, objects to gaze at. Visitors may be led to heritage sites, instructed about the story, told what to remember and what they can and cannot do while visiting, but are not invited to engage with it more actively (Muzaini & Minca, 2018; L. Smith, 2006). AHD looks at heritage as a top-down relationship between the expert, heritage site and visitor. Heritage is something the public gazes at and uncritically consumes the messages constructed by heritage experts creating its meaning to the visitor according to AHD. Heritage is not seen as something that visitors can experience actively and be part of, or even as an experience at all. Since AHD states that heritage is something strictly inherited from the past that should be 'conserved as found' distance is created, not only between the past and the present but also between heritage and its 'observer' (L. Smith, 2006), making heritage a distancing reconstruction of the past (Muzaini & Minca, 2018). The visitor is thereby disconnected from the heritage they are visiting. Heritage is something to uncritically observe instead of actively engage with when it comes to the AHD (L. Smith, 2006). In this way AHD reduces heritage to mere entertainment. A danger



for heritage sites is that they become a 'heritage theme park': just simple entertainment instead of telling a story, educating people about the past and reflecting certain values and identities. Some would say that heritage as such becomes commodified, something to sell to tourists: "a 'heritage industry', which commodifies, sanitizes and creates a false past and stifles cultural development and creativity" (L. Smith, 2006, p. 33).

AHD is finally often used for nation-building, can play a crucial role in creating national identities, serves economic objectives such as tourism and defines heritage practices such as conservation. Certain interpretations of the past are in this way privileged, while other interpretations are marginalized when these do not fit the overarching purpose. In this way heritage could be seen as a manipulation of the past in order to accomplish socio-economic and political objectives: "audiences are persuaded to accept particular versions of the past as true, even as these may be nothing but strategically selected narratives of people and events belonging to another time" (Muzaini & Minca, 2018, p. 1). The question that could be asked is *what* heritage is meant to accomplish and *how* the past is selected and crafted to achieve these objectives (Muzaini & Minca, 2018).

---

#### CRITICS ON THE AUTHORIZED HERITAGE DISCOURSE

AHD, although being the dominant discourse and seen as 'common-sense and universal truth (Wu & Hou, 2015), is quite disputed in academia. The two major criticisms on AHD are that it has a Western oriented/Eurocentric view and has an expert driven heritage declaration excluding non-experts.

AHD is indeed critiqued for being predominantly Eurocentric and reflecting ideologies, values and aspiration of upper- and middle class white men, while AHD dominates contemporary heritage conceptions and practices around the globe (Wu & Hou, 2015). AHD and its experts see the discourse as a universal truth that can be applicable worldwide. This ignores the possibility that other cultures might define heritage in another way and attach different cultural meaning to heritage, which could mean that some heritage sites will be identified as heritage while it holds no meaning to local people, or the other way around.

Different cultures have different histories, conditions, problems, issues, aspirations and so on. Consequently, the different cultural discourses which constitute them will have not only different objects of construction or topics, but also different categorizations, understandings, perspectives, evaluations and so on. They make up different cultural worlds, so to speak. (Xu, 2005, p. 62)

There are different cultural discourses of heritage that categorize and construct the concept of heritage in different ways leading to different heritage practices. This means that there are alternative or parallel heritages next to what is defined by the experts of AHD. These heritage discourses are often more fluid, dynamic and performative in nature. An example of a different, non-Western approach to heritage is the Chinese discourse *Guji* where the focus is on preserving authentic language. The language used has an authentic meaning to the people using it and is not defined by experts: "heritage is expressed as it was in the words from the past, and its meanings are negotiated in the intertextual chains that connect the present and the past [...] it is oriented to holistic intelligibility and is always open to (re)interpretation" (Wu & Hou, 2015, p. 44). Within Chinese discourses about heritage and the past it is less about preserving materiality of heritage, but more about activating a sense of virtue. As Vecco states: "while the western philosophical approach as regards conservation manifests itself in the preservation of the historic monument, the oriental one tries to use the monuments to preserve the heritage" (2010, p. 324).

As described, experts are the driver for what is proclaimed to be heritage within AHD. The appointed heritage experts identify heritage according to AHD, often with the aim to construct nationalism and national identities. By doing so AHD tends to ignore a diversity of sub-national cultural and social experiences and promotes the experiences and values of elite social classes. Women, minor ethnic groups, indigenous communities and the working class are groups that are frequently ignored by AHD with the

result that their heritage does not become recognized. Experts within AHD hold a great amount of power identifying what can be categorized as heritage and what cultural significance it holds. Heritage is in this way constructed by the experts who are *speaking for* instead of *speaking from* the 'non-experts'. This can be criticized, because cultural significance in the case of AHD is defined by outside experts instead of by communities or individuals who are directly linked to either tangible or intangible heritage (L. Smith, 2006). What misses in the authorized heritage discourse is an active or critical engagement with heritage from non-expert users of heritage. Heritage can be a co-construction between experts and non-experts creating historical narratives together (Wu & Hou, 2015). By excluding non-experts the heritage of many groups is excluded, cultural significance and meaning is defined by experts while heritage can only hold meaning when this is acknowledged by the people who are living this heritage (UNESCO, 2011b). The question is if outsiders are able to identify and judge heritage, since "what may be claimed as one group's unique heritage might also be claimed, or contested, by other groups" (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014, p. 1).

---

#### HERITAGE FROM BELOW

Heritage from below (HFB) is a discourse that looks at heritage and the construction of heritage from a different perspective than AHD. Where, as discussed earlier, AHD looks at the construction of heritage from a top-down approach, HFB uses a bottom-up approach. The starting point of HFB is not the judging and identification of heritage by experts, but how heritage is experienced by individuals: "heritage made 'in the shadows' and away from the public eye, as well as how individuals themselves experience heritage at the more local levels" (Muzaini & Minca, 2018, p. 7). Regardless of the official versions of the past identified and defined by AHD, individuals engage heritage in their own ways. Different people or communities can have different experiences and attach different meanings to heritage (sites). Within the HFB discourse, the non-experts or non-state agents, like individuals and communities are central in identifying and constructing heritage, which can result in plural interpretations of heritage. Other narratives and understandings of history and identity which were neglected by AHD becomes heritage since it has meaning to individuals and communities in HFB. Heritage from this perspective is "a process understood, practiced and experienced on the ground by the people themselves [. . .] exercising their own agency as both producers and consumers of 'the past'" (Muzaini & Minca, 2018, p. 1), giving as much different heritages as there are individuals in any given society. In this light a heritage site can hold different meanings and is constantly reinterpreted and rejuvenated by the individuals who claim and use it as their living heritage; individuals and communities play an important role in identifying heritage and therefore heritage management (Muzaini & Minca, 2018).

HFB also includes aspects of everyday life that have deep roots in the past, which might not yet have been marked as heritage by AHD. Nevertheless, HFB is not limited to intangible heritage, since non-experts are defining what is heritage from their perspective, this also means that material artefacts in museums, indigenous monuments and heritage festivals can be identified as HFB. Heritage can actually be anything and everything from this perspective, "there can be as many alternatives interpretations of the past as there are interpreters" (Muzaini & Minca, 2018, p. 12). A risk of HFB for tourism is that some tourists might not want to hear another version of the past that contradicts with narratives that corresponds with AHD: "while everyone may have a personal story or understanding of the past, these stories are not always to be emphasized since they may risk bringing up unwanted and traumatic memories" (Muzaini & Minca, 2018, p. 13).

It should not be overlooked that, even though HFB identifies heritage from below, there can also be preferred narratives of heritage influenced by ulterior motives of individuals or communities. HFB can also have its own preferred heritages. With the use of storytelling of local communities and individuals the biases of AHD can be overturned, but this can also be selective, biased and partial and serve their own economic and political function. As Muzaini & Minca (2018) state: "all heritages [AHD and HFB] are

constructed and crafted; and what is important is to what purpose they are activated and reproduced” (p.14).

---

## SUB-CONCLUSION

Heritage is a socially constructed concept, a story defined by a discourse. There are different discourses on heritage that define heritage from their own perspective. While AHD is the dominant discourse and defines heritage from a Westernized perspective, the discourse is more and more disputed since it excludes the view of non-experts, non-Western views on heritage, and commodifies heritage. HFB is another discourse, that uses a bottom-up approach to heritage, instead of the AHD top-down approach. The recognition of different types of heritage and discourses on heritage show that heritage is a concept that is not easily defined and holds different meanings to different individuals.

## 2.2 CULINARY HERITAGE

How we eat, and what we eat, and when we eat, and with whom we eat, all uniquely vary from place to place, group to group, time to time – thanks to longstanding geographic, economic, social, and cosmological differences throughout the world. (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014, p. 1)

As described in the introduction chapter, food tourism is a segment of tourism in which food and culinary heritage play a major role: experiencing and understanding culture through culinary heritage is the core of food tourism. Culinary heritage, as part of cultural heritage, can be used to develop food tourism, distinguish a food tourism destination and attract food tourists. Broadly speaking culinary heritage is an extremely important part of intangible cultural heritage, it contains cultural aspects such as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills expressed in behaviour, action and performance, in which food is the core subject that has formed over time (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2010; Timothy, 2016; UNESCO, 2018; Yusoff et al., 2013). Food and culinary heritage can be seen as an expression of local culture and is often seen as part of cultural and or communal identity, it can bind people together and provide a sense of joy.

Cultural heritage can be divided into tangible heritage (present objects and material artefacts) and intangible heritage (traditions, rituals, practices, customs, and living expressions). Intangible cultural heritage is formed by the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that are passed on from one generation to another and is therefore a link from the past, through the present, into the future (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014; UNESCO, 2011b). Cultural heritage has economic value, provides connection, can provide a sense of identity and gives meaning necessary to understand the world. As intangible cultural heritage is passed on from generation to generation, it is constantly being changed and enriched (Bessière, 1998; UNESCO, 2011b). Cultural heritage is therefore not static, like built heritage, and in a constant state of change. According to UNESCO (2011b) communities play an essential role regarding the survival and safeguarding of intangible heritage as it can only survive if the communities embrace the heritage: “intangible heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized by the groups or individuals that create, maintain and transit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage” (UNESCO, 2011b, p. 5). This also shows that intangible cultural heritage is socially constructed and only holds meaning when it is recognized, not just by experts as claimed by AHD even though they can notice the existence of intangible heritage, but by the communities which the intangible heritage is part of. From this perspective cultural heritage should not be fossilized or seen as something static that needs to be preserved according to the discourse of AHD, but cultural heritage should be allowed to change and adapt. Nevertheless, despite the changing character of intangible heritage, due to globalization, cultural homogenization and lack of support, appreciation and understanding, intangible heritage is currently under threat (UNESCO, 2011b).

Food has the ability to evoke strong emotions and bind people together through space and time. Certain dishes make people remember past experiences and make them also imagine their ancestors having similar experiences. When food creates an imaginary link to the past, food is transformed into heritage (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014). Food is often a symbol for the celebration of special occasions, festivities, and social gatherings, such as the celebration of Christmas or New Year. So, food is much more than the actual product that is consumed, it plays a huge role in cultural and social practices in life. Food can bring pleasure, entertainment, a social purpose (Henderson, 2009) and can also be seen as a status symbol and signifier of identity. Cultivation, preparation, and consumption of food is used to create identity claims of cultural heritage on different scales, from local to international scales. Meanings of food change due to class, gender or taste preferences. But also cooking traditions part of culinary heritage change over time and are developed for economic and social reasons. Differences between ethnic groups can be visualized through food and therefore food is often used to represent and distinguish different (ethnic) groups. Nowadays in cookbooks and travel guides ethnicity is portrayed with the use of food and in this way ethnic imaginaries are created for outsiders of the group as well as insiders. (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014). Food has become a recognized marker of ethnicity and culture (Timothy & Ron, 2013). The difficulty of using a cuisine as a marker of ethnicity is that even within ethnic groups there are differences, so it is important to be aware of “the choice of how we imagine, and separate out, different types of cuisines even within one ethnic group varies according to how we regard food as a marker of class, authenticity and heritage” (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014, p. 5). Food is one of the important markers of regional and ethnic identity and with the preservation of culinary heritage, ethnic pride, national patriotism, agricultural traditions and other markers of identity are partially safeguarded (Timothy & Ron, 2013).

Culinary heritage is a big part of culture, reflects the cultural norms and values of people, places and times (Timothy, 2016). Since culinary heritage is unique for a particular region, community or ethnic group in terms of used ingredients, cooking techniques, presentation and the way the food is consumed (S. L. Khoo & Badarulzaman, 2014), it can tell a story and the history of a place (Getz et al., 2014). From a culinary heritage perspective, cuisines can be seen as a mix of tangible elements, like ingredients and cooking utensils, and intangible elements like recipes, eating traditions and taste. These two elements of culinary heritage together contribute to the characteristics and cultural values of places (Timothy & Ron, 2013). Cuisines can seem identical, but even the subtlest difference can make a cuisine unique to a community and by consuming this food connect people to their ancestors that experienced the same cuisine (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014).

Sometimes national cuisines/food cultures are seen as something static, something inherited from the past that needs to be safeguarded for the future and looked at from an objective authenticity point of view. When looking at the formation or origin of a cuisine it is impossible to pinpoint when a cuisine emerged. It is sometimes forgotten that because of mobility and exchange between countries and continents many cuisines, domestic food habits and use of produce have been influenced and changed throughout history (Henderson, 2014), for example within Southeast Asia chili peppers are used widely in many dishes considered as culinary heritage which were introduced by the Portuguese traders in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays chili peppers are not associated anymore with the Portuguese, but seen as a local ingredient that is part of the local cuisine which shows how cuisines and the products have been influenced by others and how the imaginaries of food change (Staiff & Bushell, 2013). Without the chili pepper many dishes in South East that are considered as heritage dishes would not have existed. Henderson (2014) discusses the construction of the national cuisine of Singapore, which population comprises several different ethnicities who all brought their own ancestral cuisines migrating to the nation, resulting in a cuisine with many different cultural elements that is constantly evolving. In Singapore there are a number of dishes that got an iconic status, which are seen as culinary heritage by the citizens worthy of celebration and safeguarding and therefore are identified as authentic local cuisine. National cuisines are often evolving over time, adapting to new time frames, the population, social status, and socio-political changes (Cheung,

2013; Henderson, 2014; Staiff & Bushell, 2013). Therefore a national cuisine is rather a socially constructed concept, often constructed within a romantic discourse: valuing the local, the traditional and the authentic because of their (imagined) connection to the past (Pratt, 2009).

Distinctions of culinary heritage can be based on social and historical variations, but can also be distinguished by terroir. The concept of *terroir* is based on the specific environment of the place that food is coming from, when it comes to terroir it is not the taste of a culture, but the taste of a place; “terroir refers to a specific area with an outspoken cultural and historical identity” (Bessièrè, 1998, p. 31). The assumption is that the specific environment gives the authentic taste to a product and that this cannot be reproduced somewhere else, because of specific (natural) characteristics of the place. Examples of culinary products that are linked directly to the place where it is produced are: Champagne wine, Le Puy lentils, Bress poultry and prosciutto di Parma; these products may only be called so if they have a close link to the specified region. *Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) is an famous example of a France label, that guarantees the quality and origin of agricultural products, and is linked to the concept of terroir (Bessièrè, 1998). As AOC started as a label guaranteeing quality, it also became a brand with a commercial value and the products itself became an attraction for tourists.

Besides the role that culinary heritage plays in attracting food tourists by being an attraction and form of entertainment, food tourism also defines to a certain extent what is seen as culinary heritage and what is not (and therefore what is safeguarded and what is not). How is the destination represented in culinary terms? Cook books, cooking shows, travel shows, tourism books and brochures, all together create an imaginary of culinary heritage at the destination for tourists but also for local people (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014; Staiff & Bushell, 2013). The imaginary of culinary heritage that is created and the food tourism resources offered at a destination show which discourses are central in food tourism development regarding heritage and authenticity. Heritage foods can be viewed as socially constructed cultural heritage. By using culinary heritage in tourism marketing, certain images of a nation and its populations are selected to represent the national image. Since culinary heritage is often seen as a marker for regional and ethnical identity, the heritage that is promoted (and safeguarded) at a food tourism destination, can also give an insight in the inclusion and exclusion of ethnicities in multi-cultural societies by governments (Hall & Mitchell, 2001; Staiff & Bushell, 2013) and the desired discourses around the history that state governments are trying to create in the interests of national goals of identity and unity (Hitchcock et al., 2010).

---

#### SAFEGUARDING CULINARY HERITAGE

Since intangible cultural heritage is considered to be under treat and food is described as an important marker of regional and ethnic identity, the safeguarding of culinary heritage is getting more attention from experts. Timothy and Ron (2013) state that with the preservation of culinary heritage, ethnic pride, national patriotism, agricultural traditions and other markers of identity are partially safeguarded as well.

The growing attention for culinary heritage as a form of cultural heritage and the importance of safeguarding culinary heritage is also showed by a few initiatives by UNESCO. In 2004, UNESCO launched a Global Alliances Creative Cities Network with the objective to strengthen cultural goods and services, for cities that are seen as ‘centres of excellence’ within several creative industries. Gastronomy was included as one of the seven creative fields in which cities can excel (Pearson & Pearson, 2016). Since 2005 there are 26 cities that can call themselves ‘city of Gastronomy’, for example Parma, Italy; Chengdu, China; Popayan, Colombia; Jeonju, South Korea; and Zahle, Lebanon. These cities need to meet a number of criteria like having a characteristic well-developed gastronomy linked to the region, a vibrant gastronomy community with traditional restaurants and/or chefs, the use of endogenous ingredients in local cooking, traditional practices and methods, and food markets and food industry. Making use of culinary heritage is an important criterion to become a ‘city of gastronomy’. In 2008

UNESCO acknowledged the importance of intangible cultural heritage by establishing the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Since 2010 cuisines, culinary products and culinary traditional practices are listed as intangible heritage on the *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*, showing the importance of protecting and safeguarding culinary heritage. Examples of culinary heritage that is listed as intangible heritage are: traditional Mexican cuisine, gastronomic meal of the French, the tradition of Kimchi making in Korea, the Turkish coffee culture and tradition, the Mediterranean diet, the Beer culture in Belgium and the art of Neapolitan 'Pizzaiuolo' (UNESCO, n.d.).

The initiatives of UNESCO around safeguarding intangible heritage and including culinary heritage as one of the segments that needs to be safeguarded showed the growing importance and attention given to culinary heritage. Nevertheless, it is not just UNESCO who tries to save culinary heritage, there are many more groups trying to preserve culinary heritage, for example governments, NGOs, tourism marketing organisations and local initiatives. Where there are political-cultural reasons to protect cultural elements that are slowly disappearing, there is often also a commercial reason to protect heritage and turn it into a commodity that can be either an object of entertainment or consumption. In this way culinary heritage at a food tourism destination become commoditized and sold to tourists as a cultural experience. Food tourism can play a role in safeguarding culinary heritage from a commercial point of view. The economic benefits that food tourism can bring to a destination can be an incentive to preserve and protect their culinary heritage, since culinary heritage is the core of food tourism. Without culinary heritage or when the culinary heritage is rapidly declining the destination can become less attractive to food tourists. Food tourism in this way can bring economic benefits and can help preservation of cultural and culinary heritage.

With safeguarding culinary heritage, or exploiting it in some form in the light of food tourism, comes the question: who defines culinary heritage and decides what culinary heritage is and what is not. Looking at culinary heritage from AHD brings some restrictions and difficulties. When culinary heritage is seen as something inherited from the past that needs to be conserved to be able to be passed on to future generations, it becomes a construct with identifiable boundaries that should meet certain criteria to be identified as culinary heritage. According to AHD culinary heritage can only be defined and judged by experts. Nevertheless, identifying culinary heritage from an AHD perspective would narrow down what is identified as culinary heritage or what the origin of a dish or cuisine is. Another limitation of using AHD to manage culinary heritage at food tourism destinations, is that certain culinary practices perceived by individuals and communities as culinary heritage would not be safeguarded or included in food tourism development when it does not fit within a particular understanding of heritage, socio-economic and political objectives, or the representation of the past according to elites such as heritage practices, national governments or supranational organisations. Hjalager and Richards (2003) state that heritage of food does not relate on rational proof or identification by AHD experts, but it relies on faith and a feeling that 'it must be right'. Heritage food cannot always be judged by rational proof, since cuisine and culinary heritage are evolving over time, and many heritage foods that is offered might be *unauthentic*, manipulated/alterd or fake for political intentions that reconstructs local cuisines. But if the heritage food, even though it might not be authentic, can give an insight in the history and environment of a destination, the food still holds importance to local communities and tourists.

---

## SUB-CONCLUSION

To conclude here, culinary heritage is an important part of cultural heritage which is socially constructed and provides a sense of (national/regional/local) identity. Culinary heritage is a reflection of cultural norms and values of people, places and times, and can tell the story of the past and give tourists the ability to experience insights into different cultures and histories by engaging in food related activities. As discussed, cuisines are a socially constructed concept and evolve over time often constructed with a romantic discourse. How culinary heritage is defined depends on the different (dominant) discourses

around heritage, but also determines which places are developed/promoted/branded/ marketed as sites of culinary heritage in the context of food tourism. Safeguarding culinary heritage is seen as an important way for the preservation of (intangible) cultural heritage and food tourism can be an (extra) incentive to do so.

### 2.3 AUTHENTICITY

The ideal of authenticity can be characterized by either **nostalgia** or **romanticism**. It is nostalgic because it idealizes the ways of life in which people are supposed as freer, more innocent, more spontaneous, purer and truer to themselves than usual (such ways of life are usually supposed to exist in the past or in childhood. (Wang, 1999, p. 360)

Authenticity is a concept, often used to discuss **genuineness** of objects and activities, used a lot in tourism studies since it is believed to be a central concept when it comes to tourism products and tourism development. The concept of authenticity is often used within cultural tourism and its many sub forms, like food tourism, since these types of tourism involve the representation of the past or the Other (Sims, 2009; Wang, 1999). There are many different concepts, values and perspectives, sometimes contradictory and irreconcilable, when it comes to the authenticity of objects and activities. Reisinger and Steiner (2006) advocate for not using the term authenticity, but using words such as **genuine, actual, accurate and real** when referring to the nature and origins of objects and tourism activities.

Originally authenticity was a concept used within museums to identify and test the true origin of an object. The museum-linked usage was extended to tourism; tourism products, such as rituals, festivals, cuisine, housing, or dress, were judged and identified as either authentic or inauthentic on certain criteria, such as being part of traditional culture, the origin, sense of genuineness, made or performed by locals according their tradition, and being real and unique (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). It is believed that authenticity of tourist experiences does have a complex nature and by using the museum-linked usage it simplifies the authenticity of tourist experiences (Wang, 1999). Authenticity in tourism nowadays refers to “traditional culture and its origin, in the sense of the genuine, the real and the unique” (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 67).

Wang (1999) identified three different types of authenticity within tourism and a distinction can be made between authenticity of toured objects (objective authenticity and constructive authenticity) and the authenticity of tourist experiences (existential authenticity). Objective authenticity and constructive authenticity are both looking at authenticity from an object-related starting point. According to Wang these two types of authenticity are limited and cannot explain all tourist experiences, therefore the concept of existential authenticity was introduced as a way to explain a greater variety of tourist experiences focused on the authenticity of tourist experiences. The three different types of authenticity illustrate the different perspectives and discourses around authenticity and can be related to the three broad ideologies discussed by Reisinger & Steiner (2006): modernism/realism, constructivism and postmodernism. Table 1 gives an overview of the different types of authenticity in relation to the mentioned ideologies.

Table 1 Three different types of authenticity according to Wang (1999)

| Type of authenticity  | Definition  |
|---|---|
| Ideology  |   |
| <b>Objective authenticity (object-related authenticity)</b><br>Modernism/Realism  | There is a discernible objective basis for the authenticity of artefacts, events, cuisine, practices, dress, and culture, generally underpinning by a fixed and knowable reality; <b>“the authenticity of the “original”</b> (Wang, 1999, p. 353).<br><br>Museum-linked usage of authenticity of the objects that are also the toured objects to be perceived by tourists. Absolute and objective criterion used to measure authenticity.   |
| <b>Constructive authenticity (object-related authenticity)</b><br>Constructivism  | Constructive authenticity is <b>symbolic authenticity</b> , a result of social construction where different actors have competing interests arguing for their own interpretation of history, and is therefore relative, negotiable, contextual and ideological.<br><br>Authenticity is projected onto toured objects by tourism producers and tourists: “things appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers” (Wang, 1999, p. 351).   |
| <b>Existential authenticity (activity-related authenticity)</b><br>Post-modernism | Authentic experiences are central at existential authenticity - “a potential existential state of Being that is to be activated by tourist activities.” (Wang, 1999, p. 352).<br><br>Personal or intersubjective feelings: people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life, not because they find the toured objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily.<br><br>The concept of authenticity of the original is gone. Postmodernists abandon the concept of authenticity altogether and doubt any discernible, objective reality under pins perceptions of authenticity. |

Based on: Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 66 & Wang, 1999

As stated before, there are many definitions of the concept of authenticity and different ideologies address it in different ways. Is there such a thing as authenticity and is authenticity universal? Something can be experienced as truly authentic by one person, when this may not be perceived as such by somebody else. What is perceived by tourists as authentic is not necessarily seen as authentic by local hosts.

Authenticity or inauthenticity is a result of how one sees things and of his/her perspectives and interpretations. Thus, the experience of authenticity is pluralistic, relative to each tourist type who may have his or her own way of definition, experience, and interpretation of authenticity (Wang, 1999, p. 355).

Within a lot of tourism strategies, policies and development plans ‘authentic experiences’ play a crucial role, since it is believed that this is what tourists are looking for – memorable authentic experiences looking for ‘the Other’. As discussed above, it depends on the broader ideology how authenticity is perceived, how memorable the authentic experience is, and what type of authenticity tourists are seeking. Within the objective authenticity discourse, inauthenticity is an issue and this corresponds to the issue of staged authenticity addressed by MacCannell (1973); cultural products are staged so it becomes perceived by tourists as authentic, while in fact it has lost the original meaning to locals and therefore often has not much to do anymore with the original cultural product or adapted to the preferences of the



tourists, instead of being a representation of local culture (Cohen, 1988). As a result of mass tourism and the rise of the demand for 'authentic experiences', often local cultures become a commodity and destinations developed certain 'authentic experiences' made for tourists. Staged authenticity is often developed at destinations in order to meet the demands of tourists, but also to protect and insulate their culture (MacCannell, 1973). When local culture becomes a commodity, which is used to market and develop tourism, it is believed that this commodification changes the original meaning of cultural products and human relations and therefore destroys one form of traditional (objective) authenticity.

Looking at staged authenticity from the objective modernist view, where tourists are seeking the authenticity of the originals, these tourism experiences cannot be called authentic even though the tourists might think they did have an authentic experience. Staged-authenticity is often referred to as something negative where the tourists are the victim (MacCannell, 1973). Yet when tourists have the feeling they had an authentic experience, we may wonder whether staged authenticity is a bad thing? Objectively this may be the case according to the expert. But symbolically this remains questionable.

A constructivist perspective relatedly observes authenticity as something that is socially constructed, is either social or personal, therefore unfixed, subjective, relative and variable, and also takes the tourist point of view into account:

the experience of authenticity is pluralistic, relative to each tourist type who may have their own way of definition, experience, and interpretation of authenticity [. . .] if mass tourists empathically experience the toured objects as authentic, then, their viewpoints are real in their own right, no matter whether experts may propose an opposite view from an objective perspective. (Wang, 1999, p. 355) .

In the eyes of constructivists, culture is always in process and therefore there cannot be an absolute or static original or origin, nor a fixed objective reality to which people can appeal; authenticity can instead become negotiated, something that is socially constructed in an emerging process (Wang, 1999). Hence, something that is initially seen as inauthentic can become 'authentic' over time. Tourism marketing also plays a role within creating the image of authenticity, because often what is promoted becomes authentic since this is the image they create for tourists, while what is not promoted is assumed to be not authentic and not worth visiting (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). As Wang (1999) states: "authenticity is thus a projection of tourists' own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images, and consciousness onto toured objects, particularly onto toured Others" (p.355).

From a postmodern point of view, the perspective of existential authenticity, a tourist can still have an authentic experience in staged experiences when they feel it is authentic. Inauthenticity does not have to be a problem when tourists experience an authentic experience according to themselves. As long as the tourists enjoy themselves, the tourism product can transform because of commoditization but by maintaining characteristics that satisfies them, the product remains authentic in their eyes (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). The concept of authenticity of the original is not central within this perspective. According to a postmodern point of view tourists either think authenticity is irrelevant because they do not value it or are suspicious of the construction of the concept since it is often used for commercial purposes. Tourists seek their authentic selves and therefore it is less relevant if the toured objects are authentic or not (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Besides, the postmodern tourist is more aware of the impact of tourism on host communities and its sometimes fragile environments and cultures, therefore staged authenticity helps to protect toured culture and communities as it acts as a substitute for the original and commoditization may change or add new meanings to cultural products (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). Nevertheless, this does not mean that commoditization and commercialism cannot lead to disintegration of local cultures and change the meanings of cultural products and practices in such a way that it becomes meaningless and does not represent the local culture anymore and traditions are lost. But in the eyes of the postmodern tourist, it is all about the personal authentic experience, therefore staged authenticity

does not have to be an issue: “authenticity rests in selective perception that entails selective memory [. . .] a cultural product may be recognized as inauthentic or authentic depending on the type of experiences desired by tourists” (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). In the context of food tourism this could mean that a food tourist who identifies itself as a true foodie seeking the original authentic food experience seeks authenticity more seriously than a tourist who just wants to experience nice food on his/her holiday and learn something about the culture while consuming it.

In the rationalist tradition [. . .] authenticity or truth is still determined by how closely something resembles people’s idea of it. For village life to be authentic, it must resemble people’s idea of it. For a ritual to be authentic, it must accord with how one thinks such a ritual would be conducted. Tourists have preconceived notions about sites they are going to visit, or tour guides or previous tourists tell them what to expect [. . .] if tourist do not expect a teenager in a remote Indonesian village to be wearing a Walkman, encountering such a teenager may lead them to regret having missed out on an authentic experience of village life. If they expect island locals to greet guests with dancing girls and leis of fragrant flowers, they are likely to experience such an authentic welcome even when the greeters are paid performers who cannot stand tourists. (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p. 75)

On the other hand, the different types of authenticity do not exclude each other. Objective authenticity and existential authenticity can both be sought by tourists in their holidays, it depends on what the tourist is looking for in a holiday: experiencing untouched, real, genuine tourism products or looking for an authentic experience by just being in another environment experiencing non-ordinary activities (Sims, 2009). Or as said by Timothy and Ron (2013, p. 102): “authenticity lies in the eye of the beholder”.

---

#### AUTHENTICITY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD TOURISM

The different types of authenticity (objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity) can be applied to food tourism.

When it comes to *objective authenticity* it can be applied (and is applied by some) on food tourism resources, nevertheless it is hard to apply this form of authenticity since cuisines and cultural heritage are fluid and evolve over time, as discussed before. Trying to use absolute and objective criteria on culinary heritage is a difficult task, because who decides what is the original and what is authentic local food? Avieli (2013) studied the concept of local food in Hoi An, Vietnam, and as it turns out many of the dishes that are sold to tourists as ‘local food’ are often adapted and simplified. These dishes do not have their origin in Vietnam, but in China and are not considered as local food by locals. Tourists seeking objective authenticity in Hoi An by consuming local food in tourism-oriented restaurants often experience invented heritage and these restaurants are involved in staging objective authenticity, in staging expectations of their food culture as a commodity.

*Constructive authenticity* can also be applied to food tourism, from the tourist point of view and from the experts point of view. According to Sims (2009) tourists socially construct authenticity of local food and place in three different ways: a food related experience is often considered authentic if it corresponds with the image they created about what a typical food experience for that place (destination) should look like, a food experience seems more authentic when it takes place in a sympathetic surrounding environment, and when the food related experience has some elements of tradition or naturalness. Often tourists who have a constructive understanding of authenticity will look for food related experiences that are related to the landscape (*terroir*), culture and heritage of a destination.

Many places claim to sell ‘authentic’ food and many food tourists seek ‘the authentic culinary experience’ looking to experience the national cuisine of a destination. The dishes that are seen as culinary heritage and national cuisines are constructed as such, as a result of social construction: “national cuisines are often

more imagined or invented than real” (Henderson, 2014, p. 906). These ‘imagined’ socially constructed cuisines are often what food tourists are looking to experience while visiting food tourism destinations in a quest for an authentic culinary experience. What is experienced as authentic by some, can be experienced by others as inauthentic.

*Existential authenticity* can also play a role in the search for authentic experiences by food tourists. As discussed before, authenticity of the object does not matter in this form of authenticity, but the tourism experience is central; “the enjoyment of the meal is less about the food being consumed and more about the feelings provoked in the individual” (Sims, 2009, p. 332). By participating in non-ordinary activities (for example eating street food or trying new dishes, flavours or products) the tourist has the experience of an authentic experience and can develop an authentic sense of self– even though they might not consume a dish that is seen as truly (objective) authentic by others; “tourists may have their own ideas about what a “typical” food experience of that place might look like, and anything that fits this image – including the setting, the ambience and the food itself – is more likely to be identified as “authentic” (Sims, 2009, p. 329).

---

#### SUB-CONCLUSION

In context of (food) tourism, the different understandings of authenticity can coexist and it depends on the understanding of authenticity by tourists what they are looking for in food tourism experiences. Walter (2017) even states that within one food tourism experience, for example a cooking class with a visit to a marketplace, tourists may experience the three different types of authenticity at once. Therefore, it is too vague to state that food tourists are looking for authentic experiences, which also means that the understanding of authenticity by actors involved in food tourism development of a destination is central to the food tourism pathway of a destination. In the scope of this study it is interesting to analyse which types of authenticity are used at both destinations, George Town and Ipoh, since the dominant form of authenticity in the discourse determines to a certain extent how authenticity is used, or not used, in the development of tourism and also what role authenticity plays in conservation and protection of culinary heritage.

## 2.4 OVERVIEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 gives an overview of the conceptual framework for this study and shows the relationships of the three different concepts of this conceptual framework to each other in the context of food tourism development. The two different heritage discourses explored in this conceptual framework (AHD and HFB) define how culinary heritage is identified, but at the same time also define which type of authenticity (objective, constructive or existential) is central in identifying culinary heritage. Culinary heritage, defined by heritage discourses and judged by authenticity, is central in food tourism development. The search of authenticity by tourists plays a role in food tourism development next to culinary heritage and this study analyses the role of authenticity in food tourism development at the two case sites of this study.

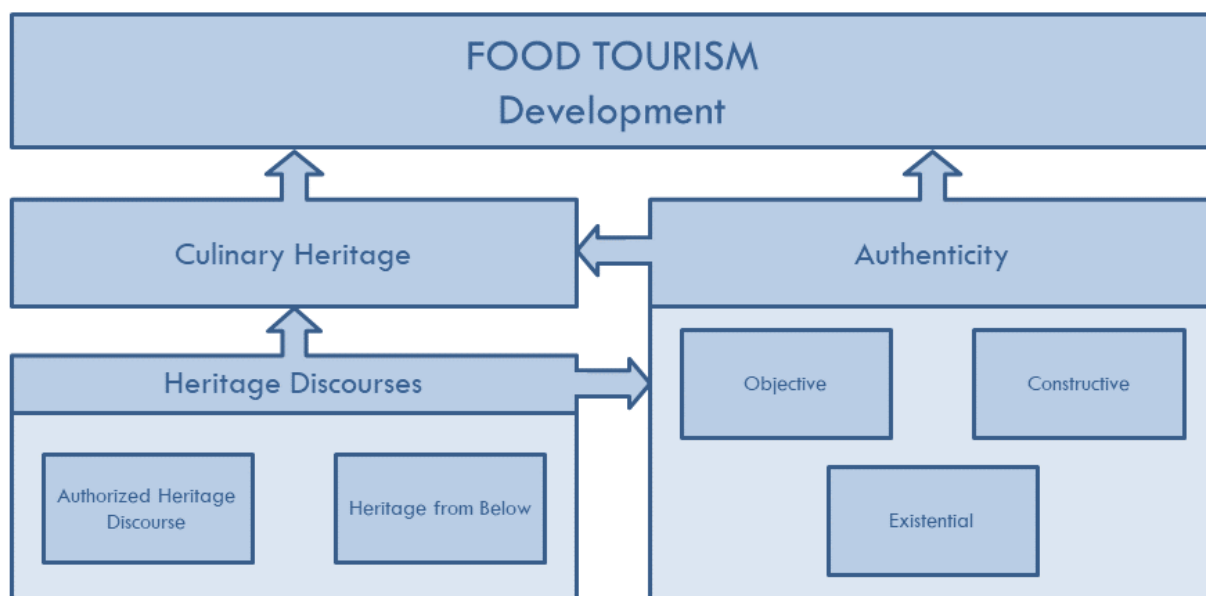


Figure 1 Visual overview conceptual framework

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to be able to answer the research questions of this study, qualitative research have been conducted, since qualitative research is about “understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social worlds” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 3). The ontology of this study is *idealism*, meaning that there is not such a thing as one external reality, but there can be multiple realities knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Since this study evolves around the concepts of discourse, heritage and authenticity, which are socially constructed concepts, understanding the meanings which people attach to this within their social worlds (discourse) is crucial to be able to answer the research questions. By doing this study the aim was to explore the different meanings people attach to heritage and authenticity and the knowledge around these concepts. Meanings are a product of time and place (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) and this case study can shed light on the differences in meanings attached to heritage and authenticity at two different places in Malaysia.

#### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research plan is a *logical plan for getting from here to there*, where *here* may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and *there* is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions. Between ‘here’ and ‘there’ may be found a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of relevant data. (Yin, 2003, p. 20)

The methodology chosen for this study was an exploratory multiple case study, with George Town and Ipoh as the two case sites. As stated by Yin (2003), when doing a multiple-case study “every case should serve a specific purpose within the overall scope of inquiry” (2003, p. 47). By studying the two case sites, George Town and Ipoh, the concept of authenticity in the context of food tourism and unique food tourism pathways was further explored and multiple perspectives compared. George Town and Ipoh were selected as the two case sites as the context of both sites, especially the food tourism development order, differs and therefore contrasting results were predicted.

Ipoh was in 2015 a city that looked into developing further as a (food) tourism destination and attracting more incoming tourists in order to gain economic benefits. Where Ipoh was an upcoming food tourism destination, George Town was an established tourism destination further down the road of development and already a well-known food tourism destination. George Town was a good case study to be able to look at how a food tourism destination that is further developed, attracting domestic and international visitors, and worldwide known for the great ‘authentic’ (street) food was developing its food tourism and. By comparing the results of both case studies, this study is able to give an insight in what role heritage and authenticity play in the context of food tourism and its corresponding challenges. The local context of both places, since even though the cities are both situated in Malaysia and pre-dominantly Chinese is very different. The local context was an important aspect to take into account in this comparative research: “no two places are likely to sort out their strategies, use their resources, define their products, or implement their plans in the same way. Places differ in their histories, cultures, politics, leadership, and particular ways of managing public and private relationships” (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1996, p. 20). The aim of this study was not to look for direct replication of theoretical replication, but to do an exploratory study at two destinations with contrasting situations.

The conceptual framework is the foundation for the studied concepts, culinary heritage and authenticity in the context of the food tourism pathways of both destinations. The concept of food tourism destinations orders and the role of authenticity in these orders, were the main reasons why George Town and Ipoh have been chosen for this multiple-case study. George Town is already a well-known food tourism destination where Ipoh is an upcoming food tourism destination and both destinations are therefore in a different food tourism development order. This study has a holistic multiple-case design as defined by

Yin (2003, p. 40), where the two individual cases have a holistic approach and have both one unit of analysis: the case site as a food tourism destination with its corresponding discourses around heritage and authenticity.

In order to be able to answer the research questions formulated in section 1.3, qualitative research was conducted with a specific focus on discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is part of *phenomenology* - a qualitative research tradition with a focus on understanding the 'constructs' people use in everyday life to make sense of their world and uncovering meanings contained to these constructs (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 12). The focus of discourse analysis is on the use of languages in texts and its contextual meaning: "examining the way knowledge is produced within different discourses and the performances, linguistic styles and rhetorical devices used in particular accounts" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 12). Basically, discourse analysis explores how language and language use is linked to social phenomena and is often used to explore social phenomena *beyond the individual person*, as language is often considered inseparable from its social context. One aspect often studied with discourse analysis is the difference in how people linked to social categories speak and/or write and how knowledge is created in this way; "our knowledge of the world is based on 'understanding' which arises from thinking about what happens to us, not just simply from having had particular experience" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 6). The premise of discourse analysis is that there are multiple versions of reality and that therefore the same concept can be, and often is, described in many ways. With discourse analysis the aim is not to check the truth, but trying to understand how the multiple realities are constructed (Taylor, 2013). As shown in the conceptual framework, the concepts of heritage and authenticity are socially constructed and different discourses can be identified. Discourse analysis can give insights in the different discourses around heritage and authenticity in the two different case studies.

### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection for this study took place over a period of seven weeks in May and June of 2015. The following data collection methods were conducted in order to be able to generate enough language material to conduct discourse analysis, but also to fully understand the context of food tourism in both case studies:

1. Inventory of current food tourism resources in George Town and Ipoh
2. Participatory observation of George Town and Ipoh as a food tourism destination
3. Interviews with local actors
4. Focus group with different actors in Ipoh

In the following sections the different data generation methods and how the data was gathered will be elaborated on.

---

#### INVENTORY OF CURRENT FOOD TOURISM RESOURCES IN GEORGE TOWN AND IPOH

With the use of the typologies of food tourism resources by Smith and Xiao (2008), the current food tourism resources and tourism development stages according to Hjalager (2002) in both George Town and Ipoh have been analysed. The inventory was done with the use of content analysis and direct observation. As a starting point I have been searching on the Internet for food tourism resources in George Town and Ipoh according the typology of Smith & Xiao (2008). Because of the possibility that not all resources could be found online and because of the language barriers (some information was only available in local languages) all the interviewees were asked in the interview to describe the current food tourism resources in George Town and Ipoh and give their perspective about the current situation. The current (offline) promotional material available in George Town and Ipoh were analysed to see what kind of resources were promoted.

I chose to do an inventory of the current food tourism resources, because they are crucial for the development of food tourism (Horng & Tsai, 2012), but also because the inventory functioned as a starting point to analyse the differences and the different food tourism development stages of both George Town and Ipoh.

---

#### PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATION OF GEORGE TOWN AND IPOH AS A FOOD TOURISM DESTINATION

As part of understanding and exploring the social world from the perspective of the researcher, part of the research was spending two months in Malaysia, not only to conduct interviews and generate data but also to experience both places as an international tourist and to conduct participant observation. The participant observation was conducted in an informal way and where possible I participated in food tourism activities such as food tours and cooking workshops.

In Ipoh this resulted in doing a half day food tour with a local guide, showing me around Old Town and the Buntong community. The guide was interviewed at the same time. In Ipoh this half day food tour was the only official food tourism product that I was able to experience, but I was also taken around by locals to experience the Ipoh food and the city from their perspective. In George Town I participated in a popular local cooking class, which gave me the opportunity to experience one of the food tourism resources in George Town. During my stay in George Town, the Penang Heritage Trust – a local heritage group, organised a lecture and panel discussion on Penang Food Traditions. Since the lecture and panel discussion was in line with my study, I attended the event and audio-taped it, so I was able to afterwards transcribe and analyse the discussion. The last part of the participant observation in George Town was that I stayed in the major international tourist area of the city – the Chulia Lane area, befriending other travellers, which gave me the opportunity to observe international tourists while I was part of their days in George Town. This was done by hanging out and eating with international tourists and foodies without explicitly interviewing them. Just being part of the local travel scene gave insights in how international visitors experience George Town as a food tourism destination and also what role heritage and authenticity plays in their decision making.

---

#### INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL ACTORS

For this study I chose to do a combination of semi-structured and open interviews with local actors in George Town and Ipoh. In order to get an overview of the different discourses, local actors with different relations to (food) tourism were selected to talk freely about heritage and authenticity in the context of food tourism. The local actors selected for this study were for both case studies: destination marketing organisations (DMOs), policy makers/government, people part of the tourism industry, local residents, domestic tourists, and international tourists.

In total 18 interviews have been conducted with 21 people (a few interviews where with two people at the same time). The 18 interviews were all face-to-face and the duration of an interview was on average around 60 minutes. The shortest interview took 30 minutes and the longest interview took 1 hour and 50 minutes. In table 2 an overview of the background of the interviewees, and the labels given to them during data analysis, in both George Town and Ipoh can be found. All the interviewees were in some way involved in food tourism in both places or were eager on sharing their opinions on food tourism and development strategies.

Table 2 Background interviewees George Town and Ipoh

| George Town                                     | Ipoh  |
|---|---|
| State Tourism EXCO Penang (DAP)                 | State Tourism EXCO Perak (BN)                   |
| <i>State government representative Penang</i>   | <i>State government representative Ipoh</i>     |
| Penang Global Tourism (DMO)                     | Tourism Perak (DMO)                             |
| <i>Tourism officials Penang</i>                 | <i>Tourism official Ipoh</i>                    |
| Festival Director George Town                   | State Assembly Community Representative (DAP)   |
| <i>Festival Director George Town</i>            | <i>Community representative Ipoh</i>            |
| Executive Director Penang Institute (DAP)       | Local foodie/domestic traveller/business woman  |
| <i>Think Tank Penang</i>                        | <i>Local foodie Ipoh</i>                        |
| Local council member (DAP)                      | Local Ipoh blogger                              |
| <i>Local council member Penang</i>              | <i>Local blogger Ipoh</i>                       |
| Owner cooking classes                           | Producer promotion videos Ipoh                  |
| <i>Cooking class owner George Town</i>          | <i>Video-producer Ipoh</i>                      |
| Researcher on conservation of heritage cuisine  | Local resident                                  |
| <i>Researcher culinary heritage George Town</i> | <i>Local resident Ipoh</i>                      |
| American food writer and food tour guide        | Journalist                                      |
| <i>Tourist guide George Town 1</i>              | <i>Journalist Ipoh</i>                          |
| Local food tour driver                          | Local tourist guide                             |
| <i>Tourist guide George Town 2</i>              | <i>Tourist guide Ipoh</i>                       |
| International traveller and chef                | International traveller of George Town and Ipoh |
| <i>International traveller 1</i>                | <i>International traveller 2</i>                |

The aim of this study was to explore the different discourses around heritage and authenticity in the context of food tourism. The mix of semi-structured and open interviews was chosen, because semi-structured interviews provide greater structure for comparability than focused interviews, but can still determine multiple realities. While open interviews have an open-end character and the interviewee is freer to talk about the topic in comparison with semi-structured interviews which can give a more in-depth insight of the understanding and meanings of the different discourses.

I chose to do semi-structured interviews with the expert actors, DMOs, and policy makers, in order to be able to compare the different policies regarding food tourism development in both destinations. The semi-structured interviews were more guided conversations than structured queries (Yin, 2003) and therefore during these semi-structured interviews there was room for the interviewees to express their own concerns and thoughts on the interview themes while still following a certain set of questions. In this way I was able to identify which of the interview themes held more importance to the interviewees and where these fitted within the different discourses around heritage and authenticity in the context of food tourism.

Unstructured interviews have an open-end character and I chose to do this type of interviewing with local tourism business owners, international tourists, domestic tourists, and local residents. The aim of these interviews was to get insight in the overall discourses around heritage and authenticity in the context of food tourism, instead of in the different policies regarding (food) tourism development with the semi-structured interviews. In an open interview the interviewee is freer to talk about the topic and direct where the interview is going in comparison with semi-structured interviews. Interviewees can answer the questions within their own frame of reference, can reveal their concerns about a certain topic and give an understanding of the meaning that they attach to for example certain events, relationships and constructs. An unstructured interview can also give a greater understanding of the subject's point of view and elicit understanding of the perspective of the interviewee (May, 1997). The aim of these unstructured interviews was to explore the discourses around heritage and authenticity in the context of food tourism with non-elite actors (the non-expert actors).

Thematic guides were developed for both the semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Nevertheless, the story of the interviewee, especially within the unstructured interviews with local tourism business owners, tourists, and local residents, is probably even more valuable than just the answers to the questions. The interest is in what the interviewees want to share, what the important issues are in their eyes, their



concerns and their perception on food tourism and authenticity of culinary heritage. The thematic guide for the semi-structured interviews was focused on the practical, strategical, and political side of food tourism, while the thematic guide for the unstructured interviews was more focused on the overall concepts of the literature review, see table 3 and 4. The overall concepts were also important in the semi-structured interviews, but the main difference was the structure of the interviews. The interviews were taped with a voice recorder, unless the interviewee did not want to be recorded, and transcribed after. The generated data was handled anonymously due to possible sensitive issues/interests, allowing respondents to speak freely.

Table 3 Thematic guide semi-structured interviews DMOs and policy makers

| Thematic guide semi - structured interviews with DMOs and policy makers |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Current situation</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current situation</li> <li>- Numbers of tourists</li> <li>- Food tourism resources</li> <li>- Current strategies</li> <li>- Differentiation destination</li> </ul> |
| <b>Goals</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall goals</li> <li>- Vision</li> <li>- Development</li> <li>- Problems</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Marketing</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Image</li> <li>- Unique selling points</li> <li>- Food Tourism promotion programs</li> <li>- Food Tourism marketing strategy</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>Future</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plans</li> <li>- Suitable strategies</li> <li>- Improve attractiveness</li> </ul>  |

Table 4 Thematic guide unstructured interviews

| Thematic guide unstructured interviews |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Foodways</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local cuisine</li> <li>- Culinary heritage</li> <li>- Distribution of cuisines</li> <li>- Recommended/popular places</li> <li>- What makes the destination interesting</li> <li>- Differentiation destination</li> <li>- Authenticity</li> </ul> |
| <b>Place image and identity</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Description destination</li> <li>- Current image</li> <li>- Desired image</li> <li>- Attractiveness destination</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Food tourism resources</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current offered food tourism resources</li> <li>- Improvements</li> <li>- Missing food tourism resources</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Food promotion</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategies</li> <li>- How should it be done</li> <li>- Focus</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Food tourism development</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems</li> <li>- Strategies</li> </ul>  |

It should be noted that the thematic guides were developed during my proposal, when this study was more focused on food tourism marketing and different food tourism development strategies. The focus and aim of this study has changed a couple of times to find the right angle to give the study academic relevance, resulting in the research design discussed in the previous section. Since the interview data was generated through semi-structured and unstructured interviews a lot of data was generated which could be reinterpreted by doing discourse analysis focusing on the concepts of culinary heritage and authenticity.

---

#### FOCUS GROUP WITH DIFFERENT ACTORS IN IPOH

At the end of my stay in Ipoh I was able to organise a focus group with different actors in tourism in Ipoh. This focus group was conducted to get a further understanding of the different perspectives on food tourism development and the corresponding discourses of different players in the tourism industry in Ipoh. A focus group is an opportunity “to explore how people think and talk about a topic, how their ideas are shaped, generated or moderated through conversation with others” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 37). The first aim of the focus group was to let the participants give their perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of Ipoh as a tourism destination and the unique selling points in order to get a better understanding of their perspectives. The other aim of the focus group was to be able to observe the interaction between group members during the discussion in order to be able to get a further insight in the discourses at play; “questioning, clarifying, challenging and discussing their positions in regard to the focus of the discussion [can add richness to the data collected]. Interactions between participants are important, because such interactions can cause a participant to reflect and further clarify their position” (Jennings, 2001, p. 172).

Another advantage of a focus group over interviews is that it is closer to everyday conversation, and therefore includes a range of communicative processes: storytelling, joking, arguing, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge, and disagreement (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 180). According to Wilkinson (2004) in a group participants are not inhibited about sharing and exploring sudden sensitive topics, and the context of a group may even facilitate personal revelations. On the other hand, participants do not always agree and try to convince the other, but this is also effective in provoking the development and elaboration of topics.

The participants were free to add any subject they wanted to talk about regarding (food) tourism. Because of the open character of the focus group and the freedom for the participants to talk about what they thought was necessary, the participants were able to follow their own agendas and talk about what is important in this matter for them. Another benefit of a focus group can be that phenomena or topics come up that the researcher did not give attention to before, or was not aware of the applicability of it for the study, but is significant for the participants (Wilkinson, 2004). After every participant gave his or her perspective there was an informal discussion about what should or should not be done to overcome the challenges Ipoh is facing at the moment relative to tourism development. The focus group lasted for two hours.

The participants of the focus group were selected on the basis of interest in the topic of food tourism and/or the involvement in the tourism industry in Ipoh. The aim was to select a group of people with different backgrounds on the basis of involvement in the tourism industry in Ipoh or with an opinion about food tourism development in Ipoh. NGOs, local tourism business and property owners, local entrepreneurs, social influencers, local residents and journalists were invited to join the focus group. One of the requirements was that the participant was able to speak English, so I was also able to understand what was said. The invitation and background information of the focus group, ‘*Forum on Food, Festivals and Tastebud Tickling Tourism*’, can be found in Appendix 1.

Not all invitees were able to join the forum, but in the end seven participants participated and there was an assistant present to videotape the focus group. All participants, besides me, were local inhabitants of Ipoh at the time. Table 5 gives an overview of the background of the participants of the focus group in Ipoh, including the labels given to them for data analysis.

Table 5 Background participants focus group Ipoh

| Participants Forum Food Tourism Ipoh                                       |
|--|
| State legislative Assembly Representative Pasir Pinji and chef – moderator |
| <i>Political community representative Ipoh</i>                             |
| Dutch researcher – assistant moderator                                     |
| Ipoh local   |
| <i>Ipoh local</i>  |
| Gopeng community representative  |
| <i>Representative local community Ipoh</i>                                 |
| Homestay owner Ipoh  |
| <i>Owner tourism facility Ipoh 1</i>                                       |
| Local food photographer and entrepreneur                                   |
| <i>Local entrepreneur Ipoh</i>   |
| Representative Ipoh City Watch ‘making Ipoh the most liveable city’        |
| <i>NGO Ipoh</i>  |
| Owner Ipoh World   |
| <i>Owner tourism Ipoh facility 2</i>                                       |
| Founder of Facebook page and blog All About Ipoh                           |
| <i>Ipoh blogger</i>  |
| Heritage property owner  |
| Owner tourism facility Ipoh 3  |
| <i>Journalist Ipoh Daily</i>   |
| <i>Journalist Ipoh</i>   |

The moderator, who posed the questions, kept the discussion going, and encouraged all the participants to participate fully in the discussion (Wilkinson, 2004), was in this focus group not the researcher, but the representative of a community in Ipoh. There were several reasons for the decision to let somebody else than the researcher to be the moderator. First of all, I was not feeling well the day of the focus group. Second, the community representative had comprehensive experience of moderating group discussions, knowledge of group dynamics in Malaysia (Wilkinson, 2004), and if necessary he could act as interpreter if a participant could not express himself in English. A danger of this arrangement was that, because of the political background of the moderator, the discussion could have been steered into a political direction instead of my original aim of the focus group. To overcome this possibility, I acted as assistant moderator and could intervene if necessary. The weaknesses of a focus group can be that participants do not feel free to talk about certain subjects, get upset or angry when they do not feel heard, or censoring when the norm of the group is not to talk or mention certain topics, and confirming, agreeing with the dominant opinion of the group (Boeije, 2010). As assistant moderator I tried to make everybody feel comfortable in this group and focus group context and made sure that the moderator was aware of the group dynamics going on during the discussion, but I also made sure there was room for discussion on the topics between the participants.

### 3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with the data, you *describe*, create *explanations*, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so, you must *categorize*, *synthesize*, *search for patterns*, and *interpret* the data you have collected. (Glesne, 1999, p. 130)

The different research methods used to generate data for this research gave a lot of input. The interviews were audio-recorded, the focus group was video-taped, the lecture and panel discussion by Penang Heritage Trust was audio-recorded and afterwards they have all been literally transcribed (Wilkinson, 2004). As Yin (2003) points out much of the data analysis depends on “an investigator’s own style of rigorous thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations” (p.110); therefore I made sure that the notes I took, during and straight after the interviews, on my immediate thoughts and interesting outcomes were all well documented in order to be able to include my first thoughts and rigorous thinking in the data analysis and could also reflect on

my first thoughts after the data analysis. During the data analysis I kept the four principles of good social science research according to Yin (2003) in mind:

1. Analysis should show *all the evidence*
2. Analysis should address *all major rival interpretations*
3. Analysis should address *the most significant aspect of your case study*
4. Use your own *prior, expert knowledge* in your case study

The coding of all the data consisted out of three different phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The first phase of data analysis was segmenting the data with open coding into meaningful parts, this was done using the following seven steps of open coding see table 6 (Boeije, 2010):

**Table 6** Seven steps of open coding

|  |
|--|
| 1. Read all the data   |
| 2. Re-read the data line by line   |
| 3. Determine the beginning and end of a fragment and if it is a meaningful whole |
| 4. Judge the relevance of the fragment for your research                         |
| 5. Assign a code to the fragment   |
| 6. Read the rest of the data, coding all relevant fragments                      |
| 7. Assign a code to each category  |

I went through all the interview transcriptions, the forum transcriptions, the lecture and panel discussion transcriptions and the answers to the questionnaire multiple times and highlighted plus coded most of the fragments, looking for reoccurring themes and contradicting opinions on the same subject. The coding and development of themes came from the content of the data. I looked at the data to see what themes occurred, of course the conceptual framework was in the back of my mind, but in this first round the approach was inductive coding. *Axial* coding was done after I finished the phase of *open* coding. Reorganising and reducing the data set by describing the categories and relating categories to sub-categories, putting the data back together in new ways. I looked for re-occurring themes, determined the relevance of these themes, and allocated more abstract codes and sub-codes to them, which resulted in a list of categories and its corresponding codes and sub-codes. The last phase of coding, *selective* coding, was done after the categories were described and distinctions were made between categories, codes and sub-codes. No core-category was selected in the last phase, but after reassembling the data I chose to work with four main categories. Table 7 gives an overview of the code tree that came from the analysis of the data.

**Table 7** Code tree of the analysis

| Category                     | Codes           | Sub-codes                  |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Tourism</b>               | Tourism general | Tourism development        |
|                              |                 | Tourism attractions        |
|                              | Food tourism    | Food tourism development   |
|                              |                 | Food tourism attractions   |
|                              |                 | Food tourism resources     |
| <b>Destination (GT/lpoh)</b> | General         | Food tourism experience    |
|                              |                 | History                    |
|                              |                 | Image                      |
|                              |                 | Geographic division        |
|                              |                 | Ethnicities/clans/dialects |
|                              |                 | Policies (politics)        |
|                              |                 | Regulation                 |
|                              |                 | Local culture              |

|                     |                     |   |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|
|                     | Tourism destination | (food) tourism destination image                    |
|                     |                     | Unique selling points                               |
|                     |                     | Strengths   |
|                     |                     | Weaknesses/problems                                 |
|                     |                     | Strategies/plans                                    |
|                     |                     | Solutions/opportunities/improvements                |
| <b>Food</b>         | Food in Malaysia    | Fusion/plurality                                    |
|                     |                     | Chinese/Malay/Indian/Others                         |
|                     |                     | Variety eateries (street food, restaurants/cottage) |
|                     | Culinary heritage   | Heritage dishes                                     |
|                     |                     | Heritage practices                                  |
|                     |                     | Ethnic cuisines                                     |
|                     |                     | Terroir culinary heritage                           |
|                     |                     | Local adaption/influences                           |
|                     |                     | New food developments                               |
| <b>Authenticity</b> | Authenticity        | Conservation  |
|                     |                     | Preservation  |
|                     |                     | Commercialization                                   |
|                     |                     | Specification                                       |
|                     |                     | Traditional   |
|                     |                     | Quality   |
|                     |                     | Local beliefs                                       |
|                     |                     | Challenges  |
|                     |                     | Loss of authenticity                                |
|                     |                     | UNESCO  |

### 3.4 POSITIONING

#### ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Neutrality and objectivity are often aspects to strive for within research, but within qualitative social research with an interpretivist stance you can never accomplish this completely (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In order to be as objective as possible when it comes to collection, interpretation and presentation of qualitative research, potential biases need to be identified.

Within qualitative research it is always important to be aware of the possible influence of the researcher on the outcomes of the research. During the interviews and the focus group, the researcher can unintentionally influence the answers of the interviewees/participants. In the case of this study I had to be conscious of the fact that I was a white female from Europe conducting research in Malaysia and that this could affect the way the interviewees perceived me. I made sure that the interviewees felt comfortable talking to me and ensuring them that what they told me was in confidence, because participants may be reluctant to share sensitive information or thoughts on sensitive topics, which can lead to incomplete results. I also tried to minimize the impact of my presence on the views of the interviewees by using open, non-leading questioning techniques. My aim was to be a researcher taking research ethics into account; “the ethical researcher creates a mutually respectful, win-win relationship with the research population; this is a relationship in which subjects are pleased to participate candidly, and the community at large regards the conclusions as constructive” (Sieber, 1992, p. 3).

Nevertheless, as a researcher I could have unintentionally influenced the interviews and focus group with my presence. I also selected what I thought were interesting participants and observed what I thought was useful for this study which can lead to researcher bias. Besides, I was a participant of the field of study in Malaysia; I was an international visitor living (and eating!) in George Town and Ipoh during the

interviews, which means that it is possible that I influenced the respondents answers unintentionally. However, I tried to be as objective as possible to limit the researcher bias. I chose explicitly to only do interviews with people who were able to speak English or were able to express themselves to a certain extent in English, so I was able to do the interviews myself and did not have to rely on an interpreter.

Next to the influence that I could have had as a researcher, I also had to be aware of my own objectivity interpreting the findings of this study. During the seven weeks that I stayed in Malaysia and generated the data for this study, I spent a lot of time with people from the Democratic Action Party in both George Town and Ipoh because of the gatekeeper I used. Since I spent time with these people in formal interview setting, but also in informal settings (during my stay in Ipoh I stayed at a member of DAP) this could have influenced how I have interpreted the findings and could have steered the direction of my research unintentionally. The aim of this study, as mentioned before, was not to check the truth, but trying to understand the multiple realities that are constructed through discourse. Therefore, I had to be aware to not judge the different discourses, but to observe them as an outsider.

As a researcher I was responsible for the choices that I made and had to be reflexive during the research of the methods that I used and adjust them where necessary.

---

#### SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Purposive sampling was used to select the interviewees who could purposefully inform and possibly give understanding (Creswell, 2012) of food tourism development and the role of authenticity in George Town and Ipoh. The participants of the interviews and focus group have been purposely selected according to the needs of this study, on the basis of their knowledge, involvement, passion, or just simply having an opinion about food tourism in George Town and Ipoh. The aim was to find participants for each of the groups of local actors, see table 2. This resulted, as described above, in participants with different backgrounds, see table 2 and 5.

The selective procedure of participants was a mix between arranging and looking for interesting interviewees myself, and the state legislative assembly representative of Pasir Pinji located in Ipoh who functioned as a gatekeeper in Malaysia selecting interesting participants and arranging interviews. The gatekeeper mainly helped with the arrangement of interviews with participants with a political background, in both George Town and Ipoh. The gatekeeper had easy access to these people in his broad social network. The benefits of this arrangement were that it was less time-consuming, especially in Ipoh, and easier to arrange meetings with tourism officials. Because of the broad social network, the gatekeeper suggested interviews with certain people. I preferred to arrange the interviews myself with the suggested participants, but in some cases with tourism officials it was only possible to arrange meetings with them through the gatekeeper.

A disadvantage of working with this gatekeeper was that, because of the political background of the gatekeeper, I potentially would only speak with likeminded people of the gatekeeper and this was the opposite of what I was looking for. I wanted to get insight in different perspectives and discourses of different actors in the field of food tourism. Therefore, I looked critically at the suggested participants by the gatekeeper and decided whether they would be an asset for my study, and also looked for interesting participants myself to select of diverse group of participants, to get insight in their different perspectives on development of food tourism.

The network method was also used during the study as a way to select participant; during interviews it happened several times that the interviewees mentioned other actors and where possible I arranged interview with these actors too. For the focus group it was difficult to arrange the participants myself and I had to trust the social network and the capabilities of the gatekeeper to invite the right participants. Together with the gatekeeper I discussed what kind of participants I was looking for.

I tried to find the balance between arranging my own participants and finding them myself and making use of the social network of the gatekeeper and letting him arrange interviews if necessary. The key was to stay critical and reflexive about who to select as a participant and who not. I tried to keep control over what was arranged with the interviewees and how my study and the purposes of the interview were explained. Another disadvantage of working with a gatekeeper is that I did not always have the full control over what was arranged and how it was arranged. Nevertheless, the strategy of working with the gatekeeper was helpful. On my own it would not have been able, or it would have been really difficult or time consuming, to arrange interviews with some high placed political actors. In the end the sample size was 33 participants, representing the different actors of food tourism in George Town and Ipoh.

### 3.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Looking back at the execution of this study there have been multiple limitations and the methodology has changed during the study several times. As stated by many when it comes to qualitative research it is common and necessary to re-design the research design in order to be able to answer the research questions, it is a continuing process of reviewing decisions and approaches (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Yin, 2003).

This study started in March 2015 with the idea to study food tourism development and destination marketing in a comparative research, comparing George Town and Ipoh. While doing my fieldwork in Malaysia starting in the end of April 2015 until the end of June 2015 it became clear that I would be unable to answer the original research objective "How are food tourism resources in Ipoh and George Town used to attract tourists and how could local residents from different local communities benefit the most from food tourism?", because of a lack of access to data regarding local communities in both cities and local community leaders willing to speak to me. This meant that I had to change my research focus and decided to use all the data that I had collected to analyse the different discourses around heritage and authenticity in the context of food tourism.

Because of the change of focus of my study I have been looking for a long time to give my thesis a new academic purpose. It took me more than a year to find a new research objective that would give the research I conducted some academic relevance, but what also fitted my research data that I collected during my fieldwork in Malaysia.

It is hard to say if all this could have been avoided, but it would definitely have made the whole research process easier when I would have found the right research objective from the start. Having to change my research objective meant that I had to use the data that I collected but approaching it from a different angle. The data I had collected was focused on food tourism development and marketing purposes and not specified on authenticity of culinary heritage. Luckily enough, because I did a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews in Malaysia the concept of authenticity of culinary heritage came up in almost every interview and focus group, without me specifically asking about it. In this way I was able to analyse the discourses around heritage and authenticity in the context of food tourism. If I would have had this research objective from the start I could have more in depth and specified answers, but it is also interesting to analyse that multiple interviewees initiated these concepts while I did not ask about them which shows the importance of these concepts in relation to culinary heritage and authenticity for them.

The question remains if there is a perfect order to study both destinations in this comparative case-study. In this study Ipoh has been studied first and George Town afterwards, this had to do with practical matters. Nevertheless, I have wondered myself many times if it would have been different if I did my research the other way around. Starting in George Town and use my findings to guide my research in Ipoh.

Furthermore, there was definitely a language barrier every now and then; therefore, I chose to only interview respondents who spoke English. This could have influenced the reliability and validity of this study, since the Malaysian (in the broadest sense of the word: people living in Malaysia) perspective of the respondents could have been predominant, because it can be assumed that the people in Malaysia speaking English are higher educated. Another problem that came with not speaking Malay or any Chinese dialect, is that especially in Ipoh tourism information was not available in English. Therefore, I was limited in my sources sometimes in Ipoh. In George Town overall this problem did not occur and almost all information was (also) available in English.

And finally, due to various (personal) reasons it took me more than four years to finish this master thesis project. This makes that, for example, the inventory of the food tourism resources may be outdated. Nevertheless, the overall reoccurring themes in my findings are still applicable for both destinations and other emerging destinations that can learn from the food tourism practices and role that authenticity may play in such practices. On the other hand, it is truly amazing to observe how especially Ipoh has developed over the last two years since I have been there and how Tourism Perak started to include Ipoh in their promotion next to the development of a food trail. Ipoh starts to get some more attention and was even named in the top 10 best in Asia 2016 by the Lonely Planet and local tourism initiatives such as Ipoh Secret are coming up (including information available in English). I hope that somewhere in this process this thesis has made a contribution.



## 4. FINDINGS



Figure 2 Map of Malaysia. Retrieved from: Google Maps

In this study, two case studies have been conducted in order to compare the findings regarding discourses around authentic culinary heritage in both destinations. George Town, the capital of the state of Penang is a well-known and busy (food) tourism destination and often referred to as either the ‘City of Gastronomy’ (S. L. Khoo & Badaruzaman, 2014) or food capital of Malaysia. Ipoh, the capital of the state of Perak, is a food tourism destination barely known by international tourists, but known by domestic tourists primarily for their Chinese food and White Coffee. George Town and Ipoh are both situated on peninsular Malaysia, see figure 2. Ipoh is located approximately 200 kilometre north of Kuala Lumpur and 160 kilometre south of George Town.

This chapter will elaborate on the findings of the study. For both cases, George Town and Ipoh, the findings will first discuss the discourses and practices concerning the local culinary heritage and local food tourism pathways. This is followed by the findings regarding the role of authenticity in the development of culinary heritage and food tourism and related forms of dissonance.

### 4.1 GEORGE TOWN

George Town, the capital of the state of Penang situated on Penang Island, is a (food) tourism destination domestically and internationally known as the food, or culinary, capital of Malaysia and is specifically famous for its signature street food or hawker food. George Town has been known for its food in Singapore and neighbouring countries for a really long time, but was internationally acknowledged since 2008. For a lot of tourists – domestic and international, food is the main incentive to visit this place.

In the first part of this chapter the development of *culinary heritage* of George Town will be described with examples of heritage signature dishes and practises according to the different ethnic groups living in the city. Afterwards the *food tourism pathway* of George Town and the role of the culinary heritage will be discussed. This chapter will end with the discourses of *authenticity* in George Town and its *dissonances*.

---

#### THE CULINARY HERITAGE OF GEORGE TOWN

George Town has a rich culinary heritage which tells a story about the history of George Town and all the different people who have called the city home since the settlement of the former port town. Its culinary heritage is developed over time which will be chronologically described in the following section.

---

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULINARY HERITAGE IN GEORGE TOWN

George Town's rich culinary heritage is a reflection of its rich history since the settlement of the former port town and as the first British settlement in 1786 by Francis Light named after King George the fifth of England. As a former port town situated on a popular trading route for the Middle East, Europe, India and China, the town quickly became a melting pot of different cultures. The Bumiputera (Malay for son of soil), originally inhabiting Penang Island, were no longer the only inhabitants of the island and the city transformed over the years into **a cultural melting pot**. The Peranakan Chinese found their way to the island and settled in George Town and during British ruling many other nationalities became part of the city. The history of all the different cultures, people and religions settling in George Town is visible in the city through architecture, but also all the different food that can be found in the city clearly shows this history.

Penang's cultural melting pot is what makes it so fascinating. Different languages are spoken, foods eaten, religions observed, festivals celebrated, clothes worn and buildings erected. Many streets in George Town reflect this with the range of hawker foods being one of the most obvious signs. (Bowden, 2014, p. 13)

---

## HERITAGE DISHES AND CULINARY PRACTICES IN GEORGE TOWN

The **Peranakan Chinese**, descendants of interracial marriages between Malay women and Chinese men settled in Penang between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, found their way to George Town after settlement by Francis Light. Peranakan Chinese are also often referred to as *Strait Chinese*, coming from the fact that in the other former British Strait colonies (Singapore and Melaka), interracial marriages between Chinese men and Malay women were also common, or as *Baba Nyonya*. The Peranakan culture was a unique culture with its own traditional beliefs, clothing and cuisine. The cuisine of the Peranakan, called **the Nyonya cuisine**, reflects the interracial marriages and is a combination and/or interpretation of the Malay cuisine with cooking styles and use of ingredients from the Chinese region where the man originated from. The culinary heritage of the man was combined with the culinary heritage of the woman and a new cuisine and culinary heritage was formed.

The Nyonya cuisine of Penang differs from the Peranakan cuisines of Melaka and Singapore because of the local influence and is known for the use of Malay and Thai fragrant herbs and aromatic spices in Chinese style dishes. Tangy, aromatic, spicy and herbal are words often used to describe the Penang Nyonya cuisine.

Famous Nyonya cuisine dishes in George Town are **Assam Laksa** (one of the most famous dishes of George Town), **Nyonya Kuih** - which are bite-size sweets or desserts, and **Otak Otak** - steamed fish cakes. Laksa is a dish that can be found in almost every state of Malaysia in many different forms, but the Thai influence and the use of tamarind makes Assam Laksa a completely different dish compared to the rest of the country. Assam laksa is the interpretation of dish laksa from the Peranakan Chinese in George Town and is a spicy hot and sour fish soup poured over rice noodles, garnished with cucumber, lettuce, onions, pineapple, ginger torch flowers, chillies and mint.



Figure 3 From top to bottom:  
Assam Laksa, Nyonya Kuih, Otak  
Otak.  
All images retrieved from:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/travellingfoodies>

During British ruling workers from China, especially from the Fujian region (South-East China) were brought in to work in the tin mines. These workers brought their own culinary heritage with them moving to Malaysia. Recipes were adapted to locally available products and cooking methods. In this way new culinary heritage dishes were created with the use of ingredients available in Malaysia but still based on the original heritage recipes from China. Even though many heritage dishes that can now be found in George Town come originally from the Fujian region, there can be spoken about 'Chinese' dishes that are unique to George Town, because the dishes have been influenced by what was accessible and socio-economic factors. Food tells a story about historical pathways. The **Hokkien Chinese** is the biggest Chinese clan in George Town and therefore Penang Hokkien became the lingua franca<sup>1</sup> of George Town. Besides the Hokkien, the other Chinese dialects that are present in George Town are **Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka and Hainanese**. All the different clans have their own culinary heritage food which tells the story about how and when they came to Penang. The Hainanese for example were the last of the Chinese dialect groups to arrive in George Town and by that time most jobs were already taken, which resulted in the Hainanese men working as cooks and helpers for the British residing in George Town. The Hainanese men adopted some of the British recipes in their cuisine and dishes such as Hainanese Chicken Chop and Hainanese macaroni pie show the influence that the British had on their cooking. The Hainanese cuisine that can be found in George Town can be described as 'East meets West'. Many Chinese heritage dishes that can be found in George Town reflect the origin and history of all the different Chinese clans and dialects that migrated to the former port city for work and a better future.

**Char Koay Teow** is, next to Asam Laksa, one of the most popular signature dishes of George Town. The dish was originally invented for labourers as a cheap source of energy and nutrients and sold as hawker food by Teochew and Hokkien Chinese. Char Koay Teow can be translated as stir-fried flat rice noodles and is in Penang made with fresh prawns, cockles, fried lard cubes, chives, lap cheong (dried Chinese sausage), originally with a duck egg, but nowadays often replaced for chicken eggs. **Penang Hokkien Mee** is another famous Chinese heritage dish, which is a noodle soup made with a stock of prawn-heads and pork bones. The use of lots of fish in these dishes shows the accessibility of seafood on the island. Besides, a lot of Chinese worked as fisherman, so seafood was an affordable ingredient. **Chee Cheong Fun** (steamed rice noodle rolls served with a mix of chillies, shrimp paste, thick red sauce and sesame seeds with a sweet dark sauce made with shrimp paste) and **Oh Sien** (fried oyster omelette) are other Chinese style dishes considered culinary heritage of George Town.

Not only the Chinese found their way to George Town during British ruling, **Indian** people also settled in the city. Many Indian men actually came as convicts sent by the British to build public infrastructure, some left after completing their sentence but also many Indian convicts stayed in George Town. Other Indian



Figure 4 From top to bottom: Char Koay Teow, Penang Hokkien Mee, Chee Cheong Fun and Oh Sien. All images retrieved from: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/vkeong/>

<sup>1</sup> Lingua franca is a language that is adopted as the common language between people with a different native language.

migrants were either free settlers or came as indentured labour. George Town has a little India where many Indian culinary heritage dishes can be found.

**Nasi Kandar**, plain rice with different styles of curries made from local ingredients and various gravies, is an Indian style dish that tells a story about the origin of this dish which was originally sold by vendors or hawkers from a *kandar*. Nasi Kandar literally means 'rice that is carried on the shoulder' and was sold to Indian labourers working in the port who wanted a quick and cheap meal. Nowadays Nasi Kandar is one of the most popular Indian dishes in George Town, and even though it is not sold anymore from a *kandar*, the name remained. **Roti Canai**, **Teh Tarik**, and **Mee Goreng** are other Indian style dishes/drinks popular in George Town and also considered culinary heritage. Another Indian influence on the culinary heritage of Malaysia, not only George Town, are the Mamak stalls – eateries run by Indian Muslims who are open 24 hours a day. George Town is nowadays known for its food scene that goes on for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. At any time of the day you can go out for food somewhere, Mamak stalls and other Indian restaurants played a huge roll in this. Since George Town was a city where a lot of migrants came to work and had irregular shifts food needed to be available at all hours. This shows how changing migrations and work relations have direct influence on culinary heritage, how food is made and where it can be found.

There are a few dishes that are considered as culinary heritage of George Town, but these dishes cannot be appointed to one of the ethnicities that are living in George Town. **Cendol** is such a dish and is therefore an interesting dish that is seen by many people as a dish that is closely linked to George Town. Cendol is an iced dessert that consists out of shaved ice, green jelly noodles getting the colour from pandan leaves and often some form of beans. The dish can be found not only in George Town, but in a lot of different cities in Malaysia and in many other neighbouring countries. Looking at Cendol there are many different versions of this dessert already within Malaysia: Chinese, Nyonya, Indian and Malay. It is unclear what the origin of this dish is, but all the different groups living in George Town have their own version with different toppings, making use of the ingredients they are most familiar to with. **Penang Rojak** is a local version of the dish Rojak which can be found in other places in Malaysia and Southeast Asia, but also considered as culinary heritage of George Town. Rojak is a fruit/vegetable salad with a sweet and spicy sauce usually made of shrimp paste, sambal, sugar, tamarind and soy sauce, and topped off with chopped peanuts. When it comes to local versions of dishes that can be found in George Town, it comes down to the local products used. In this way the local versions of dishes that can be found all over Malaysia/Southeast Asia also tell a story about the available local products and influence of other cuisines. Within George Town the influence of nearby Thailand is clearly visible in many local dishes.



Figure 5 From top to bottom: Nasi Kandar, Roti Canai and Teh Tarik, Mee Goreng.

All images retrieved from: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/vkeong/>

---

#### CULINARY HERITAGE PRODUCTS OF GEORGE TOWN

There are a few products that are closely linked to Penang Island, even though they might not be exclusive to the island and can also be found outside George Town and Penang Island, that can also be considered culinary heritage. These products are part of the (culinary) heritage story and make that George Town/Penang Island is known for these products. Penang Island is known for the production of **durian**, also called the king of fruits, and the many durian varieties and farms that can be found (and visited) on the island. Many people come specifically to Penang to eat durian, since it is believed Penang has some of the best durian varieties in the world. **Nutmeg** is another ingredient closely linked to George Town.

Nutmeg does not originate from Penang, but was introduced by the British and the nutmeg plants thrived on the island and traded on the spice route. Nutmeg juice is a drink that can be found exclusively on the island. Since George Town was situated on the spice route of South East Asia, the city became **a spice hub**, and therefore all the spices are still closely linked to Penang and often thought of when thinking about the culinary heritage of George Town.

---

#### THE EVOLVEMENT OF CULINARY HERITAGE IN GEORGE TOWN

The culinary heritage of George Town is a cultural melting pot, as it is a reflection of all the people who live or have lived in the former port town. The food and the wide accessibility of it in George Town tells its historic pathways including all the different migration waves. The different nationalities who came to settle in George Town temporarily or permanent, marrying sometimes interracial, did not only bring their own culinary heritage with them, but also influenced the way of cooking of the other groups. In the Nyonya cuisine the influence is the most visible, as it is a direct fusion cuisine of Chinese and Malay cooking. But for example, the Indian style of cooking on the other hand has strongly influenced the Malay style of cooking and therefore a lot of Malay curries are now considered as culinary heritage. Cooking styles and use of ingredients of others have influenced the way of cooking of all different nationalities that can be found in George Town. Therefore, the George Town cuisine cannot be described as one cuisine, but as different fusion cuisines that have adapted to the local environment of the city. The heritage dishes have changed over the years and adapted to local products and ingredients and this also means that a lot of the dishes that can be found nowadays in George Town are unique to the city and can therefore be called culinary heritage.

If you look at Penang itself and all the dishes that we have, it originated from China or from Indonesia and also from India and some from European countries. So, what makes Penang's food or heritage or culture different, is that it combines it all together, it makes it Penang. If you go to Indonesia, you find the same dishes, or the same thing that you can find in Malaysia or in Penang, but the way they cook it or the ingredients they use is different – Researcher culinary heritage George Town

Dishes have changed over the years; original ingredients have been substituted by locally available ingredients and accessible cooking techniques. Nevertheless, looking at street food, there are still vendors preparing their food in the traditional way cooking on wood and/or charcoal. Today second or third generation hawkers are preparing and selling these heritage dishes, inherited from the older generations (and slightly adapted them over the years), on the streets or in restaurants. The traditional way of cooking is slowly disappearing because of modernization and growing alternatives to prepare food. Lard is one of those traditional ingredients used in George Town culinary heritage, mainly in Chinese style dishes, that gives a distinctive taste to a dish. Over the years a lot of vendors stopped using this traditional product, but there are still a few stalls left that do use it (and become a food tourism attraction on its own). The narrative is that in order to have the full-on authentic experience of certain dishes, you should go to a stall where they cook the food in the traditional way and use original products.

---

#### SUB-CONCLUSION

To conclude, culinary heritage of George Town can be summarized as a reflection of the cultural melting pot the former trade port is. The mix of different ethnical cuisines, Peranakan, Chinese, Indian, Malay, and the influence of them on each other can be considered as the cuisine of George Town – there is not one cuisine, but it is a culinary melting pot. Assam Laksa, Char Koay Teow and Nasi Kandar are the most famous signature dishes of George Town. One of the identified dangers that George Town is facing is the slow disappearance of culinary heritage because of modernization and growing food tourism.

---

## THE FOOD TOURISM PATHWAY OF GEORGE TOWN

As described in the previous section, George Town has a rich culinary heritage which tells a story about the history of George Town and all the different people who have called the city home since the settlement of the former port town. But in what way is the culinary heritage used in the food tourism pathway of George Town? In this section the unique food tourism pathway in relation to its authenticity of culinary heritage and how the culinary heritage of George Town is nowadays widely used to attract food tourists will be elaborated on. As the UNESCO listing of George Town in 2008 has played a big role in the tourism pathway of George Town, it will also be discussed how this has affected food tourism and what role food tourism plays/played in this enlisting.

---

## HISTORY OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN GEORGE TOWN

George Town has been a stopping point for travellers and mariners on sea routes since the nineteenth century. The combination of beaches, tropical jungle and the historical inner city of George Town attracted not only people on sea routes, but also domestic visitors and visitors from the region such as Thailand and Indonesia. Beach resort tourism was the main focus of tourism promotion by the state and the commercial tourism industry, but budget tourism founds its way also to the island mainly because of word-of-mouth of travellers travelling overland (S. N. Khoo & Jenkins, 2002). Batu Ferringhi, was the main (beach) destination promoted on Penang island, but in the 90s the tourism focus shifted towards cultural and heritage tourism in George Town. Heritage buildings, street art and food became the main attractions of tourism in Penang, with a specific focus on George Town as the main destination to visit. In 1969 the port of George Town was moved to Butterworth (mainland Penang) and tourism was seen as an interesting market to fill in the economic gap that the move of the port left in George Town (Jenkins, 2008).

Penang was originally branded as 'Pearl of the Orient', but this slogan was, corresponding to shifting focus on (food) heritage, replaced in 1996 by a new destination marketing slogan: 'City of Living Culture'. Cultural tourism as such became the new focus in George Town. In 1995 the first heritage trail, sponsored by American Express, was realized and more trails and walks in the inner city for tourists to explore the heritage and street art followed the years after. In the beginning of the new millennium, two tourism promotion approaches could be identified: 1. the packaged commercial 'cultural tourism' promoted by the State Government, with a focus on manufactured out of context events at historical sites; and 2. the encouragement of NGOs to foreigners and locals to experience the rich diversity of cultural heritage in the local context (S. N. Khoo & Jenkins, 2002).

Today, George Town is not only known for its heritage buildings and food, but also for its street art. In 2010 the state government commissioned a sculpture artwork studio in Kuala Lumpur to design street sculptures that represents local customs and heritage in a humorous way. The street sculptures were able to tell a story about the street or a building where they are situated, that many visitors otherwise would not know. In 2012 Lithuanian street art artist Ernest Zacharevic was commissioned to do a series of mural paintings all around town for George Town festival. He included 3D-objects in his murals, such as a swing, a motorbike and a bicycle. Even though the street art of Zacharevic was not the first in George Town, his work did start the lively street art scene of George Town that attracts many tourists. The murals of Zacharevic are now a tourism attraction on its own and widely used by Penang Global Tourism to promote tourism in George Town, including street art maps and trails.

---

## THE UNESCO LISTING OF GEORGE TOWN

From the years 2000 to 2003, George Town paradoxically became listed on the World Monument Fund's list of the worlds' 'Hundred Most Endangered Sites'. The Penang municipal council was aware of the importance of heritage buildings and their conservation to be able to promote George Town as a cultural tourism destination; and therefore saw the need to prepare a plan for a historical, cultural enclave

in the city to enhance tourism development (S. N. Khoo & Jenkins, 2002) and "to ensure and encourage sustainable heritage development and to provide a protection and development framework in order to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the Site [George Town Heritage zone]" (UNESCO, 2011a, p. 685). Next to the Penang municipal council, the Penang state also recognized George Town as a city with cultural tourism potential and therefore the need to protect the heritage sites. In 1998, the Penang State together with the Melaka State started to discuss the possibility of getting World Heritage Status with UNESCO for both George Town and Melaka. The move towards nominating George Town as a historic city of the straits, was originally initiated by Penang Heritage Trust (a non-profit organisation with the aim to protect heritage in Penang) as a strategy to protect the history city centre (S. N. Khoo, 2014) and conserve pre-war buildings. The Economics of Heritage UNESCO conference was held in 1999 in Penang and Melaka, looking at how the economic value of tourism could be a solution for the declining inner city because of modern development, which was a result from the earlier mentioned move of port activities to the main land of Penang in 1969 (Jenkins, 2008).

In 2008 George Town was eventually listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, a combined enlisting with Melaka: Melaka and George Town – Historic Cities of the Straits of Melaka (UNESCO, 2008). The combination of cultural elements from the Malay Archipelago, India, China and Europe gave George Town and Melaka a unique architecture, culture and townscape (UNESCO, 2011a). While the enlisting on the UNESCO World Heritage List was initially focused on preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, specifically heritage buildings, by the time George Town got enlisted cultural heritage, including intangible heritage, was a crucial criterion to be enlisted.

Melaka and George Town are living testimony to the multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Asia, and European colonial influences. This multi-cultural tangible and intangible heritage is expressed in the great variety of religious buildings of different faiths, ethnic quarters, the many languages, worship and religious festivals, dances, costumes, art and music, **food**, and daily life. (UNESCO, 2009, p. 168).

So even though culinary heritage was not the primary reason for the enlisting of George Town it is an essential and huge part of the unique living multi-cultural heritage and cultural townscape of the city, since food plays such a big role in the daily life of the people living in George Town and therefore did play a role in becoming a UNESCO heritage site.

The combined enlisting of the historic cities of the Straits of Melaka was the first cultural heritage listing on the UNESCO World Heritage List within Malaysia at the time. The UNESCO heritage listing has been beneficial for the branding and marketing of George Town as a cultural tourism destination, while also the inner-city centre was protected by designating a protected heritage zone and a buffer zone. Different tourism/visitor programs were set up in order to offer 'different forms and means of meaningful interpretation (signage) and to promote and safeguard intangible values such as arts and heritage, living heritage treasures and **food trails**, etc.' (UNESCO, 2011a, p. 757). Domestic tourists already found their way to George Town before the enlisting, but the city now became more attractive to international tourists, which Jenkins (2008) explains as: "Western-influenced tourists place greater credibility and value upon cultural heritage sites endorsed by UNESCO as such sites represent a validation of quality, a 'brand name' for heritage tourism products" (p.5).

The combination of George Town's heritage zone with all the heritage buildings, street art, great food and different communities indeed made that more and more tourists found their way to the former port city. The UNESCO enlisting of George Town was widely used to promote the city and while (international) tourists maybe in the first instance came to visit George Town for its cultural (tangible) heritage, during their stay they also experienced the culinary heritage and slowly the city became more known for its food. Before the UNESCO enlisting, George Town was already known as a destination worth visiting for

its food and culinary heritage within the domestic and Asian market, but the enlisting helped to put George Town on the world map (S. L. Khoo & Badarulzaman, 2014).

Since 2008 we have received this UNESCO status and it [tourism] became booming. And all our Penang food was always good, but nobody knew. After the UNESCO enlisting a lot of international media, tv stations, the bloggers, and the lovers for environment, for heritage, for culture all came here and it spread [the information] through their friends, so now we are very famous - Tourism official Penang

The UNESCO listing not only brings recognition of the heritage site of George Town, but also brings the responsibilities of protecting the (culinary) heritage. This means that the municipal of Penang is forced to protect, conserve, present and transmission the cultural and natural heritage to the future generations according to Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention. It is thereby obliged to do all it can to this end and ask for financial and non-financial international assistance if necessary. UNESCO actively monitors its listed heritage sites and will intervene when the responsibilities are not considered to be taken seriously.

---

#### FOOD TOURISM RESOURCES IN GEORGE TOWN

So, George Town already attracted domestic visitors and other visitors from the Asian region with their culinary heritage before, but the enlisting of UNESCO and the influx of more tourists was a catalyst for food tourism to develop further. George Town made use of the big variety of food tourism resources they have, e.g. all the different dialect foods that can be found within the city and the areas where the different ethnicities were located such as little India with a vibrant food scene plus many spice shops and China Town(s) with lots of street food. However, just eateries do not make a destination a food tourism destination, it is a combination of different food tourism resources, such as facilities, activities, events and organisations, that can make a destination an interesting food tourism destination. Looking at the food tourism resources according to Horng and Tsai (2012) that can be found in George Town<sup>2</sup> gives the following overview:

Table 8 Food Tourism Resources George Town

| Facilities   | Activities   | Events  | Organisations   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <u>Buildings/Structures</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional soy sauce factory</li> <li>• Belachan factory</li> <li>• Street markets</li> <li>• Wet markets</li> <li>• Night markets/Pasar Malam</li> <li>• Local food stores</li> <li>• Restaurants</li> <li>• Food courts</li> </ul> | <u>Consumption</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dining at restaurants, cafes, bars</li> <li>• Consuming hawker food</li> <li>• Purchasing retail food and beverages</li> </ul> | <u>Consumer Shows</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IFoodEx (food consumer show)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penang Heritage Trust</li> <li>• George Town World Heritage Inc.</li> <li>• Chinese clan associations</li> </ul> |
| <u>Land uses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durian Farms</li> <li>• Fruit orchards</li> <li>• Open air hawker centres</li> <li>• Hawker street areas</li> <li>• Little India</li> <li>• China Town</li> <li>• Nutmeg</li> </ul>  | <u>Touring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Street) Food tours</li> <li>• Durian farms visits</li> </ul>  | <u>Festivals</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George Town Festival</li> <li>• Durian Festival</li> <li>• World Curry Festival</li> <li>• Heritage celebrations</li> <li>• Private initiative festivals</li> <li>• Pesta Pulau Pinang</li> </ul> |   |

---

<sup>2</sup> The inventory of food tourism resources in George Town was conducted in July 2015 and therefore some of the resources could have been added or no longer there.



Routes

- Food walking trails
- Street food routes

Education/Observation

- Cooking classes
- Tropical Spice Garden
- Penang Tropical Fruit Farm
- Wonderfood Museum Penang

---

### THE FOOD TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ORDER OF GEORGE TOWN

Looking at the food tourism development orders from Hjalager (2002), George Town can be placed into the third development order in 2015; the focus is on experiencing the food and its culture and entrepreneurial resources. Offering new products and services to tourists is the principal strategy of this order and this is visible in George Town in the overall set of activities that the city offers: cooking classes, the tours, and the food festivals. It is not just about enjoying and understanding the food, but about the whole experience the culinary heritage can bring. Food tourism development in George Town also started with the first order – enjoying the food and marketing the existing food (tourism) resources, where ‘it is assumed that the resource more or less already exists, but that tourists must be helped to understand the gastronomic particularities. The relevant parameters here are scale and visibility’ (Hjalager, 2002, p. 23). Within the first development order the basis stays the same, communication is key, therefore it can be assumed that the culinary heritage stays authentic in this order. George Town could make use of including food aspects in promotional materials of the city, have campaigns to come visit for durian season. Some local dishes such as Assam Laksa, got *Penang* added to the name, so it was clear for visitors the dish was the local authentic version of the dish for George Town.

Within the second order the focus is on horizontal development, which is the improvement of product quality and for the tourists being able to understand the culinary heritage. The focus in this order is still on already existing tourism resources and traditions. Looking at George Town, many restaurants and stalls brand themselves as ‘*famous Penang ...*’ or ‘*the best ... of Penang*’. When there can be found multiple famous or best stalls of Penang, the question is how valid this claim is and if it really refers to the best quality of food or just a claim to attract more customers.

Hjalager states ‘what was once thought to be lost or to have disappeared from daily life can later be revived in tourism activities [...] the need for a variety of tourist products has intensified the search for any usable historical traces of regional cuisines’ (2002, p. 27). The Nyonya cuisine was a cuisine that was slowly disappearing and it was hard to find quality Nyonya food as a consumer, but the cuisine revived with the development of food tourism. The third development order of food tourism is a logical follow up where tourists are given an opportunity to fully experience the culinary heritage with activities such as cooking classes, farm visits and tours. Cooking classes, (wet) market tours, the *Wonderfood Museum of Penang* with replicas of famous George Town dishes, and (durian) farm visits are all activities that are part of the third development order of food tourism where food becomes an experience.

Looking at food tourism activities that are offered in George Town, there are a lot of food related activities in George Town. The food tourism facilities that George Town has are used in activities to let the tourist easily experience the food culture and learn about the local culture and heritage through food (reference). The main food activity in George Town is *consumption* of food at all the different hawker stalls, hawker centres, food courts, bars, cafes and restaurants. Local food products can be purchased at all the different local food stores that can be found all around the city. Because food in George Town is always accessible, tourists can be found at every time of day around town eating and experiencing the local culture through food.

But there are more food related activities offered in George Town besides consuming. There are multiple food tours offered from different operators. Some food tours take the tourists around in vans and show

them interesting food places, bring them to food- and wet markets all around town and pay a visit at the old soy factory. There are also walking food tours offered where tourists stay in, or closer to, the heritage area where everything is in walking distance. A lot of the tours promise to let the tourist experience 'the true and authentic' food and most of the tours are focused on hawker food. There are also a few Durian tours offered to the Durian farms in the Durian season. For tourists visiting George Town as part of tour, this can be both domestic and international tourists, food is almost always on their itinerary.

Food in Penang is a must-do, it is part of their package and they [tourists] are eating from morning to night – Tourism official Penang

Other activities that are offered in the category education/observation are cooking classes. For different cuisines, different cooking classes are offered at different cooking schools. These cooking classes are a great opportunity for the tourist to learn how to cook famous dishes from the local cuisine, but also learn about the background of the dishes and the corresponding culture. The three main players in offering cooking classes are 'Nazlina's Spice Station', 'Penang Home Cooking' and 'Tropical Spice Garden'. At Tropical Spice Garden the visitor can learn more about all the different spices in Penang, how they could be used and what side effects the spices can give and at the Tropical Fruit Farm guided tours are offered to teach the visitors about tropical fruits. All these activities let the tourists experience the local culture, and as Horng and Tsai state, food tourism indicates that "local or special knowledge and information that represent local culture and identities are being transferred" (Horng & Tsai, 2012) to the food tourists.

A pitfall when a destination moves from the second order to the third order can be the loss of (objective) authenticity, because new products and services are developed specifically for tourists. These new products and services can be seen as staged authenticity, since it is developed specifically for tourists. Being in the third order as a destination, does not necessarily mean a destination loses authenticity, but there is a high chance that, because of this new development, the authenticity of the destination and its tourism products is constructed in another way. George Town started with the promotion of their local (and authentic) street food and restaurants often run by local families passing it on from generations to generations providing food for the local people of George Town; hawker centres have been set up or developed over the years with the main focus to attract and cater for (food) tourists.

Locals also do go there, it is not that only tourists would go there, they go there because there are a lot of choices. But for locals it is normally because of the pricing that we do not go. It is slightly more expensive. And also, if you compare the food quality or taste it is mainly catered to tourists. It is a tourist attraction area. Locals do go, but unless you are very picky or you are very choosy on what you eat, then this place we try to stay away from – Researcher culinary heritage George Town

This quote illustrates that locals started to avoid certain places, because they felt like those places (started to) cater more to tourists than to locals. Street food areas such as New Lane, parts of Kimberley Street and hawker centres such as Red Garden and Gurney Drive attracted many (food) tourists over the years and, deliberately or not, became more touristic by raising their prices, serve smaller portions or adjust the food to tourist preferences. Not to say that this is true for all hawkers present at these places, some places are still praised for serving the same food as they have done for decades. Looking at the concept of authenticity, those places have become more touristic and therefore perceived to be less authentic. Some places, such as Gurney Drive and Red Garden, are places specifically promoted by the state government, because the Penang state government thinks that this is what the food tourist want: clean, big, hawker centres where everything is under one roof – besides big tour busses have the opportunity to park at those places so ideal for the packaged tourists. The question is what role tourism promotion plays in the loss of authenticity of certain places. In George Town it slowly becomes visible that the places

that are heavily promoted to tourists slowly lose authenticity or at least make use of the new situation by raising their prices (which leads to a loss of local customers).

Specifically, street food routes and trails have played a significant role in directing (food) tourists around George Town. The state government funded and developed a street food map called Penang Food Trail for the campaign 'Visiting Penang 2010-2012' (by today there are different editions of the street food map, the latest version is from 2016), which showed for each heritage dish where it can be found in the city and gives a suggestion of where to go. The maps are distributed all over town and are widely used by not only tourists, but also by local residents. The street food map made heritage dishes assessable for everybody. The map is critiqued by some, since in this way government plays a big role in distributing tourists to specific restaurants and it is sometimes questioned which restaurants do and do not make it on the map. The map can be an advantage for the restaurants/hawker stalls on it, but also a disadvantage for all the other eateries. By selecting certain eateries and other places not, the state government not only plays a role in directing tourists to certain places, but identifies culinary heritage (and what is not) from their perspective.

When talking to tourism officials of George Town it is interesting to find out that 'food tourism' has never been the solely focus of tourism promotion. Food in general plays a part in tourism branding and marketing, but usually combined with the other tourism resources that George Town offers (and Penang as an island). It has been the combination of George Town as a heritage destination, with its food and street art. Back in 2015 the three marketing pillars of Penang Global Tourism (PGT, the state destination marketing organisation of Penang), where *Discover, Indulge and Explore*. The three pillars could be used for different target groups with a different focus on the pillars.

Like in Singapore we are well-known for food, so we don't have to promote our food, because it is already well-known there. So, we try to insert something else through art and some other things. Because they [Singaporeans] still come here for the food, but at least they have something else to do besides the food. Our food is only competing with Thailand and Ipoh and other places, so we need to add value when they come here. Not only focusing on food, but still have other things to do while in Penang. – Tourism official Penang

Tourism officials of Penang addressed the importance of the promotion of food tourism resources not only to tourists but also to locals. Food and eating out is such a big part of daily local life and this is why the social media channels of Penang Global Tourism do not only target tourists but also locals.

Cafes and restaurants are like everywhere in Penang. So, there is one coming up literally every day, so we cannot know everything. We ourselves are from Penang, so we eat a lot, so we want to know where the coolest or new upcoming place with good food and we are ourselves want to go. So, this whole sharing of information or food or new places to visit, is useful for tourists, visitors as well as ourselves. – Tourism official Penang

Looking at the overall offered tourism product in George Town, it shows that it is a complementing whole; there are extensive tourism resources for food, culture, heritage and nature. Addressed by one of the interviewees, the tourism product can/should be seen as a jigsaw puzzle. The complete puzzle is the overall tourism product, existing out of different pieces that complement each other. Food, culture, history, nature, shopping are all different components and together with facilitation components such as transportation and information form together the complete puzzle of tourism. To be an attractive tourism destination this puzzle needs to be complete and the different pieces of the jigsaw puzzle complement each other. Only offering food tourism resources does not necessarily mean that the destination becomes an attractive food tourism destination, or at least not a place to revisit.

Food is a very strong jigsaw piece, but you need the other pieces to make a complete puzzle. So, food alone, I think it can work for some cities because the food is so famous, but mostly it is not enough. I mean for modern day travellers, what do you do after you have eaten? What do you do in the evenings? What do you do before you eat? You want to have something to do and an all-around feel about your trip. – Festival director George Town

---

#### CRITICS ON THE FOOD TOURISM PATHWAY

The food tourism pathway of George Town is also critiqued on by some, which can be roughly divided into two critiques. The first criticism is centred around the current (food) tourism focus in George Town which will be discussed in this section. The second criticism is focused on conservation and regulation of culinary heritage, which will be briefly discussed in this section and elaborated on in the next section.

Having regulations is good, but having regulations without a preservation agenda also kind of takes away a lot of the character. – Political community representative Ipoh

The focus of the state government, when it comes to tourism, is mainly on big tourism companies and packaged tourists as the target group. Where packaged tourists can be beneficial for visitor numbers, it is questioned how much these tourists contribute to the local economy. It happens often that the packaged tourists are directed towards the more touristic places. It is believed by some that FITs (free and independent travellers) would be a better target group, since these tourists are exploring and experiencing George Town by themselves (probably still with the use of the food trail map/street food map) and can minimize economic leakages.

Many of the interviewees in George Town deny that the food in George Town has become more commercialized since 2008 when the city became UNESCO listed, but Malaysian people outside of Penang say the food has started to become more commercialized, resulting in less quality. Some of the dishes cannot meet the expectations anymore, mainly because of the taste, smaller portions than before and a higher price. The food is losing its taste and quality. This does not mean that all the food in George Town has lost its authenticity and is not genuine anymore, but especially at street food areas that primarily attract tourists this can be witnessed. The street hawkers in the touristic areas shifted their focus from feeding locals to catering mainly for tourists, which has changed the food they are selling.

---

#### SUB-CONCLUSION

George Town has more and more developed as a food tourism destination over the years and can be placed in the third development order of food tourism development where the focus is on experiencing culture through food. The UNESCO heritage site listing has played a role in the popularisation of the destination. Looking at the (food) tourism products, what is offered forms a complementing whole. Especially the Penang Food Trail played a big role in making culinary heritage dishes accessible to the big public, but also in identifying culinary heritage of George Town. The different pieces of tourism form the 'tourism jigsaw puzzle'. Food is part of the main tourism attractions of George Town next to the heritage buildings and street art. The current image of George Town is that it is the 'street food capital' of Malaysia still serving authentic food, but it is also believed by local actors that *the city is slowly losing its authenticity when it comes to food* and is becoming more commercialized.

---

#### THE ROLE AND DISCOURSES OF AUTHENTICITY IN GEORGE TOWN

It is critiqued that George Town is losing (objective) authenticity and becomes more commercialized, but authenticity has also played a huge role in the food tourism pathway of George Town. Nevertheless, there are different discourses and beliefs around the construction of authenticity and the protection of culinary heritage within George Town.

The authenticity of the (street) food that is offered in George Town is widely used in tourism marketing and promotion. The image of George Town is that it is the 'street food capital' of Malaysia and that the food served is still authentic.

Over the years, many of these Penang heritage dishes have been modified so much that what is served today is just a pale image of the original – Penang professor

It is easy to blame the loss of authenticity on the influx of tourists since 2008 and tourism development, but without denying that tourism does play a role in this issue, there are also other factors in George Town that influence the perceived authenticity of culinary heritage. A major problem regarding authenticity addressed by many local actors is the lack of knowledge and willingness to participate in local food preparation by the younger generation living in Penang.

Many in today's generation have not taken the trouble to learn how to cook because their parents think they should concentrate on their studies. They can, of course, go back to their mothers for good traditional food, but what about the next generation when mothers become grandmothers and mothers cannot cook? – Penang professor

---

#### CONSERVATION AND REGULATION OF CULINARY HERITAGE

Within George Town the two different heritage discourses visible in the context of the discussion on authenticity of culinary heritage and the need to safeguard traditional local cuisines that can be found in the city can be described as: a discourse seeing **culinary heritage as a fixed concept** that needs to be preserved and saved from any changes (AHD), and a discourse that sees **culinary heritage as part of living culture** and therefore does not see evolution of dishes necessarily as something bad (HFB). In short: AHD values and stresses the importance of **conservation and regulation** of culinary heritage in George Town, and HFB promotes **organic development** and evolution of culinary heritage in George Town.

Looking at AHD in George Town, local heritage groups, such as Penang Heritage Trust, strongly believe in the need to officially document traditional heritage dishes in order to conserve culinary heritage. This comes with the belief that there is such a thing as 'an authentic dish', that the origin of dishes can be identified and that dishes can either be defined as authentic or not-authentic. In the eyes of these actors there are absolute and objective criteria to measure the authenticity of culinary heritage, which corresponds with objective authenticity. By documenting the original recipes and ingredients used for each dish, a baseline is provided for cooking authentic traditional heritage dishes. In the eyes of the groups supporting this view, the food in George Town is losing its authenticity and taste, and therefore needs conservation which can only be done by regulating street food. Culinary heritage is in this way seen as something **static** – inherited from the past, that needs to be conserved and passed on to the next generation, and certain rules should be followed in order to be able to call a dish authentic.

A lot of things combined together is what makes a certain dish, but a lot of ingredients used nowadays have really changed. Talking about the Nyonya cuisine, it's all different from previous times. The techniques they use are different, even the *Hokkien Mee* itself is different, how they prepare the broth is also totally different. Previously they used prawn heads and this showed in the quality of the dish, it is totally different. So, what we do is to try to conserve old recipes. Especially important to me is that cooks or hawkers are using the correct traditional recipe, rather than losing up to money making, technology, or schemes that make it faster – Researcher culinary heritage George Town

With regards to food tourism, there are worries that the tourists who come to George Town to eat authentic dishes will not experience 'the real taste', because over the years hawkers have adapted the recipe, started to use different ingredients and adopted different cooking styles. In 2015 the foreign

workers ban was introduced in the state of Penang in order to protect the national food heritage of Penang and preserve the local and unique flavour of heritage dishes (Basyir, 2018).

Our chief minister here just has this policy that no foreign chefs are allowed to cook Penang food. Because if you notice in some countries or some states, maybe in KL, you see like the Nepalese, the Bangladesh, or some other nationalities, they are cooking the food. Penang is very proud of their food. So, we just want to maintain, so that is why it [Penang Heritage dishes] must be cooked by the Malaysians of Penang – Tourism official Penang

The state government was aware of the growth of foreign cooks at street food stalls and was afraid that this would influence the perceived authenticity of the offered street food. The ban means that foreign workers are not allowed to cook 13 heritage dishes (Malay, Chinese and Indian) that are sold as street food: Nasi lemak, Assam laksa, Pasembor, Mee sotong, Char koay teow, Koay teow soup, Hokkien mee, Curry mee, Wan tan mee, Loh bak, Chee cheong fun, Char koay kak and Oh sien. Nevertheless, there are another 14 local heritage dishes that are listed on the *Penang Food Trail map* that are still allowed to be cooked by foreign workers. By selecting 13 heritage dishes that needs to be protected by the foreign workers ban and 14 heritage dishes that do not have to, the state government chose which dishes are 'more' culinary heritage than others. An 'authentically local' sticker on the food stalls is supposed to show that the food is authentically cooked, but the sticker actually only represents that the dishes are not cooked by a foreign worker, not that it is cooked according to a certain recipe. The foreign worker ban is a widely discussed policy and has many supporters and opponents, which can be roughly divided into the group of actors that strongly believe in the need for conservation and regulation of culinary heritage and the group of actors that believe more in the organic development of culinary heritage and in less regulation by the state.

Let's see how Penang came to this point [current state of street food in George Town], it is because there was evolution. You lose authenticity and what we feel is authentic and unique to Penang today, it is not what was unique and authentic in Penang three years ago. It involves in this situation and it wouldn't have if there were limitations like that [foreign worker ban] – Think Thank Penang

The different opinions about the foreign worker ban clearly shows the two different discourses regarding culinary heritage in George Town. There is a large group in George Town consisting out of local operators, tour guides and other actors, that look at culinary heritage from another perspective than discussed above, namely that **culinary heritage is living heritage and will therefore evolve over time**, which corresponds with the view of the discourse of Heritage From Below. It is believed by many, that bad restaurants or hawker stalls will not survive because Penangites (people living in Penang) are very critical about their food. This group believes that the market will decide what good food is and therefore what will survive or what will not. Their critic on the other discourse regarding culinary heritage is that they are *trading in nostalgia* and see culinary heritage as something static. In the eyes of these actors, culinary heritage and local heritage dishes, should not be restricted to certain rules but just letting it organically evolve. Food in George Town has developed over the last decades because people brought their food and recipes with them, but adapted them to the local produce that were available to cook with and learned techniques from other clans. The fusion of the different cuisines and adaptation is what has made Penang food as versatile as it is today and also gives it its distinct taste.

Save George Town street food from people who want authenticity - whatever that means. You know the hawker who is working for twelve years selling his Chee Cheong Fun on Kimberly Street, it is packed and sometimes works six days a week and sometimes doesn't. He does not need anyone going to him and say 'please don't put Wonton in your Chee Cheong Fun, it is not authentic'. He doesn't need somebody to tell him how to do it. Just let him do what he does. I am worried about that kind of thing for George Town and I would worry about that too actually,

because at least the people I take around, they turned to be higher-end tourists because I charge more than most street food tours, they don't want to go to rated authenticated sanitized regulated street food. They want to know how people really eat here and want to experience that [. . .] Authentic means genuine and real. Really and genuinely, real genuine Penangites that have been eating that Chee Cheong Fun for twelve years. Genuinely and really, that place is crowded and sells out every day. Really and truly Penangites eat there and what is put in front of them is really and truly, considered by those Penangites as a Penang dish. So, what is wrong or right? **Culture is a living and breathing thing.** And cuisine and food are part of the festive of culture, it will change. *You cannot pickle a culture, you cannot pickle a cuisine.* – Tourist guide George Town 1

Authenticity is, believed by this group, not the main thing to strive for when it comes to street food and food tourism, but it is about a genuine experience which corresponds with the postmodern search for existential authenticity. There are a few problems that are a threat for street food in order to survive. Some people even wonder if street food will still be around in 10 years in George Town, particularly outside of regulated food courts. While there is a lot of concern about preserving culinary heritage and the disappearance of 'authentic heritage food', redevelopment plans of the state government for the inner city of George Town are not beneficial for the survival of street food. It is very common that new boutique hotels open in old shop lots, but often these hotels do not want a street food stall straight in front of their hotel. The Chawrasta market in George Town was a big market in the city centre with a market hall and many different stalls on the streets surrounding the market hall. Within the new redevelopment plans of the state government there is no room anymore for a lot of street hawkers and only limited spaces in the market hall, which means that these plans push street hawkers out of the city. Less and less space is available for street hawkers to operate. It is believed by the opponents of these redevelopment plans that this will actually kill street food and will lead to a loss of culinary authenticity and culinary heritage.

When everybody is all excited about losing authenticity and heritage. There is your disappearing heritage, right there, but no one cares about that though. No one is talking about it [redevelopment plans], no one is objecting to it. No one will see this as an issue. So, I think that is a much bigger problem in terms of loss of culinary authenticity and heritage. That is only going to continue. There is talk of turning Campbell Street market into a fest market, getting rid of the vendors outside the market and there are actually a few streets of vendors there. This will continue, because there is no one in the position of authority, who seems to find that a problem. So, in 10 years I think there will not be much left of street food in George Town, maybe they have Singaporean style food courts. That is the point I wanted to make, you should be concerned about preserving places where hawkers venue – Tourist guide George Town 1

Looking at culinary heritage and authenticity from the tourist perspective it is interesting to note that the search for authenticity is there, but a lot of tourists do not really know what real authentic George Town food is or how it should taste. To make it even more difficult for tourists to find authentic food, almost every restaurant or food stall will claim that it has the best food of Penang/the most famous food of Penang/the authentic taste of Penang in order to attract customers. It is believed by local actors that tourists are easier satisfied with the food they are served, because often they do not have a point of reference of what it should be (but who defines how it should be?). This is often also the reason given why authentic food is slowly disappearing, because of the incoming tourists who give business to food establishments that serve 'unauthentic' food but are not aware of this.

The tourists think this is the best, because everywhere we tell them that this is the best – Think Thank Penang

The food trail map of Penang is a useful tool for tourists, but actually a lot of Penangites who are interesting in experiencing the different heritage dishes of George Town use the map as well. The map is an initiative of the state government and Penang Global Tourism and shows different restaurants/hawker stalls/coffee houses where to experience 27 dishes that are in their eyes worth to try during a stay in George Town. Over 100 locations are listed on the map, the question is if these are really the authentic places to experience the 'true taste of Penang' because it is not clear how these places have been selected and on what criteria.

The state made a little map that is called 'authentic heritage hawker food map' and the hawkers who do it the way you think is right will be on the map and the hawkers who do not want it won't. So, you are already doing a commercial advantage to the people who do it the way you want it – Tourist guide George Town 1

---

#### SUB-CONCLUSION

The authenticity of culinary heritage dishes in George Town is in jeopardy and there are different believes about how this should be handled. Official actors, such as the state government and local heritage groups, strongly believe in regulation and conservation. Since these actors are in the position to act upon their believes around authenticity, it is visible in George Town that more regulation is happening, for example initiatives such as the foreign worker ban, moving hawker stalls to designated areas. On the other hand, there is a group of actors who believe that this regulation is actually bad for the authenticity of culinary heritage dishes. The differences in the discourses on authenticity in George Town are based around the different ideas of what heritage and authenticity is, and could broadly be divided in AHD and HFB. The discourse around *conservation and regulation* (AHD), sees culinary heritage as something static, while the other discourse sees culinary heritage is something that is evolving over time (HFB). In the light of food tourism and culinary heritage, some actors are concerned that regulation will not help, but actually kill authenticity and creativity. The culinary heritage of George Town has come a long way since the settlement of the former port town, the food has evolved over the years, the different ethnic cuisines have influenced each other, new cooking techniques have been developed, other use of ingredients; this is actually what makes the culinary heritage of George Town unique. If the former migrants to George Town had stuck to their own culinary heritage and did not change their recipes to local available products the signature dishes of George Town, such as Char Keoy Teow, Assam Laksa and Nasi Kandar, would never have been evolved to the well-known dishes they are at now.

#### 4.2 IPOH

Ipoh, the third largest city in Malaysia and the capital of the state Perak, is nationally known for its quality signature food and is by many domestic tourists on the radar for a day trip focused on indulging and experiencing its food. Within Malaysia and Singapore, Ipoh is known for its great food, nevertheless it is not very high on the list of culinary food destinations of Malaysia by other international tourists. Where George Town is a well-established international food tourism destination, Ipoh is still in the starting phase. Ipoh does have the potential to become a well-known food tourism destination for domestic and international tourists, because of its rich culinary heritage food which ranges from diverse race, heritage, culture and background.

In this part of this chapter the *culinary heritage* of Ipoh will be described with some examples of heritage signature dishes and culinary heritage practises according to the different ethnic groups living in the city to give a further understanding and context to the food tourism pathway of Ipoh. Afterwards the food tourism pathway of Ipoh and the role of the culinary heritage will be discussed; how has tourism in general developed over the years in Ipoh, what food tourism resources are present in Ipoh and what are the critics on the food tourism pathway of Ipoh. To end the chapter, the discourses of authenticity in Ipoh and its dissonances will be discussed.



## THE CULINARY HERITAGE OF IPOH

The culinary heritage of Ipoh is a mix of different cuisines that developed over time. This section describes that development including an explanation of the plurality of the culinary heritage of Ipoh, different signature heritage dishes and practices and culinary heritage products.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULINARY HERITAGE IN IPOH

The culinary heritage of Ipoh reflects the history of the city since the founding of the town in the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by a Malay chief in the middle of the Kinta Valley next to the Kinta river. This history includes Ipoh's development into a blooming cosmopolitan town where most of business and social life in the state of Perak was happening, an economy around the tin mining industry in the Kinta Valley, being called the 'city of millionaires' and the centre of entertainment and nightlife and the decline of the economy because of the collapse of the tin price in the 1970s times (S. N. Khoo & Lubis, 2005). Ipoh has attracted many migrants over the years mainly from Southern China and from India who played a huge role in the (culinary) landscape of the city.

The industries of Ipoh left their mark on the local culinary heritage. Tin and the tin industry are crucial for the history and development of Ipoh: from a small settlement into the blooming city it once was. "Tin was, in short, the soul of Ipoh" (Ho, 2009, p. ix), tin figuratively speaking built the city of Ipoh. The tin rush attracted many migrants who wanted to benefit from the industry by either being a labourer or setting up tin mining businesses, but it also attracted many other people not directly linked to the tin mining industry such as adventurers, money-lenders, merchants and prostitutes. The diverse set of people in Ipoh made it into a cosmopolitan centre (Ho, 2009) and European and Chinese elite chose to live in Ipoh because of the wide variety of clubs, entertainment and quality education (S. N. Khoo & Lubis, 2005). During the blooming period of Ipoh, the city was the centre of life in the state of Perak and also the richest city of the state. The population of Ipoh was a mix of social and professional elite, diverse ethnic groups and significant minorities.

### THE PLURALITY OF CULINARY HERITAGE OF IPOH

Since many different ethnicities reside in Ipoh, there cannot be spoken about one local cuisine. Ipoh is often described as a predominantly Chinese city, but the **plurality** is what makes Ipoh food unique. The plurality of the culinary heritage of Ipoh is seen as something that represents Malaysia's main three ethnicities, Malay, Chinese and Indian, living in the country next to each other, leading to the food being multicultural and multiracial. Especially in Ipoh plurality was often mentioned when talking about the culinary heritage of the city.

I wouldn't say that Chinese cuisine is the predominant. The predominant is the mixture, I think. – Political community representative Ipoh

When you look at the distribution of food in Ipoh you can see that the food is ethnically divided and therefore geographically distributed. This does not mean that ethnic cuisines are exclusively for specific areas in Ipoh. All the different cuisines are spread out all over the city, but there are some centres where some cuisines can be found

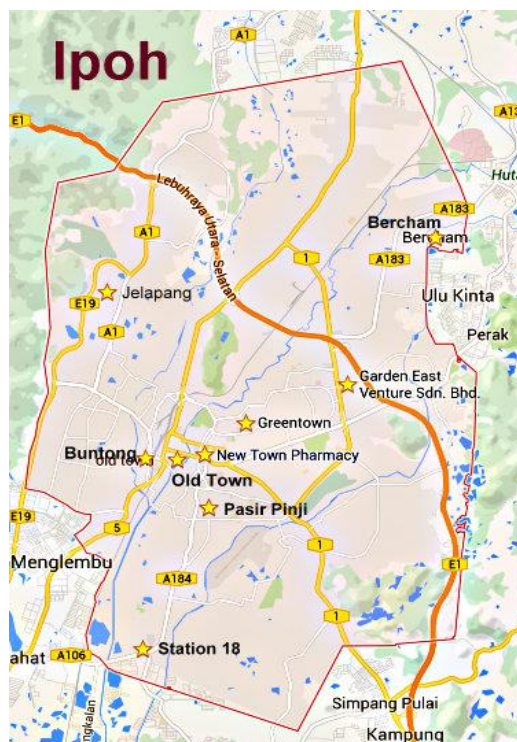


Figure 6 Map of Ipoh. Retrieved from Google Maps

particularly. Within the city centre the plurality of the Ipoh cuisine can be seen and also the more globalized brands and new developed modern cafes and restaurants can be found there. Old Town is home of most of the famous old traditional Chinese brands and restaurants, for example Old Town White Coffee. Bercham and Pasir Pinji are two other areas where Chinese cuisine is predominant, because of the New Village<sup>3</sup> history of both places. Malay cuisine can be found around Station 18 and Indian cuisine mainly at the Indian area of Buntong. Generally speaking, the cuisines found closer to the city centre are more globalized and plural. The more suburban, the more predominantly separated by race and ethnicity the cuisines are.

The nature and the beauty of Ipoh food is, because it is so plural and the way that it is geography organised and the demography is organised. If you want to have fairly kind of Chinese fair you go to the Chinese nominated areas. You want more Malay food you go to the Malay concentrated areas. And Indian, I mean Buntong is a high Indian populated area, you would go there for the better Indian restaurants. - Political community representative Ipoh

---

#### HERITAGE DISHES AND PRACTICES IN IPOH

Most of the dishes and specialties that can be found today in Ipoh were brought in by migrants from China, India and Indonesia, which means that all these different dishes can tell a special and unique story about culture, history and background. Dishes identified with Ipoh, symbolize the Malaysian Chinese or Malaysian Indian identity, since the original dishes have been adapted to local products, customs and cooking techniques. This means that even though the dishes are generally identified as 'Chinese' or 'Indian', these dishes are specific for Ipoh and therefore could be seen as Malaysian. Within Ipoh there are many dishes that are considered culinary heritage, in this section a few will be discussed. Since Ipoh has such a rich culinary heritage not all the dishes that are identified as culinary heritage will be discussed, but this does not mean that the dishes who are not included are not considered culinary heritage.

Ipoh is often referred to as a 'Chinese city', even though the three largest ethnic groups of Malaysia are all living in the city. Nevertheless, Ipoh is predominantly Chinese and the Cantonese speaking Chinese are the majority group living in the city, which goes back to the Chinese migrants who migrated to Ipoh and Kinta Valley during the tin rush. The Cantonese Chinese from Taiping were some of the earliest migrants to Ipoh and Cantonese became the main language spoken in Ipoh – not only between Cantonese speakers, but also between other Chinese dialects. Especially Cantonese and Hakka Chinese came to Ipoh to work in the mines (S. N. Khoo & Lubis, 2005). There cannot be spoken of a singular Chinese ethnicity because of all the different Chinese clans living in Malaysia and in Ipoh. Besides the **Cantonese** and the **Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese, Teochew and Hock Chew** also reside in the city. The reason why so many people from the same dialect migrated to the same places is that most jobs were filled mainly based on referrals by friends, or fellow migrants from the same province. Many Chinese opened up their own businesses or became traders when they were able to leave the tin mines, which contributed to the economic growth of Ipoh (Khor, 2016). It is believed that the love people have in Ipoh for food, and the abundance of food outlets all over town, is a reflection of Chinese eating habits in the city.

---

<sup>3</sup> New Villages are former Chinese settlements set up by the British colonial government in the Emergency period between 1948 and 1960. Ethnic Chinese were forced to live in these communities in order to restrain the communist activities at that time.

So, Chinese they know a lot about food. They are crazy, it is a hobby you know. From early in the morning, they have breakfast in the morning at 6. Then at 10 they have tea. At 12 they have lunch. Then at 3 they have tea again. Then dinner around 7. And then at night they have supper, between 10 and 12 o'clock. So, we [Chinese] almost eat about 20 hours a day. – Local resident Ipoh

Ipoh has a very rich Cantonese culinary heritage and many Cantonese inspired signature dishes can be found all over town. Ipoh is nowadays known for the quality **Dim Sum** that can be found in the city and known as one of the best places to eat Dim Sum in Malaysia. Dim Sum is an example of a Cantonese style of eating and seen as one of the signature foods of Ipoh: small dishes, often served in steamer baskets or on small plates, enjoyed with tea. Dim Sum is originally consumed for breakfast or brunch and in Ipoh there are many restaurants that sell out before lunch. There is one street in Ipoh, Jalan Leong Sin Nam, where some of the major Dim Sum restaurants can be found and therefore has the nickname 'Dim Sum Street'. Nevertheless, it are often these restaurants that are critiqued for becoming too commercialized and losing their authenticity. The **egg tarts**, originating from Guangzhou, another signature food of Ipoh, were introduced by the Cantonese, as well as **Chee Cheong Fun** – rice noodle roll topped with sesame seeds and fried shallots either served 'dry' with different sauces and pickled green chili or 'wet' with curry or gravy. Serving the Chee Cheong Fun with a mushroom sauce is unique to Ipoh. The Cantonese inspired dishes are a direct reflection of the Cantonese community living in Ipoh.

Ipoh is also very highly populated by Cantonese, which is from the province of Southern China, who are very famous for dim sum, Ipoh is also famous for Dim Sum. – Local foodie Ipoh

Next to the Cantonese, the Hakka Chinese also migrated to Ipoh looking for economic wealth, especially in the tin mines. A few signature dishes of Ipoh, such as **Hakka Mee** – noodles topped with ground meat gravy, **Salted Chicken** (yim kok gai) – chicken marinated with Chinese herbs and angelica wrapped in greaseproof paper and baked in woks filled with salt, and **Sar Kok Liew** – tofu products and vegetables stuffed with fish or pork paste, find their origin in the cuisine of the Hakka dialect. It is believed that the cuisine of the Hakka's evolved in Ipoh, because of the greater variety of spices locally available. Big Tree Foot in Pasir Pinji in Ipoh is famous for its yong tau foo and specifically its sar kok liew.

The Hainanese Chinese also play an important role in the culinary landscape of Ipoh. They originally migrated from the island of Hainan in the South China Sea, but by the time the Hainanese migrated to Malaysia most jobs in the mines and other lucrative trades were already taken. Most Hainanese Chinese therefore worked for the British administration and, especially in Ipoh, became coffee shop owners. The coffee shop 'culture' in Ipoh became popular and the Kopi Tiam became part of everyday life. Two of the most well-known signature dishes of Ipoh, **White Coffee** and **Beansprout Chicken**, have a Hainanese origin. The Hainanese cooking style in Ipoh consists out of dishes inspired on 'comfort food' from the Hainanese region adapted to local ingredients, but is



Figure 7 Dim Sum, Egg Tarts, Chee Cheong Fun, Hakka Mee, Salted Chicken and Sar Kok Liew.

All images retrieved from: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/>

also influenced by the English cuisine because of the employment of Hainanese by the British administration.

The other thing is chicken chop, Hainanese chicken chop. But it is a bit different from western chop, because a lot of Hainanese in earlier years in Ipoh they worked with the English people. So, they mix the Chinese style food and Western food to become the chicken chop. The chicken chop style has combined Chinese and Western. – Journalist Ipoh

One of the signature drinks that Ipoh is most known for is **Ipoh white coffee**, or Kopi Putih in Malaysian. The drink was introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Chinese migrants attracted by the local tin mines. It is believed that White Coffee finds its origin in one street in Old Town in Hainanese coffeeshops, called a Kopi Tiam. What makes the Ipoh White Coffee unique and different than 'normal' black coffee is that the coffee beans are roasted in palm oil margarine and served with (condensed) milk, which gives it a more caramelized flavour. The Hainanese Chinese, who ran most of the local Kopi Tiam at the time in Ipoh, developed this coffee, because during British ruling drinking coffee was a way of socializing and doing business with the British people. However, the Hainanese were not used to drinking western style coffee and adapted it to the Chinese palate. The name of Ipoh White Coffee does not come from the colour of the coffee (since it is not white), but from the direct translation of the Cantonese name referring to how the coffee beans are roasted ("The True Story of White Coffee Every Malaysian Should Know," 2013). The fact that the name of Hainanese coffee comes from the Cantonese name, shows that the Cantonese were the dominant Chinese group living in Ipoh and therefore Cantonese became the lingua franca in the city.

There are two coffee shops in Ipoh, across from each other that are often mentioned when it comes to 'original Ipoh White Coffee': Sin Yoon Loong – the coffee shop where Ipoh White Coffee originated from, and Nam Heong – the coffee shop that was the original Old Town White Coffee Kopi Tiam. OldTown White Coffee is a company launched in 1999 in Ipoh manufacturing instant coffee mixes and in 2005 also opened coffeeshops inspired by the Kopi Tiam that could be found in Old Town all over Malaysia and other countries in Southeast Asia. The popularity of OldTown White Coffee cafes and the instant coffee mixes also made Ipoh White Coffee a beverage that is well known outside of Ipoh.

**Hainanese chicken rice** is a staple dish in Malaysia and Singapore and an example of a Hainanese dish imported by Hainanese migrants to Malaysia. The dish is inspired by Wenchang chicken, which is a chicken dish using the Wenchang chicken breed. Since this type of chicken was not available in Malaysia, the dish was adapted and chicken available in Malaysia became the base of this dish. Because Ipoh was a place a lot of Hainanese migrated to, Hainanese chicken rice became a dish that could be found all over town. Where regular Hainanese chicken rice can be found all over town, the dish Ipoh is really known for, *Beansprout chicken*, is a variation of Hainanese chicken rice served with a plate of Ipoh beansprouts. So basically, just a combination of a culinary heritage dish with a terroir Ipoh product, sometimes the rice is replaced by rice noodles another terroir product. Beansprout



Figure 8 White Coffee (top) and Beansprout Chicken (bottom).  
Images retrieved from:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/>

chicken is therefore a dish where different Ipoh terroir products come together in a Hainanese inspired dish.

Chicken and beansprouts is something that Ipoh is very, very, very famous for. Why? The beansprouts produced by the natural water in Buntong on the outskirts of Ipoh gives a very unique flavour to the beansprouts. There is a very minerally flinty flavour to it, but in a nice way. – Political community representative Ipoh

The fact that Ipoh is a predominantly Chinese city with a predominant Chinese cuisine, has as a side effect that the food is mostly non-halal<sup>4</sup> in a country where the Islam is declared as the national religion. Pork is an example of non-halal food and Muslims are not allowed to eat it, but is one of the dominant ingredients in the Chinese cuisine and can therefore be found through the whole of Ipoh.

Chinese food can be found all over Ipoh, but especially in Old Town and the former New Villages are areas that is dominated by Chinese eateries from the different dialects. New Villages are former Chinese settlements set up by the British colonial government in the Emergency period between 1948 and 1960; ethnic Chinese were forced to live in these communities in order to restrain the communist activities at that time. As a result of the relocation of Chinese to New Villages, this have become areas in Ipoh where predominantly Chinese food can be found. Some New Villages, such as Pasir Pinji, are nowadays attracting visitors because of the many quality (Chinese) restaurants, hawker stalls and food courts.

Next to the Chinese migrants, Indian workers also found their way to Ipoh to work on rubber plantations on the outskirts of the city or as clerical officers for the British. Most Indian migrants came from the states of Madras and Kerala or Ceylon (Sivalingam, 1996). Ipoh became an important centre for Indians in the state of Perak, particularly for Indian minorities such as Sikhs, Indian Christians and Malayalees (S. N. Khoo & Lubis, 2005). There are certain areas in Ipoh that are seen as 'Indian areas' and within Old Town there is also an area, Little India, which is an ethnic enclave within the city where the early Indian migrants settled and started their businesses. As a result, many Indian restaurants and stores can be found in this area. Buntong is another example of an Indian enclave, most **Kacang Putih** - an Indian snack considered a signature snack of Ipoh, was originally produced in Buntong by the Indian community as a way of living. Within Buntong many cottage industries could be found producing and selling the Indian snack from their houses and therefore Buntong was also called Kampung Kacang Putih. The original Kacang Putih are white steamed lentils, but nowadays Kacang Putih refers to all the different Indian snacks that are sold on many night markets (Lim, 2018). The Kacang Putih sellers started to expand their offerings with other Indian style snacks that had a longer shelf life than the steamed lentils and were easier to carry around. Nowadays the snacks are mainly produced in a few bigger manufactories in Buntong, which people are able to visit.

The Mamak culture is also part of Ipoh and the culture can be seen as some sort of Indian culture and heritage. The term Mamak is used for people (and nowadays also eateries) who are from Indian heritage and of Muslim faith. Mamak is a combination of Malay and Indian culture (early Indian Muslim migrants married local Malay women) and mamak stalls serve Indian Muslim cuisine, such as roti canai, teh tarik, Nasi Biryani, Nasi Lemak, Mie Goreng and Murtabak. The serving of dishes such as nasi lemak shows the influence of the Malay culture, since this is considered the national Malay dish. Next to the Kopi Tiam (coffee shop) culture which is popular for the older generations, the Mamak culture is popular among teenagers and young adults. Mamak stalls are often open 24 hours a day and therefore became a popular spot for teenagers and young adults to hang out during the night and watch sport matches.

---

<sup>4</sup> Halal is an Islamic term which specifies what is permissible for Muslims. Regarding food, the criteria of Halal food specifies what foods are allowed and how it must be prepared. Regarding meat, halal specifies how the animal must be slaughtered and how the meat of the animal must be prepared.

Mamak has become a low-key night out where people from all the different ethnicities that live in Ipoh can be found together.

Within Ipoh there is one Indian inspired dish that the city is well known for: **Nasi Ganja** (literally translated Marihuana rice). This dish of Nasi Kandar is the Ipoh version of the signature Penang dish - steamed rice with a variety of curry-based meat dishes and vegetables. There is one Indian Muslim food stall in Ipoh (that is actually located in a Chinese coffee shop) that sells its Nasi Kandar with *ayam masak merah*, fried chicken braised in a spicy tomato sauce with gravy, and people like the dish so much they say it is addictive; which gave the dish its nickname. The Nasi Ganja attracts many local people and visitors, who come specifically to try this 'addictive' version of this Indian Muslim dish, from all walks of life, ethnicity and age.

The Malay ethnicity in Ipoh is the minority and the Malays are mainly concentrated in the south of the city (Sivalingam, 1996). As Malay is the minority in Ipoh there are not many signature Ipoh dishes that are Malay. **Rendang Tok** is a Malaysian dish that Ipoh and the state of Perak is known for. Originally the dish was only served to the royalty of Perak, but nowadays the dish is offered all over town. Rendang is a dish that can be found all over Malaysia and surrounding countries, but Rendang Tok is the version of Perak. The dish differs from other version of Rending, since it is a dry version and the use of roasted grated coconut.

The plurality of the Malaysian cuisine does not stop by the existence of the different ethnic cuisines, but the cuisines also influence each other and therefore dishes are created that are unique to Malaysia. Within Ipoh **Curry Mee** is another popular signature dish, nevertheless it is difficult to pinpoint the origin of

this dish since the spices used for the soup and gravy find their origin in India, but Curry Mee is prepared with Chinese culinary techniques. This makes the curry noodles a fusion of both cultures (Teoh, 2017). There are more dishes like this that can be found in Ipoh (and Malaysia) that actually represents different ethnicities. Many dishes that are considered 'Chinese', 'Indian' or 'Malay' are also influenced in some extent by the other ethnicities cooking styles or techniques, this is inevitable when they share the same city and have access to the same type of ingredients, and also shows in the same time how culinary heritage changes over time because of external influences.

There is a dish called Patai and Sambal. Patai is like a bean type of thing, it is a bean from the asparagus plant and it stinks quite heavily but it tastes really good. Sambal is basically a curry dry shrimp paste and you fry the two together. A lot of people see that as a Chinese dish if you ask a Chinese person, and if you speak to a Malay, they say it is a Malay dish, and if you speak to an Indian person, they say well the curry base, or the chili base, is Indian. But the fact is, the reality is that it is a very Malaysian thing, because it is a combination of all of it. – Political community representative Ipoh



Figure 9 From top to bottom: Kacang Putih, Nasi Ganja, Curry Mee  
All images retrieved from:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/j2kfm/>

---

### CULINARY HERITAGE PRODUCTS OF IPOH

Even though there is not a lot of agricultural activity in Ipoh, the main economic activities in Ipoh are/have been commercial, retail, service, manufacturing and mining (Sivalingam, 1996), there are a few agricultural products that are unique to Ipoh. Beansprouts, rice noodles and Pomelo from Ipoh, all have a unique Ipoh taste; it is believed in Malaysia that for the unique taste of Ipoh beansprouts and the rice noodles made in Ipoh this has to do with the quality of the water in the Kinta Valley, because of the PH-value and the richness of minerals in the water. The Pomelo, also a famous Ipoh product, gets its special taste from the old tin mining soil that is rich in iron. The specific environment and the quality of the water and soil of Ipoh gives the beansprouts, noodles and pomelo its special taste, and therefore Ipoh has *terroir* culinary heritage (Di Giovine & Brulotte, 2014). The taste of these products is unique and give it a unique taste, that cannot be reproduced somewhere else and can therefore be identified as culinary heritage of Ipoh.

Especially the beansprouts and rice noodles can be found as ingredients in many Ipoh signature dishes, with beansprout chicken combining the both as the most famous. The quality and unique taste of the rice noodles explain why so many Ipoh signature dishes are based around them, such as for example Sar Hor Fun – a flat rice noodle soup. Therefore, the *terroir* culinary heritage products play a prominent role in the culinary heritage of Ipoh, combined with the different cooking styles.

---

### COTTAGE INDUSTRIES OF IPOH

Cottage industries in Ipoh producing and selling food can also be identified as culinary heritage of Ipoh. Cottage industry was for many a way of survival; many cottage shops were set up to earn a living and sell food or other things from the home, after the collapse of the tin mining industry it is believed that people sought a new way to provide for themselves.

I was a miner, a tin-miner here. All along we have been enjoying good food, we enjoyed everything here. Everything is cheap and abundance is a lot. When the tin price fell in 1980s a lot of people went into hawker business. They had no employment in the mines, so they found other employment and started hawker stalls to cook their food to sell it. So now you can see the result, because tourist come in to go after the food. – Local resident Ipoh

Ipoh is known for the cottage shops, including all the street food stalls, and many can be found that are still operating from their homes. What makes the cottage shops special is that many street food stalls and cottage food shops are operated by families doing this for decades passing on the recipe from generation to generation. Many cottage shops take specialization to a different level, since the food they offer is often their personal specialty and can only be found at their stall. This makes that Ipoh has many unique dishes offered by the cottage shops. Comparing with George Town this is different, because there you mainly have the same type of dishes offered by different stalls. This does happen to a certain extent in Ipoh as well, but overall there is a wider variety of dishes in Ipoh.

In Penang sometimes you go anywhere and you just find the same food. Everywhere laksa, laksa, laksa, laksa. All the same dishes repeating. But I don't see this in Ipoh right now, I experienced that. I don't see this separation segment in Ipoh, because I found that Ipoh has this special and strong point. They [Penang] don't have so many food, there it is always repeating, repeating, repeating. I get an example, like in Pasir Pinji they have the special peanut dish. I think that is very famous in Pasir Pinji and I don't think you have others having the same stuff somewhere else. So, I found this a very strong point. You don't find the same thing in the small town here. You would not see that everything is repeating. – Representative local community Ipoh

Heong Peng, fragrant pastries, are Chinese biscuits originally baked in a kiln, with a filling of palm sugar, shallots and salt. The 'fragrant' part came from the burned coconut huskies, which were originally used to

heat up the kiln. Heong Peng can also be found in other states in Malaysia, but it is believed it originated in Ipoh. Yee Hup started to manufacture Heong Peng on a larger scale and nowadays this more 'commercialized' Heong Peng are sold all over Malaysia and around in the region. Yee Hup is one example of a cottage industry that developed into a manufacturer of Ipoh culinary heritage products selling the products all over Malaysia. OldTown Coffee and Kacang Putih are two other Ipoh culinary products that have developed into well-known products accessible for people outside of Ipoh. These culinary heritage products are able to tell a story about the history of Ipoh outside of Ipoh.

Another recent phenomenon that can be witnessed in Ipoh that has changed the culinary landscape of the city and in the same time became a big attraction for people outside of Ipoh, is the development of the so-called 'hipster' cafés. Since a couple of years modern cafes and restaurants have opened in Ipoh, specifically in Old Town, often located in old heritage buildings serving fusion or international cuisine. These cafés are often described as hipster, because they are different than the standard that can be found over town and is not mainstream. Especially the younger generation is attracted by these new ventures and see it as a symbol of Ipoh developing and modernizing. The hipster café culture is still quite unique and young in Malaysia and therefore many visitors are nowadays also attracted by these cafés, besides the heritage signature dishes that Ipoh is known for.

---

#### SUB-CONCLUSION

The culinary landscape of Ipoh can best be described as plural, as all the people who migrated to the former tin mining city since the settlement at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the culinary heritage of Ipoh. The culinary heritage of Ipoh reflects the history of the former tin mining city, which was built around the tin industry and therefore attracted many labour migrants from especially the southern part of China and the southern part of India. The tin mining industry attracted predominantly Chinese migrants, and therefore the Chinese cuisine is the predominant cuisine in Ipoh. Besides the Chinese cuisine Ipoh also had a well-developed Indian creating cuisine. The different ethnic cuisines have influenced each other over the years resulting in heritage dishes that are unique to Ipoh, because of the ingredients used and culinary practices.

The culinary heritage of Ipoh relies heavily on terroir culinary heritage. The concept of terroir is based on the specific environment of place that the food is coming from. The Ipoh beansprouts, rice noodles and the pomelo are products that are unique to Ipoh with a unique Ipoh taste. The terroir culinary heritage products play a major role in many signature heritage dishes. Cottage industries also play an important role in the culinary heritage of Ipoh as this was the starting point for many culinary heritage dishes and a few have grown out to nationwide franchise companies, selling the Ipoh culinary heritage outside Ipoh and therefore introducing Ipoh culinary heritage to 'outsiders'.

---

#### THE FOOD TOURISM PATHWAY OF IPOH

The rich culinary heritage which could be used to differentiate Ipoh from other destinations within Malaysia and the region is there. In this section the food tourism pathway of Ipoh in relation to its authenticity of culinary heritage will be discussed. Ipoh is still at the start of development when it comes to food tourism, but the culinary heritage already lures in visitors for a fair amount of time.

So, you can see, people in Ipoh they have eating as a hobby. It becomes so crazy that the people from out of Ipoh also came and followed the people in Ipoh in the trend of eating. They come all the way from Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Penang. In Penang they have very good food, but they still come here for the Cantonese food. The taste is different. – Local Ipoh resident



## HISTORY OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN IPOH

In 2016 Ipoh was listed as the sixth place to visit in Asia by Lonely Planet (Yu, 2016). Ipoh has come a long way from a booming tin mining city to a city in decline when the tin prices collapsed in the 1970s. The local economy and business landscape changed completely when the city could not rely on the tin mining industry anymore as the main source of income (Dixit, 2019).

The current tourism attractions of Ipoh can be divided into four categories: heritage buildings, natural attractions, culture and food. The food of Ipoh is the main attraction for domestic tourists visiting the city: the different street food, hawkers, food courts, old traditional stores, cottage industries and the Cantonese cuisine. Besides food there are also other attractions in Ipoh, but the state government is mainly focusing on promoting attractions outside of Ipoh, such as the Zoo in Taiping, Pangkor Island, Royal Belum, and the lost world of Tambun. In June 2015 the focus was on the development of 'Movie Animation Park Studios', a new theme park that opened at the outskirts of Ipoh in December 2016.

The strategic location of Ipoh, in between Kuala Lumpur and George Town on the North-South expressway, made Ipoh a destination where many people stopped on their way to either Kuala Lumpur or George Town to have lunch or fuel up. Through word of mouth Ipoh became more known as a destination worth to stop for food, who slowly developed from just a 'stop-and-go' destination to a destination to go for a day or weekend trip. Nowadays Ipoh is a destination well known by domestic visitors and visitors from the region, for example Singaporean tourists, especially as a day-trip during the weekend or holiday with a focus on gastronomy purposes. Visiting friends and relatives is also relatively high in Ipoh, many people who moved out of Ipoh or have family or friends in Ipoh come back especially during holidays. The total tourism product and tourism infrastructure was never really developed, because the growth of tourists visiting the city was just evolving over time because of word of mouth. Ipoh still faces difficulties when it comes to the overall tourism product of the city.

It is the state-government of Perak who determines the direction of tourism and is in charge of the available monetary resources. The state of Perak and Perak Tourism are focused on the development of the whole of Perak, there is not an *Ipoh Tourism* purely focusing on the development of tourism in Ipoh. Talking to governmental representatives and tourism officials, it shows that the focus of the development of tourism is mainly focused on what is outside of Ipoh. The fun map of Perak, figure 10, shows the main focusses of Tourism Perak.

It is not said that they do nothing to develop Ipoh further, but local actors get the feeling that the state of Perak is, with regards to tourism, not selling all the different cultures that are present in Perak and Ipoh and form together the cultural heritage, but is mainly focusing on the Malay and Islam heritage.

I have to be frank, promotion have to be equal among all the different cultures and races, because we are made of a multi-cultural community. – Local blogger Ipoh



Figure 10 Fun Map of Perak. Retrieved from: Tourism Perak

The state Executive Council of Tourism (and Culture and Art) and the CEO of Tourism Perak acknowledged in June 2015 that tourism is established with the locals, but that, besides Singaporeans, the international tourists are scarce. According to the tourism officials of Perak, the current stage of tourism is not near the

desired stage of tourism in the state of Perak. The first goals are to attract enough numbers of tourists to Perak and Ipoh so tourism businesses can sustain and maintain their businesses and from there it can grow further. Ipoh and Perak are still not well-known by outsiders. The numbers are slowly increasing, but it is still mainly a destination for domestic tourists. Being a destination for domestic tourists should not be a problem if this is the targeted group of tourists. Nevertheless, it is addressed by tourism facility owners in Ipoh during the focus group, that a current problem that domestic tourists overall are not very eager to spend money in Ipoh on other things than food.

They [domestic tourists] don't want to pay for anything. And if they won't want to pay for anything, like entry to cave temples or something, the cave temples cannot afford to have a guide. So, it is a chicken and egg situation. I don't see a way out of it [ . . . ] They would pay for food. They want food, so they will pay for food, but they don't want to pay for anything else. They see that anything else should be free. One man actually said to me 'what rights do you've got to ask me for a donation? [ . . . ] This should be paid for by the government or by the big businesses. You should not ask local people to pay, it is their right to be here'. This was a world west fortunate man who could probably afford to give me 50RM [Malaysian Ringgit] and not even blink. This is the problem. – Owner tourism facility Ipoh 2

It is difficult for tourism attractions to survive or develop their tourism product further if the perception of domestic visitors is that it should be free. This makes it hard for tourism businesses to sustain and maintain their businesses. If the state wants to use food tourism as a strategy to improve local economies, it is necessary to get international tourists in, who have a different mindset towards spending money on tourism products. It is said by the governmental representative of the state of Perak that being a successful tourism destination is one of the main challenges Ipoh faces and that the right mixture of offered tourism products to attract tourists still has to be discovered. The state government believes in *if you build it, they will come*; the right numbers will only be reached if new tourism attractions are built. The focus by the state government in this case is not on using the (culinary) heritage of the city as a resource to attract more tourist, but the complete opposite by creating and building new attractions from scratch, such as Movie Animation Park Studios (MAPS).

I think we are trying to reposition Ipoh as the arts and culture centre, at least for peninsular Malaysia. That is what we are trying to do with the iconic visual arts gallery. The problem with tourism is that it is a private sector driven industry, so we really have to get a lot of investors to be interested to come in as well. So I have to bring in the icons first and then they will start building [ . . . ] because as you see, the Old Town that is all private sector, we only facilitate in terms of permission, in terms of if you want activities we find them, we put them into nation and facilitate for them, but otherwise it is still coming from the private sector. – State government representative Ipoh

An example of tourist attractions within Ipoh that have been initiatives of the private sector are the murals that can be found all over town nowadays and is often mentioned as one of Ipoh's tourism attractions. In 2014 Ipoh Zachariv, the same person who started the street art scene in George Town, made a few murals in Ipoh telling a story about the history of the city. The Art of Old Town was a collaboration between Zacharevic and OldTown White Coffee, a private initiative. The murals of Zacharevic inspired many other street artists and private initiatives to develop the street art scene further in Ipoh. Hence, Ipoh became known for its street art. The public and private sector of Ipoh are still searching for ways to beneficially put Ipoh on the map as a tourism destination and develop further from there.

---

#### FOOD TOURISM RESOURCES IN IPOH

Ipoh has all the potential to become a food tourism destination looking at the culinary heritage of the city, nevertheless the destination has difficulties attracting international tourists or letting domestic visitors

stay for longer than a day. In general, there is a lack of tourism resources in Ipoh, as tourism in Ipoh never has been the focus of the state government. The lack of tourism resources does make it more difficult to develop as a food tourism destination, since the tourism infrastructure is not there yet. Developing food tourism in Ipoh needs more than the development of food tourism resources, it also needs the development of a sufficient tourism infrastructure that can meet the needs of the additional tourists it will attract with food tourism.

Ipoh attracts mainly domestic visitors, who often come specifically to enjoy the culinary heritage of the city and visiting friends and relatives at the same time. As mentioned before just eateries does not make a destination a food tourism destination. Ipoh does have a few food tourism resources, which can be used to develop food tourism in the city further. Looking at the food tourism resources that can be found in Ipoh<sup>5</sup> gives the following overview:

**Table 9 Food Tourism Resources Ipoh**

| <b>Facilities</b>  | <b>Activities</b>   | <b>Events</b>   | <b>Organisations</b> |
|--|---|---|----------------------|
| <u>Buildings/Structures</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wet markets</li> <li>• Night markets/Pasar Malam</li> <li>• Food stores</li> <li>• Hawker centres</li> <li>• Restaurants</li> </ul> | <u>Consumption</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dining at restaurants</li> <li>• Purchasing retail food and beverages</li> <li>• Consuming hawker food</li> </ul> | <u>Consumer Shows</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>                                       | -                    |
| <u>Land uses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pomelo Farms</li> <li>• Hawker areas</li> <li>• Little India</li> </ul>  | <u>Touring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food tour from Kuala Lumpur</li> <li>• Few tours aimed at domestic tourists</li> </ul>                                | <u>Festivals</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pesta Pinji</li> <li>• Perak Food Festival</li> </ul> |                      |
| <u>Routes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perak Food Trail</li> </ul>   | <u>Education/Observation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>  |   |                      |

Looking at the food tourism resources it is visible that in Ipoh most of the food tourism resources are focused on consuming or purchasing food: restaurants, food courts, hawker centres, individual hawker stalls, Pomelo farms wet markets<sup>6</sup> and Pasar Malams (night markets - they are not specified on food, but most of them have a food part what could serve as an attraction for food tourists). There are currently no food routes or trails for Ipoh specifically. There are also no dedicated consumer shows or food festivals held in Ipoh. In May 2015, a community festival with a few food elements was organised for the first time, Pesta Pinji. The objectives of this festival were: to touch, to rebrand, to stimulate, to discover (Pinji Food Fest 2015, 2014). The festival that took place in Pasir Pinji started under the name Pinji Food Fest, but was renamed Pesta Pinji after the focus of the festival changed. The festival was held in 2015 as part of the Perak Food Festival organised by Tourism Perak to promote authentic traditional dishes and delicacies of the whole state of Perak, but Ipoh just had a minor role in this festival. So far Ipoh misses out on opportunities to give the food experience extra meaning. There are no activities and events that tell stories and give tourists insight in the history of the culinary heritage of Ipoh food and distribute the stories that the Ipoh food has to tell.

<sup>5</sup> The inventory of food tourism resources in Ipoh was conducted in June 2015 and therefore some of the resources could have been added or no longer there.

<sup>6</sup> Wet markets are markets that sell fresh meat and produce.

---

## THE FOOD TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ORDER OF IPOH

The food tourism resources in Ipoh place the city into the first food tourism development order according to Hjalager (2002): enjoying the food and marketing the existing food (tourism) resources. As described earlier in the first part of this chapter about George Town, in the first food tourism development order the focus is on creating added value by making use of the already established resources and scale and visibility are key. In the case of Ipoh, the food tourism resources are mainly eating facilities and tourists are just enjoying the food, instead of understanding, experiencing or gaining knowledge about the culinary heritage. There are a few tours aimed at tourists staying in Ipoh to let them experience the food, but they are mostly aimed at domestic tourists. Food related festivals are slowly coming up, but food tourism in Ipoh is still in the basic development stage. In this stage, added value is created by increasing availability and awareness of regional food processing industries and restaurants, numbers of visitors are increasing but nothing else is changed. The development is based on the assumption that the resource already exists, but the tourist must be made aware of and understand the culinary heritage of a destination to develop as a food tourism destination. The main problem according to this order is the lack of communication between customers and food providers and the main focus of this order is to get the word out. Campaigns for particular products, connected to a region or season, is something that Ipoh could tap into, because of the terroir culinary heritage such as beansprouts and the pomelo. Nevertheless, this is not really happening yet, the same when it comes to introducing food trademarks with features/names making use of the terroir culinary heritage and 'OldTown Coffee'.

Including gastronomic aspects in promotional materials of the region/country is often done in the basic development stage of food tourism development, but this is not actively done in by the state government of Perak since the focus is not on food tourism in Ipoh. The federal tourism agency, Tourism Malaysia, sometimes does give public attention to the food that Ipoh in particular has to offer. Nevertheless, slowly there are more travel brochures that mention Ipoh and its food, including the mentioning of signature Ipoh dishes on the Ipoh Heritage Trail in 2009 as living heritage (Myheritage Technovation, 2009). In the forum held in Ipoh it was discussed that while Penang is actively promoting tourism and food in different interstate media, or outer state media, Ipoh or Perak is not doing the same.

As mentioned, the state government and its corresponding destination marketing organisation are struggling with putting Ipoh on the map as a tourism destination in general, let alone as a food tourism destination. In order to attract more tourists, the state government does try to use the image of Ipoh as 'a place with great food' as a way to push other forms of cultural tourism in Ipoh, but they do not push food tourism of Ipoh on its own. In 2015, while the state government was led by Barisan Nasional<sup>7</sup>, there was a clear focus on the development of cultural tourism around Malay Muslim heritage, such as a Mosque Heritage Trail. Food tourism and the promotion of heritage of other ethnicities than Malay was not a priority. Local actors also mentioned that they believe Malay heritage has a prominent role in the promotion of food and culture of Ipoh and Perak, while promoting the plurality of the city and the heritage of different cultures and races is not a priority.

Even though we have established ourselves [as a tourist destination], we are still not at the stage where we are well-known. There is a lot of work that needs to be done for that particular area. What we are trying to do at the moment is not just to showcase food tourism on its one, but also to inculcate the different various aspects of tourism which includes very much heritage and culture. Old Town is just one example of where there is a cluster of food tourism, a food tourism package. We showcase one cluster of the state. For this particular area, because we are quite lucky because we have the heritage buildings, we are developing a new product to be married as

---

<sup>7</sup> Barisan Nasional, translated the National Front, is a right-wing political coalition in Malaysia that dominated Malaysian politics until 2018.

well with the food tourism which is the mosque-trail package. Which will showcase six of our mosques, with their different unique architecture. – State government representative Ipoh

Since food tourism is not actively pushed by the state government, the further development of food tourism in Ipoh depends on the private sector to set up a complementing whole of food tourism resources. As mentioned by local actors, besides consuming food there is not much to do in Ipoh. Ipoh has a rich history of the private sector developing the city and the lack of the public sector in this. The state government is not pushing food tourism and expects from the private sector to do this, but the private sector has the opinion that the public sector should take the lead and they will follow. Since the number of tourists visiting the city is still quite low, for many businesses it would not be beneficial to run a company focused on (food) tourism activities. The public and private sector are both waiting for each other to initiate new development first, but in order to develop food tourism further something needs to be done one way or another.

You need more of a pull factor, because besides food they [tourists] don't know what else to do here [ . . . ] I don't think there are enough attractions out of food to keep people here. – Local Ipoh foodie

---

#### CRITICS ON THE FOOD TOURISM PATHWAY

The food tourism pathway in Ipoh so far has not really been a deliberate one, but food tourism so far has developed organically – which is the same when it comes to the tourism pathway in general. The fact that tourism in Ipoh just developed organically comes with a few problems which makes it more difficult to develop Ipoh as a food tourism destination. As mentioned before, since tourism infrastructure in Ipoh still has to develop further to be able to deliver a total tourism experience, there is more needed than the development of food tourism resources to develop food tourism in Ipoh. The problems that have been identified regarding the food tourism product in Ipoh can be roughly divided into the use of facilities, lack of activities and the accessibility of transportation and information.

The big problem in Ipoh is the lack of a complementing total tourism product, with specific travel products such as accommodation, transport, attractions and other tourist facilities. The combination of the specific travel products create the total travel experience of each individual tourist (Koutoulas, 2004). Food tourism in Ipoh cannot rely on an existing tourism infrastructure: there are not enough quality hotels, transport is lacking and there are not enough activities to entertain tourists while they are not eating. Tourists in Ipoh run out of doing things rather quick and, even though a food tourist might have the ambition to, you cannot eat 24 hours a day. Missing in Ipoh according to all interviewees is facilitation such as amenities, agencies, organisations and public transport, that complement each other. The two major problems that were addressed during the interviews in Ipoh, as well as George Town, are the accessibility of tourism information and the accessibility of (public) transport in Ipoh.

I think by now you can basically summarize the issues that we have in Ipoh under accessibility. Accessibility of information and also accessibility in terms of transportation. – Ipoh blogger

Basic tourism information such as maps, walking trails and brochures about tourist attractions, are not easily accessible - if they are already there in the first place. The existing information and brochures that exists are often not available online, which makes it more difficult for tourists to get this information and get an insight in what the city has to offer. There is also no application for mobile devices with information about Ipoh or even Perak. If you go around the city as a tourist, there is barely any signage or on-site information telling the story about a building, park, or any other place. Often the tourist is able to visit a tourist attraction, but there is not context given. Ipoh lacks accessibility of information and therefore is not sharing its story and history with the visitors. In this way the food tourists who come to Ipoh are able to experience the food, but do not get the option learn the history of the town through its food.

If you say there is no signage, the place is not telling you what to do. So, it is not going to work either. You can do whatever you like, but people don't know what is happening. When there is not enough signage, there is no information about a place. So, everything is passed by and people just do not know. – Festival Director George Town

Food in Ipoh is overrated, totally overrated. And although we get the local tourists come rushing up and they do come up for the Ipoh food, one of the reasons they come is that they know which ones to go to [eateries]. I give an example, you want curry mee, you go up the street here and you get a very fine curry mee. You go down to Old Town and you want curry mee and it won't be good. You've got to know where to go. John was talking about beansprouts, ok we all know that Lou Wong is a very good beansprouts shop, it has never failed it is always good. But there are other ones that sprung up around town, smaller ones, you go to those and it is terrible. – Owner Tourism facility Ipoh 2

Ipoh is mainly a destination for domestic visitors, which also shows in the tourism information that is available. The tourism information that is available is not always available in English for example. All the international travellers indicated that they were missing signs, food brochures, food maps, dedicated food website, tours with local guides, information for internationals instead of locals and an agenda about what is happening in the city.

It was pretty non-existent [promotion of food tourism in Ipoh]. I hardly saw any promotions/advertisement aimed at tourists. Most was to locals. – International traveller 1

I think there is more of a local promotion to Malaysian tourists in particular from large cities, the emphasis is always on the food as the main attraction and this does little to attract tourists from further afield, because they cannot relate to the food as it is not explained to them why it is so special. – International traveller 2

Another problem that Ipoh faces in its food tourism pathway is the transportation issue for tourists. Public transportation was lacking and unreliable back in 2015<sup>8</sup>. Taxis in Ipoh do not run on meters and it is difficult for tourist to get a taxi if they want to. This means that if a tourist does not come by a private car, it is hard to explore areas outside of the city centre, while there are many areas outside the centre that can be visited for the culinary heritage such as the Chinese New Villages and Indian Buntong. In this way those areas are missing out on the economic benefits that tourists can bring. From the demand side, it means that tourists needs are not met which is not beneficial for the total tourism experience. The few tourism activities, such as the caves on the outskirts of the city, that can complement the food tourism resources are not always accessible for tourists. Therefore, transportation does play an important role for the further development of Ipoh as a food tourism destination.

It was mentioned in multiple interviews in Ipoh, and during the focus group, that the tourism sector in Ipoh is currently not working together, but mainly run by a few individual operators. From the state government's point of view, the tourism sector is private sector-driven and they only facilitate in terms of permission etcetera. Therefore, private investors need to come in to further develop Ipoh as a food tourism destination and strengthen the weak tourism activity base Ipoh currently has. Investors are needed who want to develop new tourism products or improve/address the current shortcomings in tourism in Ipoh. The believe from the state government however is that the private sector is responsible for this and that the state government does not have enough funds to support new initiatives. According to the focus group, Ipoh is a town where local people tend to do things themselves, because they do not want to wait until the government does it – this has been the case since the early development of Ipoh as a town. The resilience of local people is seen as a strength, but they also feel that is not feasible to develop the city

---

<sup>8</sup> In 2019 it is believed that that public transport in Ipoh has been improved and is running according to schedule.

all by themselves. Collaboration between all the players in the field of tourism is necessary. In general, there can be currently spoken of a paradox of tourism development Ipoh; new businesses are not profitable, because Ipoh does not have the right numbers of tourists to sustain new business; but new businesses are necessary to attract the right number of tourists. One of the major difficulties when it comes to developing new tourism attractions in Ipoh comes back to this paradox of the private sector, but the government also has limited funds. Therefore, the right balance of collaboration is extremely important and a key to develop Ipoh as a food tourism destination.

I think they really should cooperate with each other. Let's say white coffee, Ipoh white coffee is very famous, everybody knows about it, but nobody knows about the history. The real history about it. So, I think they play a big part of it as well, but right now I can see is they are quite selfish I would say. For example, we have a lot of special things in Ipoh, but nobody really knows about it or maybe people do know about it, but people they don't know the history about it. – Video-producer Ipoh

---

#### SUB-CONCLUSION

Being a successful tourism destination is for the government of the state of Perak one of the main challenges Ipoh faces, but the right mixture of offered tourism products to attract tourists still has to be discovered. In order to attract more tourists, the state government does try to use the image of Ipoh as 'a place with great food' as a way to push other forms of cultural tourism in Ipoh, but they do not push food tourism of Ipoh on its own.

Ipoh has all the potential to become a food tourism destination looking at the culinary heritage of the city, nevertheless the destination has difficulties attracting international tourists or letting domestic visitors stay for longer than a day. In general, there is a lack of tourism resources in Ipoh, as tourism in Ipoh never has been the focus of the state government. The lack of tourism resources does make it more difficult to develop as a food tourism destination, since the tourism infrastructure is not there yet. This is the case for all kind of facilitations, failing public transportation and the lack of basic tourist information available in English. Developing food tourism in Ipoh needs more than the development of food tourism resources, it also needs the development of a sufficient tourism infrastructure that can meet the needs of the additional tourists it will attract with food tourism.

Looking at the food tourism resources it is visible that in Ipoh most of the food tourism resources are focused on consuming or purchasing food. So far, Ipoh misses out on opportunities to give the food experience extra meaning. Since food tourism is not actively pushed by the state government, the further development of food tourism in Ipoh depends on the private sector to set up a complementing whole of food tourism resources. The public and private sector are both waiting for each other to initiate new development first, but in order to develop food tourism further something needs to be done one way or another. The tourism sector in Ipoh is currently not working together, but mainly run by a few individual operators.

The food tourism resources in Ipoh place the city into the first food tourism development order according to Hjalager (2002). In the case of Ipoh, the food tourism resources are mainly eating facilities and tourists are just enjoying the food, instead of understanding, experiencing or gaining knowledge about the culinary heritage. The food tourism pathway in Ipoh so far has not really been a deliberate one, but food tourism so far has developed organically – which is the same when it comes to the tourism pathway in general.

---

#### THE ROLE AND DISCOURSES OF AUTHENTICITY IN IPOH

Authenticity is seen in Ipoh as an extremely important concept when it comes to food tourism in Ipoh and especially as a way to differentiate from George Town, where (as believed by the local actors of Ipoh)

the food is becoming more commercialized and losing its authenticity. The objective authenticity of the culinary heritage in Ipoh is partly constructed by the concept of *terroir* culinary heritage, since dishes such as beansprout chicken and all other dishes based around local rice noodles and beansprouts, rely heavily on the quality and origin of the ingredients. The perceived authentic and uncommercialized food that is offered in Ipoh is the main attraction for tourists to stop in Ipoh (even if it is just for a couple of hours). The unique feature of Ipoh, that at a lot of traditional restaurants, hawkers and cottage food operators are already operating for multiple generations, plays a role in the authenticity discourse around culinary heritage in Ipoh. The fact that in Ipoh hawker stalls can be found that are already operating for many generations, makes clear that the food that is sold is of high quality, unique and authentic, which makes food in Ipoh a unique experience.

Now I think where Ipoh has a bit more edge, is where all these things are still locally produced by local people. They haven't turned into commercialized places like Kuala Lumpur, where the owner has the recipe and they get some foreign workers to sell it. So, I think that is the attraction for Ipoh [authenticity]. A lot of people still come here, because they like to experience this traditional, cooked by the chef itself, kind of taste. – Local foodie Ipoh

While food tourism in Ipoh is slowly growing and more people are attracted to Ipoh as a food tourism destination, there is not a lot done to develop food tourism further while it is expressed that the motivation is there. One of the positive aspects of food in Ipoh for development of food tourism, is that it is believed to still be truly authentic to the place and objective authenticity can still be experienced. The food is not commercialized on a large scale in Ipoh, yet. The perception of many people is that within Ipoh the original taste, kitchen, chef and recipes can still be found and therefore that the food is still authentic – genuine, actual, accurate and real. This has largely to do with the fact that the food catered in Ipoh is still mainly provided for the local people and not (yet) for tourists. There are enough hawker stalls that even though the demand is there to produce and sell more than they do a day, still chose to stick to their current quantities and sell out in a couple of hours. Of course, there are also restaurants in Ipoh that become more commercialized, but this is still a small percentage. The Ipoh food is described as unpretentious, value for money, interesting and unique.

The experience is more authentic and the quality of food. You know there is still a lot of stores in Ipoh, especially in Pasir Pinji, where they will not produce more just because the demand is more. They are more than happy to turn you away and say, 'don't buy my food'. They are that kind. You won't get that in Kuala Lumpur even I think Penang, because of the way they do cherish their tourism so much. – Local foodie Ipoh

---

#### FEAR OF DEVELOPMENT

Where Ipoh is still in the first development order of food tourism development, the city is not as far down the road of development. In Malaysia the focus has been from the 1970s on new development, because new modern development is seen as progression and a way of bringing new life to a declining area, giving the area a new look and boost the identity and status of the place (Said, Aksah, & Ismail, 2013). The image of Ipoh by outsiders is that the city is underdeveloped; from a domestic perspective this is often seen as negative, but when it comes to authenticity it can also be seen as a positive aspect.

So, underdevelopment maybe negative to domestic tourists, but it is paired with authenticity. So, I think there is a unique catch there. – Political community representative Ipoh

As Ipoh is less developed as a tourist destination, most of the food offered is still focused on providing for locals. Nevertheless, Ipoh is facing the same problem as detected George Town: most cottage industries have been operated by the same family for generations, but the younger generation is less interested in taking over the family business. In this way the cottage industries will slowly die and the bigger restaurants will survive (with the danger of losing perceived authenticity of the food).



I think Ipoh should really be out there in these coming ten years, because as you can see the culture in Ipoh is slowly dying now, I would say. Those food stores you've been to, those are run by old people and the next generation will not continue the legacy anymore. So, I think they are basically dying. – Video-producer Ipoh

But you can see the thing in Ipoh is, the famous ones [food stores] will pass it to the next generation. The Hakka noodles place now is run by the sons and the same goes for Lou Wong, those beansprouts chicken is run by the next generation right now. The family businesses, not famous ones but really nice food, famous for the local, it is all old people running them and when I tried to talk to them about where are your children? Some are working in Singapore, some are working in Kuala Lumpur. They [younger generation] think that this kind of job is dirty [food jobs] . . . but if you don't pass it on to your next generation or someone else, this will extinct. I think, it is a mindset, but it needs to be a change of mindset . . . right now people complain 'you cannot earn money with this'; 'I want to be an accountant or something'. – Video-producer Ipoh

Finding the right balance in Ipoh between development and preserving the authenticity of the local food operators without over commercializing is an interesting matter. With development often comes some loss of authenticity of a place, or in the case of food tourism authenticity of the food. Therefore, it is an interesting question what the right balance is between development and preserving authenticity when you want to develop as a food tourism destination.

I think Ipoh has a unique opportunity, but also a winning edge where there is still a lot of preservation, not by policy but because it is not as far down that road of development. That is what is different about us, which is obvious in the number of cottage food operators, that are still operating from their homes. I mean if I have to compare it with my childhood there are a lot less [cottage industries], but right now if you google it and look at the comments about what is authentic about Ipoh food, a lot of it will points towards places in Pasir Pinji that are still operating from people's homes. So, I think that is something that is fundamentally slowly but slowly eliminated in places like Kuala Lumpur and Penang, but still available in Ipoh. Now there are two ways, one is you allow what has happened at Penang and Kuala Lumpur to continue in Ipoh, or you can counter that by helping these cottage operators and cottage industries without overly regulating them, but giving them a helping hand in formalizing without over formalizing. – Political community representative Ipoh

The main discourse regarding authenticity in Ipoh, by all different actors, is the fear of losing authenticity when Ipoh goes down the road of development and 'becoming like George Town'. George Town is on one hand their example of a popular food tourism destination in Malaysia, but on the other hand Ipoh fears to become more commercialized as what they see happening in George Town. Kuala Lumpur and George Town, but also neighbouring Singapore, are food tourism destinations that are seen as places that are popular by tourists but therefore has lost authenticity and commercialized. In a competing food tourism market authenticity can be an important feature to differentiate from other destinations, but the pitfall is that often with the development of (food) tourism comes a loss of authenticity. Therefore, a dissonance can be witnessed in Ipoh between the wish to develop as a food tourism destination in order to have economic benefits and the fear of losing authenticity when food becomes more commercialized. It is inevitable that the food landscape of Ipoh will slightly change and become a bit more commercialized when the city develops more toward a food tourism destination, therefore the question is how much the stakeholder of Ipoh really want the city to become a (food) tourism destination.

Although I welcome development of food tourism, we also need to be mindful about what got them [food tourists] here in the first place, the fact that they [food operators] are local. It is the fact that they are authentic and then if you allow some of the so-called regulation and formalization to go too far and tourist tailor made or making it more and more tourist orientated

a lot of that will disappear **and it shoots itself in the foot**. So, I would say that, keep the focus on fulfilling the needs of the local people and the tourism will grow. As long as you package it well, secondly make it safe [to consume local food], and thirdly through making it safe it [food tourism] will become more attractive. – Political community representative Ipoh

---

#### SUB-CONCLUSION

As Ipoh is not far down the road of development as a (food) tourism destination, the culinary heritage of the city is still perceived to be unique and serving mainly for local inhabitants instead of tourists. The image of Ipoh as an 'authentic' city could be used to develop food tourism further, nevertheless a shared concern in Ipoh is: becoming commercialized such as George Town. There is a dissonance between the ambition to grow as a (food) tourism destination, but also the fear of development being aware that with development comes some loss of perceived authenticity. This dissonance can be related to the question how (food) tourism should be developed further. As described in the section on the history of tourism development in Ipoh, there is a group of local actors that wants to develop tourism through building new tourism icons. This group does not see the need and the possibilities of using authentic (culinary) heritage to grow as a tourism destination. Another group of local actors sees the importance of using authentic (culinary) heritage resources that are already present in the city to develop as a food tourism destination, but also as a way to safeguard culinary heritage. Authenticity does play a central role in the dissonances in Ipoh: the shared fear of losing authenticity when developing food tourism and if doing so if existing authentic (culinary) heritage should be utilized to create new tourism products and develop further as a (food) tourism destination or if new tourism products and attractions should be built from scratch.

In George Town the discourses on heritage and authenticity focused more on how authentic culinary heritage could be protected and preserved. The discourses in Ipoh on heritage and authenticity was focused on how authenticity should, or should not, be used to develop as a food tourism destination. Within the discourses observed and analysed in Ipoh the different types of authenticity were not central in the discussions. In general authenticity was seen as object-related authenticity, something that could be lost by developing as a food tourism destination. While the fear for losing authenticity is there, the question central in the discourses is how to use authenticity and utilize it, not what type of authenticity to use.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 CONCLUSION

It emerged from this study that the discourses on (authentic) culinary heritage can have a different focus and corresponding discussions in two different cities, George Town and Ipoh. This leads to an interesting insight in the origins of culinary heritage of both cities and how this heritage becomes used in local establishments of food tourism. Before I start discussing the main findings of this study, I will briefly summarize the main findings to answer my research questions.

---

#### THE PRACTICES AND DISCOURSES RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULINARY HERITAGE AND FOOD TOURISM IN GEORGE TOWN AND IPOH

The development of the culinary heritage of both George Town and Ipoh is primarily dependent on a. the historical development and the historical mobility of the inhabitants of the cities, b. the culinary materiality (availability of heritage products) and c. the discursive dynamic that emerges around authenticity.

Looking at the historical development and historical mobility of the inhabitants of the cities (a), the results show that, since culinary heritage is a reflection of the history of a city, the crucial role of migration flows to both cities for its development, is represented in the culinary heritage. George Town and Ipoh, both cities where the local inhabitants are a mix of the three main ethnicities of Malaysia (Malay, Chinese and Indian) and others, are *melting pots* of different nationalities with many different nationalities and therefore many different cuisines. The historical mobilities of mainly the Chinese and the Indian, but also all the others, played a crucial role in the food that is nowadays seen as culinary heritage.

The culinary heritage of George Town is a reflection of the history of the port town: its colonial history, the history of being a trading port which meant that many different people from different nationalities visited the city, and the many people from parts of China and India who migrated to the former port town searching for labour. George Town soon became a melting pot of different cultures, with many different nationalities and therefore many different cuisines. Nowadays the Peranakan cuisine, different Chinese dialect cuisines, Indian cuisines and the Malay cuisines are all considered together as the complex composite of culinary heritage in/of George Town. The different cuisines and its corresponding cooking techniques have actually influenced each other (and continue to do so).

The culinary heritage of Ipoh, on the other hand, reflects the history of the former tin mining city, which was built around the tin industry and therefore attracted many migrants from especially the southern part of China and the southern part of India looking for labour. The tin mining industry attracted predominantly Chinese migrants, and therefore the Chinese cuisine is the predominant cuisine in Ipoh. *Cottage industries* play an important role in the culinary heritage of Ipoh as this was the starting point for many culinary heritage dishes and some of them have grown out to nationwide franchise companies, selling the Ipoh culinary heritage such as *Ipoh White Coffee*, *Kacang Putih*, and Heong Keng outside Ipoh and therefore introducing Ipoh culinary heritage to 'outsiders'.

Materiality (b) is linked to the availability of products in a certain region. The availability of products supports the development of culinary heritage through the (unique) products available in the region. Many heritage dishes originating from for example China or India, have been adapted to the local available products making the dishes now unique to either George Town or Ipoh. George Town doesn't have a lot of unique products that supports the development of culinary heritage, except for durian and nutmeg. The culinary heritage of Ipoh, on the other hand, relies heavily on *terroir culinary heritage*, the terroir heritage products are either the main attraction or (one of) the main ingredient of heritage dishes. The concept of terroir is based on the specific environment of place that the food is coming from, giving it a unique taste that cannot be reproduced outside this specific environment. The beansprouts, rice

noodles and the pomelo are products that are unique to Ipoh, because of the unique composition of the soil and the unique PH-value of the water in the Kinta Valley. The terroir culinary heritage products of Ipoh play a major role in many signature heritage dishes, such as *Hainanese Chicken Rice* and *Chee Heong Fun*.

The content of the, political, discourses (c) regarding heritage and authenticity in both cities determines the imaginary of culinary heritage that has developed. Within George Town all different signature ethnic dishes are considered as culinary heritage of George Town and there is a focus on the story of 'George Town as a cultural melting pot'. The state government, which is ruled by DAP, a liberal left party with the vision to establish a social democracy, specifically acknowledges all the different ethnicities and include all different ethnic signature dishes in the food tourism pathway of the city. The culinary heritage of George Town is also part of their listing as UNESCO heritage site, which also comes with certain regulations and rules forcing George Town to maintain their culinary heritage.

The discourse around culinary heritage in Ipoh is mainly that it is a Chinese city with a Chinese culinary heritage (mainly Cantonese), but it is actually the plurality of the city – so also the Indian and Malay that makes the culinary heritage of Ipoh unique. On the other hand, in 2015 the state government of Perak acknowledges all different ethnicities and therefore different ethnic cuisines, but had a focus on Malay heritage.

George Town is currently in the third development order (Hjalager, 2002) where the focus is on experiencing culinary heritage (food and culture). There are many food tourism activities, such as tours and cooking classes, for tourist to experience culinary heritage and understand the underlying context and history. The Penang Food Trail map played an important role in making culinary heritage dishes accessible to everyone, but in the same way played a role in defining what is considered culinary heritage and what is not. Ipoh is currently in the *first development order* (Hjalager, 2002) where the focus is on just *consuming* culinary heritage. Since tourism and also food tourism just developed organically, there is a lack of a total tourism product. Therefore, culinary heritage is not actively used in Ipoh its food tourism pathway, since Ipoh is struggling to deliberately develop tourism (and food tourism).

---

#### THE ROLE OF AUTHENTICITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULINARY HERITAGE AND FOOD TOURISM IN GEORGE TOWN AND IPOH

Looking at the role of authenticity in the unique pathway of food tourism development led to the following conclusion for both cities. Within George Town the two dominant discourses regarding the role of authenticity in context of development of culinary heritage and food tourism are *conservation and regulation of culinary heritage* (AHD) on one hand and *organic development of culinary heritage* (HFB) on the other hand. Authenticity plays a crucial role in both discourses. The conservation and regulation discourse believes that authenticity can only remain and culinary heritage preserved with the use of strict conservation and regulation. Documentation of heritage dishes and its 'correct' ingredients and the foreign worker ban for certain culinary heritage dish are just two examples of how the state government of George Town tries to regulate authenticity of culinary heritage. This discourse sees authenticity and heritage as something *inherited from the past, that needs to be conserved and passed on to the next generation* which corresponds with AHD and the aim for objective authenticity. In this discourse authenticity is seen as a real property of toured objects that can be measured against absolute and objective criteria, which means that these absolute and objective criteria have to be identified by experts. The opposing discourse in George Town could be seen as the HFB perspective. This discourse believes in the organic development of culinary heritage and does not believe in the strict conservation and regulation practices of the other discourse and sees culinary heritage and cuisine as *a living and breathing thing*, something that cannot be *pickled*. In the eyes of this discourse authenticity is not a checklist that needs to be ticked off (if a dish ticks all the boxes it is authentic), but authenticity is about genuineness and local people.

Both discourses value the importance of culinary heritage and the story it is able to tell, but heritage and authenticity are identified and judged differently.

Within Ipoh there is one major shared discourse when it comes to authenticity of culinary heritage namely *the fear of development*, because the local actors in Ipoh are aware that development of food tourism includes a potential loss of authenticity of culinary heritage. George Town is by many actors in Ipoh seen as a food tourism destination that has commercialized and lost its authenticity in developing their food tourism. Despite the fear of development, Ipoh actors are looking for ways to develop as a food tourism development without losing (too much) authenticity. With regards to development strategies there are two discourses that can be observed in Ipoh. One in which authenticity does play a role and one in which it does not. Mainly the state government and state tourism agencies care less about authenticity and are focused on building new tourism attractions, because in their beliefs one should built first before they [tourists] come. The focus of this 'building' is on creating completely new resources, such as MAPS, instead of looking at how to use existing resources, such as culinary heritage. The other discourse in which the use of authenticity for tourism development is important, focusses on utilizing existing resources to create new tourism products/experiences as their focus. Why build completely new tourism attractions while you can also make use of existing culinary heritage to create new tourism products. The authenticity of the culinary heritage does play an important role in this discourse, since the discourse evolves around the believe that Ipoh has a rich authentic culinary heritage.

The dominant discourses around authenticity in both cities are completely different, but according to Hjalager (2002) this can be explained by the different food tourism development orders George Town and Ipoh are in currently. Since George Town already developed from a first order to a *third order*, it has experienced that with the development of food tourism there simultaneously emerges greater commercialization and some loss of (perceived) authenticity. It is logical that their worries are about the effect of food tourism on the authenticity of culinary heritage and how to keep food tourism in George Town authentic to not become a food tourism destination that only becomes tailor made for tourists. When this happens, the destination loses its attractiveness for food tourists looking for *authentic food experiences*. How to keep the food authentic is the current discussion. In comparison we can state that Ipoh is still in a *first order* of food tourism development, with emphasis on food as a *product*, corresponding with constructive authenticity according to Wang (1999). The main question is hence about how such forms of tourism can become developed further, using authenticity or not.

Comparing the discourses of authenticity and its dissonances at both destinations, the differences in the role authenticity in the development of food tourism and the meaning and importance given to the concept can be observed. In Ipoh authenticity is seen as something that is given, something that the city has. The discussion evolves around the question if authenticity should be used in tourism development or not. In Ipoh there is not a lot of attention given to the different types of authenticity, in general authenticity is seen as objective authenticity. In George Town the question central in the authenticity discourses is how authenticity should remain. Therefore, the different types of authenticity all play a role in the discussion on authenticity in George Town and how this should be preserved and used in food tourism development; objective authenticity is searched for and protected by AHD, constructed authenticity defended by HFD, questions are asked about if staged authenticity is an issue at food tourism destinations. Leaving the question what type of authenticity tourists are actually looking for at a food tourism destination; are they searching object-related authenticity or might they be looking for existential authenticity, valuing the authentic experience over the authentic object. It is hard to define what tourists are looking for, in the end it depends on the value and meaning they attach to the concept of authenticity. It is visible in George Town that these different types of authenticity are central in the discourses on authenticity, but also that there is dissonance and different actors hold different meanings and beliefs. It is interesting to see that the types of authenticity start to play a role in the discussion on culinary heritage conservation and preservation in George Town. In Ipoh on the other hand, where the threat of the loss of authenticity and

commercialization is not a real threat yet, these different types of authenticity are not present in the ongoing discussion around food tourism development. So, which type of authenticity is central in the development of food tourism and the role it plays depends on which discourse is dominant in food tourism development at a destination and the different food tourism development order they are in. Nevertheless, different discourses, heritage practices and food tourism development practices can coexist, therefore authenticity can hold different roles in food tourism development; “authenticity lies in the eye of the beholder” (Timothy & Ron, 2013, p. 102).

---

#### WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM BOTH CASE STUDIES IN TERMS OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND HARNESSING OF CULINARY HERITAGE IN RELATION TO THEIR UNIQUE FOOD TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS

The last aim of this study was to identify the lessons that can be learned in terms of the construction and harnessing of culinary heritage in relation to their unique pathways to food tourism development. Based on the case studies there are four lessons that can be learned.

The first lesson is that the dominant culinary heritage discourse in a region has a large impact on how heritage is constructed, which furthermore has implications for how it is used in tourism development. This can be seen when comparing both case studies. The discussion on the importance and role of authenticity differs in different food tourism development orders. It was shown in Ipoh, that the discussion and construction of authenticity in a destination in the first development order was focused on the level of importance that authentic culinary heritage holds for developing food tourism and attracting food tourists or if this should be done by creating new (food) tourism resources from scratch. In contrast, in George Town, a destination in the third food tourism development order, it was no longer the question how authenticity should be used but how it should be protected. The discussion about authenticity was focused on the different constructions of authenticity and how this directly influences the conservation and regulation practices of culinary heritage in George Town. The different discussions on authenticity at both cases sites shows that the importance and role of authenticity differs when food tourism destinations are at different development orders.

The second lesson is that there is a delicate balance between developing and over-commercialization. This can be learned from the case study of George Town, which shows that the ambition of becoming a food tourism destination has turned George Town into a highly commercial area. There is a trap of overdeveloping the local culinary heritage which can result in over-commercialized food tourism. At the time of this study, these developments were not yet visible in Ipoh. However, there exists a (perceived) threat that the food tourism focus of Ipoh will also develop towards a highly commercialised focus. It is important for the key decision makers of Ipoh to take this balance of developing and over-commercialization into account to reduce the threat of becoming a Disneyland for food.

The third lesson is the importance of developing primary resources like hotels and tourism infrastructure before food tourism resources become developed. This lesson can be learned from Ipoh, where primary resources such as transport and tourism information are badly developed. The result of this is that the development of (food) tourism is also lacking. The lack of developed primary resources is the reason that Ipoh is still in the first stage of tourism development and why it is not able to further develop at this point. Food tourism can be seen as a recipe where there first needs to be primary resources like a stove and pots combined with different food ingredients to make a delicious dish.

The last lesson is that the effect of UNESCO listing on the influx of tourists should not be underestimated. Although it is favourable to attract a large number of tourists, the case study of George Town shows that the exponential growth of the number of tourists coming to George Town also brings new challenges.

## CONCLUSION TABLE

Table 10 summarizes the differences between the two cases in terms of culinary heritage, food tourism pathways, authenticity and dissonance.

Table 10 Conclusion table

|  | George Town   | Ipoh   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Key Culinary Developments over time</b> | Melting pot. Inclusion of different ethnic cuisines as part of daily life in the former port city.  | Plurality with a Chinese majority. Inclusion of different ethnic cuisines as part of daily life in the former tin city. Development of Kopi Tiam.  |
| <b>Key Culinary Heritage</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peranakan (Assam Laksa)</li> <li>• Chinese (Char Koay Teow, Oh Sien)</li> <li>• Indian (Nasi Kandar, Mee Goreng)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cantonese (Dim Sum)</li> <li>○ Hainanese (Chicken Rice, Ipoh White Coffee)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Indian (Kacang Putih, Nasi Ganja)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Terroir Culinary Heritage</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durian</li> <li>• Nutmeg</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beansprouts</li> <li>• Rice Noodles</li> <li>• Pomelo</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Key actors/groups</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Government Penang</li> <li>• Penang Global Tourism</li> <li>• Local Heritage groups</li> <li>• Local (tourism) business owners</li> <li>• Food courts</li> <li>• Eateries/Restaurants</li> <li>• Street Hawkers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Government Perak</li> <li>• Local (tourism) business owners</li> <li>• Cottage Industries</li> <li>• Food courts</li> <li>• Eateries/Restaurants</li> <li>• Street Hawkers</li> </ul>     |
| <b>(Food) Tourism history</b>              | Focus from beach tourism, to cultural tourism, to UNESCO listing, to food tourism.  | Limited history. Organic growth. Development from stop-and-go destination towards more cultural tourism.   |
| <b>Food tourism resources</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tours</li> <li>• Cooking classes</li> <li>• Eateries</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eateries</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Food tourism Order</b>                  | Third order (experiencing)  | First order (consuming)  |
| <b>Food tourism critique</b>               | Overdeveloped, regulated and commercialized   | Underdeveloped   |
| <b>Predominant Political Discourse</b>     | Democratic Action Party (DAP)<br><br>Free/democratic/inclusive  | Barisan Nasional (BN – National front)<br><br>Conservative/Malay oriented  |
| <b>Key Authenticity Debate</b>             | Food culture is commercialised.<br><br>What type of authenticity are food tourists looking for?   | Local and 'authentic' food production/consumption versus becoming an iconic food tourism destination.  |
| <b>Dominant heritage discourse</b>         | Authorized Heritage Discourse   | Heritage From Below  |
| <b>Dissonance</b>                          | Conservation and Preservation vs. Organic development of Culinary Heritage  | Development building new icons vs. Development using existing culinary heritage resources  |
| <b>Main threats</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of interest by young generations</li> <li>• Overregulation</li> <li>• Losing authenticity</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of interest by young generations</li> <li>• Becoming like George Town (commercialized and losing authenticity)</li> </ul>  |

## 5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Given these results, I will now discuss the most notable points that are related to: a. heritage from below versus authentic heritage discourse, b. influence of political discourse on heritage, c. authenticity of culinary heritage and d. understanding the role of culinary heritage in tourism development.

To start with point a. **heritage from below (HFB) versus authentic heritage discourse (AHD)**, the two case studies showed different approaches around the use and protection of heritage. The two main discourses that were identified at the two cases can be summarized in terms of AHD and HFB. This study can be seen as an extension of the discussion about AHD versus HFB.

If all 'heritage' is nothing more than the past as imagined from the perspectives of the 'here and now', it is perhaps too simplistic to frame AHD as a process of strategic forgetting and HFB as a positive process of collective memory recovery (Muzaini & Minca, 2018, p. 2)

Often AHD is seen as the 'bad' and HFB as the 'good', but this study supports the view of Muzaini and Minca that this is too simplistic, because both approaches are often overlapping and should not be pitted against each other. AHD and HFB can be used dependent on the political context. Heritage can be represented one way, but experienced in another. Since heritage can be seen as an interpretation from the past in the present, heritage can be interpreted and experienced differently by each individual. Where AHD is seen as heritage that is manufactured as 'top down' by elite groups for socio-economic and political objectives, HFB pays attention to heritage as "a process to understood, practised and experienced on the ground by the people themselves [non-elites]" (2018, p. 1). Analysing the results of this study, the authenticity and heritage discourses can be placed both under AHD and HFB in George Town and Ipoh. Nevertheless, AHD is particularly dominant in George Town, while HFB is dominant in Ipoh. George Town, which is often seen as a city in a liberal state, showed that it is mainly protecting its heritage according to the AHD. Elite groups in George Town, such as state organisations and UNESCO, define what should be considered as heritage and what not – they speak on behalf of the national or supranational population. The Penang Food Trail and the 'foreign worker ban' show how the elite in George Town defines what culinary heritage is and what is not. The narrative around the need to protect and preserve also corresponds to the AHD. While on the other hand, Ipoh, which is often seen as a conservative city, is more acting according the heritage from below discourse since the non-elite is taking the lead in developing (culinary) heritage tourism. The new political situation may turn this into AHD. Furthermore, a question that arises is if George Town is shifting from HFB to AHD, or if they only acted according to AHD for the last couple of years because of the influence of UNESCO and the need to comply to their standards and rules. Further research should give insight in how and in what way there is a shift from AHD to HFB or the other way around.

This brings us to the following notable point: b. **the influence of political discourse on heritage**. As stated before, this case study was conducted at two different destinations with a different political situation. In 2015, Penang (George Town) was the only state in Malaysia ruled by the opposition party - the Democratic Action Party (DAP), while the state of Perak (Ipoh) was ruled by the coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) – the National Front. This study shows how heritage, and in this case culinary heritage, "may be nothing but strategically selected narratives of people and events belonging to another time" (Muzaini & Minca, 2018, p. 1) and can be used to attain socio-economic and political objectives. The vision of DAP, a multi-racial centre-left political party advocating social democracy and secularism, is to establish a peaceful and prosperous social democracy that can unite its disparate races and diverse religions and cultures. Since equitably, equality and inclusion are key concepts of DAP, this is also visible in what is defined as the culinary heritage of George Town by the elite. The narrative of George Town as a melting pot that includes different ethnic cuisines in its culinary heritage is therefore a reflection of the political discourse of the city. In the other case, Ipoh, the results indicate how the state has pushed the Malay heritage of the state. Not to say that, for example, the Chinese and Indian heritage became left out



entirely but it was not the dominant heritage narrative by the political elite. This political discourse, and the defined heritage of Perak by the elite, corresponds with the vision and policies of the New Economic Plan (NEP): restructuring wealth, creating a Malay business community and achieving 30 percent Bumiputera<sup>9</sup> ownership of the corporate sector. Critique on NEP included that the NEP would result in positive discrimination for Bumiputera based on their indignity and negative discrimination for the rest of the people living in Malaysia (Bunnell, 2004). Especially the political discourse in Ipoh, showed how a discourse can attempt to redefine heritage and construct a version of history, in this case the dominance of Malay heritage, that justifies the (political) agenda by the elite and the ongoing exercise of power in society (Taylor, 2013).

The results regarding c. **authenticity of culinary heritage** show that authenticity in the context of culinary heritage is a complicated construct that cannot be easily identified. Authenticity of food is always constructed either as a product or as an experience. This study showed that authenticity, especially in the context of culinary heritage is always a complicated construct, which may not even be applicable to food and culinary heritage. It depends on which type of authenticity (Wang, 1999) is used to define culinary heritage. This study showed that when it comes to authenticity of food there are different opinions about what authenticity is and therefore also what type of authenticity food tourists are looking for. This was shown by the different discourses regarding authenticity in George Town. Is culinary heritage static as AHD claims where the origins of the heritage can be defined, or should we see it as a more organic, living and breathing thing that cannot be pickled and evolves overtime like all cultural entities? Since views on heritage and authenticity determine direction of the development of a tourist destination when it comes to conservation and preservation (regulation and conservation versus let it organically evolve) it is important to ask the question: *does authenticity exist when it comes to culinary heritage?* Or is the search for authenticity of food a response to “the (Western) modernist obsession with the ‘origins of things’” (Staiff & Bushell, 2013, p. 137)?

All cooking is improvised, all ‘traditions’ are fabricated in the sense that decisions are made about what is and what is not marked out as warranting representation/preservation in either oral or written form; all cooking is dynamic not just because of the creativity of individual cooks but because of changes in technology (food storage, handling and preparation) and changing social and economic circumstances (Staiff & Bushell, 2013, p. 140).

The results of George Town showed that respondents identified George Town food as less authentic and more commercialized, in part indicated by the fact that the food prices have raised over the years which resulted in less local people visiting these places. Often this price raise was mentioned when talking about the loss of authenticity, but the question that arises is if because of the higher price of the food a dish becomes less authentic if that dish that is still prepared in the same way with the same ingredients. This could mean that authenticity of food is more than a dish that is authentically prepared, but that the surrounding in which it is served (are locals still present or only tourists/commercialized restaurant or hawker stall) also plays a role for the total experience. It is thus not only about the authenticity of the food itself, but also about the authenticity of the place in which it becomes consumed. These findings correspond with the findings of Sims (2009) when she found that tourists socially construct authenticity of local food and place in three different ways: a food related experience is often considered authentic if it corresponds with the image they created about what a typical food experience for that place (destination) should look like, a food experience seems more authentic when it takes place in a sympathetic surrounding environment, and when the food related experience has some elements of tradition or naturalness.

---

<sup>9</sup> Bumiputera is the term used in Malaysia for the Malay race and indigenous ‘sons of soil’.

When a destination is purely focused on regulation and/or (re)development, making money and becoming 'a Disneyland for food', the streetscape is changing and as such becomes perceived to lose its authenticity. This then probably also results in losing culinary heritage and traditions since that does not fit in the new streetscape anymore. Should authenticity of culinary heritage not only focus on the authentic preparation of heritage food, but also include a sense of place for an authentic experience? When a heritage dish is taken out of the original context, do food tourists still consider their experience as authentic? Singapore is an example of overregulation when it comes to food, getting all the street hawkers of the street and putting them in clean food courts (where they have to raise their prices, because it is more expensive than a spot on the street) (Henderson, Yun, Poon, & Biwei, 2012). Tourists visiting Singapore can still experience the food, that might be prepared in the exact same way for decades, but it is a different experience eating it in a clean food court than eating street food on the streets from an old lady who has been selling this dish in front of her house for decades. Even though the tourists might not be able to experience authenticity from the objective view, they can still have an authentic experience according to the constructivist and postmodern view (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). It can be argued that food authenticity should be looked at by multiple perspectives, since authenticity may go beyond the actual dish that is consumed by the food tourist, it may also be about the whole experience around its culinary heritage. This corresponds with the work of Cuthill (2007) about the importance of co-presence of place and food in the tourist imaginary.

Regarding d. **understanding the role of culinary heritage in tourism development**, it can be argued that culinary heritage is part of the overall tourism product but cannot stand purely on its own. The complete puzzle is the overall tourism product, existing out of different pieces that complement each other. Food, culture, history, nature, shopping are all different components and together with facilitation components such as transportation and information form together the complete puzzle of tourism. To be an attractive tourism destination this puzzle needs to be complete and the different pieces of the puzzle may, or may not, complement one another. Only offering food tourism resources does not necessarily mean that the destination becomes an attractive food tourism destination, or at least not a place to revisit. Therefore, the assumption that destinations with rich culinary heritage can develop food tourism is not complete. It should be added that food tourism can be developed at destination with rich culinary heritage, but it should be a piece of the total puzzle that is the overall tourism product.

This study gave insight in the role of authenticity in food tourism development in both George Town and Ipoh and that this does differ for destinations in different food tourism development orders. This study was focused on discourses on heritage and authenticity dominant in the field of food tourism development. Nevertheless within these discourses a lot of assumptions are made about *what tourists want*, therefore further research looking into the meanings tourists attach to heritage and authenticity at food tourism destinations and the corresponding discourses, can give insight in *what tourists are actually looking for*. Other future research that could be done are similar studies at different destinations in order to look for reoccurring or contradicting results. Since heritage and authenticity are socially constructed concepts and different people attach different meanings to them, the research that can be done on these concepts is endless.

## REFERENCES

- Avieli, N. (2013). What is 'Local Food?' Dynamic culinary heritage in the World Heritage Site of Hoi An, Vietnam. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 8(2–3), 120–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2013.767812>
- Basyir, M. (2018). Penang hawkers share “locals only cook” policy experience. 23-06-2018. Retrieved from <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2018/06/383267/penang-hawkers-share-locals-only-cook-policy-experience>
- Bessièrè, J. (1998). Local development and heritage: traditional food and cuisine as tourist attractions in rural areas. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 38(1), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00061>
- Blakey, C. (2012). Consuming Place: Tourism 's Gastronomy Connection. *University of Hawaii' College of HOHONU*, 10, 51–54.
- Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Bowden, D. (2014). *Enchanting Penang*. John Beaufoy Publishing Ltd.
- Boyd, S. (2015). The “Past” and “Present” of Food Tourism. In I. Yeoman, U. McMahon-Beattie, K. Fields, J. Albrecht, & K. Meethan (Eds.), *The Fututre of Food Tourism - Foodies, Experiences, Exclusivity, Visions and Political Capital* (pp. 11–22). Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications.
- Bunnell, T. (2004). Positioning Malaysia: Connections, divisions and development. In *Malaysia, Modernity and the Multimedia Super Corridor: A Critical Geography of Intelligent Landscapes* (pp. 32–62). Routledge.
- Cheung, S. C. H. (2013). From foodways to intangible heritage: A case study of Chinese culinary resource, retail and recipe in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 19(4), 353–364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2011.654237>
- Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15, 371–386.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Desging: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Sage.
- Cuthill, V. (2007). Performing Betty 's Café and Revolution Vodka Bar. *Space and Culture*, 10(1), 64–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331206296137>
- Di Giovine, M. A., & Brulotte, R. L. (2014). Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage. In R. L. Brulotte & M. A. Di Giovine (Eds.), *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (pp. 1–28). Dorchester: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Dixit, S. K. (2019). *The Routledge Handbook of Gastronomic Tourism*. (S. K. Dixit, Ed.) (First edit). Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1971). The Order of Discourse. *Social Science Information*, 10(2), 7–30.
- Getz, D., Robinson, R. N. S., Andersson, T. D., & Vujicic, S. (2014). *Foodies & Food Tourism*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (2nd editio). Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Longman.
- Hall, C. M., & Gössling, S. (2016). *Food Tourism and Regional Development - Networks, products and trajectories*. (C. M. Hall & S. Gössling, Eds.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org//doi/book/10.4324/9781315691695>
- Hall, C. M., & Mitchell, R. (2001). Wine and food tourism. In N. Douglas & R. Derrett (Eds.), *Special Interest Tourism* (pp. 307–329). John Wiley and Sons Australia, Ltd.
- Hashimoto, A., & Telfer, D. J. (2006). Selling Canadian Culinary Tourism: Branding the Global and the Regional Product. *Tourism Geographies*, 8(1), 31–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616680500392465>
- Henderson, J. C. (2009). Food tourism reviewed. *British Food Journal*, 111(4), 317–326. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00070700910951470>
- Henderson, J. C. (2014). Food and culture: in search of a Singapore cuisine. *British Food Journal*, 116(6), 904–

917. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bfj-12-2012-0291>

- Henderson, J. C., Yun, O. S., Poon, P., & Biwei, X. (2012). Hawker centres as tourist attractions: The case of Singapore. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31(3), 849–855. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2011.10.002>
- Hitchcock, M., King, V. T., & Parnwell, M. J. G. (2010). Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia. In M. Hitchcock, V. T. King, & M. J. G. Parnwell (Eds.), *Heritage Tourism in Southeast Asia* (pp. 1–27). NIAS Press.
- Hjalager, A. (2002). A typology of gastronomy tourism. In A. Hjalager & G. Richards (Eds.), *Tourism and Gastronomy* (pp. 21–35). London: Routledge.
- Hjalager, A., & Richards, G. (2003). *Tourism and Gastronomy*. (A. Hjalager & G. Richards, Eds.). New York: Routledge.
- Ho, T. M. (2009). *Ipoh: When Tin was King*. Perak Academy.
- Hook, D. (2001). Discourse, knowledge, materiality, history: Foucault and discourse analysis. *Theory and Psychology*, 11(4), 521–547.
- Hong, J.-S., & Tsai, C.-T. (2012). Culinary Tourism Strategic Development: an Asia-Pacific Perspective. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 14(1), 40–55.
- Ignatov, E., & Smith, S. (2006). Segmenting Canadian Culinary Tourists. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 9(3), 235–255. <https://doi.org/10.2167/cit/229.0>
- Jenkins, G. (2008). Whose Heritage? Whose Culture? Whose Space? *Contested Space - Cultural Heritage and Identity Reconstructions: Conservation Strategies Within a Developing Asian City*. LIT Verlag Munster.
- Jennings, G. (2001). *Tourism Research*. John Wiley and Sons Australia, Ltd.
- Khoo, S. L., & Badarulzaman, N. (2014). Factors Determining George Town as a City of Gastronomy. *Tourism Planning & Development*, (April 2014), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2013.874365>
- Khoo, S. N. (2014). George Town The discreet charm of rejuvenated heritage. *Historic Environment*, 26(3), 40–49.
- Khoo, S. N., & Jenkins, G. (2002). George Town, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia: Development Strategies and Community Realities. In W. S. Logan (Ed.), *The Disappearing "Asian" City - Protecting Asia's urban heritage in a globalizing world* (pp. 208–228). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khoo, S. N., & Lubis, A.-R. (2005). Ipoh & Modern Kinta. In *Kinta Valley - Pioneering Malaysia's Modern Development* (pp. 187–267). Ipoh: Perak Academy.
- Khor, S. (2016). The Origins of the Hokkien, Cantonese, and other Chinese Dialect Groups in Malaysia. Says. Retrieved from <https://says.com/my/lifestyle/history-ancestral-origin-spoken-dialect-of-chinese-people-in-malaysia>
- Kotler, P., Bowen, J., & Makens, J. (1996). *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Koutoulas, D. (2004). Interim symposium of the Research Committee on International Tourism of the International Sociological Association. In *Understanding the Tourism Product*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2250.4806>
- Lim, J. (2018). Guide to kacang putih. Retrieved April 12, 2019, from <https://www.timeout.com/kuala-lumpur/restaurants/guide-to-kacang-putih>
- Long, L. M. (2004). *Culinary Tourism*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- MacCannell, D. (1973). Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 79(3), 589–603.
- May, T. (1997). *Social Research* (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Muzaini, H., & Minca, C. (2018). Rethinking heritage, but 'from below.' In *After Heritage - Critical Perspectives on*

- Heritage from Below* (First, pp. 1–21). Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788110747>
- Myheritage Technovation. (2009). Ipoh Heritage Trail - Map 1. Ipoh: Myheritage Technovation Sdn Bhd.
- Pearson, D., & Pearson, T. (2016). Branding Food Culture: UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy. *Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing*, 28(2), 164–176.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08974438.2015.1035472>
- Pinji Food Fest 2015. (2014). Our Mission. Retrieved March 22, 2015, from <http://pinjifoodfest.blogspot.nl/>
- Poon, A. (1993). *Tourism, Technology and Competitive Strategies*. Wallingford: CAB International.
- Pratt, J. (2009). Food values - The Local and the Authentic. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 91(1), 184–196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8276.2008.01175.x>
- Reisinger, Y., & Steiner, C. J. (2006). Reconceptualizing object authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(1), 65–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2005.04.003>
- Richards, G. (2002). Gastronomy: an essential ingredient in tourism production and consumption? In A. M. Hjalager & G. Richards (Eds.), *Tourism Gastronomy* (pp. 3–22). London: Routledge.
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice - A guide for social science students and researchers*. (J. Ritchie & J. Lewis, Eds.) (First edit). SAGE.
- Said, S. Y., Aksah, H., & Ismail, E. D. (2013). Heritage Conservation and Regeneration of Historic Areas in Malaysia. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 105, 418–428.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.11.044>
- Sieber, J. (1992). *Planning Ethically Responsible Research: A Guide for Students and Internal Review Boards*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Sims, R. (2009). Food , place and authenticity : local food and the sustainable tourism experience. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 17(3), 321–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580802359293>
- Sivalingam, G. (1996). Case Study of Ipoh, Malaysia. In *The Management of Secondary Cities in Southeast Asia* (pp. 108–133).
- Smith, L. (2006). The discourse of heritage. In *Uses of heritage* (pp. 11–43). New York: Routledge.
- Smith, S. L. J., & Xiao, H. (2008). Culinary Tourism Supply Chains: A Preliminary Examination. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(3), 289–299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287506303981>
- Staiff, R., & Bushell, R. (2013). The rhetoric of Lao / French fusion: beyond the representation of the Western tourist experience of cuisine in the world heritage city of Luang Prabang, Laos. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 8(2–3), 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2013.767808>
- Taylor, S. (2013). *What is discourse analysis?* (G. Crow, Ed.) (First edit). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Teoh, A. (2017). *Greater Than a Tourist - Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia*. Lock Haven, PA: CZYK Publishing.
- The True Story of White Coffee Every Malaysian Should Know. (2013). Retrieved February 6, 2019, from <https://says.com/my/lifestyle/the-true-history-of-white-coffee-from-malaysia-ipoh>
- Timothy, D. J. (2016). Heritage cuisines, foodways and culinary traditions. In *Heritage Cuisines: Traditions, identities and tourism* (pp. 1–24). Routledge.
- Timothy, D. J., & Boyd, S. W. (2006). Heritage Tourism in the 21st Century : Valued Traditions and New Perspectives. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 1(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17438730608668462>
- Timothy, D. J., & Ron, A. S. (2013). Understanding heritage cuisines and tourism: identity, image, authenticity, and change. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 8(2–3), 99–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2013.767818>
- UNESCO. (n.d.). Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good safeguarding practices. Retrieved July 25, 2019, from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>

- UNESCO. (2008). Twenty-seven new sites inscribed. Retrieved August 20, 2015, from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/453/>
- UNESCO. (2009). *Decisions adopted at the 32nd session of the world heritage committee*. Paris.
- UNESCO. (2011a). *Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca: Melaka and George Town - Nomination file*.
- UNESCO. (2011b). What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?
- UNESCO. (2018). *Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage - 2018 Edition*. Paris.
- UNWTO. (2012). *Global Report on Food Tourism*. Madrid.
- Vecco, M. (2010). A definition of cultural heritage: From the tangible to the intangible. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 11(3), 321–325. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2010.01.006>
- Walter, P. (2017). Culinary tourism as living history: staging, tourist performance and perceptions of authenticity in a Thai cooking school. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 12(4), 365–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2016.1207651>
- Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 349–370.
- Wilkinson, S. (2004). Focus group research. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practices* (pp. 177–199). Sage.
- Wu, Z., & Hou, S. (2015). Heritage and Discourse. In E. Waterton & S. Watson (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (pp. 37–51). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137293565>
- Xu, S. (2005). *A Cultural Approach to Discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research - Design and Methods* (Third Edit). Sage.
- Yu, E. (2016). Top 10 places to visit in Asia in 2016, Lonely Planet. CNN Travel. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/lonely-planet-best-in-asia-2016/index.html>
- Yusoff, N., Salehuddin, M., Zahari, M., Zain, M., Kutut, M., Shaazali, M., & Sharif, M. (2013). Is Malaysian Food Important to Local Tour Operators? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 105, 458–465. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.11.048>

APPENDIX 1: INVITATION FOR THE FORUM ON FOOD, FESTIVAL & TASTEBUD TICKLING TOURISM



you are cordially invited as a special guest to a

# Forum on Food, Festival & Tastebud Tickling Tourism

5th June 2015 @ 7:30pm

at





## Forum on Food, Festivals & Tastebud Tickling Tourism

### Introduction

Ipoh has rich culinary heritage and therefore great natural resources for the development of (food) tourism. Where George Town is already a well-known food tourism destination, Ipoh remains behind. Even though Ipoh is nationally well known for its great plurality of cuisines and food specialities, international tourists skip Ipoh on their visit to Malaysia and maybe only make a quick lunch stop on their way from Kuala Lumpur to Penang.

Ipoh can be much more than just a touch and go place, the city has much more interesting places to discover besides Old Town. So, Ipoh needs to be rebranded, improved and enhanced from the current image; and tourism activities need to be created to attract tourists. Currently the main tourist attractions of Ipoh are the old-heritage buildings, the limestone caves and the great food that Ipoh offers.

Tourism can bring great benefits to Ipoh and be used as a tool for economic and social development.

Because of the rich culinary heritage of Ipoh, food tourism can be a good niche within tourism to focus on. Gastronomy has become a great tool to develop tourism destinations by attracting more tourists to a destination and a great tool for destinations that are struggling at the critical stage of the tourist product lifecycle. So, Ipoh needs to be promoted as a great and worth visiting food tourism destination, that offers a different experience than is offered elsewhere.

The main reason for a food tourists to visit a destination is to experience the food and it's local culture through consuming food. Overall food tourists wants to experience 'the other', the authentic experience, and want to learn about the local culture through food.

An issue is that only offering food and eateries does not make a place a food tourism destination. The question is how value and worth can be added; and a 'visiting food experience' can be created. This does not mean that new tourist attractions need to be built or created, but the current natural food tourism resources need to be used in a more effective way. According to research and practice in other food tourism destinations, activities and events are the main attractions for food tourists to visit a place.

At the moment, research is conducted on food tourism as an economic development tool for communities within the cities of Ipoh and George Town. The aim of this research is to gain knowledge that can be used as a starting point for development of a new food tourism strategy to attract more domestic and international food tourists to the greater Ipoh area, which can have benefits for the tourism industry as a whole .

### Questions

1. What are the unique selling points of Ipoh? How can they be used?
2. How can Ipoh be branded as a worth-visiting food tourism destination?
3. What are the main problems Ipoh faces in its development as a food tourism destination?
4. How can the natural tourism resources that Ipoh possesses be used to attract more international and domestic tourists?
5. Which places in Ipoh can attract food tourists but is currently not used in tourism promotion?
6. What can be used as the best food tourism development strategy for Ipoh?
7. How can local communities be part of food tourism in Ipoh

**come share your views  
and be a part of ipoh's  
Food Tourism  
Revolution**

**5th June 2015 @ 7:30pm**  
**Mini Oasis Library**  
**118, Jalan Sultan Iskandar, 30000 Ipoh**  
**RSVP by call, whatsapp or email**  
**0124728387 or**  
**prospect.perak@gmail.com**