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An analysis of the integration of local cuisine into international destination marketing strategies for Malaysia

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An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

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Doctor of Philosophy

12 August 2016
Thesis Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Signed: ........................................ Date: ........11 August 2016......
Abstract

Understanding the relationship between local cuisine, tourists and destinations has gained the serious attention of many tourism scholars over the last 16 years. Most studies have focused on the role of local cuisine and food choices to influence tourists’ motivation to travel and extend their period of stay, as a unique selling point (i.e. competitive advantage) for a tourist destination, and place development. However, deeper understanding of ‘how and why’ local cuisine is integrated into the international tourist destination marketing has attracted less attention. This thesis investigates the way in which local cuisine is integrated into the Malaysian Government’s destination marketing strategies for the country. It specifically focuses on the policy environment within the tourist industry administration, which has driven local cuisine utilisation as part of the experiences, roles and activities employed, strategic marketing initiatives developed, and the way Malaysian cuisine is represented by the Malaysian Government. Incorporating local cuisine into a multicultural identity has been a deliberate strategy that the Malaysian Government had adopted to market itself as an international tourist destination. However, to achieve this outcome, the Malaysian Government has had to develop a clear understanding of the role of local cuisine in the construction of its destination identity.

The study is situated within the framework of the interpretive, social constructivist paradigm and employs two case studies in order to understand the role of local cuisine in destination marketing. These case studies comprise two main Malaysian food campaigns: MalaysiaKitchen Programme (MKP) and CitraRasa. The thesis uses a combination of archival (i.e. tourism-related policies and relevant documents) and empirical (i.e. interviews and observations) data sources.

The findings reveal that the Malaysian Government, through relevant tourism policies, has substantially driven local cuisine utilisation as part of the tourism products and experiences offered in Malaysia. Continuous cooperation and support from relevant tourism and hospitality representatives, as well as strategic food marketing initiatives, were the essence of its success. Yet, the Malaysian Government has struggled to clearly identify a nuanced/all-encompassing concept of Malaysian cuisine. This becomes more complicated with the nature of Malaysia’s multicultural background. It was found that the topic of local cuisine is prone to be sensitive and very controversial within the Malaysian context.
Publication and Presentations Associated with this Thesis

The following publications and presentations have been undertaken throughout the completion of this PhD research:

Conference Proceeding Paper:


• The content of this conference paper is based on the findings and discussions in Chapters One, Two and Five of this thesis.

Newspaper Articles:


• The content of this newspaper article is based on the preliminary findings at Malaysian Fest 2013 event in Sydney and discussions in Chapters Six of this thesis.

Preliminary Findings Presentations:

Jalis, M. H. (2014). *Collaboration of various stakeholders to promote Malaysian cuisine in international destination marketing strategies*. Presented at Joint Universities Symposium, 6 August 2014, Southern Cross University, Gold Coast Beachside campus, Qld


• The content of these presentations are based on the findings and discussions in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven of this thesis.
Acknowledgements

Here I am, sitting on this chair thinking and writing these acknowledgements. Over the last three and a half years that I have spent at the Southern Cross University, Australia, I have encountered many amazing individuals who have given me their continuous support for my PhD completion. These are the people to whom I wish to extend my utmost gratitude.

I would like to begin with my supervisors, Associate Professor Dr Kevin Markwell (principal supervisor) and Dr Deborah Che (co-supervisor). Thank you for always being there, for constantly advising and motivating me, and spending countless hours revising my thesis, draft after draft. I have gained the relevant research skills to be a well-trained researcher and I will never forget all these positive experiences. Not forgetting my former co-supervisor, Dr Meredith Wray, thank you for sharing your thoughtful ideas and providing the opportunity for me to attend and learn about tourist destination marketing in her tourism marketing class during my first year.

My special thanks to these experts for their contributions: Emeritus Professor Dr Barbara Santich from the University of Adelaide for her invaluable ideas on gastronomy and tourism; and Professor Dr Noel Scott from Griffith University for his comments and suggestions on the preliminary findings of this research during my presentation at the Joint Symposium Universities, Southern Cross University (SCU) Gold Coast campus in mid-2014. I would also like to thank Dr Richard Robinson from the University of Queensland for his willingness to share thoughtful ideas. My deepest appreciation goes to Professor Perry Hobson from Taylor’s University Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for his insights on this PhD research from the lens of a tourist destination marketing expert.

This PhD research was also made possible with the participation and commitment from the Malaysian Government tourism authorities, both in Malaysia and Australia, the Malaysian restaurant operators, event organisers, tourists and many others. Your contributions have helped in the completion of this research.

Thank you to the School of Business and Tourism (SBaT), SCU, for the opportunity to pursue my PhD and SBaT academic staff: Professor Elizabeth Robert (Head of SBaT), Associate Professor Dr Michael Charles (Director of Higher Researcher Degree), Dr John Haw, Dr Silvia Nelson and many others. To Dr Brent Moyle, Dr Kay Dimmock and Professor Dr Betty Weiler, thank you for your insightful and constructive comments.
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A special thanks to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and SCU for the financial assistance given to me in the form of scholarships and various grants.

To my dearest family members and friends, Siti Tarayi Tun Biyajid Athani, Harlina Mohd, Zatuliffah Mat Fuza, Abd Razak Abu Kassim, Mohaini Mohamed@Naba, Noridah Sain and Rachel Ryan, thank you for being good friends in every possible way. To my cousin, Jefry Elias, thank you for your encouragement that keeps me stronger.

I reserve my last thank to Bonda Zikrol Mohd Shabir, you are always a wonderful mum. Thank you for your patience, your trust and your prayers. To my siblings, Rohaizah Jalis (elder sister) and Mohamad Haizam Jalis (younger brother) as well as my lovely nephew (Afiq) and nieces (Alya, Ika and Raina), I know you all are proud of what I have achieved. You guys have been my rock the whole time. I love you!
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved late father, Ayahanda Jalis Mohamad. You are always my favourite and best superhero!

&

To my late elder brother, Mohd Fazlee Jalis. I am glad you were my bigger brother and I will never forget every single memory of our childhood.

“May your soul rest peacefully in paradise. Amen”
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## Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>Asian Food Channel</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>AUD</td>
<td>Australian Dollar</td>
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<td>CTC</td>
<td>Canadian Tourism Commission</td>
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<td>DMO</td>
<td>Destination Marketing Organisation</td>
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<td>EPU</td>
<td>National Economic Planning Unit</td>
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<td>EXIM</td>
<td>Export-Import Bank Malaysia</td>
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<td>EXCO</td>
<td>State Executive Council</td>
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<td>ETP</td>
<td>Economic Transformation Programme</td>
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<td>IDD</td>
<td>Industry Development Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>Malaysia Airline System</td>
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<tr>
<td>MITI</td>
<td>Ministry of International Trade and Industry</td>
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<td>MKFF</td>
<td>MalaysiaKitchen Financing Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKP</td>
<td>MalaysiaKitchen Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOF</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTAC</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTOUR</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTPB</td>
<td>Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYR</td>
<td>Malaysian Ringgit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Development Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Economic Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFHL</td>
<td>National Food Heritage List</td>
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<td>NKEA</td>
<td>National Key Economic Areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Research Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>Return On Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Small Medium Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STB</td>
<td>Singapore Tourist Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDC</td>
<td>Tourism Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNQ</td>
<td>Tropical North Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRA</td>
<td>Tourism Research Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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UNWTO : United Nations World Tourism Organisation
US : United States
VMY : Visit Malaysia Year
Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the context of modern tourism, the opportunity to enjoy local cuisine\(^1\) has been recognised as an integral part of the mix of tourist experiences that a destination can offer. As Richards (2012, p. 14) explains, local cuisine ‘provides more than nourishment, it is also a key part of all cultures, a major element of global intangible heritage, and an increasingly important attraction for tourists’. The association between local cuisine and tourism has become increasingly important and it has been estimated in one study that 30 per cent or more of tourist expenditure is devoted to food when travelling (OECD, 2012). As such, local cuisine may be used by destination management organisations (DMOs) as a platform for marketing tourist destinations.

This chapter presents the overall conceptual framework that underpins the present study, which provides an analysis of the integration of local cuisine in international destination marketing strategies for Malaysia. The chapter begins by providing an overview of local cuisine, destination marketing and current Malaysian cuisine issues (Section 1.2). Following this, Section 1.3 outlines the research aim and objectives. The relevance and justification for undertaking this study are explained in Section 1.5. Subsequently, Section 1.6 highlights the scope of the study. Section 1.7 presents a list of the definitions of the key terms used in this thesis. The organisation or structure of the thesis is outlined in Section 1.8.

1.2 Formative Background

This section navigates the study topic in a broad setting. A much more in-depth discussion is provided in the literature review (Chapter Two) and analysis of the policy environment (Chapter Four). This section begins by providing the study background, commencing with an overview of the role of local cuisine in destination marketing strategies. Following this is a brief investigation of the Malaysian context, tourism industry development and local cuisine marketing initiatives.

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\(^1\) Local cuisine refers to the characteristic manner or style of preparing food in a particular region, in the case of this thesis, the nation state of Malaysia. Local cuisines vary based upon the availability of ingredients and trade, geographical spaces and climates, cooking traditions and methods, and cultural and religious differences (Civitello, 2011; Rozin, 1992).
1.2.1 Local Cuisine and Destination Marketing

Local cuisine plays an important role in contemporary tourist experiences and tourism industry development agendas. This is evidenced by the increasing number of countries that are starting to showcase the range of distinctive foods that are available in order to create what might be called a ‘local taste’ (e.g. Thailand, Korea and Indonesia). Incorporating local cuisine into existing tourism packages, DMOs or relevant tourism authorities can enhance a destination’s image, diversify travelling experiences and encourage tourist-spend. Furthermore, incorporating local cuisine offers benefits to destinations by supporting their economic development and increasing community social wellbeing. To ensure success, DMOs and relevant authorities need to have a clear understanding of their local cuisine, especially in destination identity construction.

In many countries, local produce and cuisine can be considered a part of a distinctive destination which reflects local culture and identity. For example, rice is a staple food in most Asian countries, such as Japan (Takahashi & Honma, 2009). Within this destination, Japan’s environmental and landscape values, history, culture and traditions are strongly entwined in the marketing of Japanese cuisine as part of Japan’s destination identity (UNWTO, 2012). Similarly, the unique cuisines of France, Italy and Spain are well recognised worldwide, and have become an attraction to tourists. The success of cuisine-based marketing has inspired other countries, including Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, to promote their local cuisine as part of their distinctive culture. The utilisation of local cuisine as part of a destination’s image and to increase the diversity of products and experiences available to tourists may help to strengthen a tourist destination’s identity and competitiveness.

Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez-Canizares (2012) examined the motivations of tourists for visiting Cordoba in Spain and found that sampling the local cuisine was either the most or second-most important motivation. Their study identifies that the majority of tourists agreed that local cuisine experiences were among the most important aspects for them when travel to Cordoba. This knowledge has added to the literature on tourist’s motivations for being involved in food tourism or food-related activities (e.g. Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Chang & Yuan, 2011; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2013). Blakey (2012) explains that there is a newfound appreciation and demand for local cuisine. Local cuisine can provide a narrative for destinations, which tourists are willing to travel to in order to experience. Thus, harnessing the ‘story of food’ by connecting local cuisine to cultural and historical contexts is an important consideration in destination marketing strategies.
Su and Horng (2012) argue that reducing impediments to experiencing local cuisine has been seen as critical in the drafting of many destination marketing strategies. In addition, they suggest that using consistent and authentic images of local foods and cuisine appears to be important for marketing success.

A recent and popular marketing initiative that has been instigated by some DMOs to organise a local cuisine campaign or event clearly defines and presents the local cuisine available within a region. Examples include: ‘Taste of Melbourne’, ‘Amazing Taste of Thailand’, and the ‘Korean Food Festival’. The main intention is not the selling or buying of local food and products, but to showcase a place or destination where many local food producers combine to present the local cuisine to visitors through food tasting, cooking demonstrations and souvenirs (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Another popular marketing strategy that demonstrates the critical connections between local cuisine and tourism is the use of ‘food and eating out’ as a promotional theme. This has been particularly evident in the Singapore and Hong Kong tourism boards’ marketing campaigns that position each country as a ‘food paradise’ (Henderson, 2004; Henderson, 2009; Horng & Tsai, 2012).

Corigliano (2002) emphasises that the incorporation of local cuisines in destination marketing needs specific planning, an efficient marketing strategy and stable partnerships to market unique products in order to create a positive image for a region and to build efficient and competitive networks. Moreover, there is a need to coordinate government policy related to tourism and the food sector (e.g. producers, restaurants and other food outlets) to drive demand for tourism. Okumus, Knock, Scantbury and Okumus (2013) emphasise that it is essential that governments promote local cuisine through the development of a comprehensive marketing strategy that fosters cooperation amongst various stakeholders. This is important for adopting a strategic approach to integrating local cuisine into a destination’s identity and developing effective promotional tools.

1.2.2 The Malaysian Context

Building on the increased demand among tourists for destination food experiences, as well as on its capability to develop tourism and improve identities, the Malaysian Government has shown its commitment to marketing local cuisine as a tourism signature of the country. Local cuisine was originally featured as one of the core tourism attractions during the first ‘Visit Malaysia Year’ (VMY) in 1990 which aimed to market Malaysia as an international tourist destination. Through the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC, formerly known as MOTOUR) and the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board
(MTPB, also internationally known as Tourism Malaysia), VMY was launched to attract international tourists to experience unique local tourist sites and motivate them to stay longer, as well as encourage domestic tourists to discover Malaysia. Since then, the promotion of local cuisine has been incorporated in various ways into the destination marketing campaigns and initiatives of the Malaysian Government as well as by the tourism industry itself.

In 2006, the Malaysian Government included local cuisine as one of the national agendas and it was mentioned in (known in Malaysia as Rancangan Malaysia or RMK) the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006–2010), with the aim of encouraging more Malaysian small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially in food production. At the same time, there was a growing recognition of the value of Malaysian cuisine for worldwide branding. This led to the introduction of two major Malaysian cuisine marketing campaigns (i.e. the MalaysiaKitchen Programme (MKP) and CitraRasa\(^2\)). In addition, MTPB developed an overarching strategic marketing plan, titled ‘Promotional Plan 2007/2008’, which promoted local cuisine as part of the tourist experience in Malaysian tourist destinations (MTPB, 2007). This was the first time Malaysian cuisine had been identified and incorporated in such a plan for national and international tourism marketing initiatives.

Before proceeding with a discussion of local cuisine and the Malaysian tourism industry, it is important to have a clear understanding of the country’s portfolio based on its political geography. This provides a clear understanding of the formation of the identity of Malaysian cuisine and its association with the people and how they live.

The South China Sea divides Malaysia into two parts: East Malaysia (on the island of Borneo) and Peninsular Malaysia (also known as West Malaysia or Malaya). The two states of Sabah and Sarawak, and the Federal Territory of Labuan make up East Malaysia. Peninsular Malaysia is located between Thailand and Singapore and is divided into four main regions: the Southern (Johor, Melaka and Negeri Sembilan), Central (Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya), East Coast (Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan) and Northern (Perak, Kedah, Penang and Perlis) regions. In all, Peninsular Malaysia comprises eleven states and two territories. This is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

---

\(^2\) MalaysiaKitchen Programme (MKP) was introduced in 2006 as an international food marketing campaign. CitraRasa, formerly known as the Fabulous Food 1Malaysia (FF1M), was launched in 2009 nationwide for both domestic (the main target market) and international (those who travel in Malaysia) tourists.
The federal government hub in Putrajaya and the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, are located on the peninsula, and trading and business activities take place mostly in the northern, central and southern regions. Therefore, it is not surprising that in 2014 the population of the peninsula was almost triple that of East Malaysia (see Table 1.1), with 79.6 per cent of the Malaysian population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2016, June 27).

Malaysia, as shown in Table 1.1, has three main ethnic groups—Malay, Chinese and Indian—together with a number of ‘minority ethnicities’, such as Indigenous tribal groups including the Dayak and Iban peoples of Sarawak, Baba Nyonya or Chinese Peranakan, Chetty or Indian Peranakan and Portuguese. While Malay is the national language and Islam is the official religion, each ethnic group is permitted to follow other religions, speak their own language and have their own culture and cuisine.

The broad range of ethnic groups and different religious and cultural practices contribute to the concept of multiculturalism. The MTPB promotes multiculturalism as part of the country’s national identity through the current tourism tagline ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’. The
multicultural status reflects Malaysia’s colourful lifestyle and cuisine, which also contribute to the tourism industry as well as economic development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population (millions)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West or Peninsular Malaysia</td>
<td>24.420</td>
<td>78.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Malaysia</td>
<td>6.573</td>
<td>21.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.993</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Population (millions)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>19.150</td>
<td>61.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6.620</td>
<td>21.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1.988</td>
<td>6.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Malaysian citizens</td>
<td>2.965</td>
<td>9.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.993</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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1.2.3 Tourism Industry Development in Malaysia

DMOs have progressively promoted the country globally for more than four decades. According to Marzuki (2010), this systematic promotion started in the mid-1960s when the tourism industry was administered by the Culture Department of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth. Four products (i.e. forests/national parks, wildlife, islands and bird watching) were recognised and promoted under the nature and island tourism theme (Marzuki, 2010). However, none of these products were cultural—instead they were all based on nature or activities relating to nature. Tourism made a significant contribution to economic growth, and in 1972 the Malaysian Government established the Tourist Development Corporation (TDC) specifically to plan, organise and participate in tourism marketing and promotional activities. Twenty years later, the MTPB, also known as Tourism Malaysia, replaced the TDC. With help from 13 state offices, 37 overseas offices and eight marketing representatives, tourism has become the second-largest industry in terms of its contribution to national income (Marzuki, 2010).

According to the MTPB (2015a), the country received 27.4 million tourists in 2014. This figure was slightly higher than in 2012, which recorded 25.03 million tourist arrivals. This has brought Malaysia into the list of the top ten most-visited tourist destinations in
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

As shown in Table 1.2, food and beverage consistently appeared as the third-highest tourist expenditure item after accommodation and shopping. The amount of money spent on food and beverage increased steadily from 2005 to 2014. With 10.1 per cent or MYR4041.1 million ($1224.6AUD million) growth between 2005 and 2014, this shows that food and beverage consumption has a significant role in tourists’ experiences in Malaysia. However, part of this food and beverage expenditure can include just the basic, every-day eating that tourists require.

Table 1.2: Components of tourist expenditure (MTPB, 2007, 2012a, 2015a)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>10,074.6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17,340.2</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19,963.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>18,653.5</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19,823.9</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>21,860.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>23,285.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>22,190.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>11,096.4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>6,646.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10,211.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>14,048.4</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>18,390.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>19,763.9</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>21,060.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>19,419.3</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>14,936.5</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food and beverages</td>
<td>6,388.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9,716.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>9,980.1</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>9,880.1</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>10,400.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>4,940.1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>4,841.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local transportation</td>
<td>3,706.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5,423.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4,713.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4,057.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4,450.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5,100.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3,962.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>1,279.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,751.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1,816.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>2,038.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3,100.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2,821.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3,341.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic airfare</td>
<td>1,264.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,259.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2,090.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3,694.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6,003.1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>10,060.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4,928.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organised tour</td>
<td>1,025.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,420.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2,482.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2,422.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2,536.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2,798.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1,676.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>990.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,335.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1,199.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1,635.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1,897.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2,500.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1,700.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total (RM Billion)</strong></td>
<td>31.9541</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>56.84057</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50.33159</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60.22567</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>65.44533</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>72.60027</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.4489</td>
<td>100</td>
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1.2.4 Malaysian Cuisine as a Tourism Product

It has been argued that the diversity of its food and cuisine reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of Malaysian society. As mentioned earlier, the cultural integration process amongst the Indigenous people and settlers in the early days of Malaysia’s formation is seen as an important contributor to the development of contemporary Malaysian cuisine. The multicultural identity of Malaysia has laid a strong foundation for defining Malaysian cuisine. This can be seen through various marketing initiatives undertaken by the Malaysian Government to promote local cuisine (e.g. MKP and CitraRasa food marketing campaigns). In addition, a number of scholars believe multicultural identity is one of the key concepts for understanding and defining Malaysian cuisine (Yoshino, 2010; Jalis, Che & Markwell, 2014; Henderson, 2014; Duruz & Khoo, 2015; Olmedo, 2015). Multiculturalism has been materially symbolised through: ‘fusion’, which is the formation of cuisines out of the influences of the predominant ethnic populations of
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

Malays, Chinese and Indians (Jalis et al., 2014) or ‘eating together’, also referred to as *rojak* (i.e. mixture); interethnic exchange, which creates the complex forms of flavours in a cuisine (Duruz & Khoo, 2015); and/or ‘creole’, which is the continual exchange between various ethnic culinary traditions to form trans-ethnic cuisines (Olmedo, 2015).

Incorporating multicultural identity into Malaysian cuisine has been a deliberate strategy used to market and promote the country as an international tourist destination. This corresponds to the New Economic Policy (NEP), which emphasises a balanced socio-economic distribution and encourages integration among ethnic groups to create a sense of belonging to the Malaysian nation. Encouraging integration among a broad range of ethnic groups in Malaysia has spurred the development of Malaysian cuisine (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014). A detailed discussion of the NEP and its association with the social and political conditions that contribute to local cuisine development and the tourism industry can be found in Chapter Four.

The arrival of Chinese and Indian ethnic groups in the nineteenth century added additional flavours to Malay food. Ismail (1989) states that the Chinese and Indians were brought by the British as indentured labour to work in the mines (Chinese) and rubber plantations (Indians). Chinese Malaysians comprise the second-largest ethnic group. They introduced culinary influences, such as using specific food ingredients (e.g. seafood, fermented fish sauce and rice vermicelli) and cooking styles (e.g. stir-fry and steaming), from Southern China, particularly from Fujian and Henan (Jalis, 2008; Brissenden, 2011). They was followed by the Indian Malaysians, who mostly speak Tamil and came from Southern India (Jalis, 2008). In addition to the three major ethnic groups there are a few minority communities, namely Baba Nyonya (Chinese Peranakan), Chetty (Indian Peranakan), Portuguese and Javanese living in some parts of Peninsular Malaysia (Ng & Karim, 2016). As suggested by Jalis (2008), the adaptation of cultures, lifestyles and cuisines to local environments over many years has changed these minorities’ daily routines, particularly concerning food and cuisine. For example, *assam laksa*, which originated from the Baba Nyonya, is now easily found everywhere in Malaysia, with additional hot and tangy flavours to suit local palates; in other words, this meal has been ‘Malaysianised’.

Multicultural identity and diversity of its cuisine is also an outcome of successive waves of colonisation by the Portuguese, Dutch and later the British before the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1957. The effects of such colonisation have been the emergence
of what might now be called Eurasian cuisines and new cookery styles. As mentioned by MTPB (2012), Malaysia offers Eurasian cuisines which have been created and adapted since colonisation through the inter-marriage between Portuguese, Dutch and British people and the locals as part of a more multicultural society. Eurasian cuisines are not as widely available as the cuisines of other communities but the cuisines are kept alive by individuals. Even though there is little discussion about the impact of colonisation on food heritage in Malaysia, Olmedo (2015) stated that the chili was introduced into Malaysia (at that time known as the Malay Land) during the Portuguese colonial era. From my observations, a change of cooking styles and establishing traditional savouries and sweets using flours, butter and milk reflected new Malaysian cuisine values that were influenced by colonisation. For example, *karipap* or curry puff (i.e. a half-moon shaped deep fried savoury pastry stuffed with diced potatoes which is cooked with curry paste), which looks identical to the Portuguese pastel.

Because ethnicity and cultural diversity have been central to the development of Malaysian cuisine, political realities based on ethnicity and religion cannot be ignored in the understanding of cuisine’s role in destination marketing and destination identity. In Malaysia, the adoption of Islam as the official religion within the Constitution and the special position given to Malays (i.e. further discussed in Chapter Four) have created a multicultural society somewhat uneven in its treatment of differing ethnicities. This unevenness creates tensions at times between the Malay, Indian and Chinese populations. These ethnic and cultural tensions and divisions create challenges in the adoption of cuisine as a ‘unifying concept’ to market Malaysia as a multicultural destination with an equally multicultural cuisine. As my thesis will demonstrate, the tensions that arise from differential treatment of ethnic identities spill over into the realm of cuisine.

It is also important to recognise that there is considerable rivalry between Malaysia and neighbouring countries (i.e. Singapore and Indonesia) in relation to the marketing of local cuisine. Malaysian cuisine has similarities with the cuisines of Indonesia and Singapore. Malaysia is a relatively new nation, gaining independence in 1957. The country was officially named Malaysia on 16 September 1963 after the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak and the departure of Singapore (Ismail, 1989). Before the 1950s there was no such concept as ‘Malaysian cuisine’ as it is understood today. Malaysian, Indonesian and Singaporean cuisines obviously share similarities, for instance they all prepare specific dishes such as *satay*. 
In relation to the tensions that have existed and continue to exist concerning the cuisines of these three nations. For example, a group of Indonesians from Semarang were resentful of the Malaysian Government’s announcement of the ownership of the *popiah* (i.e. the ‘spring roll’, which is called *lumpia* in Indonesia) through a press release statement made by Dato’ Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz (the current Malaysian Tourism Minister) in February 2015 and they protested in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta (Murad, 21 February 2015). A similar incident occurred in relation to a famous West Sumatran (Indonesian) dish called *rendang* (Clark & Pietsch, 2014). Singapore, on the other hand, is seen as the closest competitor given that this country also has a fusion of multicultural cuisines. Although Chinese people comprise the main ethnic group in Singapore, the term ‘fusion’ is frequently used to describe the country’s multicultural identity (Henderson, 2014). Singapore and Malaysia have both had multicultural identities for a long time; however, Singapore is better known as a food destination and one can experience world cuisines in the small city-state. Singapore also offers a contemporary setting and safe environment. Henderson, Yun, Poon and Biwei (2012) highlight that the image of diverse local street food establishments, popularly known as ‘hawkers’, which have been depicted in Singapore tourism advertising. Destination marketers have linked this image to local cultures and everyday lifestyles. To many international tourists, this link could appear to be both authentic and novel (Henderson, 2009).

Despite various controversial food issues, the Malaysian Government still believes that local cuisine has great potential to be marketed and promoted as part of Malaysia’s destination experiences. Therefore, Malaysian cuisine has been fostered as a national tourism niche product and, since the success of VMY 1990, it has been included in almost every tourism marketing and promotional initiative. Examples include Malaysia Night at Trafalgar Square in London, Flavours of Malaysia in Sydney, and the *Sudah Makan* (‘have you eaten’) campaign in Tokyo. All these food-related events and campaigns showcase Malaysian cuisine along with food products and other aspects of Malay culture.

This thesis explores two marketing initiatives as cases studies (which are presented in Chapters Six and Seven). In November 2006, the Malaysian Government introduced the ‘MalaysiaKitchen Programme’ (MKP) to promote Malaysian cuisine to international tourists. As will be shown in Chapter Six, due to low return on investment (ROI), political scandals and the restructuring of the national governance system in mid-2008, the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) assumed responsibility for the programme. In
2010, MATRADE redesigned MKP with a new set of objectives, including the promotion of overseas Malaysian restaurants, to increase the demand for Malaysian cuisine (MATRADE, 2015). This international cuisine program also acts as a platform to showcase local food and cuisine worldwide to attract various segments of the tourist market to Malaysia. However, at the end of 2014, MATRADE once again revised MKP’s portfolio so that it focused more on food products and a trade-orientation. Consequently, less attention was given to the use of Malaysian cuisine and its impact on the country’s tourism industry.

‘Fabulous Food 1Malaysia’ (FF1M) is another food marketing campaign which was launched by MOTAC in 2009. The aim of this campaign is to celebrate local cuisine specialities at a national level and encourage Malaysian residents who are familiar with stories about local food and cuisine to share this knowledge with friends and relatives. However, in 2014 the FF1M was rebranded under the new name of ‘CitraRasa’ (‘colour of flavour’). For the purpose of this study, the name CitraRasa is used instead of FF1M. In addition to CitraRasa, the Department of Heritage Malaysia released its ‘100 Malaysian Heritage Foods List’ in May 2009. According to the Malaysia Heritage Commissioner, the list consists of ‘common foods which are part of our life but we are unaware of their heritage value and secondly foods that were once part of our culture but are slowly dying out’ (Elis, 2009, p. 24). The heritage status given to these foods and ingredients recognises them as having national significance. The list is also seen as a manifestation of the relationship between culture and cuisine in Malaysia. According to the Department of Heritage, Malaysia (2015, December 31), the selection was based on the intangible cultural heritage section of the National Heritage Act 2005 (the Act). Under the Act, intangible cultural heritage items include any form of expression, language, sayings, songs, folklore, oral traditions, poetry, dance, acting, theatre or martial arts which have existed or exist in relation to Malaysia’s heritage. In the Asian region, Malaysia is the only country with such a list. This suggests that the Malaysian Government is serious about fostering local cuisine as a valuable national entity which belongs to the Malaysian nation. There is no section or clause under the Act that specifies detailed selection criteria for food and ingredients. As at the end of December 2015, 151 local foods have been listed and declared as national heritage foods (Department of Heritage, 2015, December 31).

Although the Malaysian Government has invested significantly in promoting and integrating local food and cuisine as part of local and cultural experiences, it is important
to recognise that some issues have emerged which are related to contested notions of authenticity, and to differing attitudes to the presentation of Malaysian cuisine. In a study that sought to determine the food characteristics that form images of Malaysian cuisine, utilising two focus groups – one made up of selected members of the public and the other made up of food practitioners – Leong, Othman, Adzahan and Karim (2012) found that members of the public focused on qualities such as ‘diverse sensory experience[s]’, for example ‘Hot and spicy’ was the description they preferred, rather than more abstract notions related to history and culture. In contrast, broader perspectives of Malaysian food, including history and other influences, were referred to by the practitioner group. This group tended to see ‘cultural food’ as the representation of a culture and as a means to promote togetherness between races. Although there was a clear difference between the two groups, both agreed that Malaysian food is a ‘meeting of cultures’ due to the mixing of various ethnicities.

Other studies have found that tourists’ overall perceptions, levels of acceptance and enjoyment of Malaysian cuisine are positive (Jalis, Zahari, Zulkifly, & Othman, 2009; Karim, Chua, & Salleh, 2010; Chi, Karim, & Gursoy, 2010; Roozbeh, Ng, & Boo, 2013; Chi, Chua, Othman, & Karim, 2013). Nevertheless, the extent to which tourists recognise and distinguish Malaysian cuisine remains questionable. Yoshino (2010) reflected on the progress of Malaysian cuisine which had slowly declined in Japan. She concludes that despite its distinctive heritage, Malaysian cuisine often fails in restaurant businesses in a global market, especially in Japan. The major reasons that Yoshino suggested were the lack of a distinctive identity, with some foods having similar characteristics to those of other countries such as China and India, and the lack of creative presentation in a commercial setting. From the international tourists’ points of view, a lack of identity refers to specific dishes chosen as being representative of Malaysian cuisine. As described by Yoshino, it would highly unlikely for an ordinary Japanese citizen to recognise Malaysian cuisine and distinguish it from those of other Asian cuisines. *Nasi lemak* was chosen by the MTPB Tokyo office to be Malaysian cuisine icon for the Japanese market. This was a strategy used in the *Sudah Makan* campaign, launched at the end of September 2014 in conjunction VMY 2014, with the aim of introducing Malaysia as international tourist destination through its cuisine and culture (Bernama, 30 September 2014).

This discussion has examined Malaysia’s cultural diversity and its influence on local cuisine, and has briefly introduced the strategies used by the Malaysian Government to harness local cuisines to promote tourism. It seems that the ‘Malaysianisation’ of the
nation’s cuisine has been supported by the relative abundance of food resources, the unity of the diverse ethnic society, the political situation, and economic imperatives. Although feedback from tourists regarding Malaysian cuisine has been positive, recent studies (e.g. Yoshino, 2010; Henderson, 2014; Olmedo, 2015) have questioned its ability to speak on behalf of the nation and represent the country’s identity. Therefore, the extent to which the Malaysian Government’s strategy to integrate local cuisine into international tourist marketing has been successful is unclear. The following section sets out the aims and objectives for the current research project.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research project is to develop a critical understanding of how local cuisine is integrated into the Malaysian Government’s destination marketing strategies. This study investigates: the policy environment within the tourist industry administration that has driven local cuisine utilisation as part of the products and experiences provided in tourist destinations; the roles and activities of the government and their relationships with relevant stakeholders in food tourism and destination marketing, and food tourism marketing initiatives; and how Malaysian cuisine is represented in marketing and promotional activities. Based on this broad aim, four research objectives (RO) were identified:

RO1 – to explore the tourism policy environment which has shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine into destination marketing strategies;

RO2 – to examine the roles and activities which the Malaysian Government and its relevant agencies are employing to present local cuisine as integral to Malaysian tourism and cultural identity;

RO3 – to analyse the strategic marketing initiatives that have been developed by the Malaysian Government to integrate local cuisine into the promotion of the country as an international tourist destination; and

RO4 – to explore how Malaysian cuisine is represented in marketing and promotional activities which promote the country as an international tourist destination.
1.4 Research Approach

This study was conducted within the framework of the interpretive, social constructivist paradigm, employing a multiple case study approach to explore the process of integrating Malaysian cuisine into destination marketing strategies by considering relevant stakeholders’ views. This paradigm enables the researcher to examine the views of a multitude of stakeholders based on their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, it embraces a communicative approach in which the actual destination planning and marketing initiatives were the outcome of interactions and contested narratives between various stakeholders (Jenkins, Dredge & Taplin, 2011). A multiple case study design dealing with stakeholders with diverse backgrounds was adopted as the primary means of data collection. Within this methodological approach, problem definition, data collection and evaluation of the cases take place simultaneously. Stakeholders’ behaviours and decisions constantly change under certain circumstances, such as policies and working with various people to meet individual and/or group expectations.

Wang (2008, p. 192) suggests that ‘no single agency can control and deliver a rich combination of tourism product and service portfolio at a destination’. Therefore, this study examines the utilisation of local cuisine in destination marketing strategies by referring to relevant tourism policies and issue management theories. These policies and theories provide a theoretical framework to examine the roles, activities and influence of government, tourism organisations and community pressure groups, and to examine the interactions between these stakeholders. Within the framework, considerations (i.e. sociocultural, political, historical, physical systems and economic) suggested by Wang (2008, 2011) are applied to the research design which also acts as the ‘modus operandi’ for this study. Chapter Three describes the methodology that underpins this research and the methods used to collect data.

1.5 Justification for this Study

Previous studies have investigated food as part of the food and service industry, as part of the restaurant sector, or as a specific segment (i.e. food or culinary tourism) of the tourism industry that can enhance the quality of tourists’ experiences at a destination (e.g. Hughes, 1995; Bessiere, 1998; du Rand & Heath, 2006; Boyne & Hall, 2004; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Bourdieu, 2005; du Rand, Heath & Albert, 2003; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Richards, 2012; Henderson et al., 2012; Robinson & Getz, 2014).
A number of studies have investigated how local food motivates travellers to travel to a particular tourist destination (e.g. Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Fields, 2002; Hall & Mitchell, 2003; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Mak, Lumber & Eves, 2012; Kim et al., 2013). At first glance, it may seem that the theories and concepts developed in these studies might be applicable to all tourists. However, a large proportion of these studies were based on Western scholars’ viewpoints or research settings. This applies particularly to studies that adopt a case study approach. Some studies (e.g. Ryu & Jang, 2006, Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007, and Lin, Pearson, & Cai, 2011) do not demonstrate an understanding of the distinction between ‘food’ and ‘local cuisine’ as part of culinary terminology. This can be confusing, especially in studies which focus on particular tourist destinations.

Rather than focus on the demand-side, which has already been heavily explored in previous studies, this study explores the supply-side to provide a clearer picture of the complexity of the destination marketing process in the context of national cuisine and tourism. Only a limited number of studies have examined the role of local cuisine in place or destination marketing in Malaysia or other Asian countries (e.g. Henderson, 2004; Okumus et al., 2007; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Henderson, 2014; Henderson, 2016). In fact, research into the involvement of the Malaysian Government and relevant stakeholders in marketing the country, either domestically or internationally through its local cuisine, is almost non-existent (i.e. Yoshino, 2010). Therefore, there is a need to critically examine the various destination marketing strategies and initiatives of the Malaysian Government and associated stakeholders to promote and integrate local cuisine into the tourist experience.

Furthermore, a study of the relationships between cultural identity and local cuisine in tourists’ experiences could also provide an in-depth understanding of how the Malaysian Government is seeking to build multiculturalism into its national brand image. Given Malaysia is known as a multicultural nation with diverse ethnic groups living together, the Malaysian Government (since the introduction of the NEP in 1970, as discussed in Chapter Four) has seen multiculturalism as a priority. This is aligned with the current national tourism marketing campaign (i.e. Malaysia Truly Asia) that emphasises the diversity of lifestyles, nature and landscapes. With the tagline ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’, the campaign portrays the distinctive tourism value of multiculturalism as the essence of the country (Hamzah, 2004). However, this may create conflict throughout the marketing
process, especially when deciding what and which local food and cuisines are the best ones to represent the nation.

1.6 The Scope of This Study

The previous section justified the relevance and need to execute this study. It is also important for researchers to clarify the scope of the research project undertaken. This ensures that other researchers understand the study’s boundaries and the extent to which a study can be generalisable. As described by Simon and Goes (2013, February 23), no matter how well a research project is designed and organised limitations are unavoidable; in other words, there are limitations and weaknesses in every research project.

This study was limited to two main food marketing campaigns, namely CitraRasa and MKP, that have strong involvement and support from the Malaysian Government. This is aligned with the aim of the study, which is to critically examine the Malaysian Government’s involvement, through its relevant agencies and tourism and hospitality representatives, in integrating Malaysian cuisine into the country’s destination marketing strategies. CitraRasa is a domestic Malaysian cuisine marketing campaign which is organised annually all over the country between October and December. MKP is an international food marketing campaign. It has been reported that the highest concentrations of Malaysian restaurant businesses that are registered under MKP are located in Sydney and Melbourne in Australia (MATRADE, 2015). Furthermore, the MTPB and MATRADE offices are both based in Australia (in Sydney and Melbourne respectively). Therefore, data collection was conducted in Malaysia and Australia.

In addition, due to the time and financial constraints, the primary data were gathered in 2013 and 2014. There were also limitations related to secondary data, which mostly depended on access granted by the relevant authorities. Furthermore, as this study took place right after the general election in April 2013 some changes occurred within the Malaysian Government administration, especially in relation to policy enforcement and staff relocation. Most respondents were approached and recruited based on the present political and governance institution environment.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

i) Culinary tourism: A form of niche or special interest tourism in which sampling and experiencing food and cuisine form the basis of the tourist motivation (Long,
This form of tourism involves tourists who have a particular interest learning about and experiencing food at a particular tourist destination.

ii) **Destination marketing**: A communication process which aims to create awareness of a tourist destination and persuade potential tourists to visit. Destination marketing is one of the DMOs’ key roles – it involves articulating and communicating the goals, values and competitive attributes of the destination (Jenkins et al., 2011).

iii) **Destination marketing organisation (DMOs)**: Any government or non-government organisation that is responsible for coordinating and integrating the mix of destination elements (attractions, events, transport, infrastructure, and hospitality resources). DMOs are also involved in related destination marketing activities (Pike, 2004).

iv) **Destination marketing strategy**: A combination of resources and activities that have been designed by relevant tourism authorities to effectively leverage the tourist destination, enable the development of tourism branding and manage the economic benefits of tourism (Wang, 2011).

v) **Experience**: Experiences in tourism are intangible and immaterial; they are transactions that involve ‘meanings’ that result from specific tourist interactions with local cuisine and/or that are associated with related events or activities. Experiences involve feeling, undergoing and perceiving associated with any kind of tourist involvement at the tourist destination (based on Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Richards, 2012).

vi) **Food tourism**: One of the special-interest tourism activities in which tourists are closely linked to local cuisine and food-related activities (i.e. dining, purchasing local food produce and participating in any food events) at a destination (Hall & Sharples, 2003).

vii) **Gastronomy tourism**: Involves a trip to a place or tourist destination with primary or secondary motives to visit places of food production (i.e. restaurant or market or winery) and food-related activities (i.e. food festivals, events and farmers’ markets) (Hall & Sharples, 2003).

viii) **Government**: Refers to a group of people that has legitimate power and authority to administer a territorial site. In Malaysia the federal government is responsible for...
setting, managing and enforcing relevant tourism planning and policy at a tourist
destination, whilst the state governments primarily manage one part of the country
(i.e. a state) and implement the relevant tourism policies and plans of the federal
government (Nooi, 1989).

ix) **Multicultural:** Term used to refer to a collection of people with a multitude of
cultures, ethnic groups and religions backgrounds who live in the same geographical
area; each culture or group acknowledges and respects the others’ socio-cultural
differences (based on Rosado, 1996).

x) **Stakeholder:** Any person or organisation sharing similar interests and working in a
group to achieve a common goal. They are involved with, and are affected by, an
organisation’s decisions (Freeman, 1984; Gray, 1989; Jamal & Getz, 1995).

xi) **Tourist destination:** A geographic space or place of interest that offers tourism
products and experiences. This includes facilities and services. Its physical and
administrative features determine its management, brand and image which influence
tourists’ perceptions (Pike, 2008).

### 1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters. The first chapter has provided a brief overview of
the role of local cuisine in destination marketing, described tourism industry development
in Malaysia and the use of cuisine as part of the country’s marketing strategies, introduced
the research aim and objectives, and discussed the research design. Building on this,
Chapter Two critically reviews the relevant literature related to gastronomy and tourism,
the concept of cuisine, destination marketing and previous studies on Malaysian cuisine
in the tourism context. Both Malaysian and English language literature were reviewed to
provide a comprehensive understanding of the study. The research methodology chapter
(Chapter Three) discusses the philosophical considerations for this study and justifies the
research method chosen. It describes the step-by-step procedure undertaken in the data
collection and analysis. Chapter Four presents the policy environment analysis. Chapter
Five discusses the analysis on a sample of marketing collaterals and relevant Malaysian
Government websites of the two food marketing campaigns (i.e. MKP and CitraRasa).
The structure of governance, tourism-related policies, marketing collaterals and relevant
Malaysian Government are analysed and discussed to establish the context for the case
studies. MKP, the first case study, is presented in Chapter Six. The second case study,
CitraRasa, is presented in Chapter Seven. Finally, Chapter Eight brings the key findings together to respond to the research objectives and concludes the thesis by addressing its implications and providing recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of gastronomy as a field of academic enquiry and an examination of its connection to the tourism industry (Section 2.2). The next four sections review related literature on destination marketing and its integration with local cuisine. The first of these, Section 2.3, covers the construction of the identity of tourist destinations. This is followed by an examination of the theoretical background of tourist destination marketing (Section 2.4). This section explains tourism and hospitality from a marketing perspective, the strategic marketing process and the branding and images involved. Section 2.5 deals with the roles of relevant government authorities in terms of their cooperation with various stakeholders, and funding of tourist destination marketing initiatives. Following this, Section 2.6 discusses local cuisine in relation to tourist destination marketing. Section 2.7 addresses previous studies related to food and tourism in Malaysia. Finally, Section 2.8 summarises this chapter.

2.2 Gastronomy Tourism as a Field of Academic Enquiry

The role of gastronomy in tourism industry development has been progressively studied to understand the association between local cuisine, tourists and tourist destinations. Gastronomy in the context of ‘food tourism as a subject of academic study [has] gained in importance over the last fifteen years’ (Yeoman, McMahon-Beattie, Fields, Albrecht & Meethan, 2015, p. 15). Prior to the 2000s, gastronomy was not a significant focus of attention within the tourism studies arena. This is because the study of gastronomy overlaps with many other fields (Hall & Gossling, 2016). For example, sociology, anthropology, economics, consumer behaviour, marketing and hospitality include food in the scope of their study (Harrison, 1982). Novelli (2005) has argued that gastronomy has been recognised as a new tourism niche market; many tourist destinations are now focusing on it as a marketing and branding tool to develop and establish their identity.

Different ideas and ensuing debates among scholars have contributed to difficulties in reaching agreement about the definition of gastronomy (Gillespie, 2006). The notion of gastronomy is not widely understood due to the passive consumption of food, which fulfils a basic human need. However, for many people, their understanding of food connects to their cultural identity (Richards, 2002; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). The Greek
word *gastros* was not commonly used until the word ‘gastronomy’ made its first appearance in the *La Gastronomie* – a poem written by French poet Joseph Berchoux in 1801 (Scarpato, 2002). In his poem, Berchoux identifies gastronomy as a new social practice which has economic implications and which is associated with cultural conditions related to food and beverage.

The term ‘gastronomy’ has slowly evolved and established its place within society. Literature on gastronomy has accentuated this development, with key authors initiating this emergence. For instance, Grimond de la Reyniere’s book, entitled *L’Almanachs des Gourmands* and published from 1803 to 1812 (Mennell, 1985), advised local people about what was best to eat and drink. Gradual awareness of Reyniere’s work increased and aspects of gastronomy became a discussion topic in daily life (Santich, 2007). Before then, the word ‘gastronomy’ had been ubiquitous and difficult to define, because it encompassed an extensive association with everything related to food and drink. At the end of the eighteenth century, the word ‘gastronomy’ was defined in a French dictionary as ‘the art and science of good eating’ (Scarpato, 2002, p. 36).

However, most modern interpretations of the word gastronomy seem considerably narrower than that of Brillat-Savarin’s (1825) concept, which understands gastronomy to be related to a range of disciplines, including natural history, physics, chemistry, cookery, political science and commerce (Santich, 2004, 2007). Jean-Athelme Brillat-Savarin was a French lawyer and politician who was a passionate advocate of gastronomy studies. He published a book entitled *The Physiology of Taste (Physiologie du Gout)* in 1825. Brillat-Savarin (as cited in Santich, 2007) argues that gastronomy is probably the ‘invention’ of the Sicilian, Archestratus, who lived in the fourth century BC and who started the study of food. Archestratus introduced the word ‘gastronomy’ into his food and wine guidebook. However, Archestratus’s book no longer exists except as an important citation in the works of Athenaeus (Santich, 2007).

In *The Physiology of Taste*, Brillat-Savarin (1825) describes gastronomy as being related to the methods by which food is produced, its economic implications, storage and processing (Santich, 2004, 2007). He also touched on food preparation, highlighting the chemistry involved, digestion and the sociological effects of food. He found that there were relationships between what was best to eat, and when and how it should be prepared. However, Scarpato (2002) argues that Brillat-Savarin’s work links to the enjoyment of good food and drink as well as reinforcing the association with gastronomy. Since Brillat-
Savarin’s work was published, the word gastronomy has been recognised and gradually used by scholars worldwide in various fields of study.

In line with Brilliant-Savarin’s (1825) interpretation, Santich (1996, 2007) argues that gastronomy goes beyond satisfying a basic human need. She further described the concept as covering a wide range of food and beverage activities, such as preparation, cooking, consumption and food-related events, including marketing and promoting a tourist destination.

However, in the twenty-first century and beyond, Gillespie (2006) recognises that the availability of raw ingredients, social status and social belief are relevant to food and beverage consumed by a locality, region or nation. These factors indicate that gastronomy within the context of place or region helps to establish identity. A clear place/regional or national food identity helps to position strong and enduring images in tourists’ minds. Gastronomy and the images representing it can be seen to be part of the suite of competitive advantages which are important to market and brand a particular tourist destination. The Basque Brotherhood of Gastronomy (2003) and Bourdieu (2005) believe that gastronomy is, in essence, a cultural expression involving the various ways of food preparation and combinations of ingredients which characterise and distinguish food from one place to another.

The emergence and development of the concept of gastronomy has resulted in chefs being in high demand for all kinds of restaurant and hotel businesses (Santich, 2007). Food and cuisine education programs have been set up to train future professional chefs. According to Santich (2007), these activities have encouraged further investigation of gastronomy from a diverse range of perspectives, including but not limited to anthropology, economics and tourism. As a result, many new ideas and findings on gastronomy have been debated and discussed amongst scholars. For example, in 2002 Hjalager and Richards edited a book titled Tourism and Gastronomy which provides an analysis of the association between the tourism industry and gastronomy. It was found that gastronomy is able to strengthen a tourist destination’s image by incorporating and highlighting local cuisine as one of the destination’s tourism experiences in the marketing of tourist destinations (Okumus et al., 2007; Richards, 2012). Opportunities to experience the gastronomy of destinations were found to be an increasingly important motivational factor among tourists.
One of the ways to utilise gastronomy as part of the tourism experience is through the focus on rural areas and the subsequent economic growth from gastronomic tourism in rural and regional areas. Hall, Mitchell and Sharples (2003) investigated the role of food and wine production within the context of the tourism industry and found that such production has great potential to boost economic growth in rural areas. They argue that strong support and collaboration between public and private sectors are crucial in achieving this success. These findings are also aligned with Che, Wright and Rae’s (2013) study on the ‘Taste Paradise’ of Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) in Australia. Taste Paradise is a non-profit organisation comprising farmers, food businesses operators, chefs and food value-adders promoting TNQ regional food. Collaboration between the research team from a local university and the regional tourism authority with support from the industry (agricultural businesses) and other relevant stakeholders developed and expanded the range of TNQ tourism products (Che et al., 2013).

On the demand-side, Cohen and Avieli (2004), for example, found that ‘familiarisation’ explains the degree of willingness to taste and consume local food at a particular tourist destination. This is aligned with a recent study’s findings on Russian tourists’ perceptions of local food in the South Savo region of Finland by Mynttinen, Logren, Sarkka-Tirkkonen and Rautiainen (2015). The majority of Russian tourists were concerned with the quality of local food products, especially the freshness and healthiness; high quality of food significantly motivated them to consume local food at a particular tourist destination.

Even though using local cuisine has proven to be attractive to tourists and has the ability to improve a destination’s image, it is important to understand local cuisine and its influence on tourism development. Furthermore, incorporating knowledge about local cuisine into tourism is considered useful because it links to the local identity (Frost & Laing, 2015; Richards, 2015). The symbiotic relationship between tourism and local cuisine is crucial, particularly to promote the products that are emblematic of that region and to strengthen regional development (Richards, 2012; Gossling & Hall, 2016). Okumus et al. (2013) further argue that there is huge potential for gastronomy to capture a different range of tourist market segments, particularly those who are looking to experience local cuisine.

Associating gastronomy with tourism by creating an awareness of a specific region’s cuisine is a strategy used to build a tourism experience and create a destination image
Choosing the right marketing strategies through the relevant advertising and promotional vehicles, including non-virtual (brochures, posters, travel guides, etc.) and virtual (television, radio, websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter) is important to communicate implicit and explicit ideas about local cuisine.

Moreover, Richards (2012) suggests that food routes and trails are becoming popular at tourist destinations. The emergence of food and wine tourism has demonstrated that food and drink is an important part of the tourism experience. One of the key components in food and wine tourism is the ability to influence tourists to consume and learn to appreciate new tastes (Hall & Mitchell, 2005; Hall & Sharples, 2008). Food and wine trails are common marketing strategies that have been practiced by many wine-producing countries such as Australia, America and France. Wargenau and Che (2006) demonstrate that many small wineries in Australia were heavily dependent on tourism and cellar door sales. The Australian Government has showed its support and strong commitment to these small wineries by providing relevant tourism training for vineyard staff, including winery spots and information, as a new tourism marketing strategy and organising joint collaboration food and wine events and festivals (Hall, Sharples, Cambourne & Macionis, 2000; Wargenau & Che, 2006; Hall & Sharples, 2008).

Boyne and Hall (2004) found that, in the case of the ‘Isle of Arran Taste Trail’, tourists are willing to spend more money on locally-produced meals, and are inclined to seek and buy locally-produced groceries. Continuous success can be achieved in competitive environments. For example, the case of Southwest Michigan in the United States (US). Strategic vertical alliances help wineries to collaborate with various tourism-related stakeholders, such as tourism councils and restaurants to increase their outlet channels. Horizontal linkages help to market Southwest Michigan as a wine region with its own brand and identity (Wargenau & Che, 2006).

Food and wine trails are good examples of collaborative efforts and continuous commitment between agriculture and the tourism industry (Mulcahy, 2015). Food trails, however, require thorough planning, especially when involving policy-makers as part of the whole marketing process. Further discussion between policy makers and marketers (typically industrial bodies and/or non-government agencies) on the type of tourism product information needed is necessary before committing to final decisions in the form of strategic marketing plans or tourism policies.
2.2.1 Studies in Gastronomy and Tourism

Over the past two decades, academics have paid more attention to exploring the linkages between food within the context of gastronomic tourism, as well as the marketing of tourist destinations (Richards, 2002; Henderson, 2004; du Rand & Health, 2006; Fox, 2007; Lee, Scott & Packer, 2014). For example, Okumus et al. (2007) investigated the incorporation of local and international cuisines to promote Hong Kong and Turkey as tourist destinations and found that cuisine has been emphasised as one of the most important tourism products and it helped market Hong Kong as a culinary destination. As for Turkey, cuisine was linked to cultural attributes, and there was less emphasis specifically on food in tourism brochures, websites or booklets. The authors argue this was because previously Turkey had built its image based on the ‘sun, sea and sand’ dimensions of tourism; food was seen as less important for Turkey’s tourism industry in comparison to resorts and historical sites. Nevertheless, it could be argued that both Hong Kong and Turkey acknowledge the role of food or, more appropriately, local cuisine in tourism industry development.

Studies have also found that food tourism and culinary tourism are becoming important products and experiences in many tourist destinations (Long, 2004; Santich, 2007; Henderson, 2009; Lee et al., 2014). In the case of Australia, for example, Tourism Research Australia (TRA) has reported that international tourists spent over $4.3AUD million or 14.2 per cent of their total expenditure on food and beverage products for the year ending September 2014. This figure does not clearly indicate how much of this is simply eating because tourists have to, and how much is related to eating as a distinct experience. Food tourism is also strong in Australia’s domestic market, with $14.7AUD million spent by domestic tourists for the year ending September 2014 on food and beverage products (Tourism Research Australia, 2015). Food and wine tourism in New South Wales attracted 780,000 domestic tourists (a quarter of the total domestic tourist figures across Australia), with $572AUD spent per person per trip in 2014 (Tourism Research Australia, 2015). In addition, the Global Report on Food Tourism 2012, prepared by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) recognises food tourism as a branch of the tourism sector, and highlights the benefits that can be achieved from it (UNWTO, 2012). The report also revealed that 88.2 per cent of its affiliated members (public or private organisations which share their knowledge and expertise with the UNWTO) agreed that local cuisine is a strategic tourism product for communicating brand and image.
However, the relative effectiveness or success of the use of the concept of food-related tourism, particularly the use of local cuisines in tourism, within the food tourism, culinary tourism or gastronomic tourism literature remains somewhat debatable. It depends on whether food is the main motivation or a secondary motivation when tourists decide to travel and whether local authorities focus on cuisine when marketing a destination. To Hall and Mitchell (2001), any tourists who are motivated to travel for food as their primary or secondary motivation are involved in food tourism activity. This is more general and flexible as compared to the definition of culinary tourism proposed by Long in 1998. By referring to culinary tourism, Long’s definition is restricted to a specific group of tourists (culinary tourists) who purposely do their travelling to obtain a significant food experience and to understand the links between food and society at a particular destination. There are two aspects to this understanding: i) tourists gain new knowledge from learning about local food and comprehend the cultural values within it; and ii) the tourist destination uses food as a medium to communicate and develop its image (Long, 1998).

Hall and Sharples (2003) found that both aspects still convey a broad understanding within the context of the tourism industry. They further assert that every trip or visitation to food-related activities can be seen as food tourism. There are many other factors that can stimulate tourists’ interest in food. In some cases the interest happens spontaneously or unintentionally. For that reason, Hall and Sharples (2003) dissect food tourism into three major types: i) primary (gourmet, gastronomic and cuisine tourism – travelling for food); ii) secondary (culinary tourism – once tourists arrive at the tourist destination); and iii) subsidiary to other interests (rural/urban tourism, and travel and tourism – food as an addition to the main travelling purpose). The differences between the travel motivation levels are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

In the model of importance of a special interest in food as a travel motivation, tourists are categorised according to their level of interest in food when travelling (Hall & Sharples, 2003). There are three types of food tourism under this classification, namely gourmet tourism (which occurs when tourists visit expensive and highly-rated restaurants, wineries and festivals), cuisine tourism (which can include local and unique food experiences such as street food) and gastronomic tourism (which reflects a special interest in food and wine in specific regions or nations). The secondary interest in food is also known as culinary tourism and refers to any tourists that visit a local market, festival, restaurant or winery at a destination as part of their tourism activities. Long (1998) refers
to the term ‘culinary tourism’ as travel for the purpose of experiencing other cultures through their food. Finally, tourism where food is subsidiary to other interests is divided into two categories: i) rural or urban tourism; and ii) travel and tourism. In these forms, tourists have little to no interest in visiting local markets, food festivals, wineries or restaurants while they are travelling. At this level food is considered simply as a physiological necessity.

Other contributions to the understanding of gastronomic tourism come from Richards (2002), Boniface (2003), Sparks, Roberts, Deery, Davies and Brown (2005), Krishenblatt-Gimblett (2004), Shortridge (2004), Kivela and Crotts (2006), Brown and Getz (2005), Wolf (2006), Hall and Sharples (2008), the UNWTO (2012) and Getz et al. (2014). Richards (2002) suggests that gastronomy tourism refers to visiting or travelling with an interest in consuming and experiencing food and beverages, as well as food-related activities, as part of a tourist’s agenda when they are travelling. Figure 2.2 indicates the linkages between commodities, goods, services and experiences in gastronomy tourism. Richards argues that gastronomy tourism can take many forms related to different parts of the production–consumption continuum, from sampling the
raw product at the vineyard, for example, to the gastronomic experiences provided by restaurants. In the former case, the ‘quality of opportunity’ or the basic product is most important, whereas in the restaurant much more hinges on the whole quality of the experience. Arguably, adding more elements to the basic product could enhance tourists’ experiences and add more value to the product.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Goods</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Ingredients</td>
<td>Food and wine tourism</td>
<td>Quality of opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>Dishes</td>
<td>Commodities</td>
<td>Quality of experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gastronomic tourism</td>
<td>Gastronomy tourism</td>
<td>Increasing added value</td>
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Figure 2.2: Relating consumption and production in gastronomy tourism experiences (Richards, 2002)

Gastronomic tourism is a symbol of the strong association between food and tourism. Wolf (2006) believes that gastronomic tourism encourages the pursuit of travel in the quest for the enjoyment of prepared food, drinks and other related food activities, resulting in a great and memorable gastronomic experience. On the other hand, Krishenblatt-Gimblett (2004) asserts that gastronomic tourism occurs when food and beverages are the main focus of travel and itineraries are organised around cooking schools, wineries, restaurants and food festivals. This experience has the power to modify eating and drinking habits and tastes, as well as increase tourists’ cultural experiences of the people at the locations and countries being visited (Kivela & Crotts, 2009). In addition, Shortridge (2004) states that food-related activities are also part of the gastronomic tourism experience.

More recently, discussions within gastronomy and tourism scholarship have become much more focused on the issue of food as a travel motivation for a specific market segment to a tourist destination (Richards, 2015). Only a few studies have examined the initiatives of local authorities in developing strategic plans to market a tourist destination by integrating its local cuisine.
There have been debates surrounding the concept of ‘local cuisine’ in gastronomy and tourism studies. For example, a study conducted by Sims (2009) in England’s Lake District found that 60 per cent of tourists interviewed stated that they prefer to consume traditionally home-cooked food or drinks as well as take them home as souvenirs. Tourists believe that these food or drinks are local – unlike the producers in the area who think of raw produce as local (Sims, 2009). According to Molina, Martin and Martin-Consuegra (2010), ‘food’ is regarded as a complex and multifaceted concept within the tourism industry. It requires clarification in regard to whether it refers to ‘what is available and can be offered locally’ or ‘what is made available and preferred by tourists’. In contrast, ‘local cuisine’ is a marker of a region and/or society that can be deployed in gastronomic or food tourism studies. Alonso and Liu (2011) emphasise that local cuisines can serve as powerful tools to enhance a region’s profile as a destination and create business opportunities for hospitality operations, and that they can contribute towards tourist destination development.

Globalisation and its effects on the tourism industry is seen as one of the issues affecting tourist destinations especially in regards to the ‘impacts on local environments, cultures, and social systems’ (Chang, 1999: p. 91). Globalisation has also been implicated in the development of the local cuisine concept of a particular tourist destination. Wu and Cheung (2002) posit that globalisation of local cuisine occurred through an assimilation process between local people at specific regions and immigrants. Chinese immigrants who carry Chinese cuisine together with them are seen as one of the best examples of globalisation of local cuisine. This is supported by Wu (2002), who found that the globalisation of Chinese cuisine worldwide was due to the Chinese migrant and trading network. Globalisation of local cuisine can also be seen continuously occurring with multinational food producers, exports and imports of food supplies, and manufactured food products globally. To some extent, the ‘importation’ of Malaysian cuisine into other countries via Malaysian restaurants can be seen as part of this same globalisation process. This process, indirectly, helps in marketing Malaysia as a tourist destination and promotes its cuisine.

Although there is no agreement on the concerns of globalisation towards local cuisine of a place or tourist destination, many scholars believe that a wholesale exposure to foreign culture can harm cultural identity. In other words, globalisation may lead to changes in food traditions and local cultures. Access to food products such as ‘readymade’ on the shelves in supermarkets and hypermarkets worldwide increase the chances of some local
food and cuisine losing or at least having its local identity compromised (Wu & Cheung, 2002). Chang (1999) suggested that it is not surprising to see that some iconic foods were adopted or adapted in different local cultures. This is similar concept to McDonaldization where fast food chains are establishing themselves globally. The Slow Food Movement is in part a response to the globalisation of food, particularly as it is made manifest through the colonising tendencies of fast food chains. Obviously, there is interaction between global and local forces (Chang, 1999). This could be argued in the case of local cuisine and globalisation.

Local cuisine is now recognised as making a significant contribution in terms of establishing a tourist destination brand (e.g. Forchot, 2003; Sims, 2009; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Fox, 2007; Okumus et al., 2007; Okumus et al., 2013), in supporting the supply chain (e.g. Bessiere, 1998; Smith & Xiao, 2008) and as a travel motivator (e.g. Kivela & Crotts, 2006; López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012; Lee et al., 2014; Forga & Valiente, 2014). However, less attention has been given to the detailed and nuanced exploration of the process of integrating local cuisine into tourist destination strategies at both the regional and international levels, particularly in regard to the cooperation between multiple stakeholders and the integration of local cuisine into international destination marketing strategies, which is what this thesis aims to do. A comprehensive understanding of both aspects (local cuisine and destination marketing strategies) enables this study to reveal the influence of tourism-related policies in decision-making related to the marketing of local cuisine and the cooperation between relevant stakeholders.

2.3 Destination Identity Development

Understanding the construction of the tourist destination identity has become a frequently discussed topic in tourism studies. Jenkins et al. (2011) note that tourists tend to see and interpret a tourist destination based on its image, which subsequently influences their travel motivations. The identity and image of a tourist destination go hand-in-hand and have been clustered under marketing and branding. However, in marketing and branding a tourist destination, tourism policies provide a clear direction in planning and implementing the marketing strategic plan. Tourism policy and planning help to communicate the development of a geographic area’s identity and boundaries, as well as understand the interactions between and within state institutions at all levels in tourism (Hall & Jenkins, 2004; Jenkins et al., 2011).
National identity is often linked to local cuisine and branding when marketing a tourist destination. Local cuisine is believed to be capable of conveying deeply rooted meanings and specific concepts that reflect the special characteristics of a geographic area (Lin, Pearson & Cai, 2011). For example, Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) found that the most effective way to sell Canada’s culinary tourism was through distinct cultural attributes. The intersection of cultural systems and structures in tourism are meaningful for every tourist because: i) culture is seen as a tourist destination treasure that has great commercial potential; ii) complexity and integrity of social identities might help deflect simplistic images of a tourist destination; and iii) worldwide, culture and its meaning exists and is utilised to benefit the tourism industry (Burns & Novelli, 2006).

Consequently, DMOs or local authorities at tourist destinations have developed various marketing strategies to create distinctive identities. The most common way to highlight a destination’s identity is to have a clear tourism theme, such as cultural and heritage tourism (e.g. Scotland), natural and adventure tourism (e.g. New Zealand), sport tourism (e.g. Abu Dhabi, UAE), and food and wine tourism (e.g. Australia). White and Frew (2011a) focus on how cultural tourism, events and celebrations contribute to tourist destination identity. The three themes identified within these activities are: i) identity and image, based on social, cultural and geographical background; ii) culture and community, based on specific strengths and interests; and iii) heritage and history, based on historical stories and sites of building the nation. In recent years, many tourist destinations have positioned themselves within food and wine tourism, improving their image and identity surrounding this type of tourism by organising campaigns, big events and festivals (Hsu, Killion, Brown & Gross 2008). Examples include the ‘Year of Gastronomy’ (2006) in Hungary (Smith & Puczko, 2011) and regional food festivals such as the ‘Taste of Melbourne’ in Australia.

By drawing on Hall et al.’s (2003) understanding of ‘regionality’ by incorporating local food in marketing strategies, White and Frew’s (2011b) tourist destination identity and Jenkins et al.’s (2011) definition of tourist destination, this study—with particular reference to Malaysia and its cuisine—is able to obtain an in-depth and nuanced understanding of how tourism authorities cooperate with relevant stakeholders to create a local identity to market and brand the country as an international tourist destination.
As shown in Figure 2.3, tourism policy and planning act as the ‘home ground’ in these efforts. The figure indicates the overlap between tourist destination identities, tourism and local cuisine. The concept of cuisine and its integration into destination identities and the tourism industry is discussed in the next sub-section.

2.3.1 The Concept of Cuisine in Destination Identities

Within the broader understanding of the concept of gastronomic tourism (explored in Section 2.2.1), ‘cuisine’ often appears to represent the types of food associated with a particular place. This term has been widely acknowledged in modern cooking, starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the famous chef Marie-Antoine Careme (Escoffier, 1957). This term has widely been used to elaborate the aesthetic values which add colour, flavour and other distinctive features of a dish or meal within the gastronomy context. Establishing ‘local cuisine’ is not merely associated with the end product; it is interrelated with human activities and involves appreciating the culinary creativity in making a specific meal, which is more appropriately described as ‘cuisine’. Thus, it is
important to choose the right food which can embody the uniqueness of a particular place or destination’s cuisine.

Cuisine has been progressively studied by scholars since the French Cuisine Revolution to explore local cuisine distinctiveness (Albayrak & Gunes, 2010; Appadurai, 1988; Bessiere, 1998; Civitello, 2011; Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Mennell, 1985; Mintz & Bois, 2002; Okumus et al., 2007; Rozin, 1992; Scarpato & Daniele, 2003; Symons, 1998; Timothy, 2016; Timothy & Ron, 2013; Urry, 1995). In particular, it has been found that the ingredients in French cuisine highlight the quality and flavour of local dishes, which have become the symbolic means of place or regional differentiation (Bessiere, 1998). A region’s sense of place is able to provide tourists with a better understanding of the explicit and implicit features of the surrounding environment and society (Bessiere, 1998; Chrzan, 2007). This clearly indicates the role that local cuisine plays in identity and that it is integral to the travel experience (see Figure 2.3). It is important for a region to identify and clearly define its local cuisine in marketing and branding itself as a tourist destination, as well as to survive in a highly competitive environment (Beltran, Cruz & Lopez-Guzman, 2016). By doing so, it showcases the uniqueness of its food in order to promote itself as a tourism destination.

Before discussing the concept of cuisine and its connection with tourism, it is useful to have a clear definition of the term. As mentioned in Chapter One, cuisine is derived from the French word *coquere*, which means ‘to cook’, ultimately stemming from the Latin word *coquina* (meaning ‘to cook’) (Oxford Dictionary, 2016, July 7). Higman (2011, p. 164) states that cuisine, to the French, is both ‘the kitchen and the manner or style of the cooking undertaken there’. It also refers to the place, society and availability of ingredients or resources (Clark, 1975; Goody, 1982; Appadurai, 1988; Timothy, 2011; Civitello, 2011; Higman, 2011; Lugosi, 2013; Timothy, 2016). This term has become widely accepted in the culinary world. More contemporary interpretations have also considered cuisine as encompassing the style or way in which food is cooked, particularly in relation to a country, region or establishment (Getz et al., 2014).

Today, cuisine is a vital component in identity development for many destinations (Quan & Wang, 2004). Timothy and Ron (2013) and Timothy (2016) show that cuisine has been used as a marker which speaks about ethnic identity and represents a place or region. Clark (1975) argues that the notion of cuisine representing the food specialties of a particular place originated in the sixteenth century. From that moment, food was no longer
seen as only a basic human need; rather, people began to appreciate and recognise the artistic values that exist within food and the preparation processes involved. This is clearly described by Armelagos (2010), who conceptualised cuisine as part of a cultural system. To him, the understanding of cuisine and food-making procedures were embedded in culture, influencing the way food is consumed, as well as its taste and appearance.

The concept of cuisine, and in particular the distinctiveness of local cuisine, has been progressively studied by scholars since the French cuisine revolution (Goody, 1982; Mennell, 1985; Appadurai, 1988; Urry, 1995; Civitello, 2011; Higman, 2011). As previously mentioned, the ingredients that highlight the quality and flavour of local dishes became a symbolic way of differentiating French cuisine (and by extension, national identity) from others (Bessiere, 1998; Lugosi, 2013). Not only Paris is well known as ‘the city of love’, but Bessiere (1998) states that ‘haute’ cuisine is synonymous with France as a tourist destination. Establishing a sense of place will provide tourists with a better understanding of the explicit and implicit local cuisine of the surrounding environment and society (Bessiere, 1998).

In order for tourists to experience a sense of place, it is crucial for a destination to clearly define its local cuisine as part of its identity (Civitello, 2011; Timothy & Ron, 2013). By doing so, the place or region can showcase the uniqueness of its food in order to promote itself as a tourism destination. Scholars have argued that specific agricultural practices and products, and the cuisine that is created out of them, help to define a geographic area (Bessiere, 1998; Fox, 2007; Okumus et al., 2007; Higman, 2011; Lugosi, 2013). Added to this mix are social class, regional food policy, history and culture, and cooking and serving rules (Goody, 1982; Mennell, 1985; Appadurai, 1988; Belasco, 2008; Civitello, 2011; Higman, 2011; Lugosi, 2013). Regional food policy, as mentioned by Higman (2011), seeks to ensure the quality of local food available and control the agricultural activities. Mennell (1985) and Appadurai (1988) suggest that history and culture significantly influence human lifestyle and belief towards food.

Various authors have identified key changes which have contributed to shaping the cuisine of different countries and regions. For example, migration associated with colonialism and globalisation has combined the food practices of multiple cultures. Over time this has created the unique cuisines of particular countries, drawing from the mix of different cultures (Appadurai, 1988; Higman, 2011). Rozin (1992) stated that cultural
practices in cuisine can be determined within the context of the ethnic group. If the food is acceptable and commonly consumed within that group, it is accepted as normal, regardless of how different from other group practices (i.e. eating of insects or anything that looks bizarre). However, ethnic food is often de-spiced or localised to satisfy the palate of people in another place (Rozin, 1992). Scarpato and Daniele (2003) also identified technology as a key change which has impacted on the development of cuisines in certain countries. For example, they discuss technological advancement in food preparation, along with contemporary lifestyles as other elements in the emergence of new cuisines (e.g. fusion cuisine). Furthermore, changes in lifestyle and changes in demand in contemporary society have influenced cuisine development. These changes make human preferences more complex and diverse, especially regarding food and beverages. For instance, dietary restrictions due to medical or social reasons can make individuals more selective in their food choices. Similarly, those who have high incomes may have more varied and sophisticated food choices as compared to people with lower incomes.

Additionally, beliefs, customs and taboos affect the diet of many ethnic groups (Rozin, 1992). In other words, regardless of a person’s place of origin or religious dietary restrictions are one way that create differences with other groups or societies. Thus, regional cuisine can be influenced by the movement of people with different cultures, religious beliefs or different cooking styles into a particular region. Marzuki, Hall and Ballantine (2013) explain how religious dietary rules, such as Kosher (Jewish) and Halal (Muslim) rules, restrict some religious groups’ food choices. Nevertheless, Son and Xu (2013) found that the role of religious food (i.e. Buddhist temple food) does not just enhance the overall tourist experience but is also capable of adding distinguishing value into the destination branding of a place or region. Food guidelines, combined with cultural and social factors, also contribute to the development of certain cuisine. On the other hand, Higman (2011) states that educational background, geographic location (urban or rural residence) and the availability of resources influence food choices. Richards (2002) believes that food is used not only for the purpose of satisfying hunger but also for enjoyment and to create remarkable and memorable experiences. This is supported by Schluter (2012) in her study related to promoting intangible cultural heritage through regional cuisine as a tourist product. She believes that regional cuisine contributes to the enjoyment of excellent food, which reflects the specific eating and cooking practices of a specific geographic area.
The concept of cuisine may be used as a platform for understanding how food and beverage resources are used in particular situations (Higman, 2011). Symons (2004) explains that in countries where food of the past is served, the practice is connected with the creation of a historical atmosphere or setting. Local cuisines which are understood or accepted as authentic help build a sense of place which generates strong romantic culinary experiences (Symons, 2004). As such, associating gastronomy with tourism by creating an awareness of the specific cuisine of a specific region is a viable strategy to enhance visitor experiences and create a strong destination image (Sims, 2009).

Despite becoming a vital tourism experience in some tourist destinations, identifying and defining local cuisine is a serious issue faced by some postcolonial countries with a multicultural background such as Malaysia. The cuisine in such places is more difficult to define, given the influences of colonists or other settlers. As argued by Rozin (1992), the creation and development of distinctive regional cuisines is influenced by a range of social, cultural, economic and biological factors. Regional cuisine distinctiveness is created out of the assemblage of foods that are available together with the styles of cooking and other culinary practices such as the use of spices and other condiments to provide flavour. In some countries, regional cuisines are markedly different and distinctive as in France, Italy and China while in others regional distinctions are less obvious. Culinary practices and new foods which diffuse into a region from other regions or indeed countries can change regional cuisine: they are neither static nor immutable. Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) found that the wide variety of regional products in Canada (given the variation in climate, soils, precipitation and many others) as well as the wide variety of immigrants and indigenous cultural traditions, are among the challenges faced by the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) in selling Canada’s culinary traditions. It is a challenge to define local cuisine in multicultural countries given the variety of influences (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006); however, it is also a strength given the combination of influences from different ethnic groups. Malaysia, as postcolonial country with a multicultural identity, experiences a similar scenario. This appears to be one of the main challenges in utilising local cuisine as part of government’s tourist destination marketing strategies to sell Malaysia as a tourist destination.

1 In the context of tourism studies the definition of authenticity is rather complex. Mkono (2012, 2013) states authenticity has been widely contested, particularly from the demand-side. She found that Western tourists often believe object authenticity (i.e., something that is visible and has sensory appeal), including food, which represents regional cuisine as a cultural signifier.
In the case of Australian and New Zealand cuisine, Hall and Mitchell (2002) state that understanding the local food system, from historical times to the present day, and identifying changes within that food system are the key components of food tourism. They also argue that collaboration between various stakeholders is important in linking food and tourism to promote Australian and New Zealand cuisine. The CTC, on the other hand, has identified three recommendations to market a country as a culinary tourism destination: ‘i) developing national, regional and sector brand images, targeting the USA and domestic markets; ii) creating awareness and raising the profile of cuisine tourism in tourism marketplaces; and iii) developing an adequate bank of culinary images for use in CTC marketing programs’ (Deneault, 2002 cited in Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006, p. 50). Additionally, Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) note that strong partnerships between products (i.e. food producers, restaurant operators, and local products) and marketing (i.e. the local government, tourism and hospitality representatives and marketing tools) are crucial. These linkages can be good practice for a country like Malaysia to market itself as an international tourist destination using local cuisine.

The attraction of food within the context of tourism has been extensively investigated in many previous studies. Kivela and Crotts (2009) contend that the attraction of local foods within tourism mostly comes from: enjoyable, unique and high-quality food; tourist participation in indigenous culture through food; and opportunities to purchase and sample unique products that are not readily available in their own country. Furthermore, Ryu and Jang (2006) state that past knowledge strongly influences tourists’ intentions to experience local cuisine. It is also important for the DMOs in every destination to pay attention to issues relating to ‘familiarisation’ (i.e. becoming familiar with something such as food) amongst tourists. Even without local food or cuisine being the motivation for travelling to a tourist destination, ultimately it must be realised that tourists are bound to have individual food preferences that have been constructed biologically (e.g. due to allergies and special diets), psychologically (e.g. due to socio-demographic backgrounds and religious practices) and socially (Fischler, 1988). Cohen and Aveili (2004), in their exploration of the impediments to food tourism, found that tourists encountered impediments including hygiene standards, health considerations, communication gaps and their limited knowledge concerning local cuisine. The finding is well supported by Fischler’s (1988) theory on human attitudes to food. The tourist who experiences ‘neophobia’ is less willing, or not at all willing, to taste unfamiliar food, whereas those who experience ‘neophilia’ are more adventurous and open to tasting something that is
consider to be interesting and new to them (Fischler, 1988; Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Neophobic tourists perhaps are not as willing to take risks in tasting Malaysian food in comparison to those who are regarded as neophilic. Having a clear understanding of the dishes, ingredients and cultural practices that form a local cuisine is critical to building a competitive advantage for a particular tourist destination, along with reducing these impediments in the tourism marketing strategy and tourist activities.

Strengthening a region’s identity and sustaining cultural heritage through local cuisine (Everett & Aitchison, 2008) can be achieved by promoting the place as a tourist destination. A case study of Cornwall, England, confirmed the existence of a relationship between food tourism interests, the retention and development of a regional identity, an increase in social and cultural benefits, and conservation of traditional heritage. Everett and Aitchison (2008) found that food-related festivals and events are amongst the marketing initiatives used to promote Cornish heritage identity. These events involve many well-established Cornish food companies gathering to promote and sell their products and, indirectly, transmit to tourists the region’s heritage knowledge and identity through their company’s brand image. As described by Boyne et al. (2003), the development of the character and cultural identity of a region or a place through the incorporation of local food and cuisine within the marketing collateral have long been crucial elements of place-based tourism. Local food and cuisine are nowadays recognised as a foundational part of local heritage and can be seen as a force for sustaining, developing and promoting heritage; thus adding to the sense of place that tourists search for (Sims, 2009).

The literature that has been examined provides a strong conceptual platform for this study. As has been shown, the literature elaborates on the connections between various aspects of a region including geographical, historical and social backgrounds in cuisine creation. Furthermore, several studies on gastronomic tourism have demonstrated the intersection of local cuisine in tourist destination identities and the tourism industry. Additionally, local people have created and established local cuisines that ‘favour a distinct manner of preparing food’ (Belasco, 2008, p. 16). For example, eating a bowl of noodle soup or rice using chopsticks is emblematic of Chinese cuisine and, by extension, Chinese culture.

2.4 Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing is one of the key concepts in tourist destination marketing today. Pine and Gilmore (1999) emphasise that experience is the core element of any businesses
which creates and provides memorable events for their customers. It was found that experiential marketing is not only limited to the tourism products that are memorable but is also useful in strengthening the tourist destination’s brand by positioning the image in tourists’ minds (Gao, Scott, Ding & Cooper, 2012). The experiential marketing concept has four main features (Schmitt, 1999). First, it focuses on consumers’ experiences while travelling in a tourist destination. For example, the condition of a hotel room contributes a comfortable feeling for tourists. The second feature gives attention to the broad situation and its meaning. In this case, the roles and functions of tourism products and services offered are highlighted. Third, the emotions involved during consumption are important. This is to ensure tourists engage with the destination and enjoy travelling. Finally, experiential marketing is an eclectic approach. This can involve tourists’ participation in marketing activities by their telling stories about their experiences in travel magazines. However, successful experiential marketing depends on the consumption situation, target consumers, branding strategies and consumers’ feedback to establish brand loyalty or stimulate return intentions (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012). This has meant that the tourism industry is not only about providing and communicating tourist destination attractions – it is about the tourism experiences that consumers are searching for at the destination, with each tourist experience being different. This includes local food and cuisine experiences.

In food tourism, sensory experiences are commonly highlighted in the process of marketing local cuisine available at a particular tourist destination. Distinctive sensory experiences (i.e. colour, texture, etc.), meanings and motives always exist within tourism products and services and marketing approaches (Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2007). The culinary tourists, who are primarily travelling to a tourist destination to experience local cuisine, participate in cooking classes and demonstrations because they wanted to learn new cookery skills in locations far from their everyday concerns and habits (Chrzan, 2006, 2007). Okumus et al. (2007) and Lee et al. (2014) believe that, unlike culinary tourists, there may be differences between food tourists and other type of tourists in terms of their information searches and their level of enthusiasm toward eating and learning about foreign food and cuisine.

2.4.1 Destination Competitiveness

Apart from the importance of the tourism experience to marketing tourist destinations and how it can be utilised in food tourism, as discussed earlier, destination competitiveness is
another aspect that is considered within destination marketing. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) and Dwyer and Kim (2003) point out that increasing competitiveness is a difficult challenge in the global marketplace. This challenge is characterised by a number of significant complexities, namely the tourism destination, the products of the tourism sector as an experience (an experience which is produced by multiple suppliers), and multiple stakeholders (which makes management of the destination product complex) (Wang, 2011). Nevertheless, competitiveness is necessary for any tourist destination in order to successfully survive in the industry. Crouch (2011) suggests that the promotion of destination competitiveness needs to be focussed on attaining the goals that competitiveness is designed to achieve.

Destination competitiveness, in this study, is defined as the ability to encourage tourism expenditure, motivate and attract tourists with memorable local cuisine experiences, and improve the wellbeing of the tourist destination while preserving the natural and cultural capital for future generations (adapted from Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Destination competitiveness in relation to local cuisine is particularly significant given that Malaysia is in direct competition as a food tourism destination with Singapore and, to a lesser extent, Indonesia – both of which share cuisine elements with Malaysia.

### 2.4.2 Strategy Development for Destination Marketing

A comprehensive understanding of destination marketing and strategy assists tourism organisations to formulate effective marketing strategies. Wang (2011) emphasises that a thoughtful and well-planned marketing strategy can help the tourist destination compete effectively. Furthermore, this could provide a clear picture of the concept and scope of the tourism industry, as well as assisting with the marketing and management of the tourist destination itself (Wang, 2011). A marketing strategy is defined as a formal document or plan used by an organisation to stay competitive and be relevant in the business or industry (Jain, 2004). A strategic marketing plan refers to a strategy for an organisation’s long-term development which matches the organisation’s internal resources and capabilities to external environmental opportunities (Hsu et al., 2008). Since tourism competition is a global phenomenon tourist destinations continue to identify their capabilities and strengths (Jenkins et al., 2011). This is an ongoing effort to ensure that tourism destinations survive. Consequently, destinations must offer tourism products and services that correspond to current market demand.
In responding to tourists’ needs, desires and preferences, Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012) assert that a marketing strategy should be flexible and, at the same time, tourist destinations should make the most of their strengths and should match tourists’ value requirements. A competitive and successful marketing strategy needs to recognise and understand resources and competencies, the competitive nature of the industry, and the stages of the marketing lifecycle (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012). In addition, Proctor (2008 cited in Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012) points out that because firms compete the following elements are crucial: the level of investment needed, the functional area strategies (product line, positioning, pricing, distribution, information technology, segmentation and global strategy), the strategic assets, the competencies and synergies matched with the functional area strategies, and the allocation of resources among business units. They must all be recognised and understood by tourism authorities in tourist destinations (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012).

Implementing strategic marketing also requires a set of goals to give direction and to act as a parameter for measuring success. Proctor (2008) and Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012) argue that in setting a goal for success, marketing strategies need to be based on relevant policies that govern a particular tourist destination. This is supported by Pike (2004), who notes that the core element that has a strong influence on branding and competitiveness is the tourism-related policies that exist within the tourism system, which might lead to a pragmatic outcome in developing tourist destination marketing strategies.

### 2.4.3 Tourism-Related Policies in Tourist Destination Marketing Strategies

Tourism-related policies are considered by most scholars in the field as playing a significant role in the complex environment which regulates marketing strategy development and management of a particular tourist destination (Wang, 2011). Recently, tourism policy has been related to general government strategies, particularly in supporting trade and promotion activities at both the domestic and international levels, while the role of sub-national tourism authorities in international relations is beginning to be accepted (Hall, 2000). Hall and Jenkins (2004) assert that policy-making is a political activity that is influenced by economic status and development, social characteristics of a society, the formal structures governing the country and other features of the political system. Thus, tourism policy must be authorised by public agencies (Hall & Jenkins, 1995). This is because it may not have been significantly developed within the framework of government (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).
There is usually a synergy between state tourism policies and the destination marketing strategies that individual regions develop (Pike, 2008). These policies aim to optimise positive or beneficial tourism impacts and subsequently maximise benefits for the region (Buhalis, 2000). In this regard, it is crucial for stakeholders at the tourist destination to determine what and which tourism products have the power to persuade tourists to come, and at the same time highlight the destination’s cultural identity. The most important aspect for destination marketing and management is having a clear understanding of the identification and selection of tourism products and experiences, and recognising who has legitimate power to make a final decision (Pike, 2008; Wang, 2011). For example, Henderson (2011) acknowledged that Singapore Tourist Board (STB) was able to market and promote food hawkers as the country’s touristic icon through the ‘Hawkers Centres Upgrading Program’ in 2001. In the case of the Nordic region, Ljunggren (2012) argues that local government encouraged restaurant and food producers to consider the total ‘experience production chain’, including galleries, shops and many others. According to Dredge and Jenkins (2011), planning and policy in marketing and managing tourist destinations involves consideration of the political debate about the agenda, issues, stakeholders’ involvement and the contingency plans to address every single problem. Thus, this could be similar to the case of promoting local cuisine as part of a tourist destination’s marketing strategies which need to be addressed in more depth.

Hall and Jenkins (2004) note that tourism faces a major policy quandary due to a change of roles at the tourist destination and the individual in relation to these changes. These changes became more prevalent when the tourism industry in some countries or tourist destinations started to develop more independence with little interference from the government in the form of subsidies or assistance (Hall & Jenkins, 2004). There are interest groups within the tourism industry who seek government policies specifically developed to secure their welfare, including government funding for business development and promotion. To achieve this, national and regional tourist organisations have been restructured to: i) reduce their planning, policy and development roles and increase their marketing and promotion functions; and ii) engage in a greater range of partnerships, networks and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders (Hall & Jenkins, 2004). This restructuring has led to an increased emphasis on governance through a ‘new process of governing’ (Rhodes, 1997, p. 43).
2.4.4 Destination Brand and Image

In tourist destination marketing, Ooi (2004, p. 109) defines destination branding as ‘a dynamic process of drawing support and cooperation from various stakeholders so that [the] brand will be accepted, communicated, and manifested through official and unofficial publicity and products’. To brand a tourist destination, brand positioning is a crucial approach in which marketers communicate values and/or unique selling propositions to tourists (Kerr & Balakrishnan, 2012). Chiappa and Bregoli (2012) argue that creating positive images in tourists’ minds (brand positioning) helps to attract them to a destination. This can be implemented by selecting a consistent mix of brand elements within the existing tourism products and services, such as local cuisine to build a positive destination image. In addition, an effective branding strategy improves the tourist destination’s image and competitiveness (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). Logically then, a distinctive and memorable local cuisine identity could contribute to differentiating a tourist destination from its competitors and develop sustainable competitiveness.

According to Leiper (1990), tourist destinations before the 1990s were mainly perceived as consumer products that could be marketed in the same way as any other product even though they are consumed and experienced in many ways. Moreover, it was found that several tourist destination marketing concepts were based on tourists’ points of view, using travelling pull and push factors (Dann, 1977), marketing mixes and market segmentation (Bryant & Morrison, 1980), analysis of the destination life cycle (Butler, 1980) and models of tourist attractions (Lew, 1987; Leiper, 1990). Beginning in the early 1990s, many studies aimed to analyse and measure an appropriate tourist destination image. However, towards the end of 1990s, many researchers shifted their focus to tourist destination identity building by analysing communication or marketing elements, such as brochures (Dahles, 1998). In other words, they analysed the specific characteristics and features of tourist destinations which are used to represent the geographic area or region in tourism marketing. For example, local food and cuisine reveal a tourist destination’s associations, such as Mexican cuisine with tomatoes, Italian cuisine with pasta, Korean cuisine with kimchi and Thai cuisine with tomyam. A tourist destination brand exists, therefore, if it is able to stake out a position in the minds of tourists – not because it has a recognised name, distinctive logo, tagline or symbol (Chiappa & Bregoli, 2012).

There are several features that a destination must consider to create its own brand as part of a marketing strategy. Tourism is a fiercely competitive industry between and within
destinations, and unpredictable tourist expectations and fluctuations in tourism demand are amongst the most critical factors (Fyall, 2011). In creating a destination brand, it is necessary to develop a unique identity using existing tourist products and services in order to create an image of the destination in consumers’ minds (Ritchie, Tung & Ritchie, 2011). At this stage, promotional activities are important in distributing the right information as a marketing communication medium between the host destination and consumers (target markets). Destination image has the power to influence tourists’ perceptions so that they can have a reasonable understanding of what kind of tourism attractions and experiences are available. Tourists can then make a comparison between their initial perceptions and/or past experiences (Fyall, 2011). This is important in helping tourists to make their choice of where to go and what to do. Branding helps improve the destination’s positioning (this involves referring to an image through the unique identity) and competitiveness.

To achieve a competitive advantage, Pike (2004) argues that for tourist destinations strong brand equity and successful brand strategy are the most two important features. For that reason, he developed a framework of linkages within a branding strategy between suppliers (brand identity) and tourists (brand image), with brand positioning acting as an interface. In addition, Chiappa and Bregoli (2012) assert that tourists’ awareness of a tourist destination would increase a destination’s brand equity.

The incorporation of cuisine into a destination’s brand is becoming more common, for example, in marketing local food and cuisine as a regional brand in Czech Republic. Splikova and Fialova (2013) state that the Czech Ministry of Agriculture launched a regional food campaign to foster the nation’s and tourists’ interests. Food producers could label their products with ‘Regional aliment’ as part of the branding strategies created for this campaign. Another example of successful local food and cuisine marketing was established by the Thai Government through ‘Thailand: The Kitchen of the World’ theme launched in 2001, in an effort to promote and increase the number of Thai restaurants overseas (Lee, 2012).

Baker and Cameron (2007) argue that branding is a vital component of tourist destination marketing strategies and is also an important element in any tourism promotional plan. To ensure successful tourist destination marketing and branding, the creation and development of the strategy should be managed using bottom-up rather than top-down approach (Gnoth, 2002). Jamal and Getz (1995) state that successful brand strategies also
depend on both public and private stakeholders. Furthermore, this relationship becomes more complex in food experiences in which tourists participate as co-creators as a part of the process. Therefore, DMOs, as appointed tourism authorities, should play their role to identify which and why certain stakeholders should be involved, and to plan how to operationalise their marketing initiatives so that tourists can participate and interact with suppliers as local food and cuisine experience co-producers.

2.5 The Role of Governments in Destination Marketing and Tourism Experience Development

Destination marketing involves a multitude of stakeholders. In the stakeholder assessment conducted by d'Angella and Go (2009), it is important to understand that there are many different stakeholders that influence the development of tourist destination marketing strategies. Some of those stakeholders have more power than others, but it is important to consider all of them. Tourist destination marketing also provides the tools to attain a complex range of strategic objectives which eventually satisfy the needs of stakeholders (d'Angella & Go, 2009). However, first the stakeholder roles must be understood.

There are usually three primary stakeholder groups involved in destination marketing: i) a destination marketing organisation (DMO) responsible for promotion; ii) a government ministry providing policy advice to government; and iii) a private sector umbrella industry association that champions the causes of member organisations, with interests in tourism development (Pike, 2004, 2008). From a destination management and marketing perspective, government agencies are the major stakeholders in driving and funding destination planning, marketing and management initiatives (Jenkins et al., 2011). According to Pike (2004), DMOs can be part of the local, regional or national governments and can play a significant role in stimulating and creating demand, but they need to understand whether their targeted customers are responding in the desired way (Fyall, 2011). This is to ensure that all stakeholders can benefit in the long term. On the other hand, Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan (2010) contend that there are two primary roles of DMOs: i) offering a range of tourism activities and experiences, and ii) enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of the residents. They also have a leadership and advocacy role for tourism within the local community that they service (Gertrell, 1994 cited in Bornhorst et al., 2010). According to Presenza, Sheehan and Ritchie (2005), tourist destinations find themselves competing directly with each other not only at an international level, but also within regional and/or geographical areas. In the context of
Malaysia, competition in marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine occurs between its near neighbours, especially Singapore and Indonesia. This is because political and economic changes in the macro-environment at the tourist destination have forced each DMO to develop and position the tourist destination’s image in the marketplace as well as act as a representative for local buyers and sellers (Gertrell, 1993; Wang, 2011). Thus, utilising local food and cuisine could stimulate and support ‘inward agricultural activity, and food production, enhancing destination attractiveness and stimulating inward investment, empowering the local community through job creation and encourage entrepreneurship, generating pride in local production and reinforcing brand identity of the tourist destination’ (Telfer & Wall, 1996 cited in Richards, 2012, p. 23).

DMOs, therefore, not only act as ‘middle men’ between tourist destinations and consumers for ‘telling and selling’ the destination, but are also directly involved in negotiations between tourists and destination stakeholders. The complex relationships of stakeholders in marketing a tourist destination is, however, challenging because there are a variety of stakeholders involved in the development and delivery of tourism products and experiences (Buhalis, 2000). Managing the often conflicting stakeholders’ interests makes controlling (Sautter & Leisen, 1999) and marketing a tourist destination as a whole challenging. Tourist destination marketing strategies and actions should therefore take into account the needs of all stakeholders involved in the production and delivery of local cuisine experiences.

### 2.5.1 Cooperation and Collaboration between Stakeholders in Destination Marketing

The quality of the tourist destination experiences, especially the local cuisine as part of tourism attractions, depends in part on how stakeholders are interconnected (Mulcahy, 2015). In other words, the way stakeholders act and interact, and the relations between them, are important to ensure success in marketing and managing a tourist destination (March & Wilkinson, 2009). Furthermore, Chiappa and Bregoli (2012) argue that the internal governance of a DMO and its relationship with stakeholders are pivotal in a tourist destination’s brand development. The relationship between stakeholders is extended to the engagement of tourists in local cuisine marketing activities as co-producers. Richards (2012) argues that tourists are easily attracted to information spread by word-of-mouth through social networks. This means that one tourist’s experiences can also influence the experiences of others. Therefore, cooperation and collaboration between DMOs and relevant stakeholders is important for the success of planning and
implementing tourist destinations’ marketing strategies (Buhalís, 2000; Fyall, Callod & Edwards, 2003).

According to Wang and Fesenmaier (2007, p. 863), in the literature on relationships and alliances between organisations, particularly marketing alliances, a range of paradigms have been used to show the connection between stakeholders. These paradigms focus on narrow aspects of cooperative relationships and none of them is able to describe and demonstrate the nature of marketing alliances and networks between the stakeholders of a tourist destination (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007). March and Wilkinson (2009) reaffirm that tourism networks are complex and uncontrollable entities which have evolved in response to environmental and organisational demands. These networks comprise several stakeholders with cross sectoral and administrative as well as diverse geographical backgrounds. Ryssel, Ritter and Gemunden (2004) state that goals for networking are difficult to identify and cannot be fully managed. Fennell and Butler (2003, p. 208) point out that ‘tourism in destination regions or communities is rarely managed, even when it has been planned’. The cooperation required to stimulate tourist demand and effectively manage the relationship between themselves and DMOs, as well as enhance collaboration is seen as challenging (March & Wilkinson, 2009).

Nevertheless, Pinto and Kastenholz (2011) assert that tourism organisations never operate in isolation. The collaboration involved in marketing a tourist destination is based on strategic alliances in which two or more stakeholders jointly collaborate over time to gain a competitive advantage (Palmer & Bejour, 1995). These relationships stakeholders are able to form networks. Knoke and Kuklinski (1983) define a network as a bond of relationships that emerge from a set of persons, objects or events. This becomes more complex when integrating local cuisine into tourist destination marketing strategies because there are multiple layers of stakeholders involved, all from various backgrounds. Richards (2012) and Hall (2012) mention that traditional linear value chains are gradually taken over by ‘value networks’. Traditional linear value chains refer to the one-way delivery of a mix of products and services to the end customer (i.e. from supply to customer). Networks of stakeholders to market and sell local food and cuisine to tourists are prevalent (Richards, 2012). This forms a powerful destination marketing team to achieve common goals which benefit everyone. Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) find that stakeholders are divided into two groups in marketing cuisines in Canada: i) product stakeholders, including food producers such as restaurant operators and chefs, and ii) marketing stakeholders, including DMOs, regional associations, event organisers,
exhibitors, individual food operators and media partners. Furthermore, Pinto and Kastenholz (2011) identify six main actors in tourist destinations, each playing a different role, with individual interests which contribute services, capabilities and resources. These are shown in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic tourism agents</th>
<th>Sometimes referred to as the tourism industry, producing the services offered directly to tourists, such as accommodation, transportation, attraction and food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic agents from other sectors</td>
<td>Indirectly affected by tourism activities, such as retailers or generic service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit organisations</td>
<td>Providing tourism-related or non-related services, such as health, cultural or recreational activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public entities</td>
<td>Providing infrastructures and facilities, heritage and nature preservation, information and education, and some activities coordination within a more or less formal structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local population</td>
<td>Who condition the tourist experience directly and can benefit from touristic development but also can suffer some social impacts from it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>To whom the offer is directed and that ultimately seek unique experiences and activate the destination network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The successful development of strategic partnerships between DMOs and relevant stakeholders in tourist destination marketing is based on three key factors: i) member commitment, ii) flexibility, and iii) trust (Williams, 1999). In many cases, trust between stakeholders is often the key issue in network collaboration (Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011). Moreover, Wang (2008) finds that conflicts happen during the collaboration process from time to time. He believes that this is a common issue in any collaborative relationship, especially when corporate sectors enter into partnerships with actors from a diverse range of backgrounds and with specific interests. The most critical situation in the collaboration process is when DMOs try to strike a balance between the individual organisation’s benefits and the common benefits to the entire destination (Pike, 2004). Conflicts are handled and resolved in a more informal manner in which the social network relationships exist (Granovetter, 1985; Wang, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for stakeholders to have a mutual trust in promoting local cuisine because this will increase their tolerance and respect for one another, which helps to minimise conflict (Hall, 2012; Richards, 2012).
2.6 Local Cuisine in Relation to Tourist Destination Marketing

It is not enough to just offer tourists a plate of food. Destination planners and marketers need to develop a dynamic tourism experience that clearly establishes the local cuisine identity (Okumus et al., 2007). This requires DMOs or local authorities to work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to assemble information about why the local cuisine and its associated culture are unique (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). In general, a DMO is a single entity that may be funded, either in full or in part, by local government or by the local tourism industry. Thus, it is part of the DMO’s duties to effectively market the destination – not only to attract tourists but to make them eager to experience the local cuisine. Such experiences, ultimately, help give tourists a better understanding of the local cuisine and its identity.

Utilising marketing tools efficiently to develop the identity and image of local cuisine for a destination can include using brochures, the internet and media (Frochot, 2003; Jalis, 2013; Jalis et al., 2014). Hsu et al. (2008) found that communication, either verbally or non-verbally, is the ‘heart and breath’ in any marketing activity to deliver information about products and services. Therefore, building a profile starts with understanding the local cuisine and its emotional and cultural significance and then leads into developing a marketing strategy. Su and Horng (2012) emphasise that the unique identity of a destination, conveyed via text, photographs or symbols, as well as reducing impediments for tourists to experience local cuisine, is very important in a destination marketing strategy. They suggest this is because it helps to position a clear image of local cuisine that represents the tourist destination. For example, Tuscany has appeared in cooking magazines which emphasize the simplicity and purity of Tuscan cuisine. Chrzan (2007) found that the cooking magazines focused on the fresh and seasonal food ingredients, as well as the cookery arts of Tuscan cuisine. Henderson (2009) argues that national food (in regards to local cuisine) must not only be included as part of tourism experience packages, but must be positioned as a critical component of the destination image and advertising themes. For example, Singapore and Hong Kong both proclaim themselves as a ‘food paradise’, while Malaysia incorporates local cuisine as part of its national multicultural identity by utilising the term ‘fusion cuisine’ as the destination’s food tourism theme. Organising food-related events, such as food demonstrations, food exhibitions and campaigns, is a strategy practised by many countries to directly connect with their market and to establish the identity of local cuisine and associated cultural elements (Hall & Gossling, 2016; Richards, 2012).
Failure to distribute the correct information to tourists about local food-related activities through marketing channels is considered a barrier to appreciating local cuisine (Henderson, 2009). A study undertaken by Reynolds (1993) in Bali, Indonesia, explored the understanding of sustainable culture in food tourism and revealed that there are certain traditional foods no longer being prepared and offered for tourists. Reynolds (1993) further found that even though the government struggled to preserve and promote the local cuisine, rapid tourism development was found to be the primary factor that eroded such efforts. To avoid such deterioration, Hall and Mitchell (2003) emphasise that greater attention needs to be given by local governments to the development of food tourism. This is important because local cuisine not merely influences tourists’ travel planning and decision-making, but also has the potential to be an important part of tourist destination marketing strategies. This was confirmed by Harrington (2005), who found that local cuisine could help to deliver a range of benefits for a destination’s tourism industry and community through enhancing a distinctive image and helping to strengthen and support local food supply chains.

### 2.6.1 Integrating Local Cuisine into National Destination Marketing and Identity Strategies

An important element in developing a destination marketing strategy is the comprehensive understanding of the nature and diversity of tourism products and experiences offered by a particular destination. Lugosi and Walls (2013, p. 53) explain that in the consumption of tourism experiences, ‘the tangible component is not actually purchased in the traditional sense, instead, tourists use the product for a period of time’. This means the enjoyment during the tourist’s time at a destination is crucial. They further explain that interactions between tourists occur in a tangible place, and involve interactions between fellow tourists and destination inhabitants, thus providing ‘the core of tourist experience’ (Lugosi & Walls, 2013, p. 53). As such, tourists may be considered as co-producers of tourism and hospitality experiences in processes in which they actively interact with destination suppliers (including the environment, organisations, employees, locals and other consumers) to build their own experiences. Within this interaction process consumers indirectly engage in numerous non-market-related experiences (Walls & Wang, 2011).

Tourists today are more adventurous and open to new experiences, with many being keen to try what is sold to them as ‘authentic local cuisine’ (Reynolds, 1993), and the signature
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

...dishes of the destination. Offering quality opportunities for tourists to experience local food and cuisine is therefore important to ensure overall tourist satisfaction. As Richards (2012) explains, a substantial percentage of tourists’ time whilst on holidays involves consuming food and beverages, or deciding what and where to eat. This assertion is supported by Chrzan (2007), who notes that human minds often link tourist destinations with food or specific dishes because most travel is not just for leisure but also involves tasting some of the local cuisine. Many countries and destinations have begun to realise the importance of local cuisine in marketing the destination. As mentioned previously, countries that have long been known for their distinctive local food and cuisines include France, Italy and Spain. Various pasta dishes, including lasagne and ravioli, are synonymous with Italy, for example. In Asia, countries that are famed for their particular cuisines include India, China, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam.

In addition to having representative dishes, establishing food outlets, such as ethnic restaurants, and food-related activities, such as festivals and events, are also part of the promotion of local cuisine (Richards, 2012). This enables tourists to get closer to all aspects of local cuisine, including the cooking process, allowing them to immerse themselves in the local culture and society. Capatti (2012) notes that tourists will get excited when they start comparing their food experiences and judging what they have encountered. For example, if tourists visited Malaysian restaurants in two different places in Australia and tried the same dishes, such as ‘chicken satay’, they would most probably start thinking and talking about it based on their personal experiences. This sampling provides direct experiential marketing for potential tourists in tourism-generating regions and enables relevant stakeholders to engage with different layers of target markets (Richards, 2012).

Delivering a clear local cuisine identity that links to a destination’s brand image may, however, be difficult for some nations. For example, this can be a critical issue for nations with a broad range of ethnic and cultural groups (multicultural), for example countries such as the US, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia, where the population is mainly made up of migrants and their descendants. As confirmed by Higman (2011), this has particularly been the case for postcolonial countries, in which their local cuisine is heavily derived from the colonists who share and spread their cooking knowledge to local people. As such, a conflict of interest may exist amongst the broad range of ethnic groups in considering which dishes are used to represent local cuisine for the destination, particularly settler countries such as Malaysia.
2.6.2 Strategic Marketing Initiatives for Cuisine as a Tourism Product and Experience

As previously mentioned, the synergy between local food and tourism has evolved tremendously in the contemporary tourism industry worldwide. Henderson (2009) acknowledges that local food appears to be thriving in many countries and is an excellent asset for hospitality and tourism industries of those countries, but attention to effective promotion is needed to deliver a clear message to the targeted audiences. Food has been employed as a means of tourist destination positioning and differentiation (Boyne et al., 2003; Forchot, 2003; Okumus et al., 2007; Horng & Tsai, 2010). Food images are carefully structured in marketing strategies to transmit a sense of place (du Rand et al., 2003). By doing so, the ‘familiarity’ of the destination cuisine can be increased. For example, in multi-ethnic countries (e.g. Singapore, Australia and the US) this familiarity is reflected in the local cuisine and practice (Henderson, 2009). In addition, the increasing number of tourists (either domestic or international) who are more adventurous (particularly in relation to local food) has become a worldwide phenomenon. Most of them are keen to try what they have had promoted to them as authentic local cuisines (Reynolds, 1993) and the signature dishes of destinations.

Apart from tourist destination attraction, marketing the local cuisine can highlight various aspects of local knowledge, including social living practices, cultural values and local history (Timothy, 2013). This in turn creates the distinctive identity of a particular tourist destination. In France, for example, food heritage is a major tourist attraction (Bessiere, 2013). An important element of a national identity is a variety of ingredients (Bessiere, 1998). This aligns with Forchot’s (2003) study on the analysis of regional positioning and its associated food ‘images in regional French tourism brochures. According to Forchot (2003), French regions use images of raw products, country products and market scenes to exploit the traditional and/or rural authentic theme. Thus, Forchot (2003) highlights that featuring local ingredients in marketing a tourist destination draws attention to both the production and consumption of food.

Currently, mass media, including new media such as social media, are seen as the focal players in marketing a destination’s cuisine. In recent years, there has been a spectacular growth in television programs, and indeed entire television channels, devoted to cooking and food-related programs, such as the Carlton Food Network in the United Kingdom (UK) and the Asian Food Channel (AFC) in Malaysia. In addition, there are also cuisine documentary-like television programs in Australia, such as ‘Shane Delia’s Spice
Journey’, ‘Singapore Flavours’ and ‘Luke Nguyen’s Vietnam’, that offer insights into the historical, geographical and cultural dimensions of what people eat. Recently, the emergence of reality chef cooking television shows, such as ‘Top Chef’, ‘Master Chef’, ‘Hell’s Kitchen’, ‘Iron Chef’ and ‘My Kitchen Rules’, demonstrate the rising popularity of food and the preparation of food. Apart from the attraction of viewing participants’ anxiety as they prepare dishes and the subsequent assessment by the professional ‘jury’, these programs also highlight some of the local cuisine specialties and emphasise the use of local ingredients. These programs, with their emphasis on using local ingredients, and on aspects of the nature and culture of the host community, serve to highlight the relationship between place, cuisine, culture and tourism. However, the idea of highlighting the association between the three aspects (i.e. place, cuisine and tourism) in line with the concept of food tourism and destination marketing strategies still needs further exploration.

Several tourist destinations have long been associated with food routes and trails which promote regional cuisine by combining food production with local tourism. Newman (2014) notes that tasting trails are said to be an ideal tourist destination marketing strategy. The ‘Taste of Wales’ in Wales (Jones & Jenkins, 2002), ‘Isle of Arran Taste Trail’ in Scotland (Boyne et al., 2003) and ‘Adelaide Hill Food Trail’ in Australia (Anderson & Law, 2012) are amongst the most successful destination development and marketing initiatives. Manson and O’Mahony (2007) mention that the key factors in the success of food and wine trails are the ‘trail product’ (e.g. varieties, experience and stories, tourist readiness and commitment, product quality and promotion and theme) and ‘trail management’ (e.g. social capital, trust, compliance cost and trail coordination). In the case of the ‘Adelaide Hill Food Trail’, support and regulation from government were critical to its success (Anderson & Law, 2012). Wargenau and Che (2006) and Everett (2016) found that a strong network and strategic marketing alliances amongst the local wine, food and tourism businesses were needed to develop consistency and uniformity in promoting and branding the tourist destination.

Apart from the food trail, the role of food-related activities in tourist destination marketing, such as festivals, gourmet tours, food and trade exhibitions and holiday celebrations, has gained more attention recently amongst the DMOs wishing to market local cuisine as part of the tourism experience (UNWTO, 2012). Local food and cuisine festivals are becoming one of the best marketing tools to globalise a region’s or tourist destination’s cuisine and are a platform to transform tourism experiences. For example,
the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MCST) in Korea not only organised Korean cuisine tours overseas (in Singapore and Indonesia) but also developed a food-based exhibition at the International Pusan Film Festival and invited foreign journalists on a familiarisation tour (Lee, 2012). The MCST often sponsors related food and cultural activities abroad, such as cooking classes, traditional palace food recitals and publicity in Japan and the UK (Lee, 2012). In general, local food and cuisine festivals or events are combined with other activities and cultural events including cooking demonstrations in which the chef or demonstrators share cooking tips and the story behind the local food creation (Richards, 2012). Given the contribution that festivals or events make to the promotion of cuisine within destination marketing, more research is needed to explore and analyse their roles and effectiveness.

Culinary or gastro-diplomacy is another popular initiative in integrating local cuisine into tourist destination marketing strategies. It is a government-led food marketing campaign which was first established by the Thai Government in 2002 (Zhang, 2015). Local cuisine has been used as the core marketing tool to promote Thailand as a tourist destination and establish its identity. Looking at the success of promoting Thai cuisine and marketing Thailand as an international tourist destination, many countries particularly in the Asian region, such as Korea, are also employing gastro-diplomacy as part of their international marketing strategies.

2.7 Previous Studies on Malaysian Gastronomic Products as Part of Destination Experiences

Although the concept of integrating local cuisine into tourist destination marketing has been increasingly investigated over the past decade in the tourism research field, it seems there is still a lack of agreement in terms of understanding the concept and practice (Richards, 2012). Moreover, styles of tourism administration, political agendas, geographical location, resources, culture and society have significantly influenced such marketing efforts. Furthermore, external influences such as competitors and various target markets need to be considered in ensuring the success of marketing strategies.

Malaysia is an interesting example of a gastronomic tourist destination. As previously described, the population comprises three main ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians, followed by the Indigenous minorities. This ethnic profile has resulted in a diversity of cuisines which are showcased in food-related promotional activities as part
of destination marketing efforts. Following efforts made by the DMO (i.e. the MTPB) in cooperation with various stakeholders, in 2013 the state of Penang (also known amongst tourists as Penang Island) was named as the top Foodies’ Destination by Lonely Planet in 2013. Prior to this achievement, as mentioned in Chapter One, the Department of Heritage, Malaysia, had released the National Food Heritage List which features 151 foods representing the multicultural identity of Malaysia.

Realising the progress made by the Malaysian Government, scholars – especially Malaysian academics – have begun to explore the role of local food and cuisine in marketing Malaysia as an international tourist destination. In general, most studies have focused on tourists’ perceptions and understanding of Malaysian food and images as part of motivating tourists to travel to Malaysia and their subsequent destination experiences (Jalis et al., 2009; Yussof, Bahauddin & Mohamed, 2012; Chi et al., 2013). For example, using a survey questionnaire as a tool measuring the perception of Western tourists towards Malaysian gastronomic products while travelling in Malaysia, Jalis et al. (2009) found that the majority of Western tourists positively perceived that Malaysian gastronomic products enhanced their travelling experiences. However, Roozbeh et al. (2013) believe that these findings could vary between first-time and repeat tourists. Therefore, they conducted a study to measure the effect of food experience on overall satisfaction between first-time and repeat visitors to Malaysia, finding that Malaysian food is a crucial aspect of the overall satisfaction of the total experience. This was more prevalent in first-time tourists, who believed it enhanced their travelling experiences, whilst repeat tourists were fascinated to watch and understand the traditional cooking experience.

A similar research design, again using a quantitative approach, was adopted by authors such as Leong et al. (2012), Karim et al. (2010) and Chi et al. (2013) to understand the demand for Malaysian food as part of tourism experiences. The first two studies used a small case study approach to examine local people’s perceptions of specific foods or dishes. Unlike Karim et al.’s (2010) study, Leong et al. (2012) found that the majority of international tourists’ perceptions of Malaysian food images could be classified into five categories: i) food and dining atmosphere, such as well presented, quality ingredients and nutrition; ii) features of Malaysian food, including a variety of food choices, cooking methods and ethnic foods; iii) core food value, such as value for money and reasonable prices, delicious, add to visiting enjoyment; vi) Malaysian food specialty, such as specific food that denotes Malaysia; and v) Malaysian food uniqueness, such as hot and spicy,
original and exotic. These findings are supported by Chi et al. (2013), who investigated structural relationships between Malaysian food image, food satisfaction, culinary quality and tourist behavioural intentions. They found that Malaysian food was capable of influencing the way tourists perceived image, determined their level of food satisfaction and culinary quality, and had an impact on tourists’ decision to travel to Malaysia (Chi et al., 2013). This confirms that Malaysian cuisine has the potential to strengthen the country’s image as an international tourist destination, enabling it to attract a greater number of international tourists.

Even though the abovementioned studies demonstrate the importance of Malaysian cuisine among tourists, there is still a lack of understanding about its importance from the supply-side, particularly the role of tourism authorities and relevant stakeholders. Other studies have researched Malaysian cuisine, mostly emphasising specific foods or dishes as they relate to the restaurant and food business sector, religious practices and branding. Few studies have attempted to examine the integration of local cuisine into destination marketing for Malaysia. An exception is the work of Leong, et al. (2012), who sought a deeper insight into the characteristics of Malaysian food and food culture. They employed a qualitative approach, using focus group interviews with two groups (i.e. private and public sectors), and identified eight Malaysian gastronomy characteristics (human sensory, easy access, unique stylish, flavourful, alfresco dining atmosphere, culinary adventure and sample of cultures) and five definitions of Malaysian food (diverse sensory experience, cultural food, hot and spicy, binding grounds and meeting of cultures). Nevertheless, none of the previous studies within the context of Malaysia investigate or critically analyse the utilisation of local cuisine in the country’s destination marketing strategies. For that reason, one aspect of this study focuses on how the Malaysian Government, through its relevant tourism agencies, cooperates with various tourism and hospitality representatives to promote local cuisine inside and outside of the country through food-related marketing campaigns.

As noted earlier, given Malaysian cuisine resembles that of some other Asian countries, especially Singapore and Indonesia, there are disputes about the origin of some dishes between these countries. This has been highlighted in the media and has caused intense debate amongst the nations about who owns what. For example, Henderson (2014) states that chicken rice (i.e. fragrant rice served with roast or steamed chicken accompanied with soy sauce, chili sauce and salad) is believed to be a dish originating from Malaysia. However, it is currently being promoted as Singapore’s national dish (Henderson, 2014).
This has created tensions surrounding food identity between the countries (Henderson, 2014; 2016). However, despite these tensions, the Malaysian Government still shows strong support for the use of specific foods to promote local cuisine in its destination marketing strategies (Jalis et al., 2014). Jalis et al. (2014) argue that destination marketing needs to involve the cooperation of relevant tourism and hospitality representatives. Cooperation from the private sectors – also known as service providers, such as food producers, restaurateurs, accommodation and transportation – helps to successfully market a tourist destination through its local cuisine (Mulcahy, 2015). Thus, there is a real need to investigate the whole process of integrating local cuisine into tourist destination marketing strategies for Malaysia, particularly for promoting the country’s identity, dealing with political tensions and gaining the cooperation of various stakeholders, and addressing rivalries with neighbouring countries.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined a range of gastronomy and tourism issues and their relationships with destination marketing concepts, which form the basis for the study’s research framework. Given the complex linkages between local cuisine and destination marketing, this study investigates the Malaysian Government’s utilisation of local cuisine to market the country as an international tourist destination. For that reason, relevant gastronomy and tourism studies were reviewed at the beginning of the chapter. Most of these studies examined special forms of tourism, such as gastronomic tourism, culinary tourism and food tourism. They focused on food, in particular local cuisine, as a marketing agent to attract tourists to tourist destinations. In many regions local cuisine has been integrated into destination marketing strategies. It is important to have a deeper understanding of the process of developing marketing strategies for gastronomic tourism from the planning phases through to the evaluation phase. This understanding helps to recognise the influence of tourist destination administration structures and the relevant tourism policy and planning needed to integrate local cuisine as part of tourist destination marketing strategies. This is important because most strategic tourist destination planning and marketing research investigates stakeholders’ interactions (this includes their activities and roles) and systems of activities. Reviewing Malaysian tourism-related policies as part of the focus of this study enable to build a foundation of this study.

It is argued that the systematic process for developing tourist destination marketing strategies consists of three phases: planning, implementation and evaluation. This
approach is used to analyse the roles and activities which the Malaysian Government and its agencies have employed to integrate local cuisine into Malaysian tourism and its cultural identity. It allows this study to identify different types of marketing initiatives in local cuisine promotion and branding strategies. It also enables the study to examine how the Malaysian Government determines which foods should represent Malaysian cuisine and how to differentiate them from other regions’ cuisine identities. Moreover, political agendas, geographical location, resources, culture and society have significantly influenced such marketing efforts. In addition, external influences such as competitors and various target markets need to be considered in ensuring the success of marketing strategies.

Given that Malaysian cuisine resembles that of other Asian countries, especially Singapore and Indonesia, there are disputes about the origin of some dishes between these countries. These disputes have created some tensions between the countries (Henderson, 2014). Jalis (2015) argues that destination marketing needs cooperation from relevant tourism and hospitality representatives. Thus, there is a real need to investigate the whole process of integrating local cuisine into tourist destination marketing strategies for Malaysia, particularly for promoting the country’s identity, dealing with political tensions and gaining the cooperation of various stakeholders, and addressing rivalries with neighbouring countries.

The review of the literature has shown that the utilisation of local cuisine to market a destination is surprisingly more complex than it may superficially appear. Ruptures and tensions can occur in a multicultural nation such as Malaysia in which cuisine is an ongoing outcome of the relations between the three major ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. These ruptures and tensions are exacerbated by a situation in which one of those ethnic groups is deliberately favoured by government policies.

Finally, from the overall process of developing tourist destination marketing strategies, the emergent themes and concepts used by the Malaysian Government to promote local cuisine can be understood. This applies to related local cuisine marketing initiatives which have been planned and organised or co-organised by the Malaysian Government through its tourism agencies, with cooperation from various tourism and hospitality representatives.
Chapter 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study presents an analysis of Malaysia’s local cuisine tourism marketing process, from the perspective of various stakeholders. This knowledge will help to unpack the pragmatic (tangible) aspects of deploying local cuisine as part of the destination marketing process and tourism marketing policy (from the standpoint of the Malaysian Government, in particular). Additionally, from the conceptual and theoretical (intangible) position in tourism research, this study is designed to make a significant contribution to the conceptual framework of local cuisine marketing processes by incorporating existing tourist destination marketing concepts. This chapter discusses and justifies the research methodology employed in response to the research questions. This study received approval from Southern Cross University’s (SCU) Human Research Ethics committee – approval number ECN-13-262 (see Appendix 1).

3.2 Philosophical Considerations

The concept of research philosophy describes the underpinning abstract roots in developing the research approach. It encompasses the researcher’s view of the world and logically justifies the selection and implementation of a particular research methodology for conducting a particular research project. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) observe that the research paradigm helps to provide a set of guidelines for researchers in identifying the philosophical (ontological and epistemological) assumptions underpinning the methodological approaches used in the research project.

The choice of research paradigm involves a formal understanding of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology refers to the researcher’s view of existence (the nature of reality and being), epistemology concerns the relationship between knowledge and reality, while methodology comprises the appropriate techniques and tools that align with the ontological and epistemological considerations in undertaking the research project (Neuman, 2011). Through the lens of social sciences research there are four predominant paradigms: positivism, realism, constructivism and critical theory (Creswell, 2009; Neuman, 2011). The characteristics of each of these paradigms are shown in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1: Dominant social research paradigms
(based on Creswell, 2009; Neuman, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Realism (Post-positivism)</th>
<th>Critical Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>• Reality is actively constructed by people from multiple meanings and social positions</td>
<td>• Reality is real and apprehensible through empirical observation and measurement</td>
<td>• Reality is real; however, imperfectly apprehensible</td>
<td>• Reality is shaped by external and internal values evolved over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principle of viewing the world (reality)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>• Subjectivist – researcher relies on the individual’s view within the situation being investigated</td>
<td>• Objectivist – researcher attempts to avoid any bias</td>
<td>• Modified objectivist: the findings are probably true. Mixed method is used to reduce bias and validate the findings.</td>
<td>• Modified transactional or subjectivist: the researcher mediates the value of findings within the situation being studied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fundamental of how the researcher thinks?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>• Seeks to apprehend the knowledge that is socially constructed through in-depth interviews, observations, and grounded theory</td>
<td>• Examines and verifies theory either experimental or non-experimental (survey) research methods</td>
<td>• Seeks to reduce bias and validate the objectivity of findings through additional methods, such as qualitative (triangulation designs)</td>
<td>• Uncovers the content of dialogue (i.e. action research and observation) between the researcher and participants, and transform the knowledge into understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positivism is a paradigm that identifies reality as something that can be objectively measured through a large sample size. Creswell (2013) states that often the data are treated as one to represent the entire population, hence the statistical findings can be generalised and perhaps the outcomes easily predicted. This is contrary to realist or post-positivist, constructivist and critical theories, which view the world as socially constructed and subjectively experienced. Positivists only accept reality that is quantifiable in which specific tools, such as a questionnaire (for non-experimental or social science research), are employed to test and confirm the cause-and-effect relationship (Neuman, 2014). Realists also have elements of being reductionist, empirical and cause-and-effect-oriented (Creswell, 2013). However, realists believe that there is a real world that can be apprehensible through multiple perspectives and measured imperfectly. Therefore, a triangulation or mixed-research approach is more appropriate.

Critical theory is based on an inductive research approach which aims to explore the social world and the conflict that researchers see is the basis of inequality (Neuman,
Critical theorists tend not just to seek to understand the situation from a single (or multiple) standpoint; somehow they are trying to make a change to it. In searching for the truth, researchers need to immerse themselves in subjective reality and be part of the social situation under study (Creswell, 2013).

Unlike the proponents of realism and critical theory, constructivism (commonly known as social constructivism or interpretivism) aims to understand and document the overall processes of a situation in which social reality is constructed, managed and sustained (Neuman, 2011). One of the distinguishing social constructivist characteristics is that social structures do not have active causal power (Creswell, 2009; Neuman, 2011). While there are visible patterns that appear within social interaction, social constructivists would disregard or eliminate them as an object which has control over the situation being studied. According to Neuman (2011), social constructivists view knowledge as subjective and are influenced by people’s experiences and viewpoints, the social environment and the interaction between (and amongst) the researcher and participant. Therefore, this research paradigm is sensitive to the context that emerges from how others see the world. It seeks to achieve a deeper understanding – not just test or confirm – the relationships that occur and are identified within the available theories or laws (Neuman, 2011).

3.2.1 Ontological Considerations

This research subscribes to the philosophical assumptions most closely aligned with the social constructivism world view. Creswell (2009) notes that social constructivism is a set of assumptions derived from subjective meanings of individuals’ experiences on certain matters or events. Under this perspective, the study is positioned as social constructivist and, as such, there is an acceptance of pre-existing ideas, subjectivity and cultural interpretations that may appear within the reality boundary pertaining to this research (Neuman, 2011). An overall ‘truth’ concerning the nature of reality is not accepted, but rather a shared reality is constructed which encompasses a multitude of stakeholder viewpoints that might be influenced by various elements, including demographics, culture and working experiences that may change over a period of time and in any direction. A key proponent of social constructivist research is that a shared reality is generated through investigating knowledge based on individuals’ views of the situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Therefore, for this study the data
were collected through appropriate methods: i) semi-structured interviews; ii) secondary documents; and iii) systematic observation.

3.2.2 Epistemological Considerations

With regards to the epistemology (or the researcher’s theory of knowledge), this study is situated within an interpretative, social constructivist paradigm that uses a case study design to examine the processes in which social reality is constructed through understanding the research participants’ views. The interpretation of meanings is multiple and varied, leading the researcher to understand the complex views instead of categorising the meanings into predetermined ideas (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, Neuman (2011) states that the interaction process amongst individuals is reported to understand the social (cultural and historical) dimensions of participants. This can be done by addressing the participants’ backgrounds and how they ‘position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 8). In terms of interpretation in social constructivist research, researchers often try to interpret or make sense of the entire data that have been collected (Neuman, 2011); that is why this research is called ‘interpretive’ or ‘social constructivist’. It requires a reflective and transparent process. In order to achieve this, Neuman (2011) proposes that social constructivist researchers should articulate their assumptions and experiences through reflective and analytical memos which are written prior to and during data gathering and analysis.

3.2.3 Methodological Considerations

In order to ensure the methodology is congruent with the chosen paradigm, Creswell (2013) suggests that the constructivist believes that humans engage with the world and make sense of it based on their experiences and what they know (knowledge). Thus, the qualitative research approach, often using open-ended questions structured within an interview, has been the main method used by constructivists to obtain participants’ views (Neuman, 2011). This contention is supported by Stake (2006), who believes that the qualitative research approach largely falls within the constructivist paradigm. For the purposes of this study, it is accepted that there are multiple perceptions and truths that individuals and organisations put forward to explain situations. Interviewing the key stakeholders help uncovered multiple perspectives relating to how they see the role of local cuisine in marketing Malaysia as a tourist destination. In this situation I am not interested in one single truth. Instead, my desire is to understand, interpret and reconstruct
multiple pieces of information by looking at the complexity of views for this study’s contribution to knowledge. Adding to the complexity of views, other relevant sources of information, such as direct observations and secondary or archival documents (national tourism policy and planning, strategic marketing plans and relevant marketing collateral), are considered.

3.3 Research Strategy: Case Study Approach

A case study, as defined by Yin (2009, p. 18) is ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. Within the social constructivist paradigm the qualitative case study approach seeks to obtain multiple viewpoints of those directly or indirectly involved a case (Creswell, 2013). The aim of this is to assemble data and observe the diverse insights that emerge from the case. With reference to this aim, this section discusses and justifies the application of a qualitative case study design to this thesis’ problem space. It begins with an overview of the case study method as the approach used in this study, followed by the selection of cases and then addresses the research objectives.

3.3.1 The Case Study Method

Stake (2006) argues that the case study method is a comprehensive research technique used to attain the depth of understanding of social phenomenon and elaborate the detail of processes occurring within the scope of the phenomena under study. Further, Yin (2009, 2014) notes that the case study method is highly recommended as an appropriate research investigation when:

a) the research questions require an elaborate and deeper description of a social phenomenon;

b) the researcher has less or no power towards the studied subject matters; and

c) the focus of the study is within a contemporary context.

The types of research questions have a significant role in determining the choice of research strategy (Yin, 2009). If the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are directed toward a controlled environment then an experimental design is the best research approach. However, if the inclination of ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions relate to a situation in which
there is no control over the environment or only focus on a contemporary social
phenomenon, case studies are more appropriate (Yin, 2014). This includes a research
context that covers exploratory, in-depth descriptive and explanatory research on
decision-making, organisational operations, processes, programs and current events
(Xiao & Smith, 2006; Yin, 2014). In other words, the case study method is an effective
research tool in contexts that are often too complex for survey strategies.

3.3.2 Justification of the Use of the Case Study Approach for the Study of Destination
Marketing and Malaysian Cuisine

Yin’s (2009, 2014) position as well as that of Stake (2006) inform the present study.
Unpacking the complex processes and practices that are involved in the integration of
local cuisine into the destination marketing strategies for Malaysia requires an in-depth
exploration and deeper understanding of relevant local cuisine marketing initiatives and
stakeholders’ involvement. Thus, I have chosen two food marketing campaigns –
CitraRasa and MKP – as the central empirical foci of this study.

The key target groups of stakeholders who were identified as being critical to this study,
along with the specific selection criteria for the recruitment of these individuals and
organisations, are discussed in sub-section 3.6.3. It was believed that these individuals
and organisations were best placed to contribute relevant information for this study. These
are the people and organisations who are either directly or indirectly a part of the
organising team of the two local cuisine campaigns. In other words, they possess a strong
connection to the contemporary phenomenon under investigation.

3.3.3 Case Study Designs

Research that adopts a case study approach can take on multiple typologies (Yin, 2014).
To this end, a researcher may select to study a single case or, instead, undertake analysis
of multiple case studies simultaneously for the purpose of examining points of
convergence between cases. However, it is important that multiple cases, if they are to be
compared, have some shared reference points (Yin, 2009). These reference points (that
are shared between two or three case studies) are termed by Yin (2014, p. 57) as ‘literal
replications’. By examining and comparing ‘literal replications’ over one or less than
three cases, overarching findings between cases be corroborated (Yin, 2014).

Nevertheless, there are weaknesses or disadvantages in multi-case designs. The main
disadvantage is the risk of sacrificing some of the unforeseen evidence that emerges in a
single-case design. Furthermore, a multi-case design requires an extensive amount of time to analyse each case in comparison to a single case, especially if there is only a single researcher conducting the study (Yin, 2014). It should be noted that the choice of whether a single or multiple case design is used also depends on the research purpose and questions. Xiao and Smith (2006) mention that multiple cases have long been recognised and established in political science studies (e.g. studies that focus on group power to understand the how and why of mutual decision-making), particularly within a tourism context.

In addition, multiple case studies have proven to be robust by undergoing a thorough selection procedure. Yin (2014) states that this is achieved through a comprehensive and thoughtful case selection process including replication design (as mentioned at the beginning of this section). For that reason, details and careful attention are given in order to ensure each case is able to draw findings that can respond to the aim of the research and produce unbiased results. Thus, researchers should not take things for granted in undertaking multiple case studies (Yin, 2014).

3.3.4 Using Multiple Case Studies to Examine Destination Marketing and Malaysian Cuisine

In this study, I examined two cases. Both cases demonstrate strong levels of involvement with the Malaysian Government, as well as dynamic collaboration between public and private sectors in integrating local cuisine as part of Malaysia’s destination marketing strategies. Unlike other small-scale food-related events or festivals, MKP helps to market the country through its local cuisine worldwide, whilst CitraRasa has been included in the national tourism calendar as Malaysia’s only major food marketing campaign (or tourism experience) used to increase the country’s recognition as an international tourist destination. Both MKP and CitraRasa are large-scale food marketing campaigns, organised annually by the Malaysian Government which are aligned with the national political and economic agenda (i.e. the Ninth Malaysia Plan). These cases provide an excellent opportunity to examine the various tourism-related policies that are associated with such initiatives. Furthermore, the cases clarify the position of stakeholders (between and within the public and private sectors) who have the power to influence, or in many cases make, decisions on how and why Malaysian cuisine could be presented. Although CitraRasa is largely a domestic food tourism marketing initiative, it still actively markets
itself to international tourists and international tourists were present at CitraRasa events that I attended and observed.

From a methodological perspective, the complexities associated with organising MKP and CitraRasa, which involve people of different backgrounds, organisations, tourism-related policies and food-related activities, enabled me to access data from various sources. This allowed me to plan, combine and implement several methods of data collection which would help to increase the trustworthiness of the data. As described by Yin (2014), multiple sources of evidence are more convincing and accurate. In addition, adopting and implementing different data collection methods permitted the use of a step-by-step approach, enabling a research design which was specifically tailored to suit the nature of the study.

3.3.5 Description of Cases

As justified previously (Section 3.3.1), the case study approach is a valid research approach to achieve the overarching aim of this study. Table 3.2 compares the two major campaigns involved in Malaysia’s destination marketing processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Case Study 1</th>
<th>Case Study 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MalaysiaKitchen Programme</td>
<td>CitraRasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
<td>To brand Malaysia through its cuisine, through an integrated and holistic approach</td>
<td>To celebrate the local cuisine specialities at a national level and encourage Malaysians to share stories about local food and cuisine to family, friends and tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main focus</strong></td>
<td>Malaysian cuisine, Malaysian restaurants, food products and businesses</td>
<td>Malaysian cuisine, local restaurants, food products and businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of stakeholder involvement</strong></td>
<td>Malaysian Government is highly involved in planning, with support from relevant agencies, overseas offices, and tourism and hospitality representatives</td>
<td>Malaysian Government is highly involved in planning, with support from relevant agencies, and local tourism and hospitality representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target audience</strong></td>
<td>Mainly international tourists</td>
<td>Mainly domestic tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>International (four major markets: the US, US, China and Australia)</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>All throughout the year</td>
<td>All throughout the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campaign format</strong></td>
<td>Three major programs: restaurant business opportunities and financing facilities, food products exports, and food events</td>
<td>Two major events: Malaysia International Gourmet Festival and CitraRasa state food events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important to clarify the reasons for selecting these case studies. The main concern here is to ensure that the ‘right’ choice of case studies has been made, in order to collect the required data for the study. Yin (2014) emphasises that careful attention and consideration in the multiple case study selection process is crucial because it may entail extensive resources and time beyond the capacity of a single student or independent researcher.

While case study methodology can be undertaken in different ways, the strategy adopted for this study is a multiple case design, selecting the two major Malaysian cuisine campaigns (MKP and CitraRasa). MKP has been used as an international platform to promote Malaysian cuisine since 2006, whereas CitraRasa was included in the MTPB annual tourism marketing calendar as part of the national tourism activities for both domestic (primary market) and international tourists. There are two main rationales for selecting these case studies. Firstly, practically, this study primarily concentrates on the integration of local cuisine into international destination marketing strategies for Malaysia which are planned and managed annually by the Malaysian Government (see Table 3.2) with collaboration from various tourism and hospitality representatives. These two cases are perfect examples of this (i.e. which is why they were chosen). Secondly, the multiple case study approach has distinct advantages in comparison to the single case study approach in terms of making comparisons between the cases, which results in findings that are more compelling and dynamic. In addition, the holistic design employed in this study can help clarify the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of historically and culturally important phenomena. MKP and CitraRasa introduced and established by the Malaysian Government are also the two main national assets that focus on promoting Malaysian cuisine inside and outside the country. Therefore, undertaking cross-case analysis is important for this study.

Finally, to ensure the reliability and improve internal validity of the cross-case conclusion, the multiple-case design strategy used in this study was informed by the literal (direct or logic) replication proposed by Yin (2014). The literal replication includes the same source of data and method of collection, and target respondents are applied equally in both case studies. Both MKP and CitraRasa were established by the Malaysian Government to promote Malaysian cuisine. Furthermore, MATRADE was appointed by the Malaysian Government to organise and sometimes take part in any relevant events that promote Malaysian cuisine. Clearly, this may influence the type and interest of tourists (Malaysian versus non-Malaysian) and strategies in marketing Malaysian cuisine.
As the main agenda for this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how the Malaysian Government promotes Malaysian cuisine, the differentiation could diversify the marketing strategies adopted. Even though MKP is organised outside Malaysia and targets an international audience there is the possibility for Malaysian citizens (either studying, working or travelling) to come to and celebrate the events. In contrast, CitraRasa is organised within Malaysia, and the audience is largely pulled from the local residency and/or citizens as well as international tourists who are travelling within the country.

3.4 Research Sites

The data collection for this study was undertaken in Malaysia and Australia. The decision was made based on tourist, food market and geographical factors. In addition, the amount of time available and limited financial resources significantly influenced the choice of research sites for the study.

Being a Malaysian citizen based at the SCU’s Gold Coast campus in Australia provided the opportunity for me to focus on these two countries. Furthermore, according to MATRADE and MTPB, Australia is one of the biggest food and tourist markets for Malaysia; this is clearly shown in MKP portal (http://www.malaysiakitchen.my/). Australia is one of four major food markets (including the US, UK and China) and has the second largest food market for Malaysian cuisine, with 192 restaurants after the Asian region (MATRADE, 2015). This is followed by Europe (110 restaurants) and North America (103 restaurants). Approximately 74 per cent of these restaurants are located in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Up until the end of August 2015 the MTPB reported that Australia had maintained its position within the top ten tourist arrivals in Malaysia every year since 2000 (MTPB, 2015). Moreover, the key stakeholders of MKP (i.e. MATRADE in Melbourne, MTPB in Sydney and MOA in Sydney), including restaurant operators and the Malaysian Food Ambassador, are largely located in Sydney and Melbourne. This was part of the reason the three Malaysian food events that associated with MKP – the Malaysian Festival in Sydney, the Flavour of Malaysia and the Malaysian Fiesta in Melbourne – (also chosen as the focus in this study and reported in Chapter Six) were organised in Sydney and Melbourne annually.

As for Malaysia, it was chosen for data collection due to the nature and interest of the study on destination marketing strategies utilising local cuisine developed by the Malaysian Government. Even though Putrajaya is known as the Malaysian Government
hub, Kuala Lumpur was also included as several agencies, such as MATRADE, the Department of Heritage and EXIM Bank, are located there. Furthermore, the majority of tourism and hospitality representatives, especially those who actively involved in organising CitraRasa (the second case study, discussed in Chapter Seven) are based in Kuala Lumpur. However, this was not the only reason underpinning the selection process. In addition, given that CitraRasa is now under the responsibility of every MOTAC state office, together with MTPB state offices and other tourism-related agency state offices, data collection covers the entire country.

Within the specific context of the two Malaysian food marketing campaigns, the data collection was conducted as follows:

3.4.1 MalaysiaKitchen Programme (MKP)

MKP is an international Malaysian cuisine campaign developed by the Government of Malaysia. MATRADE under MITI is one of the Malaysian Government agencies that acts as the national trade promotion organisation. This agency has been given full responsibility to promote Malaysia’s exports worldwide. In 2008, MKP was taken over by MATRADE, with the mission to brand Malaysia through its cuisine by bringing ‘Malaysian food into every home’ across the world (MATRADE, 2013). There are several promotional initiatives (public relation and media coverage, MKP portal and food bloggers, and take part in international food exhibitions and events) that are listed under MKP, including the Malaysian Food Ambassador who is a professional and talented chef who is appointed as a food representative to give talks, demonstrations and to promote local cuisine through related food events. The main intention of this case study is to reach a comprehensive understanding of how this campaign makes use of Malaysian cuisine as its main selling point. Due to time and financial constraints semi-structured interviews were only conducted with key stakeholders (i.e. Malaysian Government agency representatives, event organisers, the Malaysian Food Ambassador and restaurant operators) and observed relevant MKP food events which were held in Sydney and Melbourne in Australia between September 2013 and June 2014. In addition, informal conversations with exhibitors (the Malaysian restaurant operators) and visitors were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of how Malaysian cuisine was represented and perceived.
3.4.2 CitraRasa

In the case of CitraRasa, I observed a number of events, engaging in informal conversations with participants, as well as collected relevant marketing materials at the food events that make up this initiative, namely:

a) The Malaysia International Gourmet Festival (MIGF)

b) CitraRasa state events (CitraRasa Jalan Ampang and CitraRasa Penang)

Observation, informal conversations and collecting relevant marketing collaterals occurred at key events simultaneously. The aim was to generate an understanding of how Malaysian cuisine is constructed and represented in CitraRasa marketing promotional activities to promote Malaysia as an international tourist destination.

The original data collection plan for CitraRasa took place within the three months between October and December 2014. This timing aligned with the three tourist market segments listed below and their corresponding events:

a) Gourmet – the MIGF is used to promote around 30 of Malaysia’s finest restaurants which participate by offering traditional food, from Malaysian to French along with other international cuisines.

b) Casual and Leisure – the ‘ASEAN Heritage Food Trail with Chef Wan’ is used to keep locals informed about ASEAN countries via their cuisines.

c) Traditional and Cultural – the ‘Street and Restaurant Food Festival’ involves hawker centres from 13 states and three territories throughout the country, promoting Malaysian cuisine and signature dishes.

These food events have been established since CitraRasa was launched five years ago under the name Fabulous Food 1Malaysia (FF1M). Three signature dishes were highlighted every year as part of the campaign strategies (for further discussion see Chapter Six). The notion of a ‘signature dish’, in reference to MOTAC, refers to specific food or a meal that is associated with or identifies the three main ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese and Indian) in Malaysia; it is a specific type of food chosen by the Malaysian Government to speak for and represent the identity of the Malaysian nation. For example, nasi lemak for the Malays, char kuey teow for the Chinese and roti canai for the Indians.
During the second stage of data collection in Malaysia (between March and May 2014), I was informed by CitraRasa’s project manager, who was working as an officer at MOTAC, that the campaign had been rebranded from FF1M to CitraRasa. Therefore, a slight change of plan was made to CitraRasa’s data collection. The first observation was undertaken at the end of May 2014 during the ‘soft’ launching ceremony of CitraRasa at the Malaysia Tourism Information Centre (MATiC) Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur, in conjunction with the Citrawarna festival (also known as Colours of Malaysia for the international market). Following this were two other food events, MIGF from the end of September until October 2014 and CitraRasa Penang in mid-November 2014. The name ‘CitraRasa’ carries the meaning of image (citra) and flavours (rasa) and, more appropriately, is called the ‘Flavours of Malaysia’.

Rebranding of FF1M to CitraRasa occurred after a restructuring of the Malaysian Government administration system after the general election in April 2013. The new Tourism Minister, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri bin Abdul Aziz, decided to reformat the content and modus operandi of FF1M to suit the current demand and tourism industry performance. In addition, the decision was influenced by the Auditor-General’s 2013 report (Series 3) released in June 2014 (National Audit Department Malaysia, 2014). Further discussion on this issue can be found in Chapter Six.

In summary, CitraRasa was chosen as a case study because it is a major Malaysian food campaign, planned and supported by MOTAC with cooperation from local stakeholders, particularly those who work closely with the ministry such as the event organisers (AsiaReach Events), non-government organisations (e.g. Chef Association of Malaysia), travel and tour operators, and tourism and hospitality representatives.

3.5 Role of the Researcher

This section presents a discussion of my journey – that of a doctoral candidate from the School of Business and Tourism (SBaT) at SCU’s Gold Coast campus, who is passionate about exploring the complexity of deploying Malaysian cuisine as part of the strategic marketing initiatives used to promote the country as an international tourist destination. This reflective discussion aims to elucidate my position within this research study. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, social constructivists acknowledge that their personal and cultural background has a significant influence on their views and the way in which they interpret the data gathered from the social phenomenon that is being studied.
Malaysia is my home country. I was born in August 1982 and have lived in Malaysia, leaving only to undertake doctoral studies in Australia. The ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’ campaign inspired by MTPB or Tourism Malaysia (the DMOs) has successfully positioned Malaysia globally as a multicultural country. This multiculturalism is also reflected in my family history, in which two ethnic groups united: Chinese (my late father’s side) and Indian Muslim (my mother’s side). I can appreciate how this mixed cultural heritage influences my way of thinking and lifestyle, particularly the type of food that I am used to and familiar with.

My interest in food studies started when I was transferred to boarding school at the age of 16. At that time I was only exposed to basic Western and Eastern cookery skills. After leaving school I decided to commence a diploma in culinary arts at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Dungun campus. The program offered skill development in Western cookery and it provided me with a better understanding of the creation of food and cuisine evolution from an international point of view. Soon after graduation I was offered entry into an undergraduate program in food service management (minor in tourism). From that point, I could see clearly and understand the relationship between cuisine and tourism. After finishing my studies I received a scholarship from the same university to undertake further study in gastronomic tourism. This allowed me to broaden and deepen my gastronomy and tourism knowledge. At that time I was under the supervision of two gastronomy professors: one at the University of Adelaide (my external supervisor) and another at the UiTM, Malaysia (my principle supervisor). The research project aimed to determine the level of acceptance of Malaysian gastronomic products amongst Western tourists. During my master’s degree research project I established a good rapport with relevant stakeholders, especially with the Malaysian Government agencies associated with the tourism industry.

Following that I was offered a full-time lecturer position at UiTM, Malaysia. I taught students in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs. I have also conducted research on the subject of gastronomy and tourism. In the course of my work, I also had exposure to a diverse range of gastronomy and culinary disciplines, particularly in Malaysian cookery, and local tourism industry development. I am particularly attracted to gastronomic tourism within the Malaysian context as my career aspiration is to become an expert and focus in this area of the service industry that has not received its fair share of attention, nor received the respect that it deserves. Too often, so-called spokespersons in this field who claim to speak on behalf and/or for the culinary arts and crafts of
Malaysia show its more glamorous, superficial aspects rather than its origins, evolution and history. For that reason, I made a decision to pursue my doctoral degree in gastronomic tourism.

In December 2012 I enrolled as a doctoral candidate at SCU in the SBaT (formerly known as the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management). It was an opportunity to determine how the Malaysian Government, through relevant agencies, was inspired to utilise Malaysian cuisine as part of its destination marketing strategies. The idea came to me after six months of being enrolled in the doctoral program and reviewing the related literature. Based on existing studies and literature, I developed my own research question: ‘How does the Malaysian Government, through relevant agencies and tourism and hospitality representatives promote local cuisine as one of its destination marketing strategies?’ This research question is aligned with the core idea of interpretative research. Neuman (2011) asserts that the interpretative researcher works with the subjective meanings that exist in the social world; that is, to recognise its presence, to understand the meaning, to avoid misinterpretation and to generate theory.

Obviously, the best research approach to gain stakeholders’ point-of-view is as a combination of both researcher and participant. I understood it was crucial for this study for me to remain as an independent researcher as much as possible in order to develop rapport with a broad range of stakeholder representatives that are actively involved in the situation being studied. Nevertheless, it was interesting to find that promoting Malaysian cuisine was not as easy as I thought. Participation of various stakeholders at different hierarchical levels, as well as the conflicting Malaysian Government tourism-related policies, have made marketing local cuisine as part of the destination’s attractions and experiences more complex. There were cases where a few participants recruited in this study, especially from the Malaysian Government side, reserved their comments and were careful in making their statements; they were trying to avoid sensitive issues that might affect or tarnish their organisation’s image, especially among the general public (e.g. it could be inferred that the representatives were racist). Nevertheless, various stakeholders’ involvement and tourism-related policies were seen as crucial elements to apply the cuisine and tourism in Malaysia.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

It is important to reiterate that this study seeks to gain depth and breadth in understanding the strategies that have been initiated by the Malaysian Government in promoting
Malaysian cuisine as part of its suite of destination marketing strategies. A qualitative research approach was adopted to achieve the study’s aim and associated objectives. This choice was made based on the main research question, to answer the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. One of the strengths of this research methodology is that it is useful in theory development, particularly to explore associations either between or within variables rather than test and verify the existing associations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative research provides illumination and elucidation of complex phenomena, including investigation of the management process and/or conflict within it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This aligns with the scope of this research, which attempts to gather insights from relevant stakeholders particularly actual people involved in the whole process of developing and implementing marketing strategies. These people have the ‘voice’ and power to influence the decisions on ‘how’ and ‘why’ local cuisine could be used to market Malaysia as a tourist destination. Using a small sampling population and semi-structured interviews (one-to-one interview sessions) allows a deeper understanding of stakeholders’ perspectives about Malaysian cuisine and destination marketing strategies. Therefore, there is ‘no single right’ answer to respond to the research objectives of this study. However, analysis performed could produce a story and critically analyse the meanings conveyed in the data. In opposition to quantitative or positivist research, the tenet of qualitative research is exploratory, open-ended and organic, and produces in-depth data (Braun & Clarke, 2009).

Prior to conducting the fieldwork an appropriate sampling technique, type of interview, observational approach for the case studies, and a list of relevant secondary data needs were determined and planned ahead. This was necessary to ensure that common issues in research, such as bias, insufficiency, validity and reliability of the data collected, did not compromise the study outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Moreover, failure to have a well-structured data collection plan renders more time, money and energy in the whole research enterprise. This, in the end, can lead to high levels of frustration and an unachievable research goal. To avoid, or at least to minimise, such research hazards a thoughtful decision was made in assuring a successful ‘modus operandi’ was used for this study purpose. Before further elaborating on the categories and techniques of data collection, the next sub-section outlines the rationale for the methods chosen to address the research objectives that underpin the empirical component of this study.
3.6.1 Addressing the Research Objectives

Given that the aim of this study is to develop a critical understanding of the ways in which local cuisine is integrated into destination marketing strategies by the Malaysian Government and relevant stakeholders in marketing Malaysia as an international destination, four research objectives were identified in Chapter One. The development of each of the research objectives corresponded with the research problem and the gap found within the existing literature review.

i) **Research Objective One**: to explore the tourism policy environment which has shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine in destination marketing strategies.

The literature review, as established in Chapter Two, indicates that the development of tourism policies provides a clear direction in designing and organising destination marketing strategies. Tourism policies are also capable of controlling activities that can result in negative sociocultural impacts and harm the environment. In the context of this study, this research objective examines various tourism-related policies which shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine into destination marketing strategies for the country. Tourism-related policies, either in the form of hard of soft copy, were requested and collected from the Malaysian Government and relevant tourism agencies for further examination. The findings are then discussed and presented to give an overview of how various tourism-related policies influence the Malaysian Government’s planning and decisions in marketing Malaysia as an international tourist destination through its cuisine.

ii) **Research Objective Two**: To examine the roles and activities which the Malaysian Government and its relevant agencies are employing to present local cuisine as integral to Malaysian tourism and cultural identity.

Based on the first research objective’s findings, further analysis was undertaken to help determine the roles and activities which the Malaysian Government and its relevant agencies utilise to market and promote local cuisine. This research objective identifies the roles of the Malaysian Government and its agencies, as well as that of other key stakeholders in this matter. At the same time, it clarifies how the Malaysian Government, through its agencies, collaborates with the private sector to articulate the relationship between local cuisine in the tourism industry and destination identities. As discussed in the literature, destination marketing is a joint initiative involving various organisations from relevant backgrounds at a tourist destination, which work as one team to achieve
common benefits (Pike, 2008). Furthermore, involvement from public agencies has been widely recognised in destination marketing strategies. To achieve this objective an examination of relevant secondary archival documents (i.e. previous year’s campaign reports, newspaper cuttings and Malaysia Plan) using thematic analysis is required. The findings were then confirmed through semi-structured interviews involving relevant Malaysian Government staff within the responsible agencies.

ii) Research Objective Three: to analyse the strategic marketing initiatives that have been developed by the Malaysian Government to integrate local cuisine into the promotion of the country as an international tourist destination.

Following on from the first and second research objectives’ outcomes, this study sought to analyse the Malaysian Government’s and agencies’ involvement in planning and organising the two major Malaysian cuisine campaigns: MKP and CitraRasa. The focus of this objective is to identify the level of involvement of various stakeholders, particularly public agencies and the Malaysian Government’s relationship with private organisations in those cases. This, perhaps, could ascertain the different roles played by each and every stakeholder, as well as the main functions of relevant Malaysian Government agencies. In addition, the key issues and challenges throughout the campaign process were identified.

iii) Research Objective Four: to explore how Malaysian cuisine is represented in marketing and promotional activities which promote the country as an international tourist destination.

Drawing from the analysis of the two Malaysian cuisine campaigns, this study further investigates how Malaysian cuisine is depicted throughout the promotional activities. This objective links back to the literature on the relationship between local cuisine identity and a destination’s brand image, which may be a critical issue for a nation with a broad range of ethnic and cultural groups (multicultural) such as Malaysia. A conflict of interest may exist amongst the broad range of ethnic groups in considering which dishes are appropriate to be used to represent local cuisine for Malaysia. Therefore, once again using the two cases, I analysed relevant marketing collateral and conducted participant observation and engaged in informal conversations at the chosen events.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the overall research design formulated for this study, showing the three stages, along with their main focus, associated research questions and data sources.
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

Stage One

Theoretical Framework

Methodology

Research Question(s)

Data Source(s)

Stage Two

ROI1
To explore the tourism policy environment which has shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine in destination marketing strategies

ROI2
To examine the roles and activities which the Malaysian Government and its relevant agencies are employing to present local cuisine as integral to Malaysian tourism and cultural identity

Stage Three

ROI3
To analyse the strategic marketing initiatives that have been developed by the Malaysian Government to integrate local cuisine into the promotion of the country as an international tourist destination

Case Study

Develop a critical understanding of how local cuisine is integrated into the Malaysian Government’s destination marketing strategies

RO4
To explore how Malaysian cuisine is represented in marketing and promotional activities which promote the country as an international tourist destination

Figure 3.1: Research design
(Original for this study)
3.6.2 Secondary Data Analysis of Relevant Archival Sources

Documents are produced, shared and used in socially-organised ways which are known as ‘social facts’ (Atkinson & Coffey, 1996). There are various forms of documents that are available and used for research purposes, including printed and non-printed materials (e.g. newspapers, magazines, posters, brochures, letters, annual reports, journals, paperwork and minutes of meetings), especially to be assess the effectiveness of destination marketing tools in conveying relevant information about tourism attractions (Neuman, 2011). They are commonly employed in most qualitative research work, including case study research which systematically evaluates such documents. According to Bowen (2009, p. 29-30), there are five functions of documentary materials:

a) ‘bearing the witness to past events, documents provide background information as well as historical insight;

b) information contained in the documents can suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to observe as part of research;

c) information and insights derived from documents can be valuable additions to a knowledgeable base;

d) the documents provide a means of tracking changes and development; and

e) documents can be analysed as a way to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources’.

For this study, I collected and analysed documents from two categories: i) the marketing collateral, either printed (including promotional brochures, travel guides, posters) or non-printed (those that can be found on official websites such as e-brochures); and ii) the government’s tourism-related policies, destination strategic marketing plan and the annual reports from the respective government agencies. I examined these documents prior to conducting interviews in order to make sure I had a comprehensive understanding of the strategic planning process that had been designed to market Malaysia as a tourist destination. This included examining relevant tourism policies that have shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine into destination marketing strategies (discussed in Chapter Four) and exploring the way Malaysian cuisine is represented in related marketing communication tools. Furthermore, the analysis of these documents could then help to inform the development of additional interview questions.
In addition to the abovementioned archival documents, other materials such as the minutes of meetings, event reports, speeches and newspaper press releases were collected, sorted and scrutinised for the purpose of corroboration. This allowed me to be more meticulous in treating the data to establish the trustworthiness of findings and to have confidence in the study’s conclusions. Jewitt (2012) states that video is seen as a significant archival data source for many contemporary social science researchers. One of the common methods practised in tourism and hospitality research is the use of existing tourism promotional videos as data in destination marketing strategy investigations, rather than video created by researchers (i.e. videography) for research (Jewitt, 2012). Moreover, the important factors of analysing videos are that it helps to recognise the history of a video, its context of production, its purpose and target audience, and how these factors are embedded in the video as an artefact, as well as what is missing in the video record (Jewitt, 2012). I was aware that the Malaysian Government had made use of promotional videos as part of their marketing communication strategy initiatives in promoting Malaysian cuisine to potential tourist or target groups. Therefore, this study gathered and analysed three videos of the ASEAN Food Trail television program as part of CitraRasa case study. For the purpose of this study, data extracted from these videos (i.e. conversations between the program’s host and invited guests) were used whenever appropriate to emphasise how Malaysian cuisine is being marketed as one of the destination’s attractions.

3.6.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore aspects of the role of cuisine in Malaysia’s destination marketing process. Furthermore, through these interviews I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the relative importance of local cuisine in Malaysian destination marketing, the associated issues and challenges, the reasons local cuisine was considered important to be used as part of destination marketing strategies, and the problems that have been encountered since the campaigns comprising the strategies were launched. The following sub-sections elucidate the interview strategy employed for this study.

i) Sampling Frame

‘It is a general feature of social enquiry to design and select samples for study’ (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003, p. 77). Non-probability sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research (Neuman, 2011). Even though the generalisation of findings derived
from this sampling technique is restricted, non-probability sampling allowed me to select participants that suited this study and who were able to contribute relevant information, as well as provide access to resources for in-depth exploration. A non-probability sample obtained using a purposive sampling technique was therefore used for this study. Furthermore, this study has no intention of being statistically representative. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique that requires qualitative researchers to determine the selection of criteria based on the research questions or objectives of their study (Merriam, 2009). For this study a participant was defined as a person who was either actively or inactively involved in any Malaysian cuisine promotional initiatives, in particular the two food marketing campaigns that constitute the case studies. The participants were largely drawn from relevant Malaysian Government agencies, followed by representatives of the Malaysian tourism and hospitality industries.

After developing the selection criteria for the organisation and responsible person/staff, I analysed relevant archival documents, including newspaper articles, reports and marketing collateral, and examined MKP and CitraRasa official campaign websites. A letter explaining the research project and requesting permission to conduct interviews with appropriate staff was sent via email to the appropriate bureaucrat within each government agency. Three officers (CitraRasa’s Project Manager, MKP’s Senior Coordinator and MTPB’s International Marketing Director in Malaysia) initially agreed to participate in the study. Their selection was based on their level of involvement in MKP and CitraRasa. These officers helped me to make a list of potential interviewees, suggesting people and organisations that were involved in managing and organising both campaigns. In addition, I was invited by a marketing representative from both MKP (Melbourne office) and MTPB (Sydney office) to attend two events: i) the Malaysian Festival 2013; and ii) the Fourth Flavours of Malaysia which were held in Sydney, Australia, between September and October 2013. This gave me an opportunity to collect more contact details of prospective interview subjects, as well as documents, and to observe the events and conduct informal conversations with organisers, participants and visitors.

To ensure saturation was reached in relation to the subject being investigated, a snowball sampling technique was employed in every interview session to recruit further respondents. This sampling technique identified potential interviewees from ‘people who know’, ‘who know people’, and ‘who know what’ until no new information was discovered. Using this sampling approach, I made initial contact with one person or a
small group of people who were relevant to the research topic and then used these people to establish additional contacts (Bryman, 2012). The aim was to speak to key persons (the informants) in as many relevant groups or organisations as possible because I believe they are pertinent to the planning of the Malaysian food campaigns under investigation. As shown in Table 3.3, a total of 71 interviews were successfully conducted in Australia and Malaysia. I continued to communicate with a number of interviewees during 2014 and 2015, either via email, phone call or Skype, to obtain additional information whenever appropriate.

Table 3.3: Interview participants including those who participated in informal conversations involved in this study
(actors are categorised based on Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Name of Ministry/Agency/ Organisation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Public entities</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and Culture</td>
<td>Putrajaya, Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism Malaysia Promotional Board</td>
<td>Putrajaya, Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Heritage</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Islamic Development</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State Government</td>
<td>States and territories in Malaysia</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CASE STUDY 1 - MKP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Name of Ministry/Agency/ Organisation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Public entities</td>
<td>Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism Malaysia Promotion Board, Sydney</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture Section, Sydney</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia Australia Education, Sydney</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EXIM-Bank</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Economic tourism agents</td>
<td>Malaysian restaurants operators</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CASE STUDY 2 - CitraRasa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Public entities</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and Culture</td>
<td>State offices, Malaysia</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism Malaysia Promotional Board</td>
<td>State offices, Malaysia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Economic tourism agents</td>
<td>Malaysian restaurants</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hotel restaurant managers</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel agency</td>
<td>Penang and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia International Gourmet Festival (MIGF)’s event organiser</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Event exhibitors at the MIGF, CitraRasa Jalan Ampang and Penang</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur and Penang, Malaysia</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Economic agents from other sectors*</td>
<td>Food manufacturers and retailers</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note - *Informal conversations were conducted with actors at both MKP and CitraRasa events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4) Non-profit organisations</th>
<th>President of Restaurants and Hawkers Association, Malaysia</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Penang International Halal Hub*</td>
<td>Penang, Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Tourists*</td>
<td>TasteMIGF</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CitraRasa Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CitraRasa Penang</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 71 semi-structured interviews were conducted with: staff working in policy development, strategic planning and marketing in the key Malaysian Government organisations (i.e. public entities); individuals who were operators or managers of tourism and hospitality businesses who participated in the food tourism marketing initiatives organised by the Malaysian Government (e.g. economic tourism agents); and those who are affected by these initiatives (e.g. non-profit organisations). In addition, 170 informal conversations were undertaken with tourists and exhibitors (including some economic agents from other sectors) at MKP and CitraRasa events.

ii) Interview format and protocols

The use of semi-structured interviews is desirable over other forms of interviews because it gives the interviewees the possibility to answer open questions broadly and to relate some examples or specific stories for this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This technique is more appropriate in terms of flexibility for both interviewer and interviewee during the interview session. Moreover, a less structured interview design with open-ended questions allows interviewees the opportunity to define the world in unique ways and minimise potential researcher bias (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were conducted based on an interview schedule; however, some questions were posed in such a way as to encourage wide-ranging responses. Other questions were asked in a highly targeted and specific manner.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, where interviewees could clarify any ambiguous questions and the interviewer can obtain wide-ranging responses to open-ended questions. Furthermore, to achieve data richness and maximise the limited time allocated in every interview session, a list of open-ended questions was pre-
determined and established as a set of guidelines for the interviewee (to obtain specific information and focus on the explored issues) and interviewer (to assist in planning the subsequent questions during the interview session). The questions are outlined in Table 3.4.

### Table 3.4: The structure of interview session
(adapted from Gillham, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segments</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory conversation</td>
<td>a. Brief explanation on the background of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Consent form (see Appendix 2) and permission to audiotape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport with participant</td>
<td>Personal and organisation information background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- relating to Malaysian</td>
<td>a. Marketing initiatives that have been planned and organised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cuisine and</td>
<td>b. Understanding of Malaysian cuisine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destination</td>
<td>c. Strategies for promoting Malaysian cuisine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marketing strategies</td>
<td>d. Roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Challenges in promoting Malaysian cuisine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific questions</td>
<td>a. CitraRasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- two case studies</td>
<td>b. MalaysiaKitchen Programme (MKP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The respondent was asked to tell a story based on their involvement in either one of the case studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. a copy of the transcript will be sent to them; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. any enquiry can be forwarded to the researcher at anytime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the beginning of the interview session, I reiterated the research background and interview purpose in order to obtain consent and seek approval for taping the interview session. Gillham (2005) states that taping the interview allows the researcher to ask probing questions and pay full attention during the interview process. In order for the interview to serve as an active research instrument (Gillham, 2005), the interviewer should be free from note-taking and have the ability to concentrate on areas or topics to be researched throughout the interview. The level of researcher knowledge in the field of study is also important to understand industry or field jargon (Lam & Lei, 2012).

### 3.6.4 Systematic Observation of MKP and CitraRasa

To further strengthen my understanding of how Malaysian cuisine is used in destination marketing strategies, I observed six events (within MKP and CitraRasa) and 12 restaurants participating in MKP. I also observed MKP’s and CitraRasa’s food-related events in Malaysia and Australia. Observation was focused on the food listed on the menu cards/boards, food presentation on the plate served to customers/visitors, relevant tourism...
materials (e.g. posters and brochures) and customers’/visitors’ reactions while enjoying Malaysian food.

As described by Marshall and Rossman (2011), researchers often decide to observe events whenever interview participants may be unable or unwilling to share more information. Informal conversations and interaction with members of the study population are important components of the participation observation method and should be recorded in the field notes in as much detail as possible (Bowen, 2009). Integrating informal conversation into systematic observation is useful to either enrich the existing data or search for new insights (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The observed events and restaurants are displayed in Table 3.5. I positioned myself as an ‘observer’, identifying myself during these conversations and explaining the purpose of the study (in brief terms).

It was found that different amounts of time (hours and days) were required to observe each of the Malaysian cuisine events. Observations were undertaken at the beginning of each event to capture the setup of exhibition booths and to collect relevant marketing collateral from each of them, whilst more engagement with visitors and exhibitors through informal conversation occurred at the middle and the end of the events. These were the peak times during which I found more interaction occurred while experiencing Malaysian cuisine, in particular between visitors and exhibitors, as well as visitor-to-visitor interaction. I spent two hours to cover the entire event: 30 minutes for taking photos in different standpoints based on the floor plan layout and 1.5 hours for informal conversation with exhibitors and visitors.

After taking photographs, I started to immerse myself in the events and engaged in informal conversation with exhibitors and visitors (this included both domestic and international tourists). DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) note that researchers need to reveal themselves and their research project mission if the conversation focuses on specific questions seeking evidence from community members or a person. Otherwise, there are no formal rules for disclosing a researcher’s involvement in a research project during casual conversations with community members. When conducting informal conversations, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the study to the participants. At this point, I used a notebook and pen to record what had been found based on the conversation.
In the case of observing the twelve Malaysian restaurants in Australia (see Table 3.5), I spent approximately 1.5 hours at each one during dinner time. Many people -- or more appropriately customers -- spent more time at dinner enjoying their food and chatting with their friends or family members as opposed to at lunch time, where many people were in a rush and had limited time to finish their meal. Observing restaurant customers’ reactions and their conversations while eating Malaysian food could provide a better understanding of people’s -- especially foreigners’ -- perceptions of Malaysian cuisine. With the permission of the restaurant owners, a camera was used to take photographs of the dining

Table 3.5: List of restaurants and events observed under MKP and CitraRasa
(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Food Marketing Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Malaysia Festival</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Flavours of Malaysia</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Fiesta Malaysia</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Malaysia International Gourmet Festival</td>
<td>Selangor, Malaysia</td>
<td>CitraRasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>CitraRasa Kuala</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>CitraRasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>CitraRasa Penang</td>
<td>Pulau Pinang, Malaysia</td>
<td>CitraRasa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Food Marketing Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ipoh on York</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Alice Makan-makan</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Jimmy’s Recipe</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Papparich</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Old Town Kopitiam</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Papparich</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Nasi Lemak House</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mamak</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Chai-Eat Like Malaysians</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Little Malaya</td>
<td>Coolangatta, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Malaya Corner</td>
<td>Brisbane, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Satay Ria</td>
<td>Brisbane, Australia</td>
<td>MKP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
layout, aesthetics and food served at the restaurants. I also collected brochures that included their menus and details about the restaurants. In addition, I used a notebook to record points based on informal conversations with restaurant customers. The data were collected for the purpose of addressing research objective four (how Malaysian cuisine is represented in marketing and promotional activities).

Finally, I also maintained a reflective researcher’s journal which assisted in creating transparency in this research process. This included how personal ‘experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies have influenced’ the researcher’s interests and the way they choose to present the research findings (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 325).

Prior to conducting observations, I developed a structured observation sheet as a tool for recording the events (see Appendix 2). The format of the questions in the observation sheet were open-ended to give me the opportunity to take notes during the events. The observation sheet helped to organise and systematise my observations, as well as to record what had been observed. As DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) explain, observation would be meaningless without using any proper tool or instrument to record the activities or events. Close-ended questions were designed to estimate the number of visitors present, to classify the category of food served by the participants or exhibitors, and to observe the reactions of visitors when tasting the food. The open-ended questions were designed to record the time, reference of photo number, and additional information that could be gained and would be useful for this study. However, due to the massive volume of data collected from these observations they were carefully treated and selected to address the study’s objectives. This sheet was inspired by the ‘observation protocol at events’ developed by Matthews and Ross (2010). The model suggests six aspects of direct observation activities, as exhibited in Table 3.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>The physical setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>The people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Frequency and duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from the systematic observation of the event that sought to provide insights into how the event was structured, its component parts and what messages were being presented about Malaysian cuisine, I also conducted two different forms of data collection simultaneously: i) informal conversations with the organisers and exhibitors; and ii) taking photographs and collecting marketing collateral. I had informal conversations with the exhibitors, visitors (including tourists) and event organisers at the event venues. No predetermined questions were asked in order to remain as open and adaptable as possible to the exhibitors’, visitors’ and event organisers’ nature and priorities; during the interview the interviewer ‘went with the flow’. As described by Merriam (2009) and Yin (2014), researchers are able to improve reliability and validity with additional data collection methods used during observations, such as interviewing, archival document analysis or other more qualitative methods.

Prior to conducting the observations proper, I made sure that a total immersion into the event experience was facilitated by wearing appropriate attire, participating in the audience during the opening and closing ceremony (if necessary) and any cooking demonstrations, as well as trying the food samples.

### 3.7 Analysis of Data Gathered from the Fieldwork

The amount of data collected in qualitative research is often very large and researchers need to find a systematic way to process and analyse them (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Regardless of how difficult and intensive the analysis is the most important aspects that need to be considered are trustworthiness and rigour (Yin, 2009, 2014). There has been considerable debate in more qualitative research in the social sciences about the value (i.e. trustworthiness) and legitimacy (i.e. rigour) of findings generated from the entire data collection process. Hence, this study has followed the four tests of case study research (shown in Table 3.7) as proposed by Yin (2014).

These four tests ensured the trustworthiness and rigour of the data and the study findings. Yin (2009) further added that high-quality analysis is able to:

a) attend to the entire evidence, including considering all alternative interpretations and rival assumptions, thus leaving no loose ends;

b) address all major rival interpretations;

c) focus on the most important issue in the study; and

d) the researcher should use their own prior and/or expert knowledge in the analysis.
Table 3.7: Four tests of trustworthiness for a case study approach  
(adopted from Yin, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Case study tactic</th>
<th>For this study…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Construct validity                         | is to identify appropriate operational measures for the concept being studied | - I have collected data from multiple sources, including interviews with various stakeholders, observations at related Malaysian cuisine events and restaurants, and archival resources  
- all interview transcriptions were sent to the participants for them to go through the content  
- I also sent the draft case study report to the Coordinator of MKP and Project Manager of CitraRasa for review |
| Internal validity                          | is to establish a causal relationship and distinguish spurious relationships | - I followed the seven stages of thematic analysis for the entire data gathered for this study, in particular interviews, observations and archival documents |
| External validity                          | to define any domain found that can be generalised     | - as mentioned in Section 3.3, I have used the literal or logic replication to the two cases |
| Reliability                                | to demonstrate the standard ‘modus operandi’ of the study | - I have developed a research design (Figure 3.1) to guide me in the data collection. |

This section clarifies the phases that have been undertaken to manage and transform the data collected (i.e. interviews, secondary archival documents, observations and videos) for this study. An inductive approach was adopted to analyse the entire data collected by means of thematic analysis. Patton (1990) describes the inductive approach as a more exploratory analysis to find the patterns, themes and categories that emerge from the data, rather than predetermine them before collecting and analysing the data.

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis: Interview Data

The data collected from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. In general, qualitative approaches are extremely diverse, complex and nuanced, and thematic analysis is seen as a basic method for this type of research analysis. Bryman (2012) states that this method of analysis is solely based on actual communication episodes between the interviewer and interviewee(s). The thematic analysis starts when the ‘analyst’ begins transcribing and subsequently printing the transcripts for further analysis. I decided to code the entire interview transcripts manually using highlighters to indicate potential patterns. Welsh (2002) argues that software might not prove as helpful as one may expect. Software such as NVIVO is unable to analyse most qualitative data like SPSS and
Structural Equation Model (SEM) do (Roberts & Wilson, 2002). Moreover, the principle analytical task for qualitative research is to explore the underlying meaning of text which cannot be computerised (Braun & Clarke, 2009). The thematic analysis for interview transcripts involved copying extracts of data from individual transcripts and collating each identified code together in separate file cards. Reporting the final outputs is the endpoint of this analysis, which occurs after the entire coding processes (identifying and grouping the themes from the raw data) are completed. The analysis process consisted of seven stages, derived in combination from analytical processes laid out by several authors on thematic analysis in phenomenological research (Braun & Clarke, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Yin, 2014).

i)  **Stage One: Assembling the data**

The audio tapes from the interview sessions were all transcribed, taking approximately eight hours of transcription time for each one hour of recorded interview. To control for validity, other steps that were taken to safeguard the data quality included transcribing interviews verbatim and making this information available to interviewees (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Yin, 2014). Since the researcher is very familiar with Malay and the English language, it was deemed unnecessary to translate the transcripts to English. A native speaker (or academic expert) was approached to check the Malaysian transcription to ensure quality. For coding purposes the transcripts were left in their original language and only quotes used to illustrate points within the thesis text were translated into English. Once the transcribing was complete I printed out and examined the manuscripts to double check if there were any mistakes and/or words or sentences that had been skipped. The audio tape of each interview was played during this process.

ii)  **Stage Two: Getting an intuitive feel for the data**

At this stage, I read the transcript manuscripts line-by-line and page-by-page several times to get an intuitive feel of the overall ideas, patterns in the content and direction in relation to the research questions of this study. Immersion is the best word to describe the extent to which the researcher must involve themselves when trying to familiarise themselves with the existing data. ‘Repeated reading’ of the data in an active way helps the researcher to immerse themselves with the depth and breadth of the content to search for semantic and latent meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). During this process I simultaneously took notes and marked ideas for coding.
iii) Stage Three: Generating initial codes (open coding)

Coding was performed by tagging and naming segments of the data set that respond either directly or indirectly to the research questions. Next, they were assigned to free codes.

iv) Stage Four: Collating codes into potential themes (axial coding)

The initial codes identified from the previous stage were collated into preliminary themes. Codes were analysed and combined them into overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2009). I further designed a table with several columns and rows to facilitate the collation process. Braun and Clarke (2009) believe that this helps to make sense of and start thinking about the association between codes, themes, and the different levels of themes. Eventually, the umbrella themes (known as the ‘candidate themes’) and subthemes within them can be specified and formed at the end of this stage (Braun & Clarke, 2009).

v) Stage Five: Reviewing themes (selective coding)

The sequel of the fourth stage is reviewing the themes (stage five). This involves refining the candidate themes, which were brought forward for critical review and consideration. This is because of the lack of supportive data or too broad a meaning, while others might collapse into each other (Braun & Clarke, 2009). Data within themes were integrated together meaningfully, while themes were distinguishable. The coding, recoding and collating of the data were performed by myself several times until the refinement did not add anything substantial and the outputs were convincing to respond to the study purpose. As a result, I had a clear idea of what the emergent themes were and why this was the case, how they fitted together or were separate from each other, and what the overall interview narration said about the content of the data.

vi) Stage Six: Defining and naming themes

At this point, it is important not to try and get a theme to do too much or to be too diverse or complex (Braun & Clarke, 2009). For that reason, the process of analysis can ‘define and refine’ to denote the ‘essence’ of each theme and determine the various aspects of the data in each theme. Based on Braun and Clarke (2009), the five crucial facets were to:

- Conduct and write a detailed analysis;
- Identify the story that each theme tells;
• Consider how each of them fits into the overall story of the data;

• Cross-check with the research question(s); and

• Ensure there is ‘zero’ overlapping between the set themes.

At the end of this stage, I had clear and well-defined themes. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that although titles had been attributed to the themes, I started to think of names that were concise, punchy and capable of transmitting the essence of the theme to readers.

vii) Stage Seven: Producing the report

Arriving at the final stage of thematic analysis, the challenge was to start writing up by ‘telling the complete story’ in a concise, coherent and logical manner, as well as be interesting without any repetition of similar data. Therefore, throughout this thesis the findings are supported by relevant examples or extracts that show the manifestation of a theme. The extracts were embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story of the data. The two elements during writing up the analytic narrative are: i) to go beyond description; and ii) make an argument so that it corresponds to the study research questions.

3.7.2 Analysis of Secondary Data Analysis of Relevant Archival Sources

The step-by-step thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2009) was also adopted as a guide to perform the policy and archival document analysis. In addition, content, semiotic and discourse analyses were employed for analysing photographs and texts found in the collection of relevant general marketing collateral, website information and food trail brochures. These analyses have been performed to explore how Malaysian cuisine is represented to market the country as an international tourist destination.

3.7.2.1 Content Analysis

Using relevant marketing collateral, including material from relevant MKP and CitraRasa events, helped me to understand the connection between the proposed and actual marketing strategy formulated by the Malaysian Government. In order to perform the analysis, content and semiotic analyses were performed to extract meaning from the existing marketing collateral. Content analysis is the most commonly used method for examining the ways in which marketing materials represent aspects of culture or place.
(Kassarjian & Kassarjian, 1988; Molina & Esteban, 2006). It is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication which can provide both quantitative and/or qualitative data (Seaton, 2000). Krippendorff (2004) states that content analysis allows the researcher to explore the conceptual and theoretical issues to enhance understanding of the data. Through content analysis, it is possible to distil words which share the same meaning into fewer content-related categories or themes (Kassarjian & Kassarjian, 1988).

Content analysis was performed on both photographic and textual material. According to Kassarjian and Kassarjian (1988), content analysis is the most commonly used method for examining the ways in which marketing materials represent aspects of culture or place. This analysis allows the researcher to explore the conceptual and theoretical issues to enhance understanding of the data (Krippendorff, 2004). Through content analysis it is possible to distil words which share the same meaning into fewer content-related categories or themes (Kassarjian & Kassarjian, 1988). Moreover, it has been employed in many tourism studies seeking an understanding of the use of local gastronomic products in destination marketing, including Forchot (2003), Okumus et al. (2007), Horng and Tsai (2010), Lin et al. (2011) and Okumus et al. (2013). It is essential to keep in mind that content is always constructed within a context. In the content analysis, a total of 1448 photographs were coded by first describing what each photograph depicted and then allocating it to a category that appeared to best represent it. Eight major categories were derived from this analysis. Textual material was examined in order to track and count the frequency of words used to describe Malaysian cuisine. A total of 1286 descriptors were identified and grouped into ten categories.

The content analysis was performed manually by undertaking a thorough read of the material. As a result, an understanding was derived based on the research aims (Henderson, 2008). The majority of the marketing materials developed and published by the Malaysian Government through MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE, either in printed or electronic form, are written using United States (US) English. However, it was interesting to see that there were a few brochures written using either United Kingdom (UK) writing conventions or a mix of both UK and US writing styles. In this thesis, quotations from marketing and promotion materials therefore remain in their original form.
3.7.2.2 Semiotic Analysis

To strengthen the argument in discussing the findings obtained from the above analysis, semiotic analysis was undertaken. Semiotic analysis has been used by scholars to interpret the meaning of content by decoding the signs which are concealed beneath the text or images (Ribeiro, 2009). The semiotic analysis of denotation and connotation was introduced by French semiotician, Roland Barthes. Morgan and Pritchard (1998, p.33) describe denotation as ‘to recognise the basic object and concern with the simple description of signs’, whereas connotation is ‘to elaborate the sign link to the society, the social ideology, the beliefs, the concepts, and values which inform the society and the descriptive is transformed by the reader into something which has meaning beyond its objectivity’.

Echtner (1999) and Berger (1986) stated that various forms of signs, either verbal or non-verbal, can be employed to communicate and represent things. In government advertising or marketing campaigns, this often involves building, shaping and enhancing a country’s identity (Rose, 2003; Zhang, Decosta & McKercher, 2015). Wilson (1993) found that semiotic analysis is an extension of content analysis, which is commonly employed by most social scientists to analyse textual data. The technique yields both quantitative and qualitative data (Krippendorff, 2004) and is fitting for research into the promotion of food in relation to tourist destinations and tourism marketing (Okumus et al., 2013). Furthermore, symbols and signs have strong associations with cultural and heritage tourism (Palmer, 1999). Barthes (1988), Noth (1990) and Hawkes (2003) believe that semioticians often develop an operational arrangement which is custom-made to respond to their research objectives. A similar notion is argued by Echtner (1999) in relation to the adoption of semiotic analysis within the context of tourism research. Accordingly, the same photographs collected and analysed in the content analysis were reused for the purposes of semiotic analysis.

It was found that visual communication through photographs and graphic illustrations were heavily employed by tourism marketers to promote local cuisine as part of destination marketing strategies. Visual communication can enable people to visualise tourism products and experiences (White, 2010). This form of communication often conveys objective intentions and more straightforward messages (White, 2010). Furthermore, marketing and promotional materials are socially constructed and this could also be the case for marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine. Performing a semiotic
analysis on photographs captured through the lens of a camera can provide a deeper understanding of the meanings and values embedded within them, allowing the researcher to refine the conclusion of the study. Having said that, the following areas were focused on in the analysis:

i) The types of signs used and the frequency of their usage in relation to Malaysian cuisine – symbolic to food experiences, such as colours, ingredients, dishes, locations and people; and

ii) The inconsistencies, overlooking or conflicts of images in the photographs presented in the various promotional materials.

Therefore, building on the findings gained from the content analysis, Section 7.5 further investigates the use of imagery by using semiotic analysis to identify the signs and symbols that appear in photographs of Malaysian cuisine. Echtner (1999) and Berger (1986) state that various forms of signs, either verbal or non-verbal, can be employed to communicate and represent things.

3.7.2.3 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis was utilised to obtain deeper insights into how local food is utilised in tourism marketing. Moreover, this analysis has often been employed by tourism and marketing researchers to study the way in which images and texts are socially constructed to market and brand a tourist destination (e.g. Frochot, 2003; Boyne & Hall, 2004; Okumus et al., 2007; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Jalis, et al., 2014). Within the social constructivist or interpretivist realm, this analysis can help researchers to examine more implicit social meanings. Discourse analysis attempts to uncover the discourses, whether explicit or implicit; that is, whether they are obvious or somewhat hidden – that are embedded within the text (Hamman & Knox, 2005). Therefore, by employing discourse analysis this research provides insights into how the Malaysian Government describes Malaysian cuisine, which influences the way tourists look at and understand it.

To perform the discourse analysis, the steps suggested by Cameron and Panovic (2014) were followed. As described by Cameron and Panovic, discourse analysis must have the following features:

a) Cohesion – grammatical relationship between sentences.
b) Coherence – the arrangement of sentences relates one to another.

c) Intentionality – the content within the sentences has been conveyed consciously and deliberately.

d) Acceptability – indicates that the sentences needs to be satisfactory.

e) Informative – existence of any new information.

f) Situationally – any remarks that have been made are important.

g) Intertextuality – reference to the world outside the text.

The analytical process undertaken to conduct the discourse analysis for this study was based on:

a) Before – things to look for before performing the discourse analysis:

- Hidden relations of power present in the marketing materials and websites.
- Who is exercising the power; that is, who is the discourse being presented to?
- Who is consulted for the marketing materials and websites?
- Who is the ideal subject or audience for the marketing materials and websites article?
- What is left unspecified in the marketing materials and websites?
- The use of passive voice or processes to express Malaysian cuisine.
- The use of descriptive language (adjectives) to indicate a strong discourse.

b) During – things to look for when performing the discourse analysis:

- Would alternative wording of the same information have resulted in a different discourse being presented?
- How is Malaysian cuisine described and presented?
- How is Malaysian cuisine characterised in the marketing materials and websites?
✓ What message does MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE intend tourists to get from the text?

✓ Why was this particular sentence or word chosen to accompany the marketing materials and websites?

✓ What repetition exists within the article and between different articles on the same topic?

Combined together, the adoption of content, semiotic and discourse analyses enabled in-depth exploration of the meaning and significance of words and photographs in a range of communication materials. To reiterate the discussion in Chapter Two, the research has confirmed that tourist destination information in relevant marketing and promotional tools is crucial for understanding a destination’s food image and differentiating a tourist destination from its competitors (Frochot, 2003; Molina, Gómez & Martín-Consuegra, 2010; Okumus, et al., 2013). Furthermore, effective marketing and promotional tools are able to communicate ethnic identity and its rhetorical, symbolic and metaphoric content through colours, visual imagery and other non-verbal elements (Echtner, 1999; Girardelli, 2004; Alozie, 2010). These elements appear in every photograph and text describing Malaysian cuisine, not merely as decoration or to embellish the Malaysian Government’s marketing collateral and websites.

With regard to the relevant three videos of the ASEAN Food Trail television program under CitraRasa case study, the seven steps of thematic analysis were also performed. For the purpose of this study, only the relevant Malaysian cuisine information was considered in order to identify how it has been represented and marketed through these videos. Coding was based on the images and messages (i.e. word-by-word) communicated by the narrator and host of the ASEAN Food Trail television program; the images were captured, the messages were transcribed and after that they were printed out for further analysis.

**3.7.3 Analysis of Systematic Observation Data**

The thematic analysis process was adapted to analyse the entire data (i.e. marketing collateral, photographs and field notes based on informal conversations during the observation sessions) collected through the systematic observation of two case studies (MKP and CitraRasa). In addition to this, reflective writing was applied based on the evidence gathered from the field notes and the photographs taken during the observation process.
3.8 Limitations of the Case Study

Inherent in any exploratory, context-specific case study is the lack of generalisability of the outcomes. However, the outcomes of this study may be transferable to some extent to other tourism destinations globally which have a high interest in the potential of local cuisine as a destination marketing strategy – especially to those sharing a similar cultural background to Malaysia (multiculturalism). Limitations of this study further extend to the participants who were involved. Due to time and financial factors this study allowed me to access the current population or key persons in the Malaysian Government or tourism and hospitality representatives involved in the strategic marketing plans of both program and their implementation. Therefore, the outcomes produced reflect the current scenario on how the stakeholders see and make use of Malaysian cuisine as an asset to market the country as a tourist destination. Nevertheless, relevant archival documents collected help to provide some insights about MKP and CitraRasa since they were first introduced. This is also related to Malaysia’s political system which was restructured to some extent following the April 2013 general election. As a result, the new Minister and people within the targeted ministries (MOTAC and MITI) would have different views in regards to what has been practiced before.

Moreover, some difficulties were experienced in gaining access to the key persons and relevant archival documents, particularly within the context of the two case studies being examined. This was probably due to high levels of involvement of the Malaysian Government in planning and organising the campaigns. Most of the participants, either government or non-government staff, were concerned with the information that they shared, including their statements during the interview session. In fact, some of the participants (mostly the Malaysian Government staff) kept reminding me not to quote their names and organisation in the thesis. Finally, taking advantage of a Malaysia-born researcher (also a native Malay speaker), most of the participants preferred to converse in Malay. However, some of the practical tourism terminologies remained in English for better clarity and understanding. Despite the ability to communicate and understand both languages, there language proficiency issues were also encountered during the data collection period, including the various dialects used from state-to-state and across regions (East and West Malaysia). In addition, other languages practiced by multi-ethnic groups (i.e. Indian, Chinese, and the minorities) have limited the case study boundary to collect and refer only to archival documents that were published in Malay and English.
It was also found that most of the photograph data captured during the observation sessions at both MKP and CitraRasa food events were not of a high quality. This is due to the food events being held in the evening (i.e. CitraRasa Penang) with less lighting available in big exhibition halls (i.e. TasteMIGF). This, therefore, has limited this study to include only relevant photographs in the analysis and findings chapters (i.e. Chapters Six and Seven) to show and support some of the findings where appropriate.

3.9 Ethical Issues

This study did not involve moderate or major risk to participants (SCU’s Human Research Ethics approval number ECN-13-262). I sought information concerning the role of local cuisine in tourism destination marketing from two main sources: Malaysian Government staff and tourism industry operators. My interest was in the processes and practices of government and the basis for decisions that were made regarding tourism marketing campaigns and, consequently, I was not interested in the personal views of government staff but rather their understanding of the decision-making processes involved in framing and developing the food tourism initiatives. To my knowledge, I did not put any government employee in a situation where they felt uncomfortable with responding to a question that was posed to them and I made it very clear that they had the right to decline to answer any question. In addition, I de-identified all the information gained through the interview sessions and no individuals are identified in this completed thesis. I would also suggest that the nature of this study is not one which is controversial or likely to create controversy. In relation to industry operators, I guaranteed confidentiality and de-identified individuals. Some industry operators were more critical of some of the government initiatives; however, as noted, data were de-identified and no individual is named or is recognisable in this final thesis or in any publications that have arisen (or indeed might arise) from this research.

During the data collection process, I presented myself personally to the respective informants on arrival at the meeting location. At the beginning of the interview session I explained the purpose of conducting the study and that the findings are purely for academic knowledge contribution. ‘Privacy’ in this study concerned participants having control over researcher access to their views. Although I sought genuine perspectives and new directions it would have been unethical to urge participants (interviewees or other people who either directly or indirectly participated in this study) to provide me with information or documents that would make them uncomfortable or result in regret. Access
to participants was expected to be relatively easy to obtain since the researcher is a Malaysian citizen and has maintained social and professional contacts in the research circles.

The researcher’s ability to understand the interviewer may be related to trust in confidentiality, the quality of the interviewee–interviewer interaction, and self-esteem. The following data collection procedures were therefore implemented:

a) Contact information for the researcher and PhD supervisors were provided to all respondents;

b) Interviewees remained anonymous by not using their names in the presentation of data;

c) Interviewees were informed and advised of their right to withdraw or discontinue participation in this study at any time; and

d) Only the researcher and the PhD supervisors are able access the interview recordings.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained and justified the methodology used for the collection of data in order to answer the research questions identified in Chapter One. It has clarified the adoption of the social constructivist paradigm within an interpretive approach, which aims to understand the processes in which Malaysian cuisine is utilised as a destination marketing tool through an analysis of multiple stakeholders’ views. A multiple-case design was selected as a mechanism to explore the situation being studied. It allows researchers to broaden and deepen their understanding of the inherent complexity in the studied social phenomenon. Taking the position of a social constructivist provides the advantage of allowing me to express my role as researcher while acknowledging my own personal and cultural background, which impacts the way views are interpreted and how the outcomes of this study are presented.

Four research objectives were identified to gain a deeper understanding of the integration of Malaysian cuisine into destination marketing strategies for Malaysia. To achieve the objectives, three data sources were gathered and analysed: i) secondary archival documents; ii) interviews with relevant stakeholders, both public agencies and private organisations; and iii) systematic observation of events organised as part of the two major
Malaysian cuisine campaigns studied. In addition, informal conversations were conducted with tourists and visitors who attended MKP and CitraRasa food events, as well as with diners at the Malaysian restaurants. All data were collected and recorded according to systematic protocols that were developed to address ethical issues.

With regards to data analysis, the seven steps of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2009) were adopted across the entire data collection process from various sources. This ensured a rigorous data analysis process was performed prior to reporting the findings. Finally, the limitations of the study were discussed before the ethical issues section reflected on the challenges in implementing the study’s methodology.
Chapter 4 – ANALYSIS OF THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the Malaysian policies associated with tourism planning and development in relation to cuisine and destination marketing strategies. It has seven main sections and addresses the study’s first research objective (RO1). In other words, this chapter aims to explore the tourism-related policy environment which has shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine into international destination marketing strategies. Analysis then continues by narrowing down the operation of each stakeholder in Malaysian cuisine and destination marketing strategies.

This chapter begins by presenting an overview of the Malaysian Government in terms of the governance system and political structure (Section 4.2). This is followed by Section 4.3, which discusses the public sector and tourism industry including its development and the roles of the Malaysian Government and its agencies. Section 4.4 discusses the broad public sector policies that contribute to integrating local cuisine into the tourism industry. Section 4.5 then focuses on the destination marketing strategies for Malaysia, while Section 4.6 focuses on how Malaysian cuisine is integrated into the tourism industry and destination marketing strategies for Malaysia.

4.2 Malaysian Government

Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy that has a parliamentary democracy system of government, headed by a Prime Minister since the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. According to Bogdanor (1997), a constitutional monarchy is a state headed by a sovereign who rules according to the constitution. However, this could be slightly different in the context of the Malaysian governance system. The Constitutional Monarchy in Malaysia consists of the King, Yang di-Pertuan Agong, as the Head of State and three powers: i) the Executive, headed by the Prime Minister; ii) the Legislative level, which is the parliament; and iii) the Judicial level – headed by the Chief Justice (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2010). Yaakop and Aziz (2014) state that the Executive power comprises government administrators by law, the Legislative power comprises the lawmakers, and the Judicial power comprises law enforcement. The political system of Malaysia is based on the parliamentary democracy system, in which
government is formed through a democratic election (Dzulkifli & Zameri, 2010). The nation takes part in the government through representatives chosen in elections. *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* has no power directly over the administration system and instead delegates to the Cabinet, which is led by the Prime Minister; the King takes the advice of Cabinet Members (Dzulkifli & Zameri, 2010). Figure 4.1 exhibits the main components of the Malaysian Government.

![Figure 4.1: The four main components of the Malaysian Government](Yaakob & Aziz, 2014)

In the specific context of the Federation of Malaysia, initially the Federation consisted of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. For political reasons, Singapore decided to leave the Federation of Malaysia in August 1965 (Liu, Lawrence & Abraham, 2002). On 16 April 1984 the Government of Malaysia declared the inclusion of a second territory (the Federation of Labuan or Labuan Island), which is located adjacent to Brunei (Andaya & Andaya, 1991). This gave the federal government the power to manage Labuan Island for the purposes of the tourism industry. In addition, Putrajaya, which is under federal government administration, was developed and established in 2001 as the third territory after Kuala Lumpur and Labuan. Putrajaya is in the central region of Peninsular Malaysia.
near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and operates as the Malaysian Government hub.

The Federation Constitutional Monarchy of Malaysia is the fourth constitution which was adopted six years after independence on 31 August 1957 (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014). A formal document that sets out the principles and legal framework for the nation was called the Malayan Union (MU) 1946 under the administration of the British (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014). The MU became constitutionally void on 1 February 1948 because of opposition from the Malay rulers (the Sultans) and the people of Malaya. The second constitution was enacted and enforced immediately after that, which was known as the Federation of Malaya, bound under the Federation of Malaya Agreement (known in Malay as Persekutuan Tanah Melayu) 1948 (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014). This agreement emphasises:

i) The Federal Government – Led by the British High Commissioner with executive powers assisted by the Executive Council and Judicial Council;

ii) Legislative Council – a member of a large number of official and non-official members (including the President of State Council of each Malay state) appointed by the British High Commissioner; and

iii) Separation of powers (i.e. the federal and state governments). Financial matters handled by the state government for the purpose of state development. The Sultans were given full power on religious issues and Malay customs (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014).

The third constitution, the Federation of Malaya Independence 1957, was introduced after the Malay Land, or Tanah Melayu, declared independence. The Federation of Malaya Independence 1957 then formed the basis of the plurality of the present nation (Dzulkiifli & Zameri, 2010; Yaakop & Aziz, 2014). However, on 16 September 1963 the Federation of Malaya was revised to be known as the Federation of Malaysia. The Malay Land was renamed as Malaysia when the two East Malaysian states (Sarawak and Sabah) joined the Federation of Malay (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2010). This is the highest law of the country which explains the administration of Malaysia as a free (or independent) country.

The basic principles in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia – as revised on 1 November 2010 (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2010) are:

i) Parliamentary democracy.

ii) Constitutional monarchy.
iii) Islam as the official religion. Malay rulers of each state (the Sultans) are the leaders of the Islamic religion. However, other religions are practiced freely.

iv) Malay as the official language. Malay language has been used since the time of the Malacca Sultanate as the lingua franca. As a British colony at the time, English was used widely, particularly in the administration, state administration and education sectors. However, the use of the Malay language is still maintained.

v) The special position of the Malays. Yang di-Pertuan Agong is responsible for preserving the special position of the Malays – known literally as Bumiputera rights (i.e. to protect the Malays’ rights on the Malay Land including the Malay land reservation and quota for public service admission, scholarships for further study, bursaries and other forms of education privileges) – natives of Sabah and Sarawak, and the legitimate interests of other communities.

In addition to the above, the Federal Constitution of Malaysia also highlights the rights and responsibilities of the federal and state (i.e. within the federation territories) government, as well as their relation to each other. The following sections discuss these aspects further.

4.2.1 Federal Government

As stated in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, the Executive power is vested in the King as Head of State. However, in terms of implementation the highest organisation that runs by the Executive power is the Cabinet (Dzulkifli & Zameri, 2010), chaired by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong from the government. Yaakop and Aziz (2014) mention that it is normal for the Prime Minister to be appointed from among the political party that has gained a majority of seats in the Parliament. The Prime Minister is responsible for informing and explaining to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong matters regarding the country’s administration.

With regards to policy development, the policies designed by the Cabinet are implemented by public officials who serve in the various government organisations. Malaysia’s national policy (known in Malaysia as the national agenda) is legally planned and enforced by the federal government to ensure continuous economic growth and social wellbeing. Table 4.1 exhibits Malaysia’s national policies since the Federation of Malaysia was established in 1963.
Table 4.1: National policies developed and established by the Federal Government of Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>National Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990 - 2009</td>
<td>National Development Policy (NDP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 - 2020</td>
<td>Economic Transformation Programme (ETP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each national policy has specific aims that need to be achieved. Liu et al. (2002) argue that the May 13 racial riots in 1969, though short and swiftly brought under control, had a significant impact on the country. An urgent response and affirmative actions were undertaken by the Malaysian Government, which introduced a plan for the nation (i.e. the NEP). The NEP was a 20-year policy that promoted interracial integration among ethnic groups and a sense of belonging to the Malaysian nation (Rasiah & Shari, 2012). Following the NEP was the National Development Policy (NDP), which provided an introduction to vision 2020 – a vision for Malaysia to be a modern and well-established country with a high income. The NDP was inspired by the fourth Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammed. Under the NDP the current Prime Minister, Dato Seri Najib Tun Haji Abdul Razak, has introduced and implemented the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) with the aim of turning Malaysia into a high-income economy by 2020. Further discussion on the ETP and how it affects the development of tourism industry in Malaysia can be found in Section 4.3.

The national policy also acts as the main reference for various government organisations for their long-term planning. These government organisations are either:

i) organisations established under the authority of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia as the National Land Council and the Election Commission, or

ii) organisations established under the authority or discretion of the government and the administration, such as ministries and departments (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014).

As mentioned above, in addition to organisations established by virtue of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, there are also government organisations that are established at the discretion of the government to help facilitate the smooth running of the administration. In the case of the tourism industry, MOTAC is one of the highest agencies in the administrative structure of the federal government.
There are departments or agencies under the responsibility of a government ministry. MOTAC has twelve agencies under its responsibility. These including (MOTAC, 2015, May 28):

i) Tourism Malaysia Promotion Board (MTPB)
ii) National Archives of Malaysia
iii) National Library of Malaysia
iv) Department of Museums Malaysia
v) Department of National Heritage
vi) National Department for Culture & Arts
vii) Istana Budaya
viii) National Academy of Arts, Culture & Heritage
ix) Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation
x) National Visual Art Development Board
xi) Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau
xii) Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC)

Most of these agencies have their own headquarters at the ministry level and branches at the state level. The responsibilities of each agency are to carry out the tasks and activities of the office related to the policies that have been made by the ministry (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2010). For example, MTPB headquarters are located in the same building as MOTAC and, in addition, there are MTPB branch offices in every state of Malaysia (the organisational structure of the tourism administration is provided in Appendix 5).

It is clear that the role of the department is to implement policies set by the government through their respective ministries. Department branches have been established primarily at the state level to help reduce the burden of the Ministry's headquarters and to facilitate its administration. At the same time, this helps the federal government achieve direct involvement and work closely with the state government especially any activities at state levels.

4.2.2 State Government

The Malaysian State Government also has its own administrative structure. It was found that there are slight differences between the administrative structure of the state
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

The government in Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak. As showed in Figure 4.2, there are 11 states on the West Malaysia and two on the East Malaysia.

**Figure 4.2:** Close-up map of Malaysia, comprising 11 states on the Peninsular or East Malaysia and two states on Borneo Island or East Malaysia
(Cadastral Template 2.0, 17 July 2016)

At a state level, the Executive power is under the control of the King, Sultan or Senator (i.e. speaker) of the State in accordance with their respective constitutional state (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014). In Peninsular Malaysia, the Executive power is normally exercised or performed by the State Executive Council (EXCO) on behalf of the King or Sultan or the President of the State for their respective states. The Chief Minister is appointed to rule every state government that has a monarchy (i.e. Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan). In Sabah the EXCO is known as the Cabinet (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2010). The EXCO is an organisation of the highest policy establishment at the state administration level. In most cases, the King, Sultan or the President of the State must act on the advice of the EXCO.

The EXCO is usually headed by a Chief Minister for the states ruled by the King or Sultan, while the title of Chief Minister (i.e. Head of the Cabinet) is used for states that do not have a monarchy (Dzulkifli & Zameri, 2010). According to Yaakop and Aziz (2014),
unlike other states in Malaysia, Malacca, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak were headed by British Governor during World War 2. The fall of the Malacca Empire in 1511 to the Portuguese armies caused the end of the Malacca monarchy (Yaakop & Aziz, 2014). The Chief Minister is the chief executive at the state government level, while the Prime Minister is in the federal administration. The Chief Minister is appointed by the King or Sultan or the Speaker of the State through a general election which is conducted every five years (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2010). The leader of a political party may not be appointed as the Chief Minister in case they do not win a state assembly seat during the general election, even though they may be the most qualified leaders.

As described in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia (2010), the Malaysian State Government is authorised to administrate and monitor local government, land matters, agriculture and forestry, public works, religious law (i.e. Islamic law) and public holidays (The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2010). Dzulkifli and Zameri (2010) state that federalism in Malaysia is relatively strong; that is, the federal government is powerful in comparison to the state governments). Decisions on budget allocation for the state government are usually announced after the federal government’s budget. This shows that the federal government remains the majority power for any administration matters, control and monitoring of activities relating to tourism policy in Malaysia.

4.3 Public Sector and Tourism

The discussion in Section 4.2 indicates that Malaysia practices a constitutional monarchy system headed by Malay rulers, whilst the Prime Minister is the Head-of-Government. This has shaped the way the public sector is involved and contributes to tourism industry development within the Malaysian Governance system. Malaysia’s governance structure has strongly influenced the way the tourist industry is administered. The federal government has the authority to enforce the need for unity without uniformity, and every state government has its own power and functionality. Table 4.2 shows the division of power between the federal and state governments. This has influenced the administration of the tourism industry and the development of related products and services within Malaysia. However, Malaysia’s federal government, through MOTAC and the MTPB, remains the main player in choosing which tourism products and services should be promoted.
Table 4.2: Division of powers under the Federal Constitution of Malaysia (Samsu, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Government</th>
<th>Share Power</th>
<th>State Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International affairs</td>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>Islamic affairs &amp; Malay custom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and security</td>
<td>Social welfare</td>
<td>Forestry &amp; agricultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Public health</td>
<td>Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Town &amp; village planning</td>
<td>Local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour force &amp; social wellbeing</td>
<td>Irrigation &amp; drainage</td>
<td>Local service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>State land &amp; water supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; shipping</td>
<td>Cultural &amp; sport</td>
<td>State public holidays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication</td>
<td>Water resource management</td>
<td>State government administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil &amp; criminal laws</td>
<td>Animal husbandry</td>
<td>Turtle &amp; river fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry &amp; trade</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of mining areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; medical</td>
<td>Homeless and hawkers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General election</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public land &amp; energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal/National public holiday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows that the financial commitment allocated by the Malaysian Government to develop and promote tourism products and experiences since 1966 – prior to this there was no allocation for tourism activities and development. The tourism industry requires thorough planning of resource allocation with contributions from the public sector. Therefore, this section identifies the different roles of the Malaysian Government in tourism and further examines how these roles contribute to marketing the country as an international destination.

Table 4.3: The distribution of allocation and tourism development activities by the Malaysian Government based on every Malaysian master plan (extracted from various Malaysia Plan 1955 - 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malaysia Plan</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Allocation to tourism (millions)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draft of Malaya Development</td>
<td>1955-1960</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>1966-1970</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1971-1975</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Focused on domestic facilities development, economic growth, labour force and social wellbeing but did not mention tourism
- Only for Malaya (Peninsular Malaysia)
- Upgrading tourist information centres in Kuala Lumpur and Penang
- Develop and upgrade tourism infrastructure
- TDC establishment
- Marketing and promotional activities
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Revenue (M$)</th>
<th>Expenses (M$)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>1976-1980</td>
<td>27.19</td>
<td>9.01</td>
<td>- 21st Conference of Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) held in Kuala Lumpur **Training for labour force under the NEP - Tourism spot development in Peninsular Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>1981-1985</td>
<td>148.51</td>
<td>49.22</td>
<td>- New tourist facility projects located in the East Coast area of Peninsular Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>1986-1990</td>
<td>140.5</td>
<td>46.57</td>
<td>- Infrastructure and product development - Setting up the Malaysian Information Centre in Kuala Lumpur (MATIC) - Upgrading national parks, culture centres and rebuilding ferry jetties all over Malaysia - Extensive marketing and promotion for the VMY 1990 and organising the VMY 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>1991-1995</td>
<td>746.3</td>
<td>247.36</td>
<td>- Preservation and restoration of heritage sites and national artefacts - Providing financial support for culture and heritage activities - Tourist facilities such as the National Theatre of Performing Arts and cultural craft complexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>1996-2000</td>
<td>605.5</td>
<td>200.69</td>
<td>- Launching the Cuti-cut Malaysia in 1999 for the domestic market - Launching the Malaysia Truly Asia campaign in 1999 for the international market - Extensive marketing and promotion for Cuti-cut Malaysia and Malaysia Truly Asia campaigns around the world - International events such as Formula I car racing, aerospace show, launching of Kuala Lumpur and Petronas Twin Tower and many others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>783.6</td>
<td>259.72</td>
<td>- Extensive marketing and promotion for the VMY 2004 and organising the VMY 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>2006-2010</td>
<td>1.85 billion</td>
<td>613.18</td>
<td>- Extensive marketing and promotion for the VMY 2007 and organising the VMY 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>2011-2015</td>
<td>3.7 billion</td>
<td>1.23 billion</td>
<td>- Tourism is announced as one of 12 National Key Economic Areas (2010-2020) - Extensive marketing and promotion for the VMY 2014 and organising the VMY 2014 - Malaysia Year of Festivals (My FEST) 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - From 1955 until 1995 money in Malaysia denoted using the ‘M$’ sign (shades in grey). *$1AUD = MYR3.30. **Training for labour force is still ongoing until today

Since 1966, the Malaysian Government has focused on the development of tourism to ensure constant performance in generating income which contributes to economic

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growth. As shown in Table 4.3, the budget allocation for the tourism industry increased almost six times in the sixth Malaysia’s master plan compared to the fifth one. During the 1990s, aligned with the NDP (as discussed in sub-section 4.2.1), the Malaysian Government approved several mega construction projects, such as the Kuala Lumpur Tower, the Petronas Twin Towers, Sepang International Circuit, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, theme parks and shopping malls (Economic Planning Unit, 2015b, April 22). Furthermore, two major tourism campaigns were introduced: ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’ (international campaign) and ‘Cuti-cuti Malaysia’ (domestic campaign). These were initiatives of the MTPB which aimed to rebrand Malaysia’s tourism image and identity. ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’ was the most successful in positioning the country as a multicultural nation (Economic Planning Unit, 2015c, May 17). This campaign helped to attract more international tourists and increase foreign exchange earnings. The ‘Cuti-cuti Malaysia’ campaign launched in 1999 aims to encourage local residents to travel and get to know their country better (Economic Planning Unit, 2015b, April 22). This Malaysian Government policy aims to reduce foreign exchange outflow.

In 2010, the tourism industry was announced as one of 12 National Key Economic Areas to which money would be allocated by the federal government through the ETP over the next ten years. At the same time, the concept of 1Malaysia or (in Malay, Satu Malaysia) was being promoted by the Malaysian Government across all activities nationwide. This concept stresses Malaysian unity and ethnic tolerance. The ETP was introduced by the Prime Minister in 2010 to replace the NDP (1991–2009). The core agenda for the ETP is to transform Malaysia to be a high-income country with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of MYR48 000 by 2020 (Economic Transformation Programme, 2015). A summary of the evolution of Malaysia’s tourism products and experiences is showed in Figure 4.3.

![Figure 4.3: Evolution of Malaysia’s tourism products and experiences](extracted from Marzuki, 2010 & Economic Transformation Programme, 2014)
In the early development of Malaysia’s tourism industry, there was strong federal government administration of the entire industry; that is, tourism was administered under a centralised governance system. Table 4.4 shows the government ministries beginning from the 1960s until today. Similar approaches were used in the administration of other industries (such as the agricultural and mining industries).

Table 4.4: The Malaysian Government’s tourism ministries since the 1960s
(Marzuki, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Ministries for tourism industry in Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Cultural Department under the Ministry of Cultural, Sport and Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MOCAT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism (MOTOUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since mid-2013 until today</td>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After discussions and consultations with the Pacific Area Travel Association committees and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries on Malaysia’s tourism potential, the DMO (known as the Tourism Development Corporation (TDC)) was proposed and established in 1972. The federal government, in its Second Malaysia Plan (1971–1975), created the following four strategies:

i) To propose more destinations and tourism infrastructures in every state to encourage more interstate tourists;

ii) To develop more tourist destinations and tourism infrastructure along the main road for domestic and foreign tourists;

iii) The development of tourist destinations and infrastructures will focus on Northern and Southern Peninsular Malaysia; and

iv) Air transport development for Sabah and Sarawak.

In order to make each of these strategies possible the Malaysian Government, through the MTPB, needed strong support and participation from the private sector. This was also part of the NEP agenda which was introduced at the beginning of 1971 (Rasiah & Shari, 2012). The Malaysian Government instructed the MTPB to generate national income by
fully utilising the resources that were available in the country for tourism purposes. The MTPB’s responsibilities included: i) planning and organising tourism activities and programs; ii) identifying potential tourist markets; and iii) creating more employment opportunities for local people (Marzuki, 2010).

Since the 1970s, the rapid growth and expansion of the tourism industry has been aligned with other industries and this has inspired the Malaysian Government to introduce a ministry that focuses on tourism administration (Marzuki, 2010). As a result, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was established in 1987. The ministry coordinates and monitors tourism industry development in Malaysia by:

i) ‘assisting the states to create and promote distinctive identities so as to be more attractive to domestic tourists and

ii) encouraging states to promote their tourist attractions and destinations and assist through joint promotions and the provision of promotional expertise at the state’ level (Sharif, 2002, p. 66 cited in Marzuki, 2010)

The National Tourism Policy 1992 stated that the ministry was entrusted with tourism industry policy and planning development, but the MTPB (as described in Tourism Industry Act 1992) retains responsibility for conducting marketing and promotion activities. In other words, the ministry is fully responsible for planning and enforcing relevant national tourism policies, conducting market research, coordinating tourism product development and providing necessary training and licensing (e.g. for travel agencies, tour operators and hotel establishments). The decision was made to provide clear roles and responsibilities for the ministry and DMO.

Apart from marketing and promotion activities, the MTPB needs to ensure that tourism-related policies are implemented and followed at all times in all marketing and promotion activities both inside and outside the country (Sharif, 2002). Moreover, the MTPB is indirectly involved with the process of developing and coordinating tourism infrastructure in both Peninsular and East Malaysia (Marzuki, 2010). This aligns with the four main functions of the MTPB as stated in the Tourism Industry Act 1992, which are to:

i) Stimulate and promote tourism to and within Malaysia;

ii) Invigorate, develop and market Malaysia internationally and domestically as a tourist focal point;
iii) Coordinate all marketing or promotional activities relating to tourism conducted by any organisation, government, or non-governmental agency; and

iv) Recommend to the Minister relevant measures and programs that stimulate development and promotion of the Malaysian tourism industry and to implement them upon approval (MTPB, 2014).

Even though the Tourism Ministry (now known as MOTAC), which is a federal government organisation, is responsible for tourism administration and planning for Malaysia. Marzuki (2010) found that destination planning, including the development of relevant infrastructure is important for the success of Malaysia as a tourist destination. It is important to note that the tourism administration system becomes more complex when it involves the intervention of the state government. Additionally, the government institutional structure positions the federal government as the ultimate authority for the industry and specifies the significant involvement of four other ministries through several departments of each ministry. Table 4.5 lists the various departments, agencies and divisions from each ministry that are engaged either directly or indirectly in tourism industry development.

Table 4.5: The list of departments, agencies and divisions from the different ministries involved in tourism industry development
(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministries</th>
<th>Department/Agency/Division</th>
<th>Tourism Products and Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and</td>
<td>Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB)</td>
<td>Policy and legislation implementation, Promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Industry development division</td>
<td>Product and industry development such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Heritage</td>
<td>Malaysian cuisine campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Archive of Malaysia</td>
<td>Heritage and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Library of Malaysia</td>
<td>Arтеfacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department of Museums Malaysia</td>
<td>Archival documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Department for Culture and Arts</td>
<td>Museum and the facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Academy of Arts, Culture and Heritage</td>
<td>Implement all cultural and arts activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Cultural Theatre</td>
<td>Performing arts and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islamic Tourism Centre</td>
<td>Venue for cultural and arts shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia Handicraft Development Corporation</td>
<td>Islamic tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau</td>
<td>Crafts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture Department</td>
<td>Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fisheries Department</td>
<td>Agro tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Malaysia identifies local cuisine as an important component of the tourism product and experience that is capable of attracting tourists from every part of the world to come to Malaysia. This is reflected in the guidebook *Lonely Planet*, which announced that Penang was among the top ten ‘foodies destinations’ in 2014 (Barton, 2014, August 8). More recently, the Cable News Network (CNN) asked their viewers to vote on the most favourite culinary destination in the world; Malaysia was ranked number six out of ten.
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culinary destinations with 265 votes (Cheung, 2014, August 12). To get listed in the ‘top 10 foodie spots’ and one of the top ten ‘culinary destinations’ has required systematic policy implementation by the Malaysian Government over a period of time. This section presents an analysis of how National Culture Policy, which is developed, established and enforced by the National Department for Culture & Arts, has shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine as a niche market within the tourism industry.

As stated in the previous section, Malaysia’s tourism industry started with no financial support from the Malaysian Government. The Cultural Department, under the Ministry of Cultural, Sport and Youth, was fully responsible for planning and monitoring the development of the tourism industry. Given the lack of knowledge and experience in the introductory stages of the tourism industry, Marzuki (2010) notes that the Malaysian Government focused on marketing Malaysia as a nature and island tourist destination. At that time, four main tourism products – Forest and National Park, Wildlife Century, island, and bird watching – were identified by the Malaysian Government. However, since the introduction of the NEP the Malaysian Government, through the Cultural Department under the Ministry of Cultural, Sport and Youth, has added culture and arts as additional tourist products and experiences. The National Culture Policy 1971 was enacted as the main reference for the integration of culture and arts into the development of the tourism industry.

Malaysia’s National Culture Policy, developed in 1971 under the National Department for Culture and Arts (JKKN). Mohamed (2008) notes that this policy is often cited as the main reason for political conflict and debate surrounding which ethnic group should represent the country. Although, as discussed in Section 4.2, the Federal Constitution of Malaysia clearly prioritises the Malay community, the Chinese and Indian communities have continuously disputed the ‘culture balance’, feeling neglected by the Malaysian Government in most tourism marketing collateral (Mohamed, 2008). This seems to contradict the first objective of its formulation, which is to strengthen national unity through culture (Liu et al. 2002). According to Liu et al. (2002), the main challenge facing the Malaysian Government now is not only to enforce the established policy into practise but also to develop a policy which can satisfy every ethnic group. The word ‘multicultural’ is synonymous with Malaysia’s image, which consists of a broad range of ethnic groups. This image is widespread in promotional efforts that have been undertaken by the MTPB since the launch of ‘Malaysia Truly Asia’ campaign in 1999 (MTPB, 2014); it reflects the ethnic or cultural diversification message which is carried through the
‘Malaysia Truly Asia’ campaign. This has also provided a guideline for the Malaysian Government on how local cuisine should be marketed to represent the whole nation.

Drawing on the discussion of cuisine in Chapter Two, it is clear that the cuisine of a region or nation can, in part, set a culture – and by extension a tourist destination – apart from others and helps to provide a common understanding of what it means to belong to a particular culture. Moreover, when place or regional identities overlap, one of the alternative options is that they can be differentiated by the branding of tourist destinations based on their local cuisines. In the case of Malaysia, it has been argued that the diversity of its food and cuisine reflects the diversity of its society, comprising three main ethnicities: Malay, Chinese and Indian (Karim et al., 2010). The cultural assimilation process amongst the Indigenous people and settlers in Malaysia’s earlier days of formation is seen as an important contributing factor in the development of contemporary Malaysian cuisine.

The introduction of Islam by Arab traders in the fifteenth century transformed the food beliefs and practices of Malay community life through the introduction of Halal food practices (Daud, 1989). In the context of Islamic laws, Halal means permissible food that signifies pure food, especially in relation to meat, processed food content and alcoholic beverages (Fischer, 2011, 2012, 2016). For Malays, who are the dominant ethnic group and represent the Muslim population in Malaysia, following Islamic food laws and practices is crucial. This includes slaughtering animals in particular ways and avoiding pork and the consumption of alcoholic beverages. However, there are no restrictions on the non-Muslim population’s access to non-Halal food. In 1974 the Malaysian Government enforced Halal certification and logo display at food premises and on food products (Fischer, 2016). It also controls licenses for selling and serving alcoholic beverages.

In the specific context of East Malaysia, which consists of Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan Island, the population is dominated by Malays, who are known as Bumiputera (i.e. the ‘sons and daughters of the soil’). Similar to the East, the West — also known as Peninsula Malaysia — is largely inhabited by the Malays or Bumiputera. The Indigenous ethnic groups such as the Iban, Bidayu and Khadazan inhabit longhouses, which are generally located near rivers and in forests (Ismail, 1989). The Indigenous peoples’ ties to their cultural heritage, including their food traditions, are strong and they are influenced by region, community and proximity to rivers and forests.
In Peninsular Malaysia, every state has local food specialties shaped by the availability of food resources (either from agricultural activities and/or imported food) and by the cultures of neighbouring countries, including Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore (Hutton, 2000; Mowe, 2007; Brissenden, 2011). The three major ethnic groups—the Malays, Chinese and Indians—created the foundations of Malaysian cuisine in this region. The Malay culture has been present in the country, particularly the Peninsula, since before the Fifteenth Century (Ismail, 1989). Halal practices, as mentioned before, are an essential part of Malay culture. In the thirteenth century, Malacca was the main trading port on the Coromandel Coast, Straits of Melaka and Indonesian archipelago for spices and other commodities (Colin, 2000; Ismail, 1989). Rice was the Malays’ staple food and supplied by Siam (now known as Thailand) before rice cultivation began in the area that is now Malaysia in the late eighteenth century (Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister’s Department Malaysia, 2015a).

The arrival of Chinese and Indian ethnic groups in the nineteenth century added additional flavours to Malay food. Ismail (1989) states that the Chinese and Indians were brought by the British as indentured labour to work in the mines (for Chinese) and rubber plantations (for Indians). Chinese Malaysians, comprise the second-largest ethnic group. They introduced culinary influences, such as using specific food ingredients (e.g. seafood, fermented fish sauce and rice vermicelli) and cooking styles (e.g. stir-fry and steaming), from Southern China, particularly from Fujian and Henan (Jalis, 2008; Brissenden, 2011). They was followed by the Indian Malaysians, who mostly speak Tamil and came from Southern India (Jalis, 2008). In addition to the three major ethnic groups, there are a few minority communities, namely Baba Nyonya (Chinese Peranakan), Chetty (Indian Peranakan), Portuguese and Javanese living in some parts of Peninsular Malaysia (Ng & Karim, 2016). As suggested by Jalis (2008), the adaptation of cultures, lifestyles and cuisines to local environments over many years has changed these minorities’ daily routines, particularly concerning food and cuisine. For example, assam laksa, which originated from the Baba Nyonya, is now easily found everywhere in Malaysia, with additional hot and tangy flavours to suit local palates; in other words, this meal has been ‘Malaysianised’.

Nevertheless, local cuisine and its representations are also seen as an arena for the expression of ethnic and national identities as well as tensions. As the majority population in Malaysia is Malay (i.e. Muslim) and practise Halal food laws, the Malaysian Government utilises the Muslim (as the majority) together with the minority groups to
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market and promote local cuisine. As argued by Khoo (2010), an Indian Muslim restaurant in Malaysia is called a *Mamak*. By doing this, it made the Malaysians feel that the *Mamak* restaurant is part of ‘Malaysianisation’ rather than representing only one ethnic group (i.e. Indian ethnic group). Historically, Indian cuisine has significantly influenced local cuisine in Malaysia, thereby resulting in the popularity of dishes such as *roti canai*, curries, and *chapati* in Malaysia (Khoo, 2010; Duruz & Khoo, 2015).

Even though today Malaysians of all races mix freely including eating together, still many of the minority ethnic groups have the feeling of being marginalised when it comes to local cuisine promotion as part of tourist destination marketing strategies. This is due to government policies which favour the ethnic Malay majority. Obviously, in 1974 the Malaysian Government enforced Halal certification and logo display at food premises and on food products (Fischer, 2016). It also controls licenses for selling and serving alcoholic beverages.

From archival documents analysis, this study found that food specialities were classified as part of Malaysia’s cultural image and identity which subsequently adds value to the tourism industry. Thus, one of the tourism strategies as stated in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991–1995, p. 240) is:

[The] Tourism industry will place increasing emphasis on developing a more distinct Malaysian image and identity. The country will promote its unique brand of tourism to reflect values consonant with the Malaysian way of life. This approach will be developed within the context of preserving and enhancing the national heritage and taking pride in the culture and lifestyles of various communities…Malaysia’s heterogeneous culture is recognised as an added asset to tourism. The multi-faceted local culture will be promoted for their exotic appeal and uniqueness…The wide sociocultural base which is rich in folklore, performing arts, traditions, handicrafts and architecture as well as food specialties… (Economic Planning Unit, 2015b, April 21).

4.5 **Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia**

The expansion of Malaysia’s tourism industry since the 1960s has contributed to its strong economic performance which also benefited the nation. The tragedy of racial conflict opened the government’s eyes to the need to make national unity a priority. As discussed in the previous section, the MTPB (known as the TDC in the early stages of tourism development) was an initiative of the Malaysian Government and it acts as an effective
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agent for integration and unity to rectify racial problems and address the issue of financial inequality. This was clearly mentioned in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971–1975, p.188):

[To] ensure balanced participation by all the people, the Corporation will carry out tourism projects, promote private sector projects and may participate in joint efforts.⁴ (Economic Planning Unit, 2015e, June 7)

Furthermore, the MTPB has successfully demonstrated its ability to administer and organise relevant marketing and promotional activities at both the domestic and international levels, as well as manage the involvement of stakeholders in the industry. However, it would perhaps not be surprising to other countries that Malaysia promotes itself as a tourist destination, developing marketing and promotional ideas of its own.

Up until 2014, the MTPB employed six main marketing communication strategies: i) advertising; ii) public and media relations; iii) publications; iv) logistics and distribution (i.e. bus wrap and aerial advertising); v) special product development; and vi) IT-based marketing (MTPB, 2015). These were designed as one integrated communication system so that they would deliver the same information to promote Malaysia as a tourist destination. Many improvements have been made since the tourism industry experienced an increase in tourist arrivals in the 1960s. In the beginning Malaysia, through federal government initiatives, relied solely on existing public infrastructure and facilities (including the national airline, the Malaysia Airline System or MAS) to attract international tourists from different parts of the world. The industry became stronger with the establishment of the destination marketing organisation, MTPB, in 1972.

It was found that between 1970 and 1990 that the MTPB was encouraged by the Malaysian Government to increase advertising, publications, and public and media relations. Printed tourism campaigns used brochures and posters for marketing and disseminating tourism information. These were distributed through tourism information centres throughout the country and overseas offices. The Malaysian Government also started to introduce massive tourism industry development, for instance, attracting international hotel chains to build and operate their businesses in Malaysia, identifying and establishing new tourism products, upgrading land transportation routes, and initiating several tourism projects nationwide (Economic Planning Unit, 2015b, April 21). This was done to encourage international tourists to stay longer and spend more money

⁴ Translated to English from the original Malay version from the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975). Note that the original document was written in Malay using Malaysian spelling and structure during the 1970s.
in Malaysia. At the same time, the Malaysian Government urged the MTPB to work hand-in-hand with MAS in international efforts to promote tourism products and experiences. In the early stages of its tourism development Malaysia was still a new country in the early stages of introducing itself as an international tourist destination, as such the Malaysian Government decided to send MTPB representatives abroad and set up offices. This enabled the MTPB to get closer to the target markets and conduct market research into the needs of different target groups. Other forms of marketing and promotion included direct mail, trade fairs and exhibitions, cooperative tour packages, tourism seminars, educational workshops and contests.

From the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996–2000) until the present (National Key Economic Areas, 2011–2020), the Malaysian Government has invested substantial amounts of money to establish information technology (IT) infrastructure. The decision to do so was made due to the great potential that can be gained through IT for economic growth. For the tourism industry the introduction of information and communications technology (ICT) has made marketing more dynamic. The MTPB and other tourism-related agencies have begun developing their official websites in more interactive styles to distribute relevant information. This makes information accessible anywhere and at any time, including disseminating and updating relevant information about Malaysian cuisine as part of tourism experiences, for example culinary tour packages, a culinary delights e-brochure and information relating to food-related events or festivals. This is a new phase in destination marketing strategies for the country. ICT is now being widely been used in tourism marketing and promotional initiatives. As stated in the MTPB 2013 Annual Report:

Last year [2013], Tourism Malaysia poured more effort into online advertising and social media activities to keep abreast of global advertising trends; a special unit was formed to specifically oversee online promotions with partners that included Google, YouTube, BBC.com, Eurosport.com and CNN.com. (MTPB, 2014, p. 15)

Another marketing strategy of the Malaysian Government through the MTPB was to gain recognition and win awards from international tourism organisations and bodies such as the UNWTO and ASEAN. Once Malaysia had joined ASEAN, it began to market and promote Malaysia as an international destination. Visa facilitation in ASEAN member countries has had a positive impact on international tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. This could be another reason the Malaysian Government has targeted the tourist market
from ASEAN member countries. Furthermore, according to UNWTO (2007), the impact has also extended to job creation in each country in the region. These initiatives appear to suggest that the Malaysian government sees merit in developing and sustaining the tourism industry. They are also as part of networking strategies to increase awareness of Malaysia as an international tourist destination which offers a diverse range of tourism experiences.

4.6 Integrating Malaysian Cuisine into the Tourism Industry and Destination Marketing Strategies

Even though it was clear in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991–1995) that food specialities could potentially be employed as a cultural resource to promote tourism image and identity, the idea of highlighting local cuisine had already been introduced during the VMY 1990. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show examples of posters printed by the MTPB and distributed in marketing and promotional activities overseas and within the country. The appearance of specific meals and tropical fruits (e.g. pineapples, star fruit and bananas) in Figure 4.4 indicate the initial idea of presenting local food images to an international audience. Figure 4.5 shows a more specific image of food (skewered meat with condiments) which was highlighted as a local food speciality. Since then, the Malaysian Government has strongly supported the promotion of local cuisine, which has been frequently employed as a marketing tool in many marketing and promotional activities, particularly overseas.
As shown in Figure 4.4, every month included different types of celebrations. Local cuisine and fruits were placed in between October and December during the VMY 1990. This was due to the higher incidence of tourist arrivals during this period each year, especially during school holidays in most neighbouring countries and the Northern Hemisphere’s winter season. VMY was organised bearing in mind that most schools have their holidays from October until the end of the year and that during this period there is a strong demand for leisure and tourism activities. From the MTPB’s perspective, the yearly tourism calendar is important because it allows them to plan marketing and promotional activities, particularly those focusing on events and festivals. Not only is there a need for proper planning (e.g. time, effort, financial resources, location and collaboration with stakeholders) but the details, such as the dates and locations of events, are also crucial. Accuracy of information helps the MTPB to plan and organise its marketing and promotional activities at both the domestic and international levels. This is evident in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: The poster of Malaysia Festival in Kuala Lumpur which was organised in conjunction with VMY 1990  
(MTPB, 2014)

The caption for the poster states:

Kuala Lumpur, the City of Lights, will once again be hosting the ‘Malaysia Fest’ to be held on 15–30 September 1990. Cultural events and food fairs of the 13 states in Malaysia will be organised in leading hotels and shopping complexes throughout the festival.
As discussed in Section 4.2 and 4.3, the division of power between the federal and state governments has strongly influenced the tourism industry. This has involved product development as well as marketing and promotional activities, including local cuisines. Although tourism activity within Malaysia is divided into 13 states and three territories, Kuala Lumpur is Malaysia’s capital city and one of the main international gateways for international tourists. Therefore, it is not surprising that international events are undertaken in Kuala Lumpur (e.g. Figure 4.5). Nevertheless, the Malaysian Government has also placed a high priority on one of the NEP’s objectives, which is to balance the involvement of ethnic groups.

After the VMY 1990, food specialities (i.e. food that is important to an ethnic group which can represent their cultural identity) were categorised as one cultural element that could benefit the tourism industry in Malaysia. Content analysis of both texts and photographs conducted by Jalis et al. (2014) found that a section of entertainment and dining out was devoted to highlighting local cuisine specialities in all tourism Malaysia marketing materials, including those published by state governments. This included relevant government websites. In general, Malaysian cuisine has been positioned based upon the wide range of ethnic groups. Similar patterns of local cuisine ideas were identified in material produced by the MTPB (as part of the federal government, with headquarters in Putrajaya and state offices) and by tourism divisions or units of state governments. Nevertheless, it was found that there are distinct differences in terms of local cuisines in every state. This shows that the Malaysian Government at both the national or state level have their own tourism agenda when making use of local cuisines in tourism promotion. Further discussion of these findings is presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

To date, several Malaysian Government initiatives have promoted local cuisine. The two main food marketing campaigns which the Malaysian Government has been involved in are MKP and CitraRasa (formerly known as Fabulous Food 1Malaysia or FF1M5). MKP was initiated in 2006 as an international food marketing campaign. It was the first large-scale project to promote the country as an international tourist destination through its local cuisine. MATRADE and MTPB overseas offices have collaborated in food-related events and festivals in particular regions or countries, for example in the ‘Taste of Melbourne’ festival in Victoria and the ‘Regional Flavours’ event in Brisbane, Australia. CitraRasa is an annual food marketing campaign with significant Malaysian Government

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5 The 1Malaysia concept was included in FF1M which was introduced under the ETP in 2010. Even though the concept began 2010, FF1M was one information distribution channel used to promote the 1Malaysia concept nationwide.
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

involvement. It is a three-month celebration of Malaysian cuisine starting in October in each year. Even though food-related events under CitraRasa have been included in the annual national tourism calendar and organised within the country, this food marketing campaign is considered by the Malaysian Government to be an international destination marketing strategy. Analyses of MKP and CitraRasa are presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

Developing and establishing the country’s image and identity is not limited to MKP and CitraRasa. The Department of Heritage also has taken proactive steps in regard to culture and heritage preservation. This has helped to document the story of food traditions which have passed from generation to generation. The Department released a list of heritage foods, which is called as the National Food Heritage List (NFHL), in May 2009 (Elis, 2009). Initially, 100 foods were identified and listed under the NFHL. At the end of August 2014, coinciding with the 57th Anniversary of Independence Day celebrations, the then Tourism Minister, Dato’ Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, revealed 151 foods that were recognised as part of Malaysia’s national food heritage (FTM Reporters, 11 August 2014). He further explained that these foods were listed in the ‘intangible cultural heritage’ section of the National Heritage Act 2005. Under the Act, intangible heritage items include any form of expression, language, sayings, songs, folklore, oral traditions, poetry, dance, acting, theatre or martial arts which have existed or exist in relation to Malaysia’s heritage. This is aligned with the interpretation of intangible cultural heritage by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation or UNESCO (refer to in the text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Appendix 4).

Food in the form of local cuisine that has been created by a group of people or by an ethnic group in an area or region, and has passed from one generation to another, is considered to be one kind of intangible cultural heritage. One example is French cuisine. In November 2010 French cuisine was officially recognised by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Committee came to an agreement that French cuisine has fulfilled the criteria for the safeguarding program. These include:

i) The gastronomic meal of the French plays an active social role within its community and is transmitted from generation to generation as part of its identity;
ii) Its inscription on the Representative List could contribute to greater visibility for intangible cultural heritage, as a catalyst for mutual respect and intercultural dialogue;

iii) Safeguarding measures reflect the commitments of the community, the French authorities and NGOs [non-government organisations] to reinforce its transmission, particularly through the education system, while encouraging research and promotion; and

iv) The nomination has been submitted following active and broad participation of communities throughout the country in meetings, debates and surveys, and many institutions and associations gave their free, prior and informed consent (Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, 2015).

The gastronomy of the French is inscribed in the inventory of intangible cultural heritage of France, established by the Mission of Ethnology of the Ministry of Culture.

In addition to the abovementioned initiatives, there are many other medium- and small-scale food-related events and festivals within the Malaysian states. Furthermore, each ethnic group has its own cultural practices and traditions that have been inherited from their ancestors (Liu et al., 2002; Jalis, 2008). These are sometimes associated with religious beliefs. Special foods are prepared and served as part of religious celebrations, for example: the Muslim community celebrates *Eid ul Fitr* (the month of Syawal in the Islamic calendar), the native *Iban* people celebrate the ‘*Dayak* Festival’, and Chinese Malaysians celebrate the Chinese New Year (Jalis, 2008). There are also fruit festivals in some places when particular fruits are in season. The state of Perak is synonymous with the *durian*, also known as the ‘king of fruits’. At these celebrations a variety of food activities are organised, including eating competitions and cooking contests in which the seasonal fruit must be used as the main ingredient. The Malaysian Government has organised religious and cultural celebrations at a national level by including them in an annual national tourism calendar. The concept of an ‘open house’ (known in Malay as *rumah terbuka*) is now practiced at the national level (Jalis, 2008). To Malaysians, an ‘open house’ connotes that anyone can visit the home of friends or relatives during a particular celebration. This shows that the Malaysian Government is concerned with national wellbeing and unity, and the hope is to bring people of different ethnic groups together at celebration venues and enjoy activities and food; it could be said, therefore, that Malaysian cuisine is more than just a plate of food. Thus, the Malaysian Government,
through MTPB, has identified that publicising night markets, food courts, food bazaars, farmers’ markets and hawkers’ street stalls is a way of marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine throughout the world. This is a marketing strategy that has been employed by many other countries. Examples include promotions of hawkers’ street stalls in Singapore, as well as marketing campaigns in mainland China and Taiwan. One recent initiative of the state government has been to provide, through local councils, proper premises that are equipped with the necessary facilities for both business operators and customers. This enables local authorities to control and monitor not only food quality, food safety and the condition of the premises but also the varieties of food available.

Another marketing and promotional initiative has been to develop and publicise food trails. The food trail brochures were the idea of the former Tourism Minister, Tan Sri Dr Ng Yen, and they were introduced as part of CitraRasa (then known as FF1M). The Fabulous Food 1Malaysia Food Trail 2009 booklet, outlining ten ‘best’ and ‘must try’ eateries in three different food categories (nasi lemak, laksa and meat bone tea), was launched in August 2010. The ten eateries were chosen based on the quality of food, customer service and cleanliness. As stated by the Ministry, the booklet promoted Malaysian food to tourists and recommended three signature dishes that could be found everywhere in the country. The aim of this initiative was ‘to harness the attractions in the food sector and entrench them as outstanding products of Malaysia’s food tourism’ (MTPB, 2011a).

According to the former Tourism Minister, the food trail booklet complemented MOTOUR’s (now MOTAC) existing tourism products, which promote the country’s target of attaining 36.168 billion tourist arrivals by 2020. This will also increase tourists’ expenditure on food and beverages (see Table 1.2 in Chapter One).

The above discussion clearly shows how a variety of marketing and promotional initiatives have been put forward by the Malaysian Government to promote the country through its local cuisine. The entire process from planning to distribute the information through various marketing communication mediums requires time and financial resources, as well as cooperation from relevant tourism and hospitality representatives. These inputs are all crucial for ensuring the success of the projects. In Malaysia, it is clear that the federal government plays an important role in monitoring the tourism industry and in driving Malaysia’s destination marketing strategies.
4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the Malaysian Government’s involvement and strategic planning to ensure the continuous development of the tourism industry which contributes to the country’s economic growth. The tourism industry is seen as one of the most vital industries in this regard. National and tourism-related policies, as well as cooperation between stakeholders, are needed. Diversifying tourism products and experiences not only helps to attract more stakeholder involvement and maximise the use of existing resources, but also makes the country more dynamic. Malaysian cuisine has been seen to have great potential to keep attracting tourist travel to Malaysia. Local cuisines can be used to promote Malaysia as a tourist destination and can motivate tourists to come back to Malaysia.

The next three chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) present further discussions on the relevant marketing and promotion initiatives. This includes providing more details on the overall marketing strategies planned and organised by the Malaysian Government and its agencies to integrate Malaysian cuisine into the country’s destination marketing strategies.
Chapter 5 – ANALYSIS OF MARKETING MATERIALS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the analyses conducted on a sample of tourism marketing collateral published by MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE. Analyses of their official websites were also conducted, particularly in regards to the two annual food marketing campaigns: MKP and CitraRasa. The food trail brochures published by the MTPB were also included in the analyses to contribute richness to the findings. The key findings from the entire analyses address the fourth research objective (RO4), which is to explore how Malaysian cuisine is represented in marketing and promotional activities which promote the country as an international tourist destination.

The chapter begins with Section 5.2, which provides information on the documents being used for this study. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 discuss the findings from the content analysis undertaken on both photographs and textual material. Following this, the findings from both semiotic (for the photographs) and discourse analyses (for the texts) are discussed in Sections 5.5 and 5.6. Finally, Section 5.7 summarises and concludes the overall outcomes from the chapter.

5.2 Marketing Materials and Government Websites

For ideas and images about local food and cuisine are increasingly embedded in the marketing collateral of tourist destinations. Local food has been found to be an important element of the tourist experience, adding value to a holiday at a destination (Quan & Wang, 2004). Serious attention has been given by respective marketers and governments to the presentation of images and textual descriptions of local cuisine in advertising materials (for example travel guides, brochures and websites) to market tourist destinations. In recent years there has also been a spectacular growth in television programs and, indeed, entire television channels, that are devoted to cooking and food-related programs, such as the Carlton Food Network in the UK and the Asian Food Channel (AFC) in Malaysia.

In order to understand the ways in which local cuisine is represented across different destination media landscapes, content analysis was employed to analyse selected
Malaysian Government tourist destination marketing materials and related websites (i.e. developed and published by MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE). Various marketing materials, such as travel guides, brochures and websites, are recognised as important in promoting food tourism (Forchot, 2003; Boyne & Hall, 2004; du Rand & Heath, 2006; Choi et al., 2006; Lin & Cai, 2010; Lin et al., 2011). Ribeiro (2009) emphasises the increasing importance of tourism images, especially those related to advertising and marketing. She found that brochures, travel guides and other printed promotional tools are important communication channels in the tourism marketing mix. However, the relevant industrial practitioners and governments should examine whether the images portrayed in these materials are intentionally designed or merely a reflection of the tourists’ pre-conceived ideas and prejudices (Ribeiro, 2009; Hynes & Jason, 2007).

Brochures aim to impact upon tourists’ ideas about a destination and to influence their decision-making (Molina & Esteban, 2006). Due to its efficiency, the internet has become increasingly popular in marketing tourism products. With the advent of electronic marketing (e-marketing), the internet can be an innovative and interactive advertising communication channel for promoting tourism destination experiences. An understanding of how destinations present food and cuisine can be gained through investigating various marketing materials (Forchot, 2003).

A total of 51 printed and electronic tourist destination marketing materials published by MOTAC and MATRADE were collected between January 2013 and December 2014 (see Table 5.1 for the publication details). The dataset included photographs and textual materials concerning Malaysian cuisine. After excluding 16 misclassified collected materials, the final sample set comprised 19 general marketing brochures and two travel guides. The travel guides were informative travelling handbooks that provided travelling tips, destination or place reviews, activities, and lists of hotels and restaurants. This allowed a deeper focus on the depiction of Malaysian cuisine in more specific marketing and promotional contexts. To facilitate the entire analysis process, all the selected materials were written in English. This helps to maintain a consistent view of the data. In addition, English language material is intended for international consumption, rather than domestic consumption.

Similar criteria (i.e. dataset contained photographs and textual materials about Malaysian cuisine) were applied to selecting the website sample. By visiting a number of official Malaysian Government websites under sub-categories, such as ‘Malaysian Cuisine’, ‘Eating and Dining Out’, ‘Malaysian Food Local’, ‘Fabulous Food 1Malaysia’,
‘CitraRasa’, ‘MalaysiaKitchen Programme’ and ‘Malaysia Signature Dish’, website pages with information on Malaysian cuisine were identified. Some of the sites contained little of their own information on Malaysian cuisine, but rather had recipes, news update articles and links to the MOTAC and MATRADE websites. These sites were removed from consideration, resulting in a sample of ten relevant websites (one MOTAC, three MTPB and six MATRADE websites). The analysis is based on text descriptions and photographs displayed in each website between January 2013 and December 2014. The details of the data are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Content analysis materials
(Various tourist destination marketing materials and websites published by MOTAC and MATRADE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Marketing Brochures</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food endless tastes and flavours</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Mar 2013/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia Dazzling Capital City</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs and Etiquette: Tips For Tourists To Malaysia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia A World of Luxury</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage and Crafts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang Street Food - Food Paradise of Asia</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian Delights</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Apr 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia Homestay Experience</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Mar 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AgroTourism in Malaysia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Apr 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak Borneo</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Malaysia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culinary Delights</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Jul 2012/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang - Pearl of the Orient</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang food endless taste and flavours</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Apr 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Southern Region (Johor, Melaka &amp; Negeri Sembilan)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Northern Region (Perak, Penang, Kedah &amp; Perlis)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditions. Beaches. Highlands. Make your dreams come true!</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- East Coast Region (Pahang, Terengganu &amp; Kelantan)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sept 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- East Malaysia (Sabah, Sarawak &amp; Labuan)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Travel Guides**

| Malaysia Travel Manual                                      | x | - | Nov 2012 |
| Malaysia Travel Guide                                        | x | - |          |

**Official websites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTAC</th>
<th>MTPB</th>
<th>MATRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.virtualmalaysia.com/destination/night%20market-cat.html">http://www.virtualmalaysia.com/destination/night%20market-cat.html</a></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tourismmalaysia.com/au/guides/cuisine">http://www.tourismmalaysia.com/au/guides/cuisine</a></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.fabfood1malaysia.com">http://www.fabfood1malaysia.com</a></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.malaysiakitchen.my/">http://www.malaysiakitchen.my/</a></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.malaysiakitchen.co.uk/">http://www.malaysiakitchen.co.uk/</a></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.malaysiakitchenmeyc.com/">http://www.malaysiakitchenmeyc.com/</a></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.malaysianfood.net/">http://www.malaysianfood.net/</a></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.mychefwan.com/home.html">http://www.mychefwan.com/home.html</a></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note** - P = Printed, e = Electronic, MOTAC = Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, MTPB = Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, MATRADE = Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation Malaysia
5.3 Findings from the Photographic Analysis

This section presents the findings on the analysis of Malaysian cuisine photographs in Malaysian Government marketing materials and related websites. The entire set of photographs found in the general promotion materials and websites were sorted into eight categories, based on the primary message the photograph conveyed: close-up images of meals, local fruits, local ingredients, food markets, dining places, dining practices, culinary lessons and indigenous food. Each photograph was then analysed and counted based on its primary message, identified through the most noticeable elements appearing and highlighted in the photographs. Summaries of the findings are presented in Figure 5.1.

![Figure 5.1: Frequency of Malaysian cuisine photographs in brochures and websites](Original of this study)

The findings revealed that half of the photographs (50.74 per cent or 379 photographs) used in MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE printed and electronic marketing materials and official websites were allocated to the category ‘close-ups of meals’. Clearly, marketers have determined that the completed meal, isolated from most cultural signifiers, is sufficient to generate interest in the cuisine and, by extension, the destination. Isolating the meal from its setting means that the viewer’s attention is focused only on the meal, and that no other visual ‘noise’ competes for the attention of the reader (Jalis et al., 2014). Photographs, which are in part the outcome of professional ‘food styling’, can communicate the aesthetic values of the meal and its distinctive characteristics through shape, colour and texture. The photographs aim to convey the various sensory experiences...
tourists will have when consuming Malaysian food and cuisine (Leong et al., 2012). For example, the presentation of fresh ingredients – highlighted through the presence of different shades of green in the vegetables – is displayed to stimulate tourists’ appetite for Malaysian cuisine. The appearance of ‘red chillies’, either as an ingredient or as a garnishing item, strongly affirms the ‘hot and spicy’ character of the local cuisine (Jalis et al., 2014).

The diverse, fresh produce used in Malaysian cuisine is also featured. Tropical ‘local fruits’ were the second-most frequent images, appearing in 79 photos (10.58 per cent). It was found that fruits that have a strong yellow (e.g. banana, jackfruit and mango), red (e.g. watermelon) and green (e.g. guava and durian) colour are used repetitively and highlighted in most MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE marketing materials and websites. Durian is frequently used to describe Malaysian cuisine as an exotic food experience. The diverse range of local ingredients, such as fresh chilies, lemongrass, ginger and various types of leafy vegetables, were depicted in 70 images (9.37 per cent), while ‘food market’ photographs of fresh food markets, fruit farms, vegetable farms and fruit shops where fresh supplies can be purchased daily were found in 35 photographs (4.69 per cent). The local fruits and ingredients featured were critical elements in making Malaysian cuisine distinguishable, thus echoing Fischler (1988) who emphasised the use of locally-grown ingredients and the availability of food resources in creating local cuisine. The cuisine’s character, particularly the hot and spicy taste in Malaysian cuisine, is highlighted in the spices that are featured (Karim et al., 2010; Leong et al., 2012). Interestingly, there were only two photographs of characteristic ‘indigenous foods’, namely *ulat sago* (i.e. grubs), which were most probably aimed at capturing the attention of readers looking for adventurous food experiences. However, in the context of the Malaysian community, *ulat sago* is a favourite delicacy of the Indigenous people of Sarawak and Sabah.

In addition to foods’ physical distinctiveness, the featured dining places also play a part in offering a wide range of Malaysian cuisine experiences. For that reason, photographs of food stalls, food markets and bazaars, and specific ethnic restaurants were included in the marketing efforts of brochures, travel guides and official websites. Leong et al. (2012) note that images of dining places and practices helps create excitement regarding Malaysian cuisine. Making up 8.57 per cent of the total photograph count, these images cultivated feelings of romance, togetherness, sociability and family. The element of people from diverse cultural backgrounds enjoying Malaysian cuisine is seen in images
that aim to connect the readers, especially international tourists, with the country’s identity as a multi-ethnic destination.

As participating in and attending cooking demonstrations and cooking classes connects tourists with local food and cuisine (Leong et al., 2012), a substantial number of ‘culinary lesson’ photographs were observed (65 photographs, or 8.70 per cent of the total). Food preparation was the most preferred subject choice and was exhibited as much as cooking. Other photos show the chef demonstrating food preparation in a training kitchen, which could be seen as an opportunity to learn about the local cuisine and how to prepare it. As previously mentioned, a plethora of food-related programs, including cooking shows with celebrity chefs such as Malaysian-born Poh Ling Yeow, cooking competitions, and food and travel documentaries on television, have also helped to link food and travel in the minds of prospective culinary tourists. The mode of cooking preparation may sometimes be a recent invention intended to impress and attract tourists (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). For example, culinary lesson category identified in this study. Participating in and attending cooking demonstrations and cooking classes involves a more active engagement with food beyond simply consuming it.

5.4 Findings from Textual Analysis

This section examines the way Malaysian cuisine has been textually expressed in the marketing collateral and website content (Section 5.3). Analysis involved reading through each brochure and website, line-by-line, to identify words used to describe Malaysian cuisine, which were underlined manually using a pen. Following this, the words were extracted to create a list of the different words or terms used. Any similar words were placed and counted one-by-one. After counting the words used to describe Malaysian cuisine in the marketing materials and websites, the words were categorised in a way that offered a description of the overall theme. Each word was compared and contrasted in terms of its meaning to decide whether it should be grouped into a theme or not, and was then assigned into the relevant category. Finally, the original marketing materials and website content were reviewed to confirm that all the words had been identified and categorised accordingly.

In the content analysis of the texts, ten categories were identified. Malaysian cuisine is marketed using various ideas and concepts, including: ‘sensory appeal’, ‘recognition’, ‘creating desire’, ‘healthiness’, ‘culinary heritage’, ‘religious’, ‘novelty’, ‘price’, ‘adventurous’ and ‘paradise’. Table 5.2 summarises each categories and lists the
associated words. The ‘sensory appeal’ category scored the highest percentage, with 22.60 per cent compared to ‘recognition’ (16.61 per cent) and ‘creating desire’ (15.97 per cent).

Table 5.2: Textual reference to Malaysian cuisine in general marketing collaterals and websites
(Original of this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Inexpensive</th>
<th>Reasonable</th>
<th>Economical</th>
<th>Expensive</th>
<th>Affordable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paradise</td>
<td>Gourmet</td>
<td>Paradise</td>
<td>Tropical</td>
<td>Paradise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Ideal food</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Rich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culinary Heritage</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Fusion</td>
<td>Rich legacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Hea...
The appearance of words such as ‘spicy’, ‘aromatic’ and ‘hot’ highlighted that chillies and spices are among the ingredients commonly used in Malaysian cuisine. Moreover, words that symbolise the novelty of local fare are incorporated to convey the kinds of gastronomic experiences tourists will encounter when eating Malaysian delicacies (Karim et al., 2010).

The concept of ‘recognition’ taps into how local food and cuisine has a strong connection with place (Bessiere, 1998; Boyne & Hall, 2004). As previously mentioned, cuisine can be used to portray the destination’s regional identity and attract visitors. The idea of highlighting local specialty dishes found in a particular area or region is one marketing technique that the Malaysian Government uses to capture tourists’ attention. For that reason, words like ‘popular’, ‘famous’, ‘favourites’ and ‘specialty’ were frequently used. For example:

Penang assam laksa, a sweet-sour hawker dish popular across Malaysia and satay is Malaysia’s most famous contribution of the culinary world. (MTPB, 2012a, p. 9)

Char Kuey Teow or ‘stir-fried rice cake strips’ is arguably one of the most popular dishes among Malaysians of all races. (A Taste of Malaysia, n.d.)

To stimulate tourists’ desire to experience the local fare, words such as ‘delicious’, ‘mouth-watering’ and ‘delectable’ were also used. Indirectly, they create a desire for the local fare. These words used in describing local cuisine may be able to shape the reader’s understanding of Malaysian food. At the same time, they help to create a sensory desire to experience Malaysian food in the place where it is originally created (i.e. in Malaysia). For example:

To savour mouth-watering local delights, visit places like Jalan Alor (Chinese food), Kampong Baharu (Malay food) and Little India (Indian food). So, come with a big appetite and enjoy a gastronomic adventure in KL! (MTPB, 2012c)

Some concepts were less common in the marketing collateral. Even though Malaysia is multicultural and has a Muslim majority, these aspects were not highly accentuated as compared to its sensory appeal. Religious beliefs and practices may be challenging to convey and may not appeal to many non-Muslim tourists. While the national policy privileging Islam in the spheres of tourism is reflected to some extent in its promotion (Henderson, 2003), a lower number of words referred to ‘Halal food’, even though this
information might be valuable to those concerned with such dietary rules and requirements.

With regards to terms/words such as ‘prosperity’ and ‘rich legacy’ incorporated under the category ‘religious’, it is important to note that Chinese Malaysians who are Buddhists believe that eating and enjoying local cuisine has a strong connection with these terms. However, there is some degree of ambiguity, as with any semiotic analysis, because others who read these brochures and view the images may have a different interpretation.

Although there were few references on the health benefits of consuming Malaysian food and cuisine quite a large number of words reflected the concept of ‘healthiness’. Results show that this category is among the top five, with words such as ‘fresh’, ‘homemade’, ‘organic’, ‘natural’ and ‘goodness’ repeatedly used in descriptions of Malaysian food and cuisine. The suggestion of health benefits is mostly associated with the ingredients, freshness and cooking style, as noted in the selected marketing resources:

> For a novel experience, try the local hawker-style fare at open-air food courts where dishes are freshly prepared upon order…the ingredient freshness of Malaysian food is its beauty. (MTPBb, 2012, p. 97)

> The apparent simplicity and freshness of this kind of Malaysian food is its beauty. (Guides, n.d.)

Likewise, few words convey affordability. Given that some equate high price with high quality local food and cuisine (du Rand & Heath, 2006), the Malaysian Government may not want to highlight its affordability so that tourists will better appreciate the quality of local food and cuisine. Nevertheless, the words ‘affordable’, ‘inexpensive’ and ‘reasonable’ in the ‘price’ category conveyed a positive connotation of Malaysian cuisine as delivering value for money.

Words such as ‘gastronomic paradise’, ‘tropical paradise’, and ‘food paradise’ are part of the government’s initiative to position the country as a world of epicurean delights in the minds of tourists (Jalis et al., 2014). Similar expressions have been utilised by destinations such as Hong Kong and Singapore by connecting ‘food and eating out’. As argued by Henderson (2009), local cuisine has a huge potential to promote a destination’s image. This could possibly be achieved through a marketing strategy that uses specific advertising themes, such as Hong Kong’s image as a ‘food paradise’. Hence, the link between the words in the ‘paradise’ category and marketing Malaysian cuisine comprise
2.09 per cent out of the total. Jalis, Zahari, Zulkifly and Othman (2009) note that the Tourism Minister does, in fact, acknowledge local cuisine diversity as an important tourism product and experience which make Malaysia a ‘gastronomy paradise’.

5.5 Semiotic Analysis – Photographs

In addition to the eight categories emerging from the content analysis undertaken in Section 5.3, tourists are also exposed to dozens of colourful food images which connect them to local food experiences.

In this study the photographs collected and used in Section 5.2 (content analysis) were also used for the semiotic analysis. Two photographs from each category in the content analysis have been selected and presented in this thesis as examples to support the discussion. The photographs were selected because they contained strong and sharp images to represent Malaysian cuisine. Moreover, other photographs detect similarities in the dominant use of symbols or features of Malaysian cuisine. This semiotic analysis provides a more nuanced view of how MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE understand local cuisine, and how these photographs could influence tourists’ expectations. The semiotic analysis was performed on both general marketing collateral and websites, as well as the food trail brochures. Discussion of the semiotic analysis findings is based on the eight categories of the content analysis and the sample photographs that are presented.

Overall, semiotic analysis of the photographs shows that the MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE have combined cultural and traditional images (based on ethnicity and religion), food speciality (based on local favourite food in every state) and healthy elements in marketing and promoting the local cuisine to attract international tourists. Cultural and traditional images were mostly found in general marketing collateral and websites. Specific dishes were used as representations of the country and nation, as well as food sensory experiences. This is in line with Boyne et al.’s (2003) notion that the development of the character and cultural identity of a region or a place, through the incorporation of the representation of local cuisine within the marketing collateral, has long been a crucial element of place-based tourism. Images of communal meals which promote togetherness, with a mixture of people from different ethnic backgrounds wearing traditional costumes and smiling while eating together and enjoying food using different kinds of silverware, are another strategy to manifest the notion of Malaysian cuisine which reflects a multicultural identity. Interestingly, images of communal dining experiences comprising a family with children were repetitively used to promote more
than just Malaysian cuisine, indicating that Malaysian cuisine is also suitable for any age group. They also carry the notion of Malaysia being a friendly and diverse nation.

On the other hand, the food speciality concept enables tourists, both international and domestic, to experience the differences between and within the Malaysian states and territories. As described Bessiere (1998) and supported by Higman (2011) and Lugosi (2013), specific agricultural practices and products, and the cuisine that is created from these, help to define a geographic area. As for health, most of the photographs depicting Malaysian cuisine show fresh ingredients, with a balanced dietary intake, in clean dining places and food markets. This is a relatively important detail for tourists who are concerned with their diets, especially when consuming unfamiliar foods when travelling in foreign countries (Fischler, 1988; Cohen, & Avieli, 2004; Quan & Wang, 2004; Getz et al., 2014).

However, bringing Malaysia’s image as a multicultural country to a global audience has had an impact on the cuisine offered. One of the challenges for the Malaysian Government is to position the appropriate food images in the minds of tourists, while at the same time reflecting the notion of multiculturalism.

Analysis further reveals that the photographs show similar patterns of ideas and intentions in their messages about Malaysian cuisine. The dominant symbols were identified and grouped into three themes: colour, food and ingredients, and others.

i) Colour

Colour appears to be the most dominant element used to help promote the idea of Malaysian cuisine. This is clearly seen in each close-up photograph. Red, green and white were found to be the main colours in marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine. Garber, Hyatt and Starr (2000), who studied the effect of food colour on perceived flavour, found that red is a powerful and intense colour which is associated with human emotion. Green, as opposed to red, is often experienced as the colour of nature and indicates freshness, whilst purity and cleanliness are associated with white (Garber et al., 2000). Most food advertisements using white display foods that are low in fats and carbohydrates, mostly found in promoting dairy products (Alozie, 2010). These three colours are frequently combined in a plate or bowl of food to portray the characteristics and food experiences when tourists consume Malaysian cuisine. For example, red chilies have high visibility to emphasise ‘fire’ and ‘hotness’, green cucumber and bak choy denote freshness, and
white plates or bowls show cleanliness. All these colours convey the overall food quality of Malaysian cuisine, from sensory characteristics to cleanliness.

Similar ranges of colour can also be seen in other categories, such as local fruits, local ingredients, dining practices, culinary lessons and food markets. However, red was used in photographs of dining practices to associate food with specific ethnic and religious identities. One of the photographs in Table 5.3 shows a group of Chinese models wearing red costumes and using chopsticks to hold food on a special occasion. To the Chinese people, red is a colour of life that bring happiness and prosperity (Qiang, 2011). Yellow colour was found to be the dominant colour in most photographs of local fruits. This is often associated with ripeness as a sign of firmness and sweetness (Garber et al., 2000). Therefore, tourists are given the message that they will also get the chance to savour locally-grown fruits at premium quality when travelling to Malaysia.

Table 5.3: Photographs extracted from various Malaysian Government marketing collateral and websites
(extracted from various tourist destination marketing materials and websites published by MOTAC and MATRADE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Close-up</th>
<th><img src="image" alt="Photo 1: Nasi lemak with fresh cucumber, fried anchovies, peanuts, prawn, hard-boiled egg and garnished with fresh red chili." /></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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2. Local fruits

Photo 2: Satay on the charcoal griller

Photo 3: Local fresh fruits
3. Local ingredients

Photo 4: A couple holding local fruits such as jackfruit, sapodilla and guava

Photo 5: Fresh and dry spices with a mortar and pestle and fresh spring onions in the background.
4. Dining places

Photo 6: Fresh red chilies in the form of whole, cut into two, slice or paste (on the stone pestle).

Photo 7: An example of a photograph showing modern *kopitiam* (a typical Malaysian Chinese coffee shop) dining experience.
5. Culinary lesson

Photo 8: A happy family with two children enjoying Malaysian food at one of the local restaurants.

Photo 9: A man and woman watching a female chef using a stone mortar and pestle, surrounded by local fresh herbs.
6. Dining practices

Photo 10: Female foreign tourist in traditional Malay dress deep-frying local delicacies.

Photo 11: Malay family in traditional costume sitting on the floor together with a white male enjoying local food.
7. Food markets

Photo 12: Happy Malaysian Chinese family holding local food using chopsticks.

Photo 13: Pasar Khadijah, Kelantan – Famous indoor wet market in the east region of Peninsula Malaysia.
ii) Food and ingredients

Representations of spiciness, freshness, familiarity and novelty were found in some of the Malaysian cuisine photographs. These characteristics were represented using fresh red
chilies, noodles, rice, fresh and cooked meats (e.g. seafood, chicken and beef), fresh vegetables and fresh tropical fruits as symbols. Although Malaysian cuisine is often projected as consisting of a complete meal, for example noodles or rice such as *char kuey teow* cooked with meats and/or seafood and vegetables with other flavouring ingredients, the ingredients are presented with classical Western plates and crockery. For example, in pictures of *nasi lemak* the rice is presented in the centre, served with hard-boiled eggs, fried anchovies, chili paste, fried peanuts and fresh cucumbers placed around the sides. Even though the carbohydrate portion, either rice or noodles, is larger than the other food components, this image shows that Malaysian cuisine is balanced and healthy, as well as having an appealing presentation. Each of these symbols – mainly ingredients – carries a sign to inform tourists about the diversity of food experiences, for example the mixture of flavours and textures, in Malaysian cuisine waiting for them when they travel to the country.

Fresh red chilies and green salad, for example, can be seen in almost every photograph of Malaysian dishes. Based on the selection guide for chilies developed by Gray and Michaud (2008), it was found that the images of fresh red chilies that appear in the photographs are medium-sized, which indicates a hotness between mild and medium. Furthermore, fresh red chilies are two to ten times less hot than the dried pods (Gray & Michaud, 2008). Even so, these symbols inform tourists that Malaysian cuisine is made from ingredients of fine quality that are familiar and contain a balance of sensory and nutritional qualities. In terms of balance in Malaysian cuisine, this is mainly achieved through combinations of ingredients, such as fresh red chilies and green vegetables or salad. This is similar to the concept of yin (cool) and yang (hot) in Chinese cuisine (Fang, 2011). This could be an important aspect that has been considered by MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE to market and promote Malaysian cuisine. As for novelty, local fruits and indigenous categories were used to convey this idea. For example, pictures of tropical fruits such as durian, jackfruit and sapodilla plant the idea of a novel experience in tourists’ minds.

In addition to the above findings, it is interesting to note that images of rice or noodles often appear in most complete-meal photographs, either in the centre of the plate or bowl or at one side, together with other accompaniments. As discussed in Chapters Two and Four, rice is a staple food for Malaysians and is the main source of carbohydrate to provide the body with energy (Hutton, 2000; Mowe, 2007; Jalis, 2008; Brissenden, 2011; Duruz & Khoo, 2015). Noodle dishes are also frequently consumed as an alternative to
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

rice. Furthermore, noodles are similar to vermicelli pasta, which is commonly used in Italian cuisine. The bigger portions of rice or noodles in the photographs, as opposed to meat in Western cuisine, signal substantial amounts of carbohydrate served and consumed in Malaysia as a common characteristic of local cuisine. This could be something unappealing to international tourists, particularly Westerners, unless paired with vegetables and meats or seafood. Both rice and noodles are symbols of ‘Asian-ness’ in Western people’s minds.

iii) Other symbols

There are five other dominant symbolic techniques that have been identified and used as key signifiers to portray Malaysian cuisine in the photographs. These are: the use of foreign models, family and friends with small children, models wearing ethnic costumes, models with culinary skills, and dining atmosphere (indoor and outdoor).

The appearance of non-Malaysian models in several photographs, expressing their enjoyment through their happy faces, is intended to represent tourists, and that Malaysian food is enjoyed by all and Malaysia is welcoming to all. In addition, there were also images of families and friends with small children (either foreign or local or a mix of both) in several photographs. This is an interesting strategy, particularly the use of small children together with their parents and relatives enjoying local food and experiencing communal dining practices at a restaurant. Despite its spiciness, Malaysian cuisine suits all ages and those travelling with children. In addition, enjoying and sharing local food at the same table with family members and friends helps tourists understand the importance of togetherness in Malaysian cuisine.

MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE also used images of models, either foreign or local, wearing ethnic costumes in a few Malaysian cuisine photographs. These images convey the concept of multiculturalism and togetherness within the context of food. However, it was found that the core message of these images (particularly through their ethnic costumes, such as a woman wearing hijab) was on emphasising ethnic identity and religion to reflect Malaysian cuisine. For example, Henderson (2003) revealed that mosques, crescents with a star on the flag and standard dress code (i.e. females wearing scarfs on their heads) are among the emblems for the Muslim community, and were used as symbols of the national religion by all Malaysians. Thus, it is not surprising to see images of local women covering their heads with a scarf as a signifier that Malaysian cuisine can be consumed by the Islam community. However, it remains unclear how
tourists view and understand these images. Non-Malaysian tourists may see this as exotic even though it is everyday attire for some female Malaysians.

Models appearing to demonstrate culinary skills are often seen in Malaysian cuisine photographs. The portrayal of unique cooking skills, such as handling a stone mortar and pestle (as shown in Table 5.3) to cook food, a man using stainless steel cups to pull tea and a skilful cook demonstrating flying bread (popularly known as roti canai or pan-fried flat bread in Malaysia) enables tourists to have a better understanding of Malaysian cuisine and differentiate it from other cuisines. Culinary skill is another interesting feature of Malaysian cuisine which is able to enhance tourists’ food and travelling experiences, which are blended with the dining atmosphere (indoor and outdoor). Leong et al. (2012) believes that images of outdoor dining places are associated with Malaysian cuisine. The majority of Malaysians prefer to dine in open spaces, unlike typical Western settings in restaurants (Leong et al., 2012). Perhaps, dining in the open air, in a clean and hygienic setting – commonly known as alfresco dining – would be familiar to tourists from various countries across the world. Furthermore, outdoor dining indicates that Malaysian cuisine offers casual dining experiences in decent and clean surroundings. As for indoor dining, once again familiarity can be promoted by showing restaurants with Western dining setups serving local dishes. However, images of kopitiam are frequently chosen for marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine. Duruz and Khoo (2015) mention that the commodification of nostalgia can be found in several local food and beverage advertisements. Kopitiam is a Hokkien term for coffee shop. They are mostly owned and run by Chinese (Hainanese and Foochow) migrants, who typically sell beverages and rent spaces to other hawkers to sell assorted foods (Duruz & Khoo, 2015). This could be the case in Malaysia, in which the kopitiam restaurant concept is booming all over the country. Tourists are shown as being comfortable, while they linger, enjoying Malaysian cuisine in a cosy ambience, with round marble dining tables and black and white photographs hanging on the restaurant’s walls showing local places and peoples.

5.6 Discourse Analysis

The findings reported in Section 5.4 show that Malaysia has a wide range of foods due to the multicultural identity that epitomises Malaysian cuisine. Interestingly, there is a consistent idea among MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE in the way they describe Malaysian cuisine in their general marketing collateral and websites. This shows that careful attention to detail in textual expression is present in each and every marketing
communication channel used by MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE. Nevertheless, according to Hsu et al. (2008), ineffective marketing communication tools could mislead readers or viewers. This applies particularly to word choice and the position of words used to describe a tourism product or service. This situation could be one of the cases found in the selected Malaysian Government marketing collateral and websites.

Analysis revealed that the idea of multiculturalism – or more appropriately the ‘discourse of multiculturalism’ – appeared in some sentences to reflect the identity of Malaysia, which comprises three dominant ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. This presumably is to show the readers, particularly tourists, that these three main Malaysian ethnic groups form the foundation for understanding Malaysian cuisine. By highlighting the words ‘Malay, Chinese and Indian’, MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE clearly market and promote Malaysia’s multiculturalism as part of its cuisine identity. For example:

Enjoy the unique and authentic cooking styles and flavours of Malay, Chinese and Indian cuisine is an experience to be enjoyed when visiting Malaysia. (MTBP, 2012b, p.157)

Even though Malay, Chinese and Indian are often used as the essence of Malaysian cuisine, it is not to say that MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE left the minority groups behind. In many instances, the cuisines that represent minority groups, such as Peranakan or Baba Nyonya are often described as ‘exotic’, for example:

Peranakan or Nyonya cooking consists of an exotic blend of Chinese and Malay savoury cuisines. (Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, Penang pearl of the orient, n.d., p.17)

Positioning the idea of exotic food experiences in the minds of tourists about minority groups’ cuisines can be seen as these cuisines having different standards to those of the Malay, Chinese and Indians. It seems as though minority ethnic groups are only used to capture specific tourists’ attention – particularly those who are more adventurous. This aligns with Fischler (1988), who states that there are tourists who have a natural tendency to seek the exotic, novelty and variety in food experiences – known as neophilic tourists. However, the discourse of multiculturalism in marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine as part of Malaysia’s destination marketing strategies largely focused on the three major ethnic groups.
On the other hand, it was found that multiculturalism has also been used by MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE to promote the idea that a wide selection of local foods represent the Malaysian cuisine identity. For example:

…various delicious and popular dishes from this rainbow of gastronomic spectrum, with pictures and detailed recipes, from each unique ethnic kitchen. (Retrieved from http://www.malaysianfood.net)

Our multiculturalism has made Malaysia a food paradise…” (Retrieved from http://www.malaysiakitchen.my)

Presenting a diverse range of local foods, created by each ethnic group, informs tourists that there are a range of food varieties available for them to consume while visiting Malaysia. It could be argued that there is the possibility that some local foods may look tempting to Malaysians but may not be attractive to international tourists. Additionally, popular dishes might change from time-to-time because they are ‘in demand’. Nevertheless, using popular dishes could help tourists understand the different types of food consumed by Malaysians, thus communicating information about Malaysian cuisine.

Apart from being promoted as a multicultural country, Malaysia is also recognised worldwide as a Muslim country. This adds to the complexity of creating a better understanding of Malaysian cuisine. Words such as ‘Halal’ are employed not only to represent the country but also to inform specific target markets that are bound by religious dietary restrictions (i.e. Halal food for Muslims). For instance:

As a Muslim country, Halal food (food that is permissible for Muslims) is easily available. (MTPB, 2012a, p. 3)

The above sentence describing Halal food can be found everywhere in Malaysia. However, tourists might interpret it to mean that all eateries in Malaysia serve Halal food. In reality, again back to the notion of multiculturalism, there are some eateries owned by non-Muslim ethnic groups which served foods such as pork.

Another category that has been observed and identified within the dataset is ‘Otherness’. MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE believe that incorporating an element of ‘Otherness’ in describing Malaysian cuisine not only creates a desire to taste Malaysian cuisine but
also emphasises the destination’s exoticness through specific regions and dishes. One example is:

With a population that is diverse and colourful, the various ethnic communities of Sabah and Sarawak bring to the table an endless buffet of exotic culinary delights. (MTPB, 2012a, p. 33)

Unlike cuisine in West Malaysia, dining in Sabah and Sarawak offer adventurous and exotic cuisine or food items. There are quite a number of unique dishes and rare ingredients that can be found here (MTPB, May 2011).

The above sentence indicates the wide-range of ethnic groups found in Sabah and Sarawak is the main reason for the creation of exotic dishes. This seems misleading because Malaysia, in general, is well-known as being home to a wide-range of ethnic groups. Sabah and Sarawak are among the 13 states that form Malaysia as a nation. It is not surprising, therefore, that MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE only emphasises the idea of ‘Otherness’ in relation to specific regions such as Sabah and Sarawak. The use of ‘Otherness’ in this context can serve to create a sense of distinctiveness for the destination and encourage visitation. ‘Otherness’ in Malaysian cuisine that is associated with Sabah and Sarawak is seen through unique dishes and use of rare ingredients which differentiate them from the cuisine found in the states of West Malaysia. Furthermore, the use of the wording ‘diverse and colourful population’ does not necessarily carry the meaning of the exoticness of Malaysian cuisine. However, Sabah and Sarawak market themselves on the very unique cultures that they have, which make them difference from the rest of Malaysia.

Finally, the word ‘freshness’ acts as another value-added aspect of Malaysian cuisine which could possibly create a positive image in tourists’ minds. However, the way MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE describe freshness does not directly refer to or explain the local cuisine itself. Most of the words under this category, such as ‘fresh’, seem to focus on the freshness of cooking ingredients and methods rather than on the appearance or content of Malaysian cuisine. This is obvious in the following two sentences extracted from various marketing resources:

The appeal of Chinese food is due to its fresh ingredients… (MTPB, 2012a, p. 11)
In Malay cuisine fresh aromatic herbs and roots are used, some familiar, such as lemongrass, ginger, garlic, shallots, kaffir limes and chilies. (Retrieved from http://www.malaysianfood.net)

The above sentences mention that two of the three main ethnic groups, the Malay and Chinese, use fresh ingredients to prepare food. The word ‘fresh’ in the sentences is trying to inform tourists that Malaysian cuisine is healthy through its ingredients. In other words, no processed products or chemicals are added in preparing the foods; everything is made from scratch.

5.7 Conclusion

As mentioned in Chapter Two, marketing and branding are critical elements for a tourist destination when facing fierce competition and changes in tourists’ expectations (Ooi, 2004). Apart from communicating what can be offered, marketing and branding distinguish a tourist destination through the construction of a unique identity and the creation of a positive image in the minds of targeted tourists (Chiappa & Bregoli, 2012). The results of the chapter, driven by the content, semiotic and discourse analyses of relevant tourism marketing materials and websites, have contributed to a better understanding of how Malaysian cuisine is integrated into Malaysia’s destination marketing and promotion strategies.

The results show that Malaysian cuisine is predominantly represented through photographs showing ‘close-ups of meals’, ‘local fruit’ and ‘local ingredients’. Moreover, food-related activities, such as ‘culinary lessons’, ‘dining places’ and ‘dining practices’, further portray the identity of Malaysian food and cuisine. Clear images of the ingredients used in most Malaysian food and cuisine show tourists the types of food that they will encounter and experience during their travels. Regarding the textual analysis, specific words such as ‘spicy’, ‘hot’, ‘savoury’, and ‘tasty’ are repeatedly used in most of the Malaysian Government marketing collaterals, conveying ‘sensory appeal’. Similarly, there are a substantial number of words, such as delicious, mouth-watering and tempting, that are frequently applied to stimulate tourists’ desire to experience Malaysian cuisine while visiting the country. The aim of producing such images and descriptions is to create an awareness of Malaysian cuisine identity and to brand the tourist destination.

Overall analysis of the photographs also found that the Malaysian Government demonstrates the sensorial characteristics of Malaysian cuisine through ‘close-ups of
meals’, ‘local ingredients’ and ‘local fruits’ photographs. Photographs of local food are used to increase the visibility of Malaysia as a culinary tourist destination and also show the local community lifestyle, for example images of happy families sharing and enjoying food, and of a girl wearing a scarf and eating a bowl of hot noodle soup using chopsticks. Such photographs could encourage tourists to try the local cuisine, get closer to the local community, and thus enhance their travel experiences while in Malaysia.

These findings were further supported by the outcomes of the semiotic analysis. Multicultural and freshness themes consistently appeared in photographs of Malaysian cuisine throughout the entire data collected. Using a background of everyday eating places and a mix of people reflecting different ethnic groups were the most common strategies used by the Malaysian Government to incorporate Malaysia’s multicultural identity. The freshness theme was mainly conveyed through the ‘close-ups of meals’, ‘local ingredients’ and ‘local fruits’ photographs, in addition the photographs showing cooking activities also manifest the notion of freshness in Malaysian cuisine. However, both the multicultural and freshness themes were found to be less important in the majority of photographs printed in the food trail brochures.

The analysed texts in the marketing materials and websites provide an understanding on the roles that certain words that can play in influencing tourists to experience Malaysian cuisine. Even though there were inconsistencies in terms of writing style (i.e. between US and UK English), it was found that the words in the ‘sensory appeal’ and ‘creating desire’ categories are important in marketing Malaysian cuisine. Furthermore, the appearance of words such as ‘popular’, ‘famous’, ‘specialty’ and ‘favourite’ in the ‘recognition’ category can convey how certain types of local food are well recognised and available at certain places or venues in the country. However, it is less clear how photographs of indigenous ingredients and words under the ‘religious’ category promote Malaysian cuisine. The Malaysian Government may be able to improve marketing strategies by targeting the needs of different market segments. For example, tourists who have religious dietary requirements (e.g. Muslims, Hindus, Jews) could be given specific details about the foods available and served at a particular tourist destination. This could improve the effectiveness of marketing resources.

Finally, with regards to the discourse analysis undertaken, it was interesting to note that MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE paid more attention and detail to describing Malaysian cuisine. Several local foods were described in too much detail which caused confusion
and lead to incorrect information being provided. Furthermore, utilising complex terms not only led to confusion but also misinterpretation amongst the readers. As for the food trail brochures, the MTPB believes photographs were a more appropriate strategy to represent the idea of Malaysian cuisine. However, the majority of the photographs found in the food trail brochures failed to deliver the notion of Malaysia as a multicultural destination. This was not a main concern in the general marketing materials and official websites.
Chapter 6 – Case Study 1: MALAYSIAKITCHEN PROGRAMME

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines MalaysiaKitchen Programme (MKP) as a government initiative that was first introduced by the Malaysian Government through the MATRADE under MITI in 2006. Using MKP as the first case study provides a better understanding of the strategic marketing and promotion initiatives that have been developed by the Malaysian Government by exploring how Malaysian cuisine is promoted in an effort to attract tourists to the country. For the purposes of this case study a range of secondary archival documents, such as relevant MATRADE annual reports, Malaysian Plans and brochures, were examined and a number of in-depth interviews were undertaken with relevant stakeholders both in Australia and Malaysia. In addition, systematic observations and informal conversations were undertaken at selected Malaysian restaurants (those which are registered under MKP) and MKP food-related events in Sydney and Melbourne. The case study specifically addresses the second (RO2) and third (RO3) research objectives of the overall research project.

This chapter begins by first describing the course of MKP from 2006 to 2014 in Section 6.2. The discussion includes the aim and objectives of MKP and the establishment of marketing and promotion initiatives for Malaysian cuisine. Section 6.3 describes the roles of the principal stakeholders in MKP. Section 6.4 describes the process of determining and selecting local foods to represent Malaysian cuisine and how this cuisine differs from other destinations in Southeast Asia (SEA), particularly the neighbouring countries of Indonesia and Singapore. Section 6.5 presents the findings on how Malaysian cuisine has been represented in marketing and promotion activities. These findings are based on observations conducted in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia. Section 6.6 addresses the issues involved in organising MKP. Section 6.7 summarises the overall outcomes from the chapter.

6.2 An Overview of MalaysiaKitchen Programme 2006–2014

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry (MOA) is the government agency with the primary responsibility for the agricultural and food producing industries.
6.2.1 Contextual Background

*Agromas* (‘agro’ is a short form for agricultural products, whilst ‘mas’ means Malaysia) and *Olemas* (‘ole’ is a typical Malay Malaysian term for souvenir, whilst ‘mas’ means Malaysia) are the two brands of food products introduced by MOA in 1993 that are promoted by the Federal Agricultural and Marketing Authority (FAMA). This is part of MOA’s initiatives to promote Malaysian food products and at the same time encourage SMEs relating to food production and manufacturing. In addition, MKP has established a culinary diplomacy program, also known as ‘gastrodiploamcy’, to promote and encourage people to understand as well as eat Malaysian cuisine. According to Zhang (2015), both culinary diplomacy and gastrodiploamcy are used interchangeably, which means using cuisine (as a tool of public diplomacy) to create cross-cultural awareness and understanding of a place/destination’s food and cuisine. MKP was initially inspired by the success of ‘Thailand: Kitchen of the World’, which had been established by the Thai Government in 2002.

‘Thailand: Kitchen of the World’ is a ‘Global Thai’ program established by the Thai Government through their Department of Export Promotion, Commerce Ministry. ‘Thailand: Kitchen of the World’ aims to promote and build the country’s cuisine image through Thai restaurants worldwide. Thai restaurants are employed as a medium to export Thai food and products, including dining utensils, furniture and handmade products (Thailand: Kitchen of the World, 2015). Zhang (2015) observes that Global Thai was the first government-led gastrodiploamcy marketing initiative worldwide that intended to build the number of Thai restaurants around the world and encourage people to appreciate and eat Thai cuisine. The Thai Government was able to promote Thailand’s image internationally through its cuisine. As ‘Thailand: Kitchen of the World’ was seen to be a successful gastrodiploamcy program, the Malaysian Government developed MKP, which was originally known as ‘Malaysia: The Truly Asian Kitchen’. MKP is seen as a symbol of administration of Malaysia in which the Malaysian Government has the power to determine policy in relation to gastronomy and tourism. The NEP (i.e. the first national economic policy between 1970 and 1989) heavily emphasised ethnic unity and achieving a ‘fair’ socio-economic profile. Therefore, the Malaysian Government through the NDP (i.e. the second national policies between 1990 and 2009) has identified local cuisine as one of its ‘tools’ to achieve ethnic unity, balancing socio-economic distribution and to generate income which then boosts national economic growth. However, the extent to which local cuisine as a tool to achieve these ambitions is debatable and ethnic tensions
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

in particular remain. Both MKP and ‘Thailand: Kitchen of the World’ are examples of tourist destination marketing activities which have been planned and organised to create awareness about the culinary and tourism attractions available in a destination.

6.2.2 Aim and Functions of MKP

Through the MOA, MKP was initially proposed in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006–2010). The principal aim was to brand Malaysia as a multicultural country through its cuisine, by promoting local food products and Malaysian restaurants worldwide. Promotion of local food products would increase export activities. During its initial establishment, the MTPB acted as MKP’s promoter on behalf of the Malaysian Government. However, as will be discussed later, a transition from the MTPB to MKP Unit in MATRADE took place during late-2009. Collaboration with and cooperation from Malaysian restaurants abroad and foreign-owned restaurants serving Malaysian cuisine offered tangible experiences to educate people about Malaysian cuisine and, by extension, raise awareness of Malaysia internationally (MATRADE, 2015, July 11). Through MKP, the participating restaurants are promoted and featured: in relevant advertising and promotion collateral; on MKP portal; and through public relations initiatives, including participation in trade shows, cookery programs and other food-related events. MKP portal was developed as a social platform for people to virtually interact and share their ideas, comments, pictures or videos and to obtain information about Malaysian restaurants and cuisines. This provides an opportunity to market Malaysia as a tourist destination through cuisine awareness to a larger audience in just few seconds at a low cost (Jalis, 2013, November 1st).

As stated in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006–2010), by 2015 the Malaysian Government’s target is to have 8,000 Malaysian eateries worldwide by providing free business consultation (market surveys and business feasibility studies) and low interest financial support (e.g. MalaysiaKitchen Financing Facility or MKFF). This indirectly helps to attract tourists, increases agriculture exports and puts the country on the gourmet map. This figure is similar to the Thai Government’s 2003 target for Thai restaurants. In 2002 there were 5,500 Thai restaurants operating worldwide (The Economist, 2002, February 21); however, through the Global Thai campaign, the Thai Government successfully achieved its target of 8,000 restaurants in 2003. However, in the case of MKP campaign, it was seen as a long-term Malaysian Government investment to market and brand
Malaysia through its cuisine, as well as to accomplish its target of having 8,000 Malaysian restaurants around the world.

To achieve the targeted number of Malaysian restaurants, a full package of incentives (e.g. free consultation to set up new restaurant businesses overseas, financing support, marketing and promotion initiatives, and up to 90 per cent financing at a 3 per cent interest rate) were offered to new entrepreneurs from the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank Malaysia to open restaurants abroad as long as 70 per cent of the company’s shares were Malaysian-owned (Loh, 2006). It was found this happened toward the end of NDP period (i.e. between 1990 and 2009). During this period, the amount of money that was allocated for tourism industry more than tripled (see Table 4.3 in Chapter Four). According to the current Minister of International Trade and Industry, Dato’ Sri Mustapa Mohamed, the main terms and conditions of the MKFF loan scheme are:

i) The equity condition owned by Malaysians citizens must be up to 70 per cent;

ii) Maximum repayment structure is 5 years including a 6-month grace period, plus a 3-month suspension;

iii) MKFF is open to any franchise from Malaysia; and

iv) No restrictions on the number of Malaysian dishes to be served at the Malaysian restaurants overseas (MATRADE, 2015).

MKFF, under the EXIM Bank, is managed by the Ministry of Finance.

Under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, MYR130 million ($43.09AUD million) was allocated by the federal government for MKP’s ten-year project (i.e. from 2006 until 2015). In addition, Malaysian embassies and MATRADE’s overseas offices assisted in sourcing raw materials (i.e. cooking ingredients) that require temporary import–export documentation and negotiation between representatives from two different countries via the MOA with transportation cooperation from MAS. MAS provided special air freight rates for raw food materials or manufactured food products (Loh, 2006). This is confirmed by MKP officer from MATRADE’s Melbourne office:

We still collaborate with MAS to help the Malaysian restaurant operators under MKP on special air freight rates for raw food ingredients. (#MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, 24 February 2014)
With the marketing and promotion initiatives conducted by MTPB, financing facilities controlled by EXIM Bank and the support of Malaysian restaurants worldwide, MKP is seen as a platform to establish a cuisine identity and promote Malaysia as an international tourist destination. As such, the Fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, showed his support of MKP and announced the idea at the Ninth Malaysia Plan’s tabling at the end of 2005.

In the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006–2010), the Malaysian Government has planned and proposed the country to be a stop-centre (i.e. Halal hub) for the Malaysia Halal certification and the Halal products certification worldwide. This initiative is believed to help Malaysian Government to position Malaysia’s image as the international Halal hub for Halal trade. At the same time, it promotes Malaysia’s Islamic tourism. The introduction of Islam by Arab traders in the fifteenth century transformed the food beliefs and practises of Malay community life through the introduction of Halal food practices (Daud, 1989). In the context of Islamic laws, Halal means permissible food that signifies pure food, especially in relation to meat, processed food content and alcoholic beverages (Fischer, 2011, 2012, 2016). By incorporating and positioning Halal into local cuisine, more Muslim travellers were attracted to the country and Malaysia was recognised as the World’s Top Muslim-Friendly Destination in 2015 (MTPB, October 2015).

Beginning in 2006, this program was administrated by the National Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister’s Department. It was originally promoted with the words, ‘Malaysia: The Truly Asian Kitchen’. This slogan was chosen as a way of improving Malaysia’s image as a multicultural country which consists of the three main ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian (Loh, 2006). However, to what extent the slogan represents the nation entirely (particularly Indigenous and other groups) remains questionable, especially in regards to the position of the minority ethnic groups as part of Malaysian cuisine’s identity. According to MKP coordinator:

The slogan ‘Malaysia: The Truly Asian Kitchen’ is to tell people around the world that Malaysian cuisine emerged from different ethnic roots. There are Malay, Chinese and Indian dishes, plus creations over time which are a combination and blend of different elements [ingredients and cooking methods] of these different influences [ethnic groups]. As a result, tourists get the rich gastronomic experience when they travel through the entire Asian continent even if they travel only to
Malaysia to sample the broad range of dishes that are made available for them. (#MKP Coordinator, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, 17 April 2014)

The MOA was given the responsibility of developing a 10-year strategic plan for MKP. This is a long-term plan which requires continuous financial and non-financial support, as well as commitment from the Malaysian Government. In addition, the planning needed to consider the availability of raw materials and access to food supplies, marketing and promotional activities, access to the financing facilities and the support of private sector (i.e. Malaysian restaurants abroad). Moreover, MKP became the first Malaysian Government program to use a food marketing campaign to promote the country’s identity by using its cuisine to promote the country as an international tourist destination. For that reason, according to MKP Coordinator, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, three subsidiary companies, The *Malaysia Travel Business* (MTB), *Malaysia My Destination Sdn Bhd* and *Corporate Treasures and Travel Services Sdn Bhd*, under the *Pembangunan Pelancongan Nasional Sendirian Berhad* or *Pempena Sdn Bhd* were appointed to promote MKP initiative worldwide. The MTPB remains the DMO for Malaysia and it has incorporated MKP into its tourism marketing and promotion activities.

From December 2006 until December 2014, 376 Malaysian restaurants – 95.3 per cent short of the 8000 target – owned by Malaysian expatriates and Malaysian restaurant franchises were opened worldwide, covering markets in Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia including Australia and New Zealand. Continuous marketing and promotion activities were conducted by the MTPB. One of the innovative marketing strategies planned was for Malaysian restaurants associated with MKP to be used as information centres to promote Malaysia as an international tourist destination. To date, 724 restaurants have joined MKP, with 26.52 per cent or 192 restaurants operating across Australia. However, this total of 724 restaurants does not even achieve 10 per cent of the Malaysian Government's target of 8000 restaurants in 2015. This study found that failure to gain anywhere near the targeted number of restaurants was due to higher non-performing loans (NPLs) and the fact that the restaurant business plan developed by MKP

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6 *Pelancongan Nasional Sendirian Berhad* or *Pempena Sdn Bhd* is a private limited company subsidised by the Malaysian Government through the tourism ministry. In the Malaysian system of governance, subsidiary companies are known as Government-Linked Companies (GLCs). According to Khazanah Nasional (2015, April 15), an investment holding fund of the Malaysian Government, GLCs are 'companies that have a primary commercial objective and in which the Malaysian Government has a direct controlling stake. Controlling stake refers to the Government’s ability (not just percentage ownership) to appoint BOD [Board of Directors] members, senior management, make major decisions (e.g. contract awards, strategy, restructuring and financing, acquisitions and divestments etc.) for GLCs either directly or through GLICs [Government-Linked Investment Companies]'.
was not flexible (in that some well-established Malaysian cuisine franchise restaurants were not able to register or were not eligible for MKFF).

Twelve restaurants located in the Australian cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and the Gold Coast agreed to participate in this study. From the interviews conducted, none of the restaurant operators mentioned that their restaurant functioned as a kind of de facto tourism information centre. This was further confirmed through observation sessions held at their premises by ascertaining if there were any tourism-related promotional brochures or posters on display on the walls, dining tables or at the counter. As can be seen in Figure 6.1, there are no tourism posters on the walls promoting Malaysia and indeed there is little to nothing in their interior design that suggests ‘Malaysian-ness’.
The restaurant operators believed that the MTPB was responsible for providing tourism-related information to potential tourists. This belief was contradicted by the current Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Sri Mohammed Najib Abdul Razak, in an interview with the local English-medium newspaper, the *New Straits Times* on 4 November 2006 (Loh, 2006). Abdul Razak pointed out that MKP would help the agriculture and tourism sectors by increasing exports of local food products and raw ingredients and by increasing tourist arrivals. He said that restaurants would be used as centres to disseminate information on tourism and as bases to promote Malaysian cuisine brands, products and handicrafts. Using restaurants as de facto tourist information centres in marketing Malaysian cuisine within the context of destination marketing is quite an innovative strategy, which to date no other countries have done. Although it is an innovative strategy, however, it does not appear to be working. None of the restaurant owners interviewed marketed Malaysia as a tourist destination, nor did they appear to gain any support in regards to tourism posters or other marketing collateral to help them.

According to the Malay language newspaper *BERNAMA* (*Kerajaan harap jumlah restoran Malaysia luar negara cecah 8000*, 2007, April 18), from the tourism ministry’s point of view, the concept ‘from the farm to the table’ enables restaurants located overseas...
to become ‘the windows of Malaysia’\textsuperscript{7}. In other words, MKP, through its focus on Malaysian cuisine, is able to provide sensory experiences by providing Malaysian meals at the restaurants. This indirectly helps to spread knowledge about Malaysian culture and entices tourists to choose Malaysia as their holiday destination. However, the concept ‘farm to table’ denotes freshness (everything freshly grown and farmed). This could be a huge challenge to the Malaysian restaurants that operate overseas. According to BERNAMA (Kerajaan harap jumlah restoran Malaysia luarnegara cecah 8 000, 2007, April 18), the increase of 4.2 per cent in tourist arrivals from Japan from 2006 to 2007 (340 027 arrivals in 2000 and 350 213 in 2007) was partly due to the efforts of the MTPB in MKP campaign and the launch of the first Malaysian restaurant in Tokyo, Japan, by Malaysia’s Deputy Prime Minister at that time. However, the newspaper article does not provide any evidence to support this claim. Indeed, Yoshino (2010) found that one of the major reasons many Malaysian restaurants still struggled to expand worldwide and to sustain their businesses, especially in the Japanese market, was due to a lack of distinctive cuisine identity. This is not aligned with the original concept of establishing MKP, which was articulated by Abdul Razak.

As for the agricultural industry, the former agriculture minister, Dato’ Sri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade And Industry (MITI), saw MKP as a tool to stimulate food industries, especially SMEs, and encourage their productivity (MATRADE, 23 April 2010). Again, food industries focussed largely on processed food for the purpose of export, which contradicts the concept of ‘from the farm to the table’. The involvement of the public sector could encourage food industry operators and relevant stakeholders, both inside and outside the country, to collaborate. As pointed out by Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib Abdul Razak in the New Straits Times on November 2006, this approach integrates Malaysia’s agriculture and tourism goals (Loh, 2006). Looking at the opportunity for Malaysia to become a high income and well-established country through the integration of local cuisine and tourism, the ETP (i.e. the third national policy – between 2010 and 2020) continued the initiative. However, the focus was shifted from tourism (i.e. at the end of NDP) to food production and manufacturing (i.e. beginning of ETP). In other words, brand Malaysia was being established through the use of local cuisine. This idea could be realistic if there is a strong collaboration and continuous commitment from both the MOA and MOTAC. It is similar to the concept of regional food events and festivals held in several countries, such as Melbourne and Brisbane in

\textsuperscript{7} The original text was translated for the purposes of this study. The dari terus ke meja makan reads in English as ‘from the farm to the table’, whilst Jendela Malaysia means the ‘windows of Malaysia’
Australia, which have established the image of a place or destination. Abdul Razak said that the benefits to Malaysia may not be immediately tangible but they will manifest as improvements to Malaysia’s image and profile (Loh, 2006).

6.2.3 Changes in Policy

As previously mentioned, the transition from the MTPB to MATRADE to coordinate MKP (including marketing and promotion initiatives) took place in late 2009, after a meeting between the tourism minister, the Chief Executive Director of MTPB and the Minister of Trade to discuss the efficacy of MKP. The EPU decided to hand over MKP to MITI, and MATRADE took control of planning and managing the program because of suspicions regarding the amount of money spent showing minimum program outcomes. The Sun Daily (4 November 2008) reported that Dato’ Sri Azalina Othman Said (the Tourism Minister between May 2008 and April 2009) doubted MKP’s performance since its launch. The Minister further stated that MYR130 ($39.39AUD) million was allocated to MKP in 2006 but only MYR1.9 ($0.58AUD) million had been spent by October 2009. The Minister of Trade, Dato’ Sri Mustapa Mohamed, in his speech at MKP relaunch ceremony on 23 April 2010 in Kuala Lumpur mentioned that the Malaysian Government had conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of MKP since it was first introduced in 2006. Results showed that there was a need to strengthen the promotional activities and improve accessibility to MKP financing facility. Therefore, MATRADE, through MKP Unit, was mandated to coordinate this food marketing campaign. As one of the respondents said:

Actually, at the end of 2008 a meeting was held by the EPU, together with a consultant who had been appointed to assess the effectiveness of the MalaysiaKitchen Programme and it was reported that the performance was unsatisfactory especially the very low number of Malaysian restaurants recorded to participate in the campaign after three years of being introduced since 2006. (#MKP Senior Coordinator, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, 17 April 2014).

MATRADE (2015) acting as an import–export trade promotion agency believes there are great opportunities to expand trade in goods and commodities, including food products, Halal supplies, cooking equipment and appliances. In addition, MKP Unit, is responsible for monitoring the business performance of existing Malaysian restaurants registered under MKP, while at the same time encourages new restaurant businesses and coordinates them. It seems that the move from the MTPB to MATRADE has resulted in less focus on
marketing Malaysia as a tourist destination through its local cuisine. The MTPB not only lost the opportunity to promote Malaysian cuisine as part of tourism attractions through MKP but also limited its access to potential international tourists in some countries. A great deal of marketing and promotion initiatives were emphasised around food products, in particular readymade products which are available at supermarkets and food stores, for the purpose of export as well as awareness of Malaysian restaurant locations worldwide.

Since 2010, MKP has remained under the management and administration of MKP Unit. The two core benefits that are offered through MKP are: promotional support and financial facilities. The promotional activities are now more extensive than those employed between 2006 and 2008 to provide marketing and promotional assistance to MKP restaurant businesses, as well as to keep attracting Malaysian restaurants abroad to join MKP. There are four different marketing communication channels and support:

i) public relations through recipes and reviews by food bloggers and writers;

ii) free advertising space for the restaurateurs and food businesses in MKP’s official portal and related marketing collateral (i.e. for restaurant customers, food retailers, food bloggers, etc.);

iii) invitations for the restaurateurs and food businesses to participate at domestic and international food exhibition events; and

iv) updates on information about Malaysian food products in the local market.

According to MKP Senior Coordinator, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, food bloggers and writers are invited by MATRADE to MKP restaurants to taste-test food and promote the restaurant, as well as Malaysian cuisine more generally, in their blog spots. Apart from that, the free advertising space on MKP’s official portal and related marketing collateral provide opportunities for businesses to promote themselves at domestic and international food exhibition events, and get the latest information about the availability of Malaysian food in the market place. All these marketing and promotion initiatives can expand and enhance the image of Malaysian cuisine and increase people’s awareness about the presence of Malaysian restaurant businesses. This is similar to the marketing strategy that the Thai Government has been practicing since 2002 through its ‘Thailand: Kitchen of the World’ program (Zhang, 2015). The Malaysian Government tends to take part and sometimes sponsor small-scale food events, such as Flavours of Malaysia at the Grace Hotel in Sydney and as a partner of the Taste of Melbourne festival, unlike South Korea
and Peru which focus on major international events (Zhang, 2015). This has led to less impact of marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine to both the general public and potential tourists. From my observation and informal conversations at MKP’s food events both in Sydney and Melbourne, the majority of visitors (including tourists) were Asians from China, Japan and other countries. It shows that the awareness of Malaysian cuisine is largely among the Asian markets. Some of them were familiar with Malaysian cuisine, while others had no knowledge; they would like to taste-test the food to get some idea of Malaysian cuisine, which also could entice them to travel to Malaysia. Finally, collaboration with local and foreign media organisations is another important aspect of MKP to market and distribute information about Malaysia’s cuisine identity worldwide. MKP uses international broadcasters, such as the Asian Food Channel (AFC), Discovery Channel and CNN, to market and promote Malaysian cuisine (MATRADE, 2014).

Under the management of MATRADE, administrative work, the hiring of new team members and new marketing strategies all needed to be done quickly. This has placed pressure on MATRADE to develop appropriate marketing strategies within the remaining available budget (i.e. MYR128.1 or $38.82AUD million). MATRADE found that the first three years of MKP showed little progress between 2006 and 2008. As mentioned by one of the respondents:

MalaysiaKitchen Programme was basically taken over in 2009 and during the year we revised MKP. The budget was very limited and we had to use what was available at that time [in 2010]. (MKP Coordinator, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, 17 April 2014)

Immediate action was planned at that time to create awareness of MKP’s existence. Dato’ Sri Mustapa Mohamed, MITI launched the new MKP promotion in London in the UK with the aim of increasing international awareness of Malaysian cuisine and restaurants worldwide. He said that relaunching MKP in London could publicise Malaysian culture and heritage through its broad range of cooking styles and culinary traditions which would create a unique identity (MATRADE, 23 April 2010).

Creating a unique identity for Malaysia to position itself as a multicultural country could be challenging. For example, how distinctive is Malaysian food in comparison to its near neighbouring countries’ cuisines (i.e. Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand)? MKP invited local media partners and well-known British celebrity chefs such as Gordon Ramsey to collaborate on marketing and promotion activities. For example, Malaysian cuisine
cooking demonstrations were organised by Gordon Ramsey and a few Malaysian chefs, with coverage of the events appearing in local newspapers, television channels and food blog spots (MATRADE, 2011). Since then, MKP has been progressively marketed and promoted worldwide, particularly in the US and Europe. According to MATRADE’s 2010 annual report, in selected markets in Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand MKP is part of Malaysia’s destination branding through the promotion of restaurants serving Malaysian cuisine (MATRADE, 2011). This indicates the Malaysian Government is targeting specific markets (for example Asian markets in foreign countries) which have the greatest potential for Malaysian cuisine to be celebrated and accepted.

Apart from marketing and promotion initiatives, as mentioned earlier, MKFF was made available to any Malaysian restaurant overseas provided they fulfilled the minimum criteria. The EXIM Bank was appointed by the Ministry of Finance Malaysia (MOF) as the official MKP finance agency to disperse the allocations for restaurant businesses. As explained by one respondent:

The mandate given to EXIM Bank is to provide cross-border financing. So anything outside Malaysia falls to EXIM Bank. Because of EXIM Bank’s mandate – that’s why I think MOF decided to park the fund with the EXIM Bank. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

As previously mentioned, any Malaysian national, regardless of ethnicity, is welcome to apply to MKFF scheme and get approval for up to 90 per cent of the total cost to set up a restaurant business overseas at 3 per cent interest. EXIM Bank, together with MKP overseas offices and Malaysian embassies, evaluate the restaurant business proposals and gather relevant information from the respective country. This applies to new restaurant operators, whilst those already well-established who need to expand their restaurant businesses are financed according to their current financial strength and assets. The EXIM Bank conducts application assessments before giving any approval. This was further elaborated by a respondent:

MKFF is a special financing scheme of MOF that gives you a very low interest rate of three per cent. So we finance any restaurant operating overseas ... after assessment and also after liaising with all related departments for further assessment – for example the technical, risk department. Then, we track their expenditure with
suppliers and vendors because don’t want them to misuse the funds. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

For that reason, it is compulsory for the potential restaurant operators to submit a complete business plan via MKP unit, MATRADE. As described by MKFF officer, EXIM Bank:

For new applications we will look at the viability of that location whether it is workable or not to open a restaurant at that location. And also to give some feedback on how to operate a restaurant in that location because when we want to give financing to the restaurant, we want to ensure the terms that we have imposed are workable…That’s why the purpose of that visit is to cover all related matters not only location, we observe local people’s eating patterns and their culture. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

Additional benefits that can be gained by restaurant operators registering and operating their food businesses under MKP include obtaining Malaysian food products and other supplies at lower prices. The participating restaurants can get deals via Malaysian Government-approved suppliers. Abdul Razak also announced that existing restaurateurs could get tax incentives and grants to open outlets abroad (Loh, 2006). This was part of a strategy to attract more restaurant operators to venture into overseas markets. It was found that MKP is attractive because of the benefits for participating restaurants – not so much for benefits focusing on Malaysian cuisine. This is aligned with Zhang’s (2015) findings, which mention that the Malaysian Government, through MKP, offers better deals for corporatising memberships and franchisees.

After almost 10 years of implementing and marketing Malaysian cuisine throughout the world, MKP had attracted over 724 Malaysian restaurants to join the program (MATRADE, 2015). This figure represents nine per cent of the 8000 target set by the Malaysian Government and which was mentioned by Abdul Razak in 2006 at the introduction of MKP. This shows that the Malaysian Government has not come close to meeting its target. The key challenges of MKP are discussed in Section 6.6.

In addition to its efforts to promote Malaysian restaurant businesses, MATRADE also collaborates with other Malaysian Government agencies, private sector organisations and regional tourism and trade bodies to promote Malaysian cuisine as part of its branding
strategy for attracting international tourists. Further discussion on this collaboration can be found in the following section.

6.3 Identification of the Roles of MKP Stakeholders

The involvement of MKP in marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine as part of Malaysia’s international destination marketing strategies involves various stakeholders at multiple levels of policy and planning. This case study identifies the core stakeholder groups who actively participate in MKP and recognises their roles. This case study also examines the participation of the Malaysian Government through its agencies in planning and organising MKP. Thematic analysis conducted on related archival documents and interviews revealed the involvement of different stakeholders at three stages: i) processing, including planning and setting up businesses; ii) marketing and promotion, for the restaurant businesses and food products; and iii) monitoring the restaurant businesses’ progress and growth pattern of food products. The findings are tabulated in Table 6.1 and further explained in the following paragraphs.

Reiterating the argument made in Chapter Two, there is no single stakeholder model that is able to describe and explain the marketing and branding of an international tourist destination through the integration of its local cuisine. Nevertheless, as identified by Pike (2004, 2008), DMO responsible for promotion activities, a government ministry responsible for policy advice, and a private sector to operationalise the tourist ventures. In addition, DMOs act as negotiators between public sector tourism initiatives and private sector businesses (Gilmore, 2003). This is also the case in Malaysia. Developing attractions which encourage tourists to travel to Malaysia requires involvement from various stakeholders. MKP is one of key the government-led food marketing campaigns in Malaysia. In 2006 the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib Abdul Razak (who is currently the Prime Minister of Malaysia) stated that the government was only a facilitator in this program and it was up to the private sector and entrepreneurs to make it succeed (Loh, 2006).
Table 6.1: The involvement of stakeholders in MKP
(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Marketing &amp; Promotion</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Ministries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ministry of Finance (MOF)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Ministries</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry (MOA)</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC)</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Prime Minister Department</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) overseas offices</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Export-Import (EXIM) Bank</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) oversea offices</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Malaysia’s Embassies</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA)</td>
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<td>6. Department of Islamic Development Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Malaysia Investment Development Authority (MIDA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Local or Regional Authorities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant businesses, Event companies, Hotels, Airline companies, Media partners, Consultation companies and many others.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - Nat = National, Int = International

There are four groups of stakeholders involved in MKP:

i) The Malaysian Government – Core Ministries

The first group comprises the main drivers of MKP, the MOF and MITI. The MOF is responsible for funding MKP. The allocated funds are distributed to EXIM Bank (for financing Malaysian restaurants) and MATRADE (for marketing and promotion purposes). The supporting ministries are indirectly involved in MKP, given that agencies under their control are required through their core functions to support MKP’s operations.
ii) The Malaysian Government – Supporting Ministries

The second group comprises the MOA, MOTAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Prime Minister’s Department. The ministries ensure the agencies coordinate what has been planned by the core ministries and this was clearly mentioned by one of the respondents:

We do the implementation, meaning anything that comes from the top management of the ministry itself, we will implement. (#MKP Senior Coordinator, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, 17 April 2014).

At the same time, the ministries are also responsible for monitoring the performance of MKP program to make sure its targets can be achieved within the timeframes given. The involvement of the MFA through Malaysia’s embassies was found to be significant during the processing (i.e. planning and setting up the restaurant businesses) and marketing and promotion stages. In regards to processing the potential restaurant business applications for MKFF, one of the respondents mentioned that:

It is us who sometimes seek assistance from the Embassy of Malaysia [under the MFA] at that country just to check its existence. Because sometimes, Tourism Malaysia [MTPB office] is not there. So we ask the embassy to get the relevant data for us and visit the location (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014).

For marketing and promotion, one of the strategies used is for Malaysian embassies to serve informal meals to international countries’ leaders or government representatives. As described by Zhang (2015), this is commonly practised in gastrodiplomacy campaigns in many countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia and Japan, to improve formal state and country relations and to further diplomatic intimacy. Additionally, in another form of gastrodiplomacy, MATRADE has introduced the ‘MKP Food Ambassador’ also known as the Malaysia Food Ambassador initiative. Among criteria that have been set by MATRADE, the Ambassador must be a Malaysian citizen who is familiar with Malaysian cuisine, has been living and working in a particular place or country more than 10 years, is creative and innovative in marketing Malaysian cuisine, has a good rapport with local food and beverage industries or associations and, finally, is well connected with local media and communication channels. Professional and celebrity chefs in a particular place or country can be appointed as MKP Food Ambassador representing the Malaysian Government. The Malaysia Food Ambassador is responsible for planning and developing
creative marketing and promotional activities to promote and push the image of Malaysia using its local cuisine:

As for the Malaysia Food Ambassador, in the Australian market, MATRADE has appointed me, who can do cooking demonstrations to help talk about Malaysian food at any MKP food-related events. Actually, my first involvement with MKP was at the Good Food and Wine Show at Darling Harbour. Actually I was involved in Laneway Lounge of MKP, I have to cook food and serve it to the public. (#Malaysian Food Expert, Sydney, 18 February 2014)

Having a celebrity chef helps the government to get closer to the target audience and interact with supplier (Ljunggren, 2012; Moscardo, Minihan & O’Leary, 2015). Further examination of MFA initiatives under MKP is discussed in Section 5.4.

iii) The Malaysian Government Agencies

The third group consists of the agencies that plan, coordinate and monitor MKP worldwide. MATRADE acts as the leader to coordinate MKP and ensure the campaign’s success. MKP Unit is responsible for consulting with potential restaurant business operators to open their restaurants abroad, identifying and negotiating with local and international food industry operators (in this case largely the importers and exporters of the goods) and conducting market research. MKP Unit also has to identify and encourage Malaysian food companies and restaurants to participate in marketing and promotion initiatives at the international level. This sometimes involves Tourism Malaysia’s participation, especially in food events and exhibitions related to the tourism industry. In addition, MKP Unit works closely with EXIM Bank (in relation to the MKFF), the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA), the Islamic Development Department and Malaysian embassies.

As previously mentioned, EXIM Bank reviews applications from restaurant businesses and investigates the market and demand at the location. It also monitors restaurant operations to evaluate their performance. One of the reasons for this monitoring is to ensure the restaurant operators can survive and repay the loan given to them. According to one respondent:

We look at new applications in terms of the viability of that location and whether it is realistic to open a restaurant at that location. We also need to give some feedback on how to operate a restaurant in that location because when we finance a restaurant,
we want to ensure that we impose terms that are workable. We try to avoid imposing terms that the restaurant suddenly finds it cannot comply with … We do not want that to happen. The purpose of visiting locations is to not only to see the location, but also to see the eating patterns of local people and their culture (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

The EXIM Bank will usually direct Malaysian Government agencies’ overseas offices such as MATRADE, Tourism Malaysia and Malaysian consulates (or embassies) to gather information such as the demand for Malaysian cuisine in the local market, rules and regulations to set up a restaurant business in a particular location and the availability of ingredients. According to one respondent:

We do have to liaise with MATRADE and MTPB offices overseas just to check whether the information given is correct. We also verify that certain rules and regulations can be observed at the potential location. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

These agencies are also involved in reviewing and conducting small market studies for the EXIM Bank. This is to ensure that the restaurant business can survive and succeed. One of the respondents stated that:

We do the visit to take pictures, get feedback and obtain all sorts of relevant information about their outlets including the food prices and the customers who come to eat. We then monitor the situation after they get approval. We conduct observations together with MATRADE for the five-year tenure to see how their performance goes. We want to ensure we play our part in managing and providing the finance under the MalaysiaKitchen programme. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

Ongoing evaluation through regularly visiting Malaysian restaurants under MKP is also crucial for observing business performance. At the same time, the return on investment (ROI) needs to be assessed by MATRADE and EXIM Bank to inform the relevant ministries on MKP’s success each year.

In terms of raw materials and other goods, MATRADE liaises directly with FAMA or the agriculture section’s overseas offices to make arrangements if there are specific food ingredients that need official documentation before they can bring them into a particular foreign country. Other Malaysian Government agencies within the region – either the
Malaysian embassies or MTPB overseas offices – take responsibility if there is no MATRADE branch.

As for the Malaysia Investment Development Authority (MIDA), it plays a similar role with the other Malaysian Government agencies that have overseas offices. MIDA is contacted by EXIM Bank to collect and provide necessary data for potential Malaysian restaurant businesses. It also participates in marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine and contributes some financial support for food-related events. As one respondent put it:

> When you talked about agencies we work together in terms of sometimes it’s called by particularly we doing it for MIDA they will fold out the money. We do have the funding for different occasions, some we decided with the same objective we combine effort at the food events. (#MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, 24 February 2014).

Finally, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia is responsible for providing consultation on Halal food and monitoring Halal certification and food products. Although the Malaysian Government itself ensures every manufactured food product that is made in Malaysia displays the Halal logo for consumer convenience, it does not necessarily mean that it is compulsory for restaurants or food outlets, especially those that are overseas, to use Halal products. Most respondents believed that Halal is only meaningful in certain target markets, especially Muslim communities. However, a different view was given by one restaurant operator on the importance of Halal in restaurants:

> Twenty-five per cent of the world’s population is Muslim. The Muslim market is growing and in most Western countries access to Halal food is very limited and this is a problem for Muslims … So, we focus on this because there’s a large market. I believe there are two million Muslims in Australia8 … and if you look at Sydney which has a population of four million there are not many Halal certified restaurants. In fact, there are not many Malaysian restaurants that are Halal certified. (#Restaurant Manager 1, Sydney, 19 February 2014)

This respondent asserted that Halal certification is important for international tourists because:

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8 In 2011, Muslim was reported the third largest community in Australia with 2.2 per cent (i.e. equivalent to 476 290) of the total Australian population (University of South Australia, 2015)
It’s more on the trust thing; the moment we show the certification, especially certified by Halal Australia … we have a reputation that we have to maintain. I think it’s important especially in the city hotels. A lot of tourists visit here and stay here but there is no Halal food between here and the CBD, I mean there are but not easily accessed. So I think it is important. (#Restaurant Manager 1, Sydney, 19 February 2014)

This comment is echoed in Fischer’s (2012, 2016) study on countries which brand Halal for the global Muslim market. He found that displaying the Halal logo and certificate either on the food product label or on the food premises’ wall is seen as a form of trust, which acts as a communication tool in modern consumer cultures. Halal is, perhaps, part of the Malaysian Government’s marketing strategies for the country’s cuisine. While attending MKP food events food stalls were observed to display the Halal sign, communicating the message to their visitors (including tourists) that their food complied with Islamic law.

Another interesting response was received to the question regarding the importance of Halal in running restaurants under MKP. This was concerning the financial support provided by the Malaysian Government:

OK, I think as a financier, we are always concerned with repayment of the loan. We want to make sure that they are able to repay the loan. If we want to restrict our promoters [restaurant operators] to only those providing Halal, especially if they are running their business overseas, we don’t think they can survive. Because knowing the cultures of other countries which consume alcoholic beverages during and after dinner, so we can’t insist on this restriction. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

The above responses clearly show that Halal is only a concern in certain target markets. This is not to say that other target markets do not really care about Halal information. The reason for not enforcing Halal practices in Malaysian restaurants under MKP is also to give flexibility to food business operators to offer more menu items to meet local demand and to be more profitable and hopefully sustainable, so that there is a ROI for the Malaysian Government. The approach taken is a pragmatic one and there is willingness to compromise Muslim beliefs in order to maximise financial returns for commercial reasons. At the same time, it minimises the chances of the Malaysian Government losing
money from MKFF borrowers (i.e. the Malaysian restaurant operators) provided by EXIM Bank.

iv) The Private Sector

Even though the involvement of the Malaysian Government agencies in planning and monitoring is important, it is primarily to facilitate MKP – particularly the restaurants financed under the program. Findings of my study show that participants in the private sector are crucial to MKP’s success; that is, the private sector acts as the champion to materialise, operationalise and ensure the success of destination marketing strategies with interests in tourism development (Pike, 2004, 2008). In the context of MKP, industry players include: food producers, restaurant operators, event management companies, media partners, food ambassadors and other supporting organisations (e.g. the consultants and relevant regional authorities). Table 6.2 summarises the roles of private sector organisations in MKP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Sector</th>
<th>Roles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Suppliers Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food industries (importers and exporters)</td>
<td>- producing and supplying Malaysian-made goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant operators</td>
<td>- preparing and serving Malaysian dishes as well as friendly service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- serving as informal ‘Malaysian ambassadors’ to some extent; they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>represent Malaysia in other markets overseas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing and Promotion Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media partners</td>
<td>- disseminate and broadcast information about Malaysian cuisine as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MKP restaurants and food events to respective audiences using various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>media communication channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food ambassadors</td>
<td>- cooking demonstrators at any food-related events and exhibitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia Airlines System (MAS)</td>
<td>- transporting any raw materials that are not available in local areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for special food events and promotion activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- providing updates on Malaysian cuisine marketing and promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>activities in their inflight magazine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food bloggers</td>
<td>- review most recent marketing and promotion initiatives undertaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by relevant Malaysian Government agencies overseas and communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with specific groups about Malaysian cuisine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event organisers</td>
<td>- collaborate with Malaysian Government agencies and other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to organise food events and promotion activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private consulting companies</td>
<td>- conduct market research, liaise with local media and access other related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>marketing resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The local or regional authorities monitor Malaysian food or restaurant businesses within their geographic area. This includes making sure the businesses have the appropriate license and follow the regulations and policies in addition to certification and recognition (e.g. Halal certification and nomination for best local food outlet awards).
6.4 The Marketing and Promotional Initiatives Undertaken by MKP

In relation to MKP marketing and promotional initiatives, thematic analysis has been undertaken of the data gathered from interviews with relevant MKP stakeholders, the observations of food-related events attended (see Table 6.5) and marketing collateral collected from the food-related events. This analysis provides insights into the three different marketing communication channels that have been employed by MATRADE. They include public relations (media relations, food bloggers, food trucks, recipes and cooking demonstrations), advertising (MKP’s official website, relevant Malaysian Government agencies and private sector websites, and mobile applications) and related marketing collateral, and food-related events and exhibitions. MKP marketing and promotion initiatives varied during MTPB and MATRADE coordination.

During the period that MKP was coordinated by the MTPB (2006–2009), tourism was the core agenda of every marketing and promotion initiative. MATRADE (2010-2015), however, focuses on Malaysian cuisine to promote two industries (food and tourism). Moreover, under MATRADE’s control, the focus is more on participation in food-related events and exhibitions overseas and various public relations initiatives. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, attracting and encouraging potential food business operators to open and run restaurants abroad under MKP is one of the principal marketing objectives. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses or lost opportunities in this approach, such as the lack of marketing collateral available for restaurant owners to use in their restaurants and no provision of Malaysian ‘fact-packs’ that could provide information to restaurant owners to communicate with customers. Besides creating demand for Malaysian cuisine and serving as a platform to showcase local food and cuisine worldwide, MKP could attract various tourist market segments to Malaysia. However, this initiative is quite expensive and would require continuous support from the relevant tourism-related agencies on behalf of the Malaysian Government and private sector. This raises the question of what is the actual ROI and does this approach actually bring in more tourists to Malaysia?

As discussed previously, since July 2010 MATRADE has been entrusted to promote MKP. It was found in the analysis that the revised MKP’s aim had no specific focus on tourism. Instead, MKP’s new aim is to increase demand for Malaysian cuisine and food products by increasing the patronage of Malaysian restaurants operating overseas:
So as for what we actually do in the promotion exercise – we do an umbrella promotion so we do not promote any specific restaurant or type. We take a national stand. So we will promote, for example, *nasi lemak* so any restaurants which sell *nasi lemak* will get promoted instead of just promoting restaurants X and Y, we take a very national stand. (#MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, 24 February 2014)

During 2010 MATRADE focused on two major markets, London and New York, because these were cosmopolitan centres and known to be adventurous in trying new cuisine. Over 24 special promotional activities in these cities were planned and organised (see Table 6.3), including: media engagements, public relations activities, television food channel sponsorship, collaboration with celebrity chefs and other personalities, as well as developing and updating websites, microsites, social networking sites and marketing collateral (MATRADE, 2010, p. 128). Additionally, an MKP Portal was developed and over 500 restaurants serving Malaysian cuisine were identified and listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Asia</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>- Taste of Malaysia Reception, Tokyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republic of China</td>
<td>- MKP Awareness Program, Beijing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong SAR</td>
<td>- Participated in Agri Pro Asia 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participated in Hong Kong Food Expo 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participated in World SME Expo</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>- In conjunction with the Charity Workshop, Jakarta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>- MKP Awareness Program, Manila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>- Marketing Campaign, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>North America</td>
<td>- Launching MKP at the International Culinary Centre, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lucky Rice Festival, Manhattan Bridge Archway, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participation in Fashion Week Night Market, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- MKP Food Truck in Manhattan, Queens</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Taste of Malaysia, the Great Wall Supermarket, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Malaysia Restaurant Week, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Summer Fancy Food Show, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Participation in Los Angeles Night Market, California</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Chef Working Visit to Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Familiarisation Visit to Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Educational Chef Trip to Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>- Launching of MKP at Restaurant Villa Malaysia Lounge &amp; Grill, Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Online media promotion through Canadian Restaurant &amp; Food Services Association (CRFA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Europe  
- Restaurant Round Table Event, London  
- Prime Minister’s meeting with restaurant operators in London and Netherlands  
- Launching of Malaysia Kitchen Campaign 2010 at Jom Makan restaurant, London  
- Asia House Food Festival, London  
- Participated in Taste of London  
- Malaysia Kitchen Curry Fest, London  
- Promotion program at Selfridges  
- Participation in Night Market, Trafalgar Square, London  
- Launching of ‘Jom Makan’ (Let’s Eat) third outlet, Loughbrough University, London  
- Participated in London Restaurant Festival  
- Malaysian Banquet at Delima Restaurant  
- Participated in Regional Tour of Waitrose  
- Malaysian Banquet at Poet Bar  
- Collaboration with the Chef Association Malaysia, Malaysia Culinary Schools, MAS, Fried Chillies, Fire Fly, Air Asia and Collateral

Oceania  
- Promotional Program to Australia (Perth, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Canberra)  
- Malaysia Fest Festival, Sydney  
- Prime Minister’s visit to Sydney  
- Participation during Film Festival, Melbourne  
- Participation in Flavour of Malaysia Food Festival, Sydney  
- Awareness Program, Australia  
- Participated in 1Malaysia Best Carnival, Perth

New Zealand  
- Awareness Program, Auckland  
- Promotion in Wellington  
- Participated at the Taste of Auckland

In the following year (2011), in which the Tenth Malaysia Plan was introduced with new budgetary measures for the second half (2011–2015) of MKP project period, MATRADE developed a five-year marketing and promotional plan. This was under the third national policy (i.e. ETP) to transform Malaysia to become a high-income country by 2020. The first (2006–2010) and second (2011–2015) half of MKP marketing and promotional plan differed in terms of the integration of food into tourism industry and marketing initiatives. During the first half of MKP project period the MTPB had a strong focus on the role of food as part of tourism experiences and products in Malaysia but less attention towards attracting potential restaurant operators to open businesses overseas. With the coordination of MATRADE, extensive marketing and promotion initiatives were undertaken, such as highlighting reviews on Malaysian restaurants on food and drink websites, in blogs and establishing MKP Portal. Again, this could only be effective for a specific audience group, particularly those who have a high interest in exploring regional or local cuisine. Therefore, MATRADE carried out other promotion programs, including press familiarisation trips to Malaysia, organising or participating in food-related events,
television cooking programs, radio interviews with the Malaysian Food Ambassador, and organising the Malaysia Food Truck. According to one respondent:

The aim was to create higher visibility and intensify activities to encourage more people to participate in 2011. By doing these, people will get closer and have a clear understanding…not just by reading and looking at colourful images on our marketing brochures and posters…they get opportunity to see, smell and taste [sensory experiences] Malaysian cuisine. (#MKP Senior Coordinator, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, 17 April 2014)

Therefore, in 2012, the EPU and the Prime Minister agreed to the new tagline ‘bringing Malaysia into every home’. As described by the Senior Coordinator, MKP, MATRADE:

…‘bringing Malaysia into every home’ is a new tagline which [will be used in] the next phase of MKP (2013–2018) to market Malaysian cuisine by encouraging consumers worldwide to not only buy ready-to-eat Malaysian food products but also motivate them to buy ingredients and spices to try their hand at cooking Malaysian dishes at home. (#MKP Senior Coordinator, MATRADE, 17 April 2014).

Unlike 2010 and 2011, at the beginning of 2012 the focus of this marketing strategy shifted to Malaysia’s food products for export. The Malaysian Government adopted another marketing strategy by introducing Malaysia’s agricultural produce and food products as part of Malaysian cuisine identity knowledge.

In addition to the above, MATRADE has collaborated with foreign media partners and organised culinary tours as part of the promotional activities. One of the respondents stated that:

...we get celebrity chefs to do a Malaysian cuisine on TV or on a stage anything that creates vast ideas about Malaysian food so there’s a promotion. Under the promotion, there’s a lot of things that can be done, they can have been exercises where we bring journalists or travel journalists or culinary journalists back to Malaysia [and] put them on a food tour, bring them from up north to Penang, down south to Malacca, have them taste various food we have to offer and then, when they come back, they write an article which says this is good so that’s one form of promotion. (#MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, 24 February 2014).
In terms of benefits to the tourism industry, these activities provide exposure to foreign media partners to the existing leisure and tourism activities that are available in Malaysia. At the same time, writing and publishing about the excitement of travelling to Malaysia and getting the opportunity to taste Malaysian cuisine would provide more genuine information and be a more trustworthy source for tourists or readers. However, some readers might be a bit sceptical about the articles, as the authors would have visited Malaysia on a paid-for trip. As highlighted by another respondent:

I think it would certainly help in terms of raising people’s interest in Malaysian travel... Cooking Malaysian food enables people [audience] to see the sights and sounds of like having it being done in Malaysia itself, it’s always something to talk about. When you produce a TV show or take me to a ride. The reasons people travel really is not genuinely, there are some aspiration or X factor they want to see beautiful scenery they want to absorb the sight and sound… (#Malaysian Food Expert, Sydney, 18 February 2014)

Giving travel incentives, such as vouchers or tickets to winners of relevant contests or competitions involving culinary experiences, was seen by MTPB as an alternative marketing and promotion initiative to market and promote Malaysian cuisine, at the same time being a push factor for tourists to travel to Malaysia and experience the local cuisine:

We also have initiatives where we give away free tickets or free vouchers for culinary experiences in Malaysia. This of course we incorporate with the tourism part. So they visit Malaysia, they stay in a particular hotel and then we have them also take a particular food journey. (#MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, 24 February 2014)

Something similar to this also was used by the MTPB Sydney office at the end of 2013. With strong collaboration from five Malaysian restaurants in Sydney and promotional support from MATRADE, a marketing initiative called Malaysian Cuisine Food Trail in Sydney was launched. The Malaysian Cuisine Food Trail in Sydney booklet was given to the restaurants’ guests and it must be brought to all five restaurants to get their official stamps. Once all completed, the booklet was dropped in a collection box located at the restaurant entrance or cashier counter. A winner was selected by drawing from the pooled entry forms, receiving two flight tickets to Malaysia and discounted accommodation, as well as food vouchers for during their stay. Although this is considered to be a pro-active initiative to associate Malaysian cuisine and the tourism industry it focused on small
audience – five Malaysian restaurants in Sydney – and thus has limited access to target markets from other regions or states.

6.4.1 Assessing the Success of MKP

Drawing from the various promotional activities undertaken by MATRADE with cooperation from a number of stakeholders, this case study also sought to understand the relative success of MKP. Data gathered through interviews and informal conversations with relevant stakeholders identified that Malaysian Government agencies (in this case MKP Unit and EXIM Bank) are responsible for presenting the outcomes to the MOF annually regarding the allocations and the ROI. MATRADE has taken the initiative to hire a research consultant to study MKP’s performance in 2010. As mentioned by one of the respondents, the research consultant is responsible for:

…study[ing] the acceptance rate of people through the media channels and publications including published articles, the activities, the activities organised by us and then an analytical [by counting the visit rate and observing comments from the reviewers] website where we already have the MalaysiaKitchen portal. (#MKP Coordinator, MATRADE, 17 April 2014).

Furthermore, MKP Coordinator in MATRADE mentioned that social media, and visitor (including tourist) and consumer surveys were used to investigate MKP’s success. This was measured by analysing the numbers of visitors to social media portals and their feedback based on the promotional activities that they attended. Consumer and visitor surveys were conducted at MKP food events and exhibitions, including the number of food products sold and how much money participants or exhibitors earned. Unfortunately, I was not given access to any of the data collected and, according to MKP Senior Coordinator, the data were kept confidential for relevant government authorities’ reference only. Nevertheless, the success of MKP can be assessed by analysing other people’s opinions (i.e. interview participants and exhibitors at the food-related events).

Four of the respondents stated that the way they viewed the success of the marketing and promotion of Malaysian cuisine through MKP, especially in the food-related events, was based on the number of visitors attending the events and their feedback. One of the respondents said:

Success is being measured by the number of people coming in, but the long line-up of people trying the food really shows they like the event. The number of people,
how people are attending, and feedback from all of the people who actually promote their food, sell their food… (#Director of Education Malaysia Australia, Sydney, 20 February 2014)

From EXIM Bank’s perspective, MKP’s success is measured by looking at the restaurant businesses’ performing and non-performing loans. This is important, especially when support involves business loans from the Malaysian Government. According to the MKFF officer, EXIM Bank, until mid-2014, almost 50 per cent of Malaysian restaurants were reported to be in the non-performing loan group; that is, they were unable to pay their loan provided by EXIM Bank through the MKFF. This appears to be due to the lack of promotion efforts and limited information, as well as access to MKFF during the early stages of MKP in 2006 (MATRADE, 2010). However, in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011–2015), EXIM Bank imposed new regulations, including that potential restaurant operators must have five years of food business experience (three years in Malaysia and two years overseas) and 30 per cent of the loan amount was secured to cover relevant processing and legal costs.

Private sector organisations appear to assess MKP’s success by looking at business performance and income. Besides counting the number of food products sold at MKP’s food events and exhibitions, increased demand for a company’s product and restaurant patronage are seen as indicators of MKP’s success. The more people, including tourists, coming to the food events and restaurants, the better business will be for the private sector. This shows that the private sector, within the context of MKP, is more profit-oriented, concerned primarily with their business growth and performance, with a lack of interest regarding making people understand Malaysian cuisine. Therefore, to the private sector, achieving their sales volume targets and building a positive organisational image (i.e. good service and food) are the most crucial aspects, rather than customers understanding Malaysian cuisine. In other words, if the visitors and restaurant customers (including tourists) are satisfied, they will be more likely to return. Similarly, in the context of tourism, tourists might be interested to come back to Malaysia to taste Malaysian cuisine.

In addition, recognition is seen as a sign of success for marketing Malaysia through its cuisine. As mentioned by one restaurant manager in Sydney:

Malaysian food experts speak up in terms of its recognition and…recently the Malaysian food is coming quite popular and you have a few of the celebrity chef
Celebrity chefs were seen as the most influential speakers to speak and educate about Malaysian cuisine through MKP marketing initiatives. They often appear in food-related events and cooking shows or talks (either on the television or radio). The MATRADE officer in Melbourne further added that:

We believe by doing these [i.e. participating in food-related activities and cooking shows] it doesn’t just help us to promote Malaysian cuisine as part of Malaysia’s tourism attraction but also we notice there is demand from the audience to learn and understand about Malaysian cuisine. That is why recently the Malaysian celebrity chefs often get the opportunity and invitations from media companies to be on TV. (#MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, 24 February 2014).

Using celebrity chefs or food experts as speakers to represent a tourist destination is a common strategy in promoting and educating people about local cuisine. Furthermore, as mentioned by MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, demand from the audience to watch (or repeat watch) Malaysian cuisine cooking shows clearly indicates people’s awareness of the cuisine.

6.5 Malaysian Cuisine Represented in Relevant MKP Marketing and Promotion Activities

This section discusses the local foods selected to represent Malaysian cuisine in MKP’s marketing and promotion activities. The findings are based on interviews with various stakeholders, and observations of three food events and seven Malaysian restaurants in Sydney and Melbourne between October 2013 and February 2014. In addition, interviews with several stakeholders, including representatives of Malaysian Government agencies at their headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, were also used to provide insights into the selection process.

6.5.1 Identification of Local Food

There was a constant pattern found in stakeholders’ responses regardless of whether they were from the Malaysian Government or the private sector; they all reported that six dishes were identified to be used in MKP to represent Malaysian cuisine. Further analysis and discussion on these six dishes can be found in Section 6.5.2. These six dishes were
the result of a ‘brainstorming’ session in 2010 comprising MATRADE board of directors and EPU representatives. The six dishes were:

...satay, roti canai, nasi lemak, kari laksa, mee goreng, rendang…like that la…

The first MKP we launched we’ve tried to highlight these signature dishes. (#MKP Coordinator, MATRADE, 17 April 2014)

…certain menus that fall under the MalaysiaKitchen Programme menu such as nasi lemak, mee goreng, laksa… (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

A signature dish refers to a recipe or specific food that identifies a place or individual. In tourism marketing terms, this is known as a tool for branding to create tourist destination images. There is no clear understanding of the concept of a signature dish; however, many scholars argue over the concept of national dishes (Appadurai, 1988), heritage cuisine (Metro-Roland, 2013; Timothy, 2015) and iconic cuisines (Everett, 2015). Regardless of whether it is a national, heritage or iconic cuisine, these dishes, or more appropriately food that speak about a place or lifestyle of a people or ethnic group. Using a signature dish to represent a tourist destination can be used as a branding strategy to appeal to target audiences. More than merely creating a desire among targeted audiences to taste a particular food, a signature dish includes creating and developing the perceptions and images of a particular tourist destination in tourists’ minds. Usually, a specific food or dish is chosen and highlighted in tourism marketing collateral and activities to represent a place or region (Forchot, 2003). For example, gazpacho (i.e. a cold tomato-based soup blended together with raw vegetables) synonymises the Andalusian community in Southern Spain, while Tomyam is another example of a signature dish that represents Thailand. The selection process and decisions surrounding signature dishes involve numerous stakeholders of a particular tourist destination. This notion aligns with Dinnie (2008) and Blichfeldt and Nicolaisen (2012) on the concept of nation branding. In the case of MKP, decisions were made only by selected stakeholders appointed by the Malaysian Government. Dinnie (2008) state that there are numerous powerful stakeholders interested in shaping the nation branding.

However, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, in an interview with the New Straits Times in November 2006, said ‘We want them [the restauranteurs] to be creative … We also will not be rigid about the menu as long as it is Malaysian cuisine and the restaurant has a Malaysian ambience’ (News Straits Times, 2006). Flexibility in restaurant menus was experienced before MATRADE took over MKP from MTPB in 2010. The decision
on the six signature dishes was made by a group of committees (i.e. CEO of MATRADE, EPU, a private consultant and a few senior executives of MATRADE) appointed by the Malaysian Government to review MKP’s performance over the four years since its launch in 2006. Unfortunately, the specific criteria that they used to establish the signature dishes remain unknown, as some of those involved were transferred to different departments and some retired. Additionally, during the interview sessions with MKP Coordinators and Officers they were unable to explicitly explain the selection criteria and process because they were not in their current position when the decisions were made. I tried to obtain access to individuals who were involved in these discussions but was unsuccessful. Alternatively, I requested relevant documents such as minutes of such meetings and reports. MKP Coordinators, MATRADE Kuala Lumpur, were only able to provide me with the Minister of International Trade and Industry’s speech given during MKP relaunch; however, the specific criteria that they used to establish the signature dishes were not mentioned.

In regards to the six signature dishes, another respondent stated that:

There is no definite list but we will screen it just to ensure that reflects the Malaysian culture and identity. (#MKP Officer, MATRADE Melbourne office, 24 February 2014).

We just want them [the restaurants] to display Malaysian ambience … As long as they present a Malaysian theme that’s okay to us. For example, their trading name needs to represent Malaysia – for example Mahsuri Satay. Mahsuri is a typical Malaysian name. And then the décor should use traditional or cultural props such as congkak⁹, wau¹⁰ – something that represents Malaysia. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

The first quote contradicts what had been explained by MKP Coordinator and Senior Coordinator, MATRADE in Kuala Lumpur. The process of selecting six signature dishes was established in 2010 under the administration of MATRADE through MKP Unit. The second statement, made by the MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, only emphasises the ambience that represents truly Malaysian cuisine – the dishes or food. From these two quotes it could be argued that the role of signature dishes is seen as less important in marketing and promoting Malaysia as a tourist destination.

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⁹ Congkak is a traditional game.
¹⁰ Wau is a type of kite which is popular in Terengganu (one of east coast states in West Malaysia).
Private sector organisations, including Malaysian restaurant operators and event organisers, must follow the guidelines of the six signature dishes that have been chosen by the Malaysian Government agencies:

We stated in our letter to every restaurant operator that they ‘must’ sell at least sell one signature dish that can represent Malaysia. (#Event Organiser 3, Melbourne, 7 July 2014)

Yes, the event organiser stated in the invitation letter that we need to prepare and sell at least one Malaysian dish speciality at the event. (#Restaurant Manager 8, Melbourne, 26 February 2014)

However, most of the restaurant operators interviewed mentioned that there is flexibility either to sell any of the six dishes or at least some of them (see Table 6.4). This is especially relevant to locations that have difficulty accessing ingredients. At the same time, their business depends on what is in demand at the location. Nevertheless, event organisers mentioned that they needed to select signature dishes as the main attraction, and restaurant operators are also required to do so. Sponsorship is tied to them using at least some of the signature dishes; otherwise the Malaysian Government agencies would have no interest in sponsoring the events.

Table 6.4: Analysis of menu items in the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne restaurants
(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nasi lemak</th>
<th>Roti canai</th>
<th>Laksa</th>
<th>Rendang</th>
<th>Satay</th>
<th>Mee goreng</th>
<th>Other Malaysian dishes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 9</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 10</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 11</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant 12</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5.2 Malaysian Cuisine at MKP’s Food-Related Events and Restaurants

This sub-section further discusses MKP’s restaurants and food event marketing and promotion activities. The six signature dishes, as described in the previous section, were
used in analysing the specific food that represents Malaysian cuisine by looking at meals displayed on the restaurants’ menu cards and at the food-related events.

i) MKP’s restaurants

Although there are no restrictions on using MKP as a restaurant brand, it is important for every Malaysian restaurant registered under MKP to offer a range of Malaysian foods. Analysis of interviews and observations at 12 Malaysian restaurants registered under MKP revealed that all of them were offering similar Malaysian dishes to represent the country’s cuisine. The outcomes are shown in Table 6.4. There were other selected Malaysian delicacies (karipap, rojak and nasi ayam) including desserts (bubur pulut hitam and pisang goreng or banana fritters) on the restaurant menus. Additionally, there were other food items offered on every restaurants’ menu card which varied from one restaurant to another.

With regards to food presentation, it was found that the ways in which food was presented and served to the restaurants’ customers were simple (i.e. typical Western-style plating with fresh salad for garnishing). From my observation, the dishes were modified to suit Western palates and styles. As mentioned earlier, in Malaysia nasi lemak, for example, is wrapped in banana leaves in pyramid shape together with all the condiments (fresh cucumber, chili paste, fried anchovies and hard-boiled egg). However, at an MKP restaurant in Australia, nasi lemak was served with a colourful combination of condiments plus an additional meat item, such as beef rendang or fried chicken (Figure 6.2). Gisslen (2014) notes that the style of each food item and the art of preparation are the most important aspects in making end products appealing and well presented. From my observation, the majority of Malaysian restaurants in Australia plate and style the food to capture local audiences/markets.

However, it is interesting to find that the banana leaf (as the serving base for some curries) did not feature at any of these restaurants or events, especially to wrap dishes. Most of the dishes were made and served on white plates or packed in white coloured boxes which resembled a more typical Chinese takeaway.
The taste of the dishes was modified to varying degrees to be less hot and spicy to suit local tastes. This was mentioned by one of the restaurant operators:

We like to serve our Malaysian food here, but then the Aussie or the foreigner may not be able to eat anything a bit hot. So we use cream, we use bread – you have to be able to find a formula that can attract them, that can give them a bit of choice … They may come once, twice but that’s it. So you must be able to understand your market and give them diversity. They like curry but tell them this is mild curry and this is hot curry… (#Restaurant Manager 2, Sydney, 19 February 2014)

You must be able give that fusion, it must be good *rendang* and they must be able to find something like a gravy or maybe a salad that is acceptable to them. So you must have that image, you must have *rendang* and that fusion. *Rendang*, salad and a little bit of rice, you cannot promote the way that Malaysian do rice and *rendang*. It may work in Malaysia but it will not work in Australia, because Australians are so conscious in terms of food intake. They are particular about their fibre… (#Restaurant Manager 6, Melbourne, 26 February 2014)
Three respondents said that the decision to modify foods to suit local settings is not just due to local demand but also because of access to ingredients, premises rules and regulations set by local authorities, and limited cooking equipment. Some basic ingredients were dried, canned or frozen, such as canned and powdered coconut milk which they believed was not the same quality as that found in Malaysia. Furthermore, using fresh ingredients increases operating costs. These are the reasons restaurant operators offer Malaysian food in a form that is cost effective and at the same time attractive and locally accepted. Nevertheless, one of the respondents believed that Australians, in general, have a basic idea of the nature of the cuisine in some regions in Malaysia, such as Penang laksa for Penang. Penang Island was among the first tourist attractions in Malaysia and the majority of the tourist market was derived from the Oceania region. The popularity of television shows and print articles on the culinary specialities of specific regions or ethnic groups was also noted. In addition, the basic knowledge and understanding about Malaysian cuisine that people have learnt from these sources helps them to have a pre-conceived idea about Malaysian cuisine characteristics. For that reason, one of the respondents stated that:

So now, with Malaysian food, we cannot fool the customers like we did when I first came here in 1981. Nowadays, satay can be fried, but white people already know by now, the original style of cooking satay is to grill it (#MKP Restaurant Manager 3, Sydney, 19 February 2014).

Besides the physical features of the Malaysian dishes served at the restaurants, the results of this study also found that the culinary experiences of live cooking demonstrations (e.g. spreading the roti canai) is considered to be part of the Malaysian cuisine identity. During observations and informal conversations conducted at participating restaurants, it was found that some of the restaurants’ customers mentioned that they really enjoyed cooking demonstrations, which made them keen to try the food (as they believed the food was freshly made). These demonstrations were found in two Malaysian restaurants which followed the open kitchen concept (i.e. the setup of kitchen is more visible for the customers to see how the food is prepared and to watch the unique skills used to prepare the food). As for other restaurants, pictures of the chef preparing food and common traditional cooking equipment were displayed on the walls.
ii) MKP’s food events

From the three annual food-related events involving MKP restaurants and MATRADE examined for this study, Malaysian cuisine was consistent in terms of the theme and delivery of food identity through specific dishes. In other words, specific dishes such as nasi lemak, satay and roti canai were employed and emphasised at the events to attract people and at the same time educate them about Malaysian cuisine. Furthermore, the involvement of various stakeholders, as identified by Pike (2004, 2008), including partnerships between public and private sectors – particularly restaurant operators and Malaysian Government agencies – were amongst the reasons for the success of the events. A background summary of the events is presented in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Summary of MKP’s food events
(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Main Malaysian Dishes</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
<th>Number of Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian Festival</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>i) 17 restaurants ii) 3 food products vendors iii) 1 textile vendor</td>
<td>Nasi lemak, roti canai, satay, laksa and char kuey teow</td>
<td>i) Cultural performance ii) Cooking demonstration iii) Contest – lucky draw</td>
<td>28000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MFest)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavour of Malaysia</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>7 days</td>
<td>i) 2 hotels</td>
<td>Roti canai, nasi ayam, rojak, char kuey teow</td>
<td>i) Cultural performance ii) Cooking demonstration iii) Contest – lucky draw and holiday package</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>i) 21 restaurants ii) 2 food products vendors iii) 1 textile vendor</td>
<td>Nasi lemak, roti canai, satay, laksa, char kuey teow</td>
<td>i) Cultural performance ii) Cooking demonstration iii) Contest – lucky draw, food competition</td>
<td>30000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was found that the concept of Malaysian cuisine at the events was based on a diverse food range which carries various characteristics (colour, taste and texture). Some of dishes had chilies to add a hot and spicy flavour. As can be seen from Table 5.4, several food specialities, such as nasi lemak, roti canai, satay, char kuey teow and laksa, were written and displayed on the menus and served at the restaurants and events to portray the identity of Malaysian cuisine. These food specialities indicate that there is a consistency of image and identity of Malaysian cuisine delivered through MKP’s food events.
internationally. In addition, the food vendors also sold the food products in the form of readymade (Figure 6.3) or premixed products for visitors to take home and prepare (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.3: Tourists and visitors observing readymade Malaysian food products (e.g. sambal ikan bilis – anchovies in chili paste for nasi lemak, laksa paste, etc.) at one of the food vendor stalls at MFest 2013, Sydney

Figure 6.4: Yuen Chun Sauce sold in bottle for making char kuey teow at one of the food vendor stalls at Malaysian Fiesta 2014, Melbourne
At the events there were lots of food-related activities for visitors. These included visual culinary experiences, such as spreading and making the *roti canai* (see Figure 6.5). These experiences complemented the excitement of Malaysian cuisine. Interestingly, some of the visitors said that these culinary experiences not only helped them better understand the meaning of Malaysian cuisine but also showed them that the food was fresh. Most of the food was prepared and served from scratch using fresh ingredients at the event’s location. The concept of cooking to order also conveyed the idea of freshness. For example, visitors had the opportunity to watch live while *char kuey teow* and *roti canai* were prepared and cooked.

![Figure 6.5: A chef spreading the roti canai dough at the Flavour of Malaysia 2013, Sydney](image)

Another marketing and promotion strategy was combining Malaysian cuisine and cultural performances (including traditional music). This showed how much the local cuisine was strongly linked to Malaysian cultural values and identity. Enjoying the food may have created a more meaningful experience for visitors when accompanied by the rhythm of traditional songs. Traditionally, Malaysian food brings people together to enjoy with friends and family members. It was observed that many visitors were seated in small groups and were scattered everywhere as they shared their meals while watching the cultural performances.
Interestingly, Malaysian cuisine is often associated with hot and spicy tastes, especially in marketing advertisements but, surprisingly, no warning signs were observed at any food stall stating that this may be the case. The research found that the Halal sign was emphasised the most. This information could easily be found on all of the Malaysian food commodities through a special Halal certification symbol appearing on every label.

MKP food events and associated tourism advertising material showcase Malaysia as a multicultural country through the association between food and ethnic groups as the core of Malaysia’s destination identity. Nevertheless, there were variations of Malaysian foods in every menu listed and displayed at each stall, particularly representing the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese and Indian). In addition, several food stalls offered specific Malaysian delicacies which were from Malaysian ethnic minorities, such as onde-onde (a colourful round shaped dessert which is made from glutinous rice flour and stuffed with palm sugar) from the Peranakan or BabaNyonya areas.

Overall, it could be argued that Malaysian cuisine was represented at the events by integrating three aspects: food, cultural performances and cooking activities. Malaysian cuisine, through its diverse food selection, was always an important element bringing people together (Jalis, 2013, November 1st). Cultural performances and activities have been used to promote Malaysian cuisine, making the marketing and promotional activities more meaningful and effective. However, the question remains as to whether these cultural activities help people, especially foreigners, to understand and differentiate Malaysian cuisine from that of other countries. Obviously, signature food or dishes that have been chosen to represent Malaysian cuisine are tangible in nature. They can be seen, touched and tasted, unlike cultural performances and symbolic ideas which are more intangible and often used by the Malaysian Government in food-related marketing and promotion initiatives.

6.6 Key Issues in Managing MKP

Looking at the systematic planning and success of marketing and promotion activities, it could be said that integrating Malaysian cuisine into international destination marketing strategies for Malaysia helps to brand the country and establish a specific identity. Promoting Malaysian cuisine through MKP, moreover, encourages the participation of stakeholders from various backgrounds to cooperate in a mission which benefits them as well as the country. Despite the success accomplished through MKP, there are issues which have reduced the effectiveness of this food marketing campaign.
One of these is the difficulty in encapsulating the concept of Malaysian cuisine and how to tell a story about it. This was the main reason most respondents were uncertain when asked for their perspectives. Furthermore, this uncertainty has caused confusion about whether the dishes being employed really represent Malaysian cuisine. Everett (2015) notes that, apart from promoting the cuisine that represents a tourist destination, it is important for the place planner and marketer to promote food that is in demand and appealing to the audience. Considering this point, the Malaysian Government, through relevant stakeholders such as event organisers and restaurant operators, utilise three strategies: i) distributing printed recipes, which are also available on tourism-related Malaysian Government websites; ii) cooking demonstrations by invited Malaysian food experts or celebrity chefs who prepare food in front of the audience while telling a story about the food; and iii) the restaurant operators and food retailers who sell Malaysian food as well as ready-made food products for visitors, including tourists, to take home. These three strategies were mentioned repeatedly by event organisers who participated in this study, for example:

We have invited around 16 Malaysian restaurants to set up food stall in Fiesta Malaysia 2014. Each restaurant sells different kind of famous Malaysian food such as nasi lemak, roti canai, and char kuey teow. They also need to bring their restaurants’ flyers that contain their business information and selected Malaysian food recipes. We also invited Poh, [Malaysian celebrity chef] to do a cooking demonstration and talk about Malaysian food to the visitors. Cuisine plays an important role in our culture and, also, we believe that Malaysian food would be a crowd puller for our event (#Event Organiser 3, Melbourne, 7 July 2016)

Second is the difficulty for MATRADE to make decisions about the campaign because the agencies and private sector organisations have different motivations for being involved in MKP, which leads to the need for flexibility in planning and organising MKP marketing and promotion activities. This is the case even though the Malaysian Government seems to be in control of the content and implementation of MKP. Thus, there is a tension to balance between market and government demands. This was illustrated in one of the statements from the respondents:

They cannot survive without us [Malaysian Government], you see of course you called them as food operators. If they want us to help, they have to follow what we expect from them. For example, I want this, this, this…so they have to plan, if they
are so blended and so Westernised, we would not call you because you do not represent us. You must understand it is not to say that they have no voice – they need to have a good relationship with government officials here. That should be the way, they shouldn’t be silenced, and nobody should work in silence. If they want to be different, yes they can, but we don’t want to do anything Australian [cuisine] because that is not a representation of Malaysia. (#Director of Education Malaysia Australia, Sydney 7, 20 February 2014).

From the event organisers’ perspectives, organising food-related events promoting Malaysian cuisine enables them to capture the local market’s attention and motivate them to come and taste Malaysian cuisine, while the restaurant operators believe joining MKP would help them in terms of free publicity and promoting their business.

However, it was found that an inefficient information flow between the event planners and the restaurant operators has been the reason for the communication gap between the government and private sector. Most of the planning involved the events committees and Malaysian Government agencies. The private sector, especially the restauranteurs, only received an invitation letter to participate as an event exhibitor. Again, the private sector is the driving force behind the success and failure of any marketing strategies (Wang, 2011). This has led to a misunderstanding by both the Malaysian Government and the private sector of the purpose of organising events to promote Malaysia as a tourist destination through its cuisine. The majority of the participants, especially the restaurant operators, participated because they believed that they could get more sales from food-selling activities at the events, rather than for embracing and harnessing Malaysian cuisine as a tool to market and promote the country.

The two major issues dealt with by the EXIM Bank were: i) the non-performing loans (NPLs) amongst the restaurant operators; and ii) attracting restaurant operators to join MKP. The issue with existing Malaysian restaurants that are well established within overseas countries was to match their standard operating procedures and management to the rules and regulations that have been predetermined and set by the Malaysian Government. For example, many of the successful chain-restaurant companies in Malaysia are not able to comply with the requirements set by the EXIM Bank to enable them to apply and get access to MKFF funding.
Most of the restaurant franchising companies are not willing to take risks because it will affect their brand if the business fails to survive:

We approached PappaRich\textsuperscript{11}, they refused to join us. Because it did not fit with their own business model. Some of them announce that they do not want to enter any contract with the government and that they have stable financial resources. They decided not to open any outlet overseas, because it’s too risky. If one outlet closed, it will affect their branding. (#MKFF Officer, EXIM Bank, 27 May 2014)

Finally, the findings indicate that there is tension between the event organisers and overseas restaurants regarding marketing Malaysian cuisine as part of Malaysia’s international destination marketing strategies. This tension is obvious in most of the findings from informal conversations with event visitors and restaurant customers who mentioned that their main reason for attending the event/restaurant was to enjoy the dishes. However, having some understanding and experience of Malaysian cuisine could perhaps assist them in planning and listing eating Malaysian food as one of their desired leisure and tourism activities when they are travelling in Malaysia.

6.7 Chapter Summary

MKP is an example of a government-led gastrodiplomacy food marketing campaign that was organised to promote and brand Malaysia overseas through its cuisine. Even though low ROI is seen as the greatest challenge for MKP, the Malaysian Government and its relevant agencies continuously commit to propel this initiative worldwide. It was found that the first half of this food marketing campaign (2006 - 2015) aimed to promote the diversification of a range of local cuisine products and experiences. In 2008, two years after the introduction of MKP, it was reported that MKP failed to achieve its goal due to management issue identified under the Tourism Ministry through MTPB (i.e. the DMO). However, MKP became a more successful food marketing campaign after MATRADE (i.e. under MITI or Trade Ministry) took over the management responsibilities since end of 2009. Today, MKP is an example of how the Malaysian Government’s involvement in food products and enterprises as well as food-related events has had a significant positive

\textsuperscript{11} Papparich is owned by Papparich Group since 2005. The first outlet was opened in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Currently, there are 21 Papparich restaurant outlets all over Australia. The first outlet was opened in 2012 at QV building in the Melbourne city centre. Papparich is own by a Malaysian chef which offer varieties of Malaysian dishes such as nasi lemak, roti canai, laksa, char kuey teow, etc.
impact on MKP’s modus operandi and content. In addition, tourism is seen as one of the important foci in MKP.

Through this case study, this chapter has addressed two aspects of the second (RO2) and third (RO3) research objectives of this study. Analysis of strategic marketing and promotion initiatives that have been developed by the Malaysian Government through the integration of local cuisine found that there were various marketing communications employed. Moreover, collaboration between the stakeholders also helps in expanding the scope of promotion activities through their official websites and printed marketing collateral. MKP Food Ambassador role – appointing a Malaysian (or Malaysian-born) chef celebrity – is another marketing strategy that has been used by MATRADE to represent the Malaysian Government and inform potential tourists about Malaysian cuisine. In addition, the Malaysian Government has incorporated cooking competitions and food-related contests to get the attention of local markets and motivate potential tourists to taste Malaysian cuisine and have a chance to win trip to Malaysia. This involved the cooperation and support of the respective tourism agencies, food and restaurant business operators, accommodation operators and transportation companies.

Regarding the process of identifying specific food or dishes to represent Malaysian cuisine, the findings show that it was controlled by the Malaysian Government. The decision was made by the appointed committees which consists of the various agencies from different Malaysian Government’s ministries. This has helped to answer the next question: how does the Malaysian Government differentiate its local cuisine from the offerings of other destinations in Southeast Asia? Nevertheless, findings revealed that using the local names of dishes (without translation into other languages), traditional cooking skills and cultural values are seen as effective ways to market and promote Malaysian cuisine. The influx of food products which are produced and made in Malaysian (both those that use Malaysian ingredients and those made in Malaysia), as well as those that carry Malaysian brands will help the effort to increase people’s awareness of Malaysian cuisine. In addition, Halal is another element highlighted in marketing Malaysian cuisine. Halal has been progressively promoted by the Malaysian Government, not only to position the country as a Muslim destination but also to capture a more diverse tourist market. However, this could be a big challenge for the Malaysian Government because neighbouring countries (i.e. Indonesia and Singapore) also use the same strategies in marketing their cuisines.
Findings from this case study also address several key issues that exist in regard to managing and implementing MKP. First, the communication gap between the planners (what was planned and aimed) and operators (how it was organised and achieved) has resulted in misunderstandings, thus disappointment has occurred. Second, leniency and flexibility given to the restaurant operators by the Malaysian Government has caused an issue with NPLs.

All in all, MKP is seen as a medium to brand the country through its local cuisine, mainly through the opening of restaurant businesses in overseas locations and the distribution of food products (i.e. import and export activities). Tourism only benefits from MKP when there is a crowd dining at a restaurant or attending a food-related events. It can also be argued that there is greater focus on promoting Malaysian cuisine for foodservice purposes and the food product industry than on attracting potential tourists to travel to Malaysia.
Chapter 7 – Case Study 2: CITRARASA

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the implementation of CitraRasa (formerly known as Fabulous Food 1Malaysia or FF1M), which was first introduced by the Malaysian Government through relevant agencies in 2009. Using CitraRasa as the second case study provides a better understanding of the strategic marketing and promotion initiatives that have been developed by the Malaysian Government, and enables this study to explore how Malaysian cuisine is promoted in an effort to attract tourists to the country. For the purpose of this analysis data were gathered from three different sources: relevant archival documents and marketing materials, interviews with relevant stakeholders and observation of CitraRasa events. The case study contributes to the second (RO2) and third (RO3) research objectives of this study.

This chapter begins by unpacking the background of CitraRasa from 2009 to 2014 in Section 7.2, explaining its aims and objectives as well as its marketing and promotion initiatives. This is followed by Section 7.3, which discusses the roles of stakeholders in CitraRasa. The marketing and promotional initiatives for CitraRasa, including the utilisation of various marketing communication strategies, are elaborated in Section 7.4, while Section 7.5 focuses on how Malaysian cuisine is represented in relevant CitraRasa marketing and promotion activities. The relevant key issues in managing the overall organisational aspects of CitraRasa are highlighted in Section 7.6. Finally, Section 7.7 concludes the chapter.

7.2 An Overview of CitraRasa 2009–2014

CitraRasa was the second food marketing campaign initiated by the Malaysian Government through the Ministry of Tourism and Culture or MOTAC (formerly known as the Ministry of Tourism). The name CitraRasa is derived from the combination of two Malay words: Citra, meaning imagery and diversification, and Rasa, meaning flavour. The idea behind this name is to show a multicultural identity that reflects the taste of Malaysian cuisine. First launched in 2009, with the aim of celebrating local cuisine specialities at a national level and encouraging Malaysian residents who are familiar with stories about local food and cuisine to share this knowledge amongst friends and relatives, CitraRasa was a food marketing campaign that organised food-related events both at
national and state level, aligning with the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006–2010) (Economic Planning Unit, 2015b, April 21). Therefore, CitraRasa provided an opportunity to promote Malaysia as a food destination within the country and also worldwide. Once again, similar to MKP discussed in Chapter Six, CitraRasa is an example of the utilisation of local cuisine in marketing Malaysia as an international tourist destination. However, one of the most difficult challenges in implementing and organising CitraRasa was attempting to reflect the multicultural identity of Malaysia through local cuisine. Nevertheless, the concept of 1Malaysia was being promoted by the Malaysian Government across all activities nationwide. CitraRasa was one of these tourism activities that followed the concept.

CitraRasa is an example of a tourism marketing campaign developed by the Malaysian Government and imposed on the industry and community through food-related events and activities. In line with Lovelock, Wirtz and Chatterjee’s (2004) concept of tourism marketing, CitraRasa as a food marketing campaign: i) provides the tourism and hospitality industry with more businesses opportunities, ii) encouraged tourists to travel to sample the cuisine, and iii) travel makes up a significant portion of the time and money spent in association with food and tourism experiences.

Telfer (2000) found that the Taste of Niagara generated positive outcomes for the Niagara region by forming strategic alliances among numerous food and tourism stakeholders which then strengthened the profile of the region’s cuisine. Similarly, the strategic alliances established between various stakeholders (e.g. food vendors, hotels, restaurants and chefs) to manage and organise CitraRasa resulted in positive outcomes for Malaysia (examined and discussed in Section 7.4). Food-related programs can also positively influence tourists’ buying behaviour to consume local cuisine by segmenting potential tourists and targeting them with specific marketing tactics (Okumus et al., 2007). CitraRasa also enables tourists to learn about Malaysian cuisine through food-related events and activities. This is aligned with Richards (2012) notion that food-related activities can be one of the ways to market and promote place.

In terms of stakeholder involvement in organising CitraRasa (see in Section 7.3), as aligned with Pike (2008), the MTPB is only responsible for promoting a tourist destination, the tourism ministry provides policy advice to Malaysian Government, and a private sector umbrella industry association that champions the causes of member organisations, with interests in tourism development. This assertion holds true when the
former Tourism Minister, Dato’ Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen said that CitraRasa was important for sharing the diversity of Malaysian cuisine and for supporting the culinary industry in the country (BERNAMA, 17 September 2009).

This food marketing campaign comprises three months of tourism- and food-related events and activities which are divided into three tiers or market segments: gourmet, casual and leisure, and traditional and cultural (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: The different tiers and events under Fabulous Food 1Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Gourmet Market</th>
<th>Casual and Leisure Market</th>
<th>Traditional and Cultural Market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event</strong></td>
<td>Malaysian International Gourmet Festival</td>
<td>ASEAN Heritage Food Trails (also recorded as a television program)</td>
<td>Streets and Restaurant Food Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Month</strong></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organiser</strong></td>
<td>AsiaReach Events Sdn Bhd</td>
<td>Chef Wan Sdn Bhd</td>
<td>Hawkers and traders’ associations in each state and territory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - Sdn Bhd = Sendirian Berhad (private limited)

As shown in Table 7.1, the gourmet market organised in October every year is focused on promoting hotel restaurants or, more appropriately, fine dining restaurants through the Malaysian International Gourmet Festival (MIGF). This event promotes Malaysian cuisine together with other international cuisines to foreign and local tourists who have a preference for premium dining experiences over street food. CitraRasa’s Project Manager stated that:

We’ve [MOTAC] been supporting the MIGF since early 2000. Based on our observation, we found that most high-income international tourists enjoyed tasting Malaysian food and they did not mind paying extra for high quality services and a fine dining atmosphere. (# Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

He further explained that:

Fine dining restaurant has always been a Western thing. With MIGF, it opened the door for Malaysia to embrace and showcase our cuisine which also can be prepared and presented at the same quality and standard to Western cuisine in restaurants that offer a fine dining concept. For example, we have Bunga Emas at Royale Chulan, Bukit Bintang in Kuala Lumpur. We don’t have many fine dining restaurants in Malaysia offering Malaysian cuisine as their specialty. We cannot invite other [other than fine dining restaurant] restaurants because MIGF is offering gourmet
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style and aiming at a high-income target market. We decided to invite several fine dining restaurants [foreign cuisine] including those attached to hotels to join MIGF. [It is] Not cost effective if we just rent a big hall and exclusive setup with VIPs just to experience and taste-test only two stalls. (# Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

Furthermore, it was found that premium restaurant patrons spent more money on fine dining to taste Malaysian cuisine than they did on street food; it is undeniable that street food is less expensive, whereas fine dining can be very expensive. Fine dining is another form of initiative by the Malaysian Government to lift the image of Malaysian cuisine to the next level. It is clearly spelled out in the statement by the MIGF’s event organisation (i.e. AsiaReach Events) director:

MIGF is more than just a food event. It is a platform for Malaysian cuisine to be renowned worldwide especially among the high-end target market. We found that many foreign tourists from the high-end target market get very excited to taste Malaysian cuisine, but for hygienic and status reasons they are not willing to buy from the street stalls. They don’t mind paying more for Malaysian cuisine at fine dining or any exclusive restaurants, if they have to do it (#Director of AsiaReach Events, 8 April 2014)

The second food event under CitraRasa’s ‘umbrella’ is the ASEAN Heritage Food Trail which is held during the month of November. This event specialises in promoting the eateries available at various food courts and franchise outlets located in big shopping malls. The ASEAN Heritage Food Trails illustrates a different type of food trail concept. As discussed in Chapter Two, food trails are used to promote local cuisine by combining food production and local tourism (Boyne et al., 2003; Anderson & Law, 2012). According to CitraRasa’s Project Manager, MOTAC, this could capture tourists’ attention and give them ideas about where to find food and what type of food that is available in those shopping malls. At the same time, this event, through live cooking demonstrations and food sampling, helps to build tourists’ confidence about the quality and authenticity of food served at those eateries. International or domestic tourists could spend more time and money not just shopping for personal items but also on food at participating restaurants and food products or supplies at supermarkets inside the shopping mall. The name of the event was chosen due to the broad range of food stalls and groceries that can be found in the same buildings. At first glance, this is a rather complicated marketing
message to promote Malaysian cuisine because it is promoting a number of ASEAN countries, not just Malaysia. However, this is seen as another Malaysian cuisine marketing initiative that helps to attract international tourists – especially those from ASEAN countries – given that food is one travel motivation factor, and helps them distinguish cuisines from different ASEAN countries. As described by CitraRasa’s project manager, MOTAC:

ASEAN Heritage Food Trails is organised by our celebrity chef [also known as the Malaysian Food Ambassador], Chef Wan. It is an ASEAN cuisine celebration for domestic and international tourists to learn more about the country’s culture through its cuisine. The event includes chefs from ASEAN countries who will share their knowledge and recipes on ASEAN dishes. This also provides an opportunity for us to highlight the uniqueness of Malaysian cuisine compared to other dishes from ASEAN countries. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

Although the concept that the ASEAN Heritage Food Trails is capable of influencing visitors (including tourists) to consume Malaysian cuisine, at the same time this event provides an opportunity for them to learn how to distinguish Malaysian cuisine from others. The only issue found was that offering other cuisines from within the ASEAN region could be an ineffective way of marketing and branding Malaysia’s local cuisine. A similar perspective has been mentioned by researchers in describing the uniqueness of food and wine at specific places or countries as compared to others (Richards, 2002; Wargenau & Che, 2006; Richards, 2012; Okumu et al., 2013). In addition, combining these food and culinary experience elements was designed to encourage more tourists to visit shopping malls to shop and learn about Malaysian cuisine. Again, it still remains questionable whether this event effectively markets Malaysian cuisine and differentiates its identity from other ASEAN countries’ cuisines.

Finally, the Street and Restaurant Food Festival is the third food event under CitraRasa banner. This event has been held annually in December since 2009 in every state and territory. Furthermore, the involvement of state governments through local councils was seen as crucial in organising CitraRasa particularly in relation to set up and location for the food event. It is organised by the federal and state restaurant associations which are appointed by MOTAC through CitraRasa’s project manager. The federal and state restaurant associations are contacted by the MOTAC Putrajaya (for federal restaurant associations) and MOTAC state offices (for state restaurant associations) to attend a
meeting. The chairman of every restaurant association is requested to bring a list of restaurants that have signed in and registered with them. It was found that every state restaurant association on the Peninsular Malaysia communicates well with each other in comparison to those in West Malaysia. This was repeatedly mentioned during interview sessions with directors or deputy directors of MOTAC state offices:

We received a letter to organise CitraRasa from the MOTAC Putrajaya [Head Office] at the beginning of every year. We started to call the state restaurant association for a meeting to discuss about CitraRasa organisation (#Director of MOTAC, Johor office, 18 November 2014)

Every year MOTAC Putrajaya office will send an official letter to MOTAC state offices nationwide to organise the Street and Restaurant Food Festival at the state level. We communicate and work together with the federal restaurant association and get their help to contact the state restaurant associations. The festival lasts for one month [December in every year]. We encourage every MOTAC state offices to try not to organise the festival on the same date. We want tourists either domestic or international to feel comfortable … they plan to experience the festival in every state. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

The chairman of a restaurant association in Negeri Sembilan confirmed this by saying:

As the chairman of this association in Negeri Sembilan, I remember we [Restaurants and Hawkers Association, Negeri Sembilan and MOTAC] have been working together organising CitraRasa since 2009. The festival [Street and Restaurant Food Festival] involved the entire Federation of Malaysia. The first year [2009], MOTAC Putrajaya contacted the Kuala Lumpur office. From there, Kuala Lumpur organised and approached us. We keep in touch with MOTAC state office Negeri Sembilan every year since then to organise the festival. (#Chairman of Restaurants and Hawkers Association, Negeri Sembilan, 14 May 2014)

The festival aims to promote the traditional and cultural aspects of Malaysian cuisine (i.e. experiencing Malaysian food culture and having an opportunity to get close to local people) through food experiences on local streets and in restaurants that are available in every state around the country. As discussed in Chapter Four, even though the division of power can clearly be seen between federal and state governments, the integration of local cuisine in destination marketing is seen as an example of shared power from both
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The changes in policies occurred when it was believed that some policies favoured one particular ethnic group.

Since 2009, CitraRasa, as has been discussed in Chapter Four, has been a component of the government-initiated tourism experiences that have been planned annually in the MTPB’s annual tourism calendar. As stated by the Director of Domestic Marketing Division, MTPB:

…usually the end of the year many tourists are in Malaysia because it is winter in their country so they like to be in Malaysia, and for other months we are already full with other programs so we focus on the end of the year to encourage domestic tourism as well as foreign tourists. (#Director of Domestic Marketing Division, MTPB, 14 April 2014)

Tourist arrivals between October and December coincide with food-related events and activities every year and they have been a reason for encouraging hoteliers to maximise their profit margins and sales by offering more than accommodation. The MIGF was one of the marketing initiatives initiated by the Malaysian Government to encourage tourists to attend dining experiences at various hotel restaurant outlets. MOTAC (the Tourism Ministry) combined Malaysian cuisine and shopping tourism as another marketing strategy through the ASEAN Heritage Food Trail. This was held in conjunction with the Year End Sales promotion, also known as the YES campaign. The YES campaign has taken place every year from November to the first week of January all over the country. The campaign aims to encourage tourists (both domestic and international) to shop while travelling. As mentioned by the Domestic Marketing Director of MTPB:

Malaysia receives more international tourist in every year especially from the end of September until January from all over the world. Malaysians [domestic tourists] are often busy travelling during this time because of school holiday and many people are trying to finish their annual leave. Looking at this, we [MTPB] want tourists, regardless international or domestic, to travel in Malaysia and spend more money. So we proposed MOTAC to combine CitraRasa with the YES campaign [which focuses on shopping]. Tourists not only spend money on clothes, bags and other stuff but also they can stop at any eatery outlets available to eat Malaysian specialities. (#Director of Domestic Marketing Division, MTPB, 14 April 2014)
The Streets and Restaurants Food Festival takes place at the beginning of November, and markets and promotes Malaysian cuisine as part of Malaysia’s destination experience. The Tourism Ministry organises these two major campaigns concurrently at the end of the year to attract more tourists and encourage them to spend more money and time in Malaysia. Tourists, both domestic and international, come to Malaysia not just for leisure and shopping but also, at some point in time, to take the opportunity to experience the diversity of Malaysian cuisine offered at various food outlets.

Another two initiatives that have been used by MOTAC in CitraRasa are the introduction of signature foods and the food trail concept. At the launching ceremony for CitraRasa (at that time known as FF1M) in September 2009, Dato’ Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen (former Malaysian Tourism Minister), made it clear that signature foods are iconic dishes which represent the country and are common and familiar amongst Malaysians (BERNAMA, 17 September 2009). Furthermore, the government hopes that the promotion of these iconic dishes will help to strengthen the identity of Malaysia as a multicultural society. This is aligned with Everett’s (2015) recent work, which discusses the interrelatedness between iconic cuisines, marketing and place promotion. She believes that an iconic food can be central to the creation of an identity of either an ethnic group or a place. Therefore, iconic foods could be a useful marketing tool to communicate information about a particular tourist destination. It helps to segment tourists and target them with specific marketing tools (Okumus et al., 2007), as well as raise the cuisine profile of a tourist destination.

The three foods chosen for CitraRasa campaign are based on the three major ethnic groups in the country. In other words, each of the three dishes has an affiliation with one of the three dominant ethnicities in Malaysia: Malay, Chinese and Indians. These signature dishes, as shown in Table 7.2, were promoted from 2009 to 2013 in CitraRasa campaigns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ethnic Groups</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Nasi Lemak,</td>
<td>Meat Bone</td>
<td>Laksa</td>
<td>Roti Canai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satay</td>
<td>Tea, Char</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Rendang</td>
<td>Kuey Teow</td>
<td>Nasi Beriani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Mee Rebus</td>
<td>Yong Tau</td>
<td>Rojak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Nasi Goreng</td>
<td>Foo</td>
<td>Sup Tulang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>Popiah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2009 (the first year of CitraRasa campaign), MOTAC chose dishes across all ethnic groups. As far as it could be determined, there were initially no systematic procedures or
mechanisms to choose which dishes represented what. CitraRasa’s project manager reflected that:

After the first year, we were planning CitraRasa [formerly known as FF1M] for 2010. We tried to think of the best way to pick and choose which food to represent which ethnic group in Malaysia. The tourism minister [Dato Seri Ng Yen Yen] at that time suggested using an online voting system using the FF1M websites. She further mentioned that it will give Malaysian citizens the opportunity to suggest and vote which food can be used to represent which ethnic group. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

The online voting system developed by MOTAC has showed some improvement in terms of food selection. It provides an opportunity for Malaysian citizens to nominate online and vote on the selection of the signature foods. Through this, it allows the nation to get involved and share their thoughts about the concept of Malaysian cuisine. Voting based on who favours what and what is popular is seen as being more democratic.

Most of the signature dishes are complete meals and the name remains in its language of origin – they are not translated to English. For example, nasi lemak, nasi ayam, nasi goreng and nasi beriani, are all common dishes and nasi (rice) is a staple food for Malaysians. The word that comes after nasi will usually indicate the kind of meal. It was clear that most foods representing Chinese Malaysians were named in the Chinese language. Nevertheless, the names of these foods are common and they are well-known among all Malaysians. In the same table, Table 7.2, there are three noodle-based dishes, mee rebus, laksa and char kuey teow which were also chosen as signature dishes to represent Malaysian cuisine. One of the questions that might be raised is ‘was laksa selected to represent Indian ethnicity or just as a dish that represented the nation as a whole?’ Laksa is a bowl of noodles served with fishy gravy and topped with fresh cucumber, hard-boiled eggs, fresh chili slices and lime. The name is derived from the noodle itself (i.e. laksa made from rice flour). The noodle is slightly thicker than rice vermicelli, which is widely consumed in Southeast Asia especially in Malaysia among the Chinese community (Nura, Kharidah, Jamilah & Roselina, 2011). Since the voting system developed through the FF1M portal (www.fabfood1malaysia.com) seems more democratic, laksa was probably not used to represent Indian ethnicity. Furthermore, signature dishes could change over time as they do everywhere (i.e. where things fall in and out of favour). During an interview with the Project Manager of CitraRasa they
explained that the selection of signature foods for the first year was carried out by a committee, which included the former tourism minister:

The former tourism minister [Dato’ Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen] gathered all directors from each division within MOTAC for a meeting to discuss the annual tourism activities for the year 2009. We [the directors from various division] have suggested the dish should reflect Malaysia as a multicultural country. The three dishes [nasi lemak, bak kuku tea and laksa] were suggested by Dato’ Seri [Dr Yen Yen] and agreed on by all of us. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

It seems that the decision was made by the majority of meeting members; however, the Tourism Minister had the power to decide on and control which dishes could be used to represent Malaysian cuisine. After receiving feedback from the general public in the first year, the signature food selection was improved by using an online voting system from 2010 through to 2013, via a portal (www.fabfood1malaysia.com) which was developed by MOTAC. However, the portal was blocked and deleted in mid-2013 after the general election:

The website no longer exists because the new tourism minister [Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz] believes that we can get MTPB [the DMO] to do marketing and promotion either printed or online. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

CitraRasa’s Project Manager stated that the former tourism minister believed that involving the public in the signature food selection process would help to build the nation’s trust in the tourism ministry in marketing the country as a multicultural tourist destination and would help ensure the success of CitraRasa. However, he advised that he had no record of any yearly reports of the voting process. The website enabled anyone to view photos and reports submitted by tourists, and to read their reviews and recommendations of local eateries in the various states of Malaysia. In addition, it provided updates for viewers on the latest information about CitraRasa. This illustrates that the use of information communication technology (ICT), through the development of the website/portal, was used as a destination marketing tool to promote Malaysian cuisine. Gruena, Osmonbekovb and Czaplewskia (2006) argue that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is able to spread relevant information, as a medium of knowledge exchange (customer-to-customer), across the world more effectively in less than a few
seconds at minimal cost. Maxwell PR (2014, November 17) reports that 40 per cent of people learn about food from websites, apps or blogs.

Once the campaign was rebranded as CitraRasa the MOTAC state offices were given full responsibility for its planning and organisation. This decision was made due to a review received from the Auditor General of Malaysia. The Third National Audit Report for the year 2013 found organisational weaknesses – not representing a multicultural identity and that the location chosen for the event was not suitable – in the planning and implementation of events to promote art, culture and heritage through events/activities aimed at upholding the 1Malaysia Concept.

In the National Audit Department report there were two comments made by the Auditor General of Malaysia, Tan Sri Dato’ Setia Haji Ambrin Buang, regarding management of the FF1M:

i) ‘The composition of event segments of the Fabulous Food 1Malaysia: Street and Restaurant Food Festival Event was not well balanced and not in line with the 1Malaysia Concept and could affect religious/multicultural ethnic sensitivities in Malaysia [Halal food serving]; and

ii) The management of events especially in choosing locations; the storage of event promotional items; the management of payments; safety management and maintenance after the events were not done appropriately’ (National Audit Department, 2014, p. 100)

The Auditor General of Malaysia found that most of the food events under the FF1M were located at eateries dominated by the Malaysian Chinese, such as Streets and Restaurants Food Festival at Jalan Alor in Kuala Lumpur. There was minimum involvement of the Malay, Indian and other ethnic groups. Furthermore, this raised the Halal issue, where non-Muslim ethnic group largely participated and catered food at the event. These weaknesses, despite the democratic, participatory nature of choosing signature foods from the three major ethnic groups, led to the rebranding of FF1M to be known as CitraRasa.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the concept of 1Malaysia had been introduced by the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, in April 2009. The core aspect of 1Malaysia was mutual respect between ethnic groups and receiving each other. Malaysians, regardless of ethnic background, must be united. This concept
also underpins the entire country’s administration system (both federal and state
governments), including the tourism industry (under the MOTAC). 1Malaysia is
misaligned with the concept of Bumiputera policy, which favours Malays.

The Bumiputera policy, as mentioned in Chapter Four, was introduced in 1970 during the
NEP to reform ethnic preferences in business ownership and achieve social balance.
Returning to the 1Malaysia concept, food is one of the ‘tools’ identified by the Malaysian
Government through MOTAC used to achieve national unification. All these weaknesses
in managing the FF1M shows that it failed to achieve its main goal. As a result, the
Tourism Ministry decided to rebrand the FF1M. The rebranding decision is mentioned in
MOTAC’s feedback on the Auditor General’s report series 3, regarding financial
statements and financial management, the activities of the relevant ministries and
departments, federal statutory corporate activities and the management of subsidiary
companies for the year 2013:

For the purpose of improving the organisation of this event in 2014, the ministry
has rebranded it as CitraRasa program. The program is coordinated by Ministry of
Tourism and Cultural Affairs state offices in collaboration with the state
governments and NGOs. (Ministry of Finance, 2014, p. 371)

According to the project manager of CitraRasa, the food marketing campaign is still
relevant in the national tourism calendar and each event organised by the Tourism
Ministry has taken into account its potential to attract domestic and foreign tourists. The
manager said the name CitraRasa reflects the domestic tourism campaign targeting
largely domestic tourists and some international tourists (who are travelling in Malaysia).
Unlike the name FF1M, to me, CitraRasa is not a good name if it wants to attract non-
Malaysian tourists because they would not understand what the name means, let alone
know how to pronounce it correctly. As mentioned earlier, CitraRasa is now managed by
MOTAC state offices within Malaysia. This offers an opportunity for local communities
to engage in the economic activity generated from the sale of food and from handicrafts,
accommodation and transportation. Furthermore, CitraRasa’s funding allocation was
approved by the MOF and it was made clear that its purpose was to market and promote
Malaysian cuisine:

During the changes of new tourism minister after the general election in April 2013,
we [MOTAC] received 2013 funding approval from MOF to organise FF1M before
it can be rebranded. The annual financial budget estimation for the forthcoming
The Malaysia International Gourmet Festival (MIGF) is still maintained under CitraRasa. According to CitraRasa’s project manager, the current Tourism Minister, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, decided to discontinue the ASEAN Heritage Food Trail and Street and Restaurant Food Festival because of the National Auditor report. Moreover, CitraRasa’s project manager mentioned that the reasons why MOTAC decided to discontinue these events was due to high cost and, significantly, that the current Tourism Minister does not have as much interest in promoting food as part of tourism experiences in Malaysia in comparison to the previous tourism minister (Dato’ Seri Ng Yen Yen). The change in policies resulting from the 2013 general election may also be a reason for discontinuing these events. In addition, it is believed that the current Tourism Minister wants to make a different mark from the former one. This was further elaborated by the project manager of CitraRasa:

[The] ASEAN Heritage Food Trail was originally proposed by Chef Wan [the Malaysian Food Ambassador] who is sekampong [came from the dame hometown as] Dato’ Seri Ng Yen Yen. They negotiated between themselves privately when they came up with this event. We just followed the orders given by the Tourism Minister at that time. But then, when Dato’ Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz was appointed as the new Tourism Minister [i.e. after the general election in 2013], he decided to discontinue this program and replace it with other tourism projects.

(#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, (4 April 2014)

The above quote obviously describes the strong influence of Malaysia’s Tourism Minister to decide what and which food tourism marketing initiatives should be conducted. The Malaysian Food Ambassador, Chef Wan, was appointed from 2009 until 2013 by MOTAC to promote and appear in television programs which showed the event venues. The food ambassador also performed cooking demonstrations at many food outlets (food courts and grocery supermarkets) located inside or outside the shopping mall buildings. Therefore, the decision to rebrand CitraRasa was made by the current Tourism Minister by dispersing the marketing and promotion for Malaysian cuisine strategies to the states and territories.

The rebranding changes at the end of May 2014 involved the coordination of CitraRasa by the MOTAC state offices, in partnership with relevant tourism agencies, state offices
and state governments. This enables every state to showcase local and signature dishes to attract tourists. Selected hotels feature food specialties, cultural shows and handicrafts from the various states in Malaysia and from around the world. The marketing and promotion incorporates Malaysian cuisine in various sectors and tourism products and activities at each state and territory level. For example, for CitraRasa Sabah and Perak 2014:

The purpose of this event is to promote Sabah’s rich culinary traditions founded on its strong historic cultural heritage. (#Deputy Director of MOTAC, Sabah office, 27 November 2014).

In Perak, Rendang Tok is our signature dish now and then. Apart from that, we also promote local cuisine based on place. For example, Kuala Kangsar speciality on masak lemak udang galah [prawn cooked in coconut milk with fresh chilies]. Another place called Pengkalan Hulu is popular with nasi dalam buluh [rice cooked in bamboo]. (#Director of MTPB, Perak office, 23 December 2014)

The marketing and promotion incorporates Malaysian cuisine in various sectors and tourism products and activities at each state and territory level. Therefore, in the context of this thesis, CitraRasa is an interesting and illuminating case study that is able to provide significant evidence on its role and activities in integrating local cuisine into Malaysia’s tourism and cultural identity. Moreover, it involves various stakeholders, including the public and tourists, and reflects the image of Malaysia as a multicultural country.

Since 2014 was the first year that the MOTAC state offices started planning and organising CitraRasa, the majority of participants who were interviewed, including MTPB state offices, the state government’s tourism unit, restaurant operators and other stakeholders, regard CitraRasa to be a positive initiative. However, ethnic tensions arose at a CitraRasa event in Penang, this is discussed in more detail in Section 6.6.

### 7.3 Identification of the Roles of Stakeholders in CitraRasa

Similar to MKP (see Chapter Six), the organisation of CitraRasa in marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine as part of Malaysia’s international destination marketing strategies involves various stakeholders at multiple levels. This section identifies the core stakeholder groups who actively participate in CitraRasa and outlines their roles. Furthermore, it examines the involvement of the Malaysian Government through its
agencies in planning and organising CitraRasa. Thematic analysis conducted on related archival documents and interviews revealed the involvement of different stakeholders at three stages: i) processing, ii) marketing and promotion, and iii) monitoring. The findings are tabulated in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: The involvement of stakeholders in CitraRasa
(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Ministries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian Government Agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. National Academy of Arts, Culture and Heritage</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. National Development of Culture and Arts</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Department of National Heritage</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Malaysia Handicraft Development Corporation</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Department of Museums Malaysia</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Federal Agricultural and Marketing Authority (FAMA)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Department of Islamic Development Malaysia</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. National Library of Malaysia</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Event companies</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Consultant companies</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shopping malls</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cultural and heritage parks</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hotel and restaurant businesses</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Media partners</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Travel agencies</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Airline companies</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Food products businesses</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hotel and restaurant equipment and facilities suppliers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Private health organisations</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Chef Association of Malaysia</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Malaysia Association of Hotel</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Local councils</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Health Departments</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Higher education institutions</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As stated in Chapter Two, the Tourism Ministry develops the tourism policy for a particular tourist destination, whereas the DMO, as the term explains, focuses on marketing and promotion activities. However, in the case of CitraRasa, the Tourism Ministry, MOTAC, has been the core stakeholder in charge of the campaign and its progress since 2009. Together with MOTAC, nine agencies including the MTPB are directly involved in organising the campaign. Private sector stakeholders (event companies, consultant companies, shopping malls, cultural and heritage parks, hotel and restaurant businesses, media partners, travel agencies, airline companies, food products businesses, hotel and restaurant equipment and facilities suppliers, and private health organisations) are also involved in CitraRasa’s organising team. As noted by Pike (2004, 2008), a strong and successful destination marketing strategy is not just for the purpose of promoting a place or destination and persuading tourists to come; it is also about creating partnerships between public and private sectors. This was found to be the case in CitraRasa. More than half of the stakeholders who were involved in organising CitraRasa were from the private sector, mainly hotels and restaurants as well as food businesses. There were five additional organising members, mostly from non-government organisations. Each of them had a different role, as discussed in the following sub-section.

7.3.1 The Four Groups of Stakeholders Involved in the Success of CitraRasa

Based on data collected, it was found that the Malaysian Government through, MOTAC and its agencies, strongly influenced the management and organisation of CitraRasa. This can be seen in the involvement of four groups of stakeholders with specific roles. It was initiated, led and monitored by the Tourism Ministry, MOTAC. However, CitraRasa’s operations were the full responsibility of the private sector, with help from relevant Malaysian Government agencies. Clearly, this is an example of a public and private partnership in tourism administration, in which the Malaysian Government is the powerful authority in tourism planning, but where partnerships with the private sector are crucial for industry development.

i) The Core Ministries

The main administrative driver of CitraRasa was MOTAC. Through the Industry Development Division (IDD), MOTAC was responsible for the entire organisation of CitraRasa since its launch in 2009. According to CitraRasa project manager, IDD’s main duty was planning and managing tourism industry growth. This included:
• Developing and strengthening the structures, functions and roles of tourism and hospitality representatives (e.g. hotel, travel agency, etc.) as well as strengthening tourism development;

• Upgrading existing tourism products and services as well as diversifying the domestic tourism experiences;

• Developing and promoting the domestic tourism industry;

• Developing and upgrading the skills and efficiency of the labour force in the national tourism service sector;

• Promoting tourism investments; and

• Formulating regulations and guidelines to maintain the tourism facilities’ quality (Industry Development Division, MOTAC, 7 July 2015)

The Tourism Ministry, through IDD, was responsible for organising related marketing and promotion strategies. CitraRasa is an example of where MOTAC acts as a mediator between various public and private sector organisations, and as the project leader to monitor the product development and promotional activities at the national level. Furthermore, organising food marketing campaigns like CitraRasa helps to create awareness of the job opportunities in the food service industry and encourages productivity and investment in the food and tourism industries. CitraRasa’s project manager believes:

…this is a platform to reach out to tourists and get their feedback and opinions instantaneously regarding Malaysian cuisine as part of the tourism experience. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

Therefore, CitraRasa can provide an understanding of what future tourists expect and what can be done to improve both the food service and tourism industries.

Aside from taking part in the planning and administrating of CitraRasa, MOTAC has been heavily involved in the marketing and promotion activities of Malaysian cuisine through CitraRasa. Thematic analysis undertaken on data collected through interview sessions with MOTAC (both headquarter and state offices) identified four themes under marketing and promotion:
a) Funding

The allocated funds came from the Ministry of Finance (MOF) through the annual budget presented by the Tourism Minister. Usually, the budget was estimated based on the current year’s expenses. They were split into two (headquarters and state offices) and distributed accordingly. However, the funding for CitraRasa was controlled by MOTAC’s headquarters in Putrajaya and the funds were distributed to the three major food events.

b) Information dissemination

The Ministry originally developed a portal, put the campaign on the annual tourism calendar and produced a food trail booklet. The portal was for anyone to keep up-to-date on the relevant food events and programs for CitraRasa and to submit their recommendations for local eateries nationwide. Moreover, visitors got a chance to vote in the selection of the three Malaysian cuisine signature dishes to be highlighted each year. CitraRasa’s project manager mentioned that it was part of the ministry’s job to get public participation and show transparency in the voting process in which foods or dishes were chosen to represent each ethnic group. However, voting stopped when the portal was discontinued and FF1M was rebranded as CitraRasa in 2014. As for the tourism calendar and food trail booklet, they were made available for tourists’ convenience. These materials were also helpful in providing details for any related tourism and Malaysian cuisine promotional activities throughout the world.

c) Intermediary

Given that CitraRasa is run by Malaysia’s Tourism Ministry, relevant agencies that work closely automatically provide support for and collaborate on any marketing and promotion initiatives. This is further extended to the private sectors.

d) Advisor and decision-maker

In relation to deciding what and how Malaysian cuisine should be marketed and promoted, MOTAC has the power to decide whether to accept or reject decisions made by the event organisers.

ii) Malaysian Government agencies

The second stakeholder group comprises the agencies under MOTAC that plan, coordinate and monitor CitraRasa. Out of the nine agencies listed in Table 7.3, the MTPB
and FAMA are the most important players in supporting CitraRasa. The MTPB acts as the national marketer at both domestic and international levels. FAMA focuses on collaboration with MOTAC and the private sector to create an efficient and effective agriculture marketing system. Both agencies also provide financial support for the success of CitraRasa.

### iii) The Private Sector

Even though the involvement of MOTAC and relevant tourism agencies in planning and monitoring is crucial, their role is limited to monitoring the whole CitraRasa campaign. This study found that the private sector organisations are the main actors which make CitraRasa successful. In the context of CitraRasa, the food producers (importers and exporters), restaurant operators, event management companies, media partners, the Malaysian Food Ambassador and other supporting organisations (i.e. the consultants and relevant regional authorities) are amongst the key industry players. The initiative of using Food Ambassador is seen as part of the broader strategies that have been employed in culinary or gastro-diplomacy programs such as MKP (Zhang, 2015). It could be argued that the Malaysian Food Ambassador program, from the perspective of the Malaysian Government, is capable of representing and speaking on behalf of the nation about local cuisine to tourists at CitraRasa. Table 7.4 summarises the roles of private sector organisations in CitraRasa.

**Table 7.4: The key roles of private sector organisations in CitraRasa’s marketing and promotion activities**

(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Sector</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Suppliers Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel and restaurant operators</td>
<td>- prepare and serve Malaysian dishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing and Promotion Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media partners</td>
<td>- disseminate and broadcast information about Malaysian cuisine as well as restaurants and food events to respective audiences using various media communication channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food ambassador</td>
<td>- cooking demonstrators at any food-related events and exhibitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airline companies</td>
<td>- hosting a television program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food bloggers</td>
<td>- updates on Malaysian cuisine marketing and promotion activities in their inflight magazines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event organisers</td>
<td>- review recent marketing and promotion initiatives undertaken by relevant Malaysian Government agencies and communicating with specific groups about Malaysian cuisine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private consulting companies</td>
<td>- the main actor that organises Malaysian cuisine events in collaboration with MOTAC and its agencies as well as other stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- conduct market research, liaise with local media and access other related marketing resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
iv) Others

This stakeholder group can be divided into two sub-groups and each has a different function in support of CitraRasa campaign. It was found that their contribution to the success of the campaign did not directly involve any financial resources.

a. Local or Regional Authorities

These authorities monitor and regulate Malaysian food or restaurant businesses within their geographic areas. This includes issuing business and premises licenses, and enforcing local food regulations and policies in addition to certification and recognition (e.g. regular health and cleanliness inspections for grading, and Halal certification as appropriate). They also provide additional support for federal and state government events, including local food promotion activities.

For CitraRasa food-related event publicity and advertising, the local council needs to grant permission for event organisers to do any publicity within their territory. Approval is required to ensure that only relevant information related to Malaysian cuisine is printed on advertising media such as banners and posters. This is designed to prevent inappropriate details appearing that could cause any untoward incidents, such as complaints from local people, for example wrongly highlighting foods or dishes that do not belong to the local community.

In addition, some responsibilities need to be carried out by the local council, such as providing location or venue information, waste management and special requests about equipment or the set up needed by MOTAC and event organisers.

b. Tourism and hospitality associations

These groups are invited to be part of CitraRasa’s organising team in three aspects. First, by giving advice to MOTAC and event organisers on what can be done and by attracting private organisations to participate. Second, by getting young people to volunteer in government campaigns and, third, by researching and publicising the campaign’s success.

7.4 Marketing and Promotional Initiatives for CitraRasa

The Malaysian Government, together with the various stakeholders, utilise a broad range of marketing communication channels for promotion purposes. Four communication marketing channels have been used to promote Malaysian cuisine and CitraRasa’s
campaign activities. They include public relations (FF1M’s official website, media relations, food bloggers and cooking demonstrations), advertising (hotels, travel agencies, relevant Malaysian Government agencies and private sector websites and mobile applications), related marketing and promotion materials, and food-related events and exhibitions. In addition, tourist information centres are also seen as important tourism marketing and promotion resource hubs for disseminating and distributing relevant information about and marketing resources relating to Malaysian cuisine. Ballantyne, Hughes and Ritchie (2009) state that, in the Australian context, visitor information centres are responsible for channelling any marketing and promotional information about local tourism products and services which provide significant impacts on the economic, social and recreational wellbeing of a particular place or destination. Tourist information centres are located in almost every state and territory in major airports, tourist spots and a few large shopping centres all over Malaysia.

These marketing and promotion initiatives vary depending on the stage of the campaign; that is, those used at the very beginning of the campaign differ to those used in the introductory stages. Although in recent years electronic and online information has become more prominent, MOTAC also uses traditional marketing communication. Flyers, brochures, posters and recipe cards are commonly distributed at related promotional activities. However, two more contemporary marketing methods have also been employed: promoting Malaysian cuisine through social media marketing (i.e. Facebook, Twitter and official websites) and by employing a co-branding strategy. Co-branding occurs when two or more brands are combined in some way as part of a product or some other aspect of the marketing program (Keller, 1998; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). For co-branding, MOTAC, through event organisers’ initiatives, invited potential or well-established food companies to get involved in organising related events. One example is AgroMas (a Malaysian brand introduced by the MOA which is made up of food products produced and packed in Malaysia). Tourists, regardless of where they are, may remember Malaysia whenever they see AgroMas products available at a groceries store.

Multi-sensory marketing approaches have been progressively employed over CitraRasa campaign period especially at events and in participating restaurants. This helps tourists to actively participate and connect with Malaysian cuisine. Unlike brochures, posters and other related media advertisements, multi-sensory marketing approaches allow the tourists to understand Malaysian cuisine through the eyes (sight), nose (smell), hands (touch) and tongue (taste). This is achieved through food sampling and cooking
demonstrations. From observing MIGF and CitraRasa events, it was found that there were two ways of getting tourists’ attention during cooking demonstrations. The first involves one-way interaction in which the chef does the demonstration and at the same time tells the story of the food and the ingredients used. Two-way communication is the second type of cooking demonstration that allows tourists to be part of the whole cooking demonstration session. Two-way communication appeared to work best, not only in bringing the cooking session to life but also in terms of tourists being more focused and giving their full attention to learning about Malaysian cuisine. This finding aligns with Richards (2012) and Hall (2012), who found that interaction, including question and answer sessions, that occurs during cooking demonstrations is an effective approach to learn about and understand place cuisine or specific dishes.

Using CitraRasa campaign, MOTAC utilised another strategy to market and promote Malaysian cuisine through its collaboration with the Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad in 2010. MOTAC states that airports, especially those with international services, are the main gateway for foreign tourists to enter Malaysia. Thus, having marketing campaigns at international arrival stations puts in tourists’ minds information about events and at the same time helps to build their interest in knowing more about Malaysian cuisine.

In addition to the above, MOTAC invited local and foreign media partners and travel agents from 25 countries to the Mega Familiarisation (MegaFam) program during the launch ceremony for CitraRasa events in every year. The MegaFam program aimed to generate a closer relationship with members of the local and international media, giving them a first-hand experience of Malaysian tourism and update them with information about holiday destinations in Malaysia. Media partners were required to report and publicise Malaysian cuisine, while travel agents created more holiday packages to Malaysia. Culinary trips are part of promotion activities. Benefits to the tourism industry could include publicising the existing leisure and tourism activities that are available in Malaysia to foreign media partners. At the same time, writing and publishing about Malaysian cuisine in Malaysia provides a genuine source of information and promotes trust among tourists and readers.

7.5 Assessing the Success of CitraRasa

Drawing from the various promotional activities undertaken by MOTAC in cooperation with a multitude of stakeholders, this study also seeks to understand the relative success of CitraRasa. Thematic analysis of interviews, observation sessions, informal
conversations and archival documents (e.g. printed event reports) revealed that there were four aspects that the Malaysian Government and relevant stakeholders focused on when measuring the success of CitraRasa: i) the number of visitors at the events; ii) viewing the events’ website; iii) sales by the exhibitors or participants; and iv) the value of promotional activities from the private sector.

According to CitraRasa’s project manager and MIGF event organiser, social media, as well as visitor and consumer surveys, were used to measure CitraRasa’s success. In particular, success was measured by looking at the numbers of visitors to social media portals and reviewing their feedback regarding promotional activities that they attended. Similar measurements were used for CitraRasa portal. Unfortunately, there is no evidence or report produced by MOTAC that shows the number of visitors who browsed or utilised the website. On the other hand, visitor surveys were conducted by external consultants (appointed by MOTAC) at CitraRasa food events and exhibitions, including an analysis of the number of food products sold and how much participants or exhibitors earned.

MOTAC also appointed a research consulting company to conduct a survey among domestic and foreign tourists to gauge their attendance and obtain feedback during FF1M in 2012. A total of 1000 questionnaires were collected within the city of Kuala Lumpur and analysed for this purpose. Results showed that the majority of domestic and international tourists agreed that FF1M helped them to better understand Malaysian delicacies. Apart from that, most of them attended FF1M to enhance their knowledge about local delicacies. However, there was no further detailed elaboration on what the tourists understood about Malaysian cuisine and how FF1M helped increase their understanding:

We just want to get this report and send it to MOF because MOF requested a full report on the effectiveness of organising the FF1M. MOF wanted to see from the tourist-side how well they accepted this event. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

When I tried to get CitraRasa’s project manager to share more information about MOF, he said:

I’m sorry…I can’t reveal much because it is a confidential information between the ministries. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)
Apart from consumer surveys and website viewing, four of this present study’s respondents (CitraRasa’s project manager, MIGF event organiser, Director of MOTAC Sabah office and the food and beverage director of Bunga Emas, Royale Chulan) stated that the way they viewed the success of the marketing and promotion of Malaysian cuisine through CitraRasa, especially in food-related events, is based on the number of visitors attending and dining at participating restaurants and their feedback. For the event organiser, the success of CitraRasa is also measured by looking at the participation and support from various food and restaurant businesses:

We want more participation from the fine dining restaurant operators in Malaysia. That’s how we see the success of CitraRasa, apart from the number of visitors keep on increasing in every year. (#Director of AsiaReach Events, 8 April 2014)

More than 150 stalls featuring signature dishes from Penang’s famous hawker fare are participating in CitraRasa in Penang this year. We are expecting more participants next year. (#Director of MTPB Penang Office, 14 April 2014)

This is important because the participants or exhibitors are meant to deliver the content or messages for CitraRasa to the target audiences. Unfortunately, this is not what happened during my observations at the three events (this is further discussed in Section 7.7) and informal conversation with exhibitors (i.e. restaurants/participants) also confirmed this was not the case; most of them said that they aimed to get more people to buy what they were selling:

This is the only time I can make extra profit selling food to a huge crowd. Sales are always up and down every day at my restaurant. There are days [where I get] many customers, there are also days I don’t make a profit…not even get enough to cover my daily food cost. (# Hawker 7 at CitraRasa in Penang, 24 October 2014)

Different views were given by several exhibitors at the TasteMIGF 2014 on this; however, there was still a sense of participating in CitraRasa for the purpose of making profit in the long run:

Yes, we want to promote our restaurant to the event’s visitors. This is the platform for us to do more intense promotion [get closer to potential or new markets]. (#Restaurant Manager of Bunga Emas, The Royale Chulan Hotel Kuala Lumpur, 17 October 2014)
Overall, the private sector believes that CitraRasa’s success is determined by looking at business performance (sales) and income. In other words, counting the number of food products sold at CitraRasa’s food events and exhibitions, demand for a company’s product and restaurant patronage are seen as indicators of CitraRasa’s success. However, assessing the success of CitraRasa’s use of Malaysian cuisine as part of destination marketing strategies for Malaysia remains questionable. There is still no specific mechanism to measure the impact of CitraRasa’s use of cuisine on motivating and attracting more international tourists to visit Malaysia.

7.6 Malaysian Cuisine Represented in Relevant CitraRasa Marketing and Promotion Activities

This section discusses the process of selecting specific local foods to represent Malaysian cuisine in CitraRasa. The findings are based on interviews with various stakeholders and observations of three food events and 36 Malaysian restaurants all over Malaysia between March and December 2014. In addition, interviews with several stakeholders (see Table 3.3 in Chapter Three), especially representatives of Malaysian Government agencies at their headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, as well as in every state around Malaysia, were also used to support these outcomes.

7.6.1 Identification of Local Food

It was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (Section 7.2) that three signature dishes per year were identified and featured in CitraRasa campaign. CitraRasa project manager further explained the details of the selection process that occurred through the FF1M website involving public voting. Prior to the voting process, the initial list of dishes was compiled through discussions between the board of directors of MOTAC and MTPB. The three major ethnic groups were used as a benchmark for the discussion. However, with the rebranding of the FF1M to CitraRasa in 2014, MOTAC state offices now organise the campaign. By doing this, significant collaboration between the federal and state government can be seen through the organisation of CitraRasa.

At the state level, local food identification is based on what is ‘famous’ and ‘popular’ (discussed in Chapter Five). Local food was identified by each MOTAC state office and then used in each office’s destination marketing strategy, offering local delicacies to distinguish and brand every state. In other words, specific foods or signature dishes are identified to represent each state.
Private sector organisations, including restaurant operators and food product businesses are encourage to include these local signature dishes that are specified by MOTAC state offices and relevant Malaysian Government tourism agencies. However, most of the restaurant operators mentioned that there is flexibility in terms of offering food on their menus. A few restaurants and food product businesses found the restriction ‘to include the local signature dishes’ difficult to follow because they are only allowed to prepare and present specific food specialities and products. At the same time, their business depends on what is in demand at the location. In addition, every restaurant operator and food product business has to compete against each other to attract and convince visitors (including tourists) to buy their food. The next sub-section details the incorporation of Malaysian cuisine at related food events in CitraRasa campaign.

### 7.6.2 Malaysian Cuisine at CitraRasa Food-Related Events

Table 7.5 shows background information for three food events organised under CitraRasa campaign. Of the three CitraRasa annual food events examined for this study, the MIGF received the lowest number of visitors because the target audience was limited to high-income tourists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Main Malaysian Dishes</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
<th>Number of Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia International Gourmet Festival – Taste (MIGF) 2014</td>
<td>Sunway Pyramid Exhibition Centre, Selangor</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>i) 28 restaurants</td>
<td>Nasi lemak, roti canai, satay, laksa and char kuey teow</td>
<td>i) Live band performance ii) Cooking demonstration iii) Cooking class Contest – lucky draw</td>
<td>Over 1000 VVIPs*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CitraRasa Kuala Lumpur 2014</td>
<td>MATIC, Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>i) 14 restaurants</td>
<td>13 states and 2 territories highlighted their signature dishes</td>
<td>i) Cultural performance ii) Cooking demonstration iii) Contest – Lucky draw</td>
<td>23000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CitraRasa 2014 Penang Malaysia</td>
<td>Subterranean Penang International Convention and Exhibition Centre (SPICE)</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>i) 28 hawker stalls operators</td>
<td>Nasi lemak, satay, luka, char kuey teow</td>
<td>i) Cultural performance ii) Cooking demonstration iii) Contest – lucky draw</td>
<td>21000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note - *VVIPs means very very important persons
After undertaking a thematic analysis of relevant secondary archival documents, interviews with various stakeholders, informal conversations with exhibitors and observation materials, Figure 7.1 presents the overall concept of CitraRasa food marketing campaign. Further elaboration is presented in the following sub-section.

Figure 7.1: Marketing local cuisine in the 2014 CitraRasa campaign
(Original for this study)

i) *Malaysia International Gourmet Festival 2009–2014*

Before presenting and discussing the findings for this section, it is important to go briefly into the historical background of MIGF, in particular how this event is related to CitraRasa campaign. Despite the fact that MIGF began eight years before it became part of CitraRasa campaign, this study only focuses on investigating the use of MIGF as a medium for marketing Malaysian cuisine as part of Malaysia’s international destination marketing strategies. Hence, more attention is given to the period from 2009 to 2014. Relevant secondary and archival documents either printed or available on the MIGF website were collected to examine the historical background. Included in the data were a series of interviews with relevant stakeholders, informal conversations with exhibitors and visitors, and observation.

Based on the data collected, it was found that MIGF was first organised in September 2001. This event was the inaugural Kuala Lumpur Gourmet Festival (KLGF) and it made its debut with 13 restaurants participating. According to the Marketing Director of the Federal Hotel Kuala Lumpur, who was on the KLGF committee, MIGF was inspired by the Vision Kuala Lumpur (Vision KL) through a sister company within the Vision Four
Media Group called AsiaReach Events, with the idea of creating an annual gourmet festival. MIGF sparked a lot of media interest and a greater appreciation of local chefs. Due to the success and international recognition received, KLGF became the KL International Gourmet Festival (KLIGF) in 2003. Continued strong, positive responses from tourism and hospitality representatives all over Malaysia made the KLIGF team stage the event on a larger scale. In 2006, the Malaysia International Gourmet Festival (MIGF) was introduced to enable fine dining restaurants from all over the country to participate. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, offering Malaysian cuisine at any fine dining restaurant would engage the high-end market as well as enhance the image of the cuisine itself.

Since joining CitraRasa, MIGF has showcased between 15 and 30 standalone restaurants and hotel restaurants that offer fine dining at international standards. The number of participants has varied every year due to how the restaurants’ owners look at the benefits. Most of the restaurants mentioned that MIGF is one business marketing strategy they use to promote their restaurant. However, a few of them believed that there were various audiences attending the event every year and this helped them to expose and expand their business to new target markets. According to AsiaReach Events’ director, through CitraRasa the Malaysian Government provides strong marketing support, especially by putting the event on the national tourism calendar. MOTAC has also allocated some financial support for marketing purposes. As stated by CitraRasa’s project manager:

MIGF is more about sponsorship [providing financial support to organise]. We sponsor their event. As a sponsor, we have our logo in there. It’s more for PR [public relations] work (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

The involvement of the Malaysian Government has spurred business collaboration among tourism and hospitality industry operators. Different views have been given by CitraRasa’s project manager. He believed that MOTAC was looking for this event to be more than just a food event:

MIGF is an international platform to market and promote Malaysian cuisine to all tourists. We are trying to push them to promote Malaysian cuisine as the focus of the event. MIGF is a well-established food event in this country and continuously promotes the food and restaurant industry. We want them to include Malaysian food images and highlight Malaysian cuisine in every marketing campaign. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)
For that reason, AsiaReach Events has to come up with attractive ideas on how Malaysian cuisine can be incorporated as a main focus at the event. This is also part of MOTAC’s requirements if MIGF is interested in getting full support from the Malaysian Government. Therefore, two initiatives were proposed and agreed to by MOTAC. The first was to encourage participation from fine dining restaurants that prepare and serve Malaysian cuisine as their main dining experiences. The second initiative was having special Malaysian cuisine cooking demonstrations performed by the Malaysian Food Ambassador, Chef Wan, at a ‘theatre of cuisines’ (which is the name given to cooking demonstrations at the TasteMIGF venue).

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, MIGF was organised throughout the month of October in every year at participating restaurants’ premises. However, the launching ceremony, the TasteMIGF, is usually held in September to provide tourists and invited special guests the chance to get a glimpse of what to expect from the participating restaurants or, as they are called, the ‘festival restaurants’. MOTAC provides the MIGF organiser with a list of fine dining restaurants (usually hotel-owned) available throughout Malaysia and approaches them by sending them an invitation letter. The location of the TasteMIGF depends on the availability of venues and must be within the city of Kuala Lumpur or somewhere nearby. Each year the event organiser will come out with a different MIGF event theme to make the event more appealing and celebratory. The theme is based on previous feedback gathered from visitors and festival restaurants, food trends at marketplaces and sponsorship from various stakeholders. Apart from that, the Director of AsiaReach Events and CitraRasa’s project manager mentioned that the decision was also influenced by the MIGF’s Royal Patron, Tunku Laxamana Tunku Dato’ Seri Utama Naquiyuddin Tuanku Ja’afar (the eldest son of the Sultan of Negeri Sembilan). Since 2009, the involvement of the Royal Patron has helped in terms of networking (to attract stakeholder sponsors and joint organisers of the event) and in establishing the event’s status as a luxurious and glamorous food event in Malaysia. Other activities such as live music and cooking demonstrations were made available to enhance food experiences. All these were experienced at the TasteMIGF event by:

transforming the venue into a ‘theatre of cuisines’ in which food and cooking activities, people and live music performances were gathered together in one place full of fun and enjoyment. (#Director of AsiaReach Events, MIGF, 8 April 2014)
At the MIGF, the concept of Malaysian cuisine is mainly based on a classical menu choice presented in a modern style. The decisions about the food menu and theme reflect every restaurant’s specialities. However, the food must be presented in the form of a full set menu (i.e. from appetiser to dessert), consisting of one item in each food course. The menu can be newly created for the event or it can come from the restaurant’s existing menu card. More attention needs to be given to the cooking methods and style of food presentation to ensure they match the theme of the event.

‘Gourmet Dollars’ (a coupon used by visitors and tourists to exchange for food at the event) was used at the TasteMIGF, Epicure International Gourmet Village and Epicure Lifestyle Workshops. The Gourmet Dollars strategy is not just for the sake of getting money in advance and giving special discounts to visitors, it also helps the festival restaurants to carry out trading activities. In particular, using Gourmet Dollars helps to reduce waiting times for sampling food. It was also used as a voting system for festival restaurants to win trophies and prizes:

We’ve been joining MIGF since 2010 and won many trophies. This [the trophies] is important for our brand recognition and building people’s trust (#Executive Chef of Renaissance Hotel Kuala Lumpur, 29 September 2014)

You can see the trophies at the main entrance. Now, we are busier than before MIGF. We can experience great impact in term of our business performance with all this recognition [the trophies]. Our chef has received many invitations inside and outside the country to do Kelantan cuisine cooking demonstrations (#Restaurant Manager of Kelantan Delights, Kuala Lumpur Sentral, 21 April 2014)

Awarding trophies and prizes were part of the initiatives use by the MIGF organising team to keep restaurants motivated to continuously participate and support the event. Meanwhile, the Epicure International Gourmet Village and Epicure Lifestyle Workshop are meant for visitors who want to learn to cook with master chefs, and participate in wine tasting and other culinary experiences. In 2014, TasteMIGF included a new product called LuxuryPlus. It showcases luxuries, such as high-end properties, luxury holidays and branded goods. This included participation of a luxury car company (the new Jaguar F-Type Coupe at TasteMIGF 2014) and LuxuryPlus Workshops (for those seeking in-depth information on specific food-related business projects).
From the data gathered and analysed at the TasteMIGF 2014, it was found that only two fine dining hotel restaurants (Bunga Emas, The Royale Chulan Hotel Kuala Lumpur and Nook, Ascott Hotel Kuala Lumpur) offered Malaysian cuisine. The TasteMIGF organiser (the Director of AsiaReach Event) also stated that:

MOTAC Putrajaya wanted us to get at least one fine dining restaurant that offers and specialises in Malaysian cuisine to participate in TasteMIGF. Otherwise, we will not get support from them [MOTAC]. I notice that this is part of the requirement since CitraRasa was known as Fabulous Food 1Malaysia in 2009. (#Director of AsiaReach Events, 8 April 2014)

There was also a requirement for Malaysian cuisine cooking demonstrations to be allocated at the event. By continuously providing Malaysian cuisine cooking demonstrations it helps to maintain MIGF’s status as part of CitraRasa mega events. The restaurant, Bunga Emas restaurant from The Royale Chulan Hotel Kuala Lumpur, offers a full set menu starting with appetisers through to coffee and tea.

The Bunga Emas restaurant’s chef said he had planned the menu based on the theme of MIGF (i.e. gourmet) and the ingredients supplied by the sponsors. Apparently, these two aspects strongly influence how Malaysian cuisine can be portrayed at the MIGF. However, the Bunga Emas Restaurant manager added that:

For MIGF we normally have a special menu which is Malay food that you couldn’t find at home … So you can see, the menu is actually more for fine dining. Normally people think Malay food is hidang [communal dining, served on the table]. Fine dining, the presentation, everything is so different but the base is still Malay. Basically, the presentation is the way we bring in ideas from other cuisines to make it like Malay food. (#Restaurant Manager of Bunga Emas, The Royale Chulan Hotel Kuala Lumpur, 17 October 2014)

Apart from the food and presentation, it was found that other food- and culture-related activities were brought into the event:

So last year, it was just Bunga Emas. We were doing the culture show wayang kulit12 thing. Before the Gala Launch, we are doing the… that one was 2012. In

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12 This is a form of shadow puppet theatre, crafted from cow or buffalo hide mounted on bamboo stick. It is a traditional and cultural performance using light and shadow that is famous in the state of Kelantan, located on the east coast region of West Malaysia.
2013, we were doing traditional bamboo, I mean, *pakai buluh* [in Malaysian language] to bring out the Malay village style, bamboo and wood – those things. (#Restaurant Manager of Bunga Emas, The Royale Chulan Hotel Kuala Lumpur, 17 October 2014)

This indicates that marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine is not only about planning and deciding which food should be included on the menu and the style of food presentation (see Figure 7.2 and 7.3); it is also important to bring together other aspects of the Malaysian culture as one package with the food experience. Participation was open to any fine dining restaurant, either through invitation or on a volunteer basis. For example, fine dining restaurants were pre-identified and then sent invitations to encourage them to participate in the event. However, the decision of whether or not to participate is made by restaurant management.

![Figure 7.2: The Bunga Emas’s chef posing in front of the exhibition booth with cooking ingredients on green plates to reflect the banana leaf motive](image)

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Further thematic analysis was conducted on data collected through observation and informal conversations with exhibitors and visitors (including tourists) at the events to identify if, how and why MIGF has been useful in marketing Malaysia as an international tourist destination through its cuisine since 2009. Surprisingly, the findings revealed that no method was employed to measure the impact of this event on arriving international tourists. The value of the ‘Gourmet Dollars’ and the weekly sales reports (for the month of October) from every participating restaurant were the main resources to measure the event’s success. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees said that MIGF not only diversified Malaysia’s tourism experiences, but acted as a platform to present Malaysian cuisine on a par with other international cuisines worldwide.

Even so, various stakeholders had additional agendas relating to their involvement with MIGF. These occurred due to different layers of business and organisational objectives that they set when deciding to jointly organise the event. Obviously, the main goal of the Malaysian Government, through MOTAC, is to utilise Malaysian cuisine as part of the country’s destination experiences for tourism industry development. Furthermore, collaborating with private sector organisations and various Malaysian Government agencies helped in terms of funding to organise such events. The private sector organisations, including event organisers, hotel and restaurant operators, and other
stakeholders, said that MIGF was a ‘seeding/networking site’ to spur future potential businesses and collaboration between them or between stakeholders and visitors. In addition, a few exhibitors (particularly chefs) believed that MIGF was seen as a great platform for self-recognition for future career growth, especially when they received awards given by the MIGF organising team based on their performance and achievement throughout the month of the event. Two of the chefs stated that:

This event is not just helping in terms of promoting our restaurant and establishing our name, but also I always found that it helps chefs to get better job opportunities either locally or internationally. The more trophies they win, the better recognition and value they will get from the industry. I know a few Malaysian-born chefs are now working abroad and this is one of the great opportunities for Malaysian cuisine. (#Executive Chef of Nook, Aloft Hotel Kuala Lumpur, 28 September 2014)

Personally, the recognition given by MIGF is meaningful for my career growth. The restaurant management straightaway promoted me to a higher position and I also received a token of appreciation from them. Not only that, I also received a few job offers from other places, especially abroad, to set up a Malaysian restaurant in the UK (#Executive Chef Kelantan Delights, Kuala Lumpur, (21 April 2014)

All in all, MIGF is one example of a food event with high involvement and support from the Malaysian Government in marketing the country as an international tourist destination in an exclusive way. This event is not just to ‘spice up’ the uniqueness of Malaysian cuisine as a tourism experience – it also puts a positive image in tourists’ mind.

**ii) CitraRasa events at the state level**

Beginning in 2014, MOTAC introduced a new organisational structure for CitraRasa to cover the whole country in a more practical and equally distributed way. As mentioned earlier, it replaced two events, namely the ASEAN Heritage Food Trails (also recorded as a television program) and the Streets and Restaurant Food Festivals, which were organised between 2009 and 2013. With this new format, CitraRasa events were handled by every MOTAC state office. This provided flexibility in terms of the event times and dates, as long as there was no overlap between states. This would allow tourists, especially domestic ones, to plan their travel itineraries (if necessary) and spend more time on one food experience at a time. One aspect of the rebranding agenda was to achieve equality in marketing and promoting local cuisine throughout the country. However, it was found
that there was still a degree of inequality in terms of marketing and promoting local cuisine after the rebranding (discussed in Section 7.6).

There is a diverse range of food across every state and ethnic group. However, as can be seen from Table 7.5, several signature foods were highlighted to portray the identity of Malaysian cuisine. *Nasi lemak, satay, char kuey teow* and *laksa* were amongst the signature foods in every event. Every MOTAC state office was asked about the choice of these dishes. For example:

*Nasi lemak, satay* and *char kuey teow* have been on the front page of Tourism Malaysia’s promotional activities since the ‘90s. Every time we discuss what food can we bring and serve tourists to represent Malaysia … as one nation regardless of ethnic background, everybody spontaneously mentioned these three dishes. We should be proud that our *laksa* is the best in the world … we received international recognition. Every state prepares their own *laksa* with distinctive characteristics and ingredients. (#Director of MOTAC, Johor office, 18 November 2014)

Of course we always have *char kuey teow, nasi lemak, laksa* and *satay* at any events at the state level or national level. That’s truly Malaysian. Furthermore, you [tourists] can find all these everywhere in Malaysia. (#Director of MOTAC, Sabah office, 27 November 2014)

This shows that Malaysian cuisine was driven by ethnic food specialities which, after a certain period of time, have become common dishes throughout the nation. This has been consistently repeated by respondents from MOTAC state offices. Although the Director of MOTAC, Sabah office, said those dishes are truly Malaysian, promoting dishes such as *char kuey teow, nasi lemak, laksa* and *satay* could be a challenging task for the Malaysian Government given that similar dishes can be found in Indonesia and Singapore.

Local food specialties were also highlighted as the main attractions at CitraRasa events organised in each state. Most of the dishes were relatively similar, with the signature dishes displayed in Table 7.2. Most MOTAC state offices believed that every state needs to identify and develop new tourism products as well as maintain the existing ones. Local cuisine in this context refers to the state’s cuisine, and is seen as a promising tourism experience that can entice tourists to come and stay in that particular state. This is similar to the notion that local foods represent the locality. Moreover, this is one of the ways to
encourage tourists, especially international tourists, to prolong their stay in Malaysia. The longer they stay, the more they will spend and contribute to economic growth. Therefore, every state is responsible for diversifying and emphasising their uniqueness.

In promoting Malaysian cuisine, the focus is on ‘one nation’ or, as discussed in Chapter Four, the concept of ‘1Malaysia’, which means ‘regardless of ethnic background’. This is more aimed at achieving the national goal of being recognised as a successful multicultural country. Moreover, it would be impossible for a multicultural country like Malaysia to have different sets of marketing and promotional initiatives to cover each ethnic group.

This aligns with the MTPB Director of Domestic Marketing’s statement that:

If we come out with a separate marketing strategy for each and every ethnic group, this would cost more effort, time and of course money. The worst part would be confusion of Malaysian cuisine identity and the country itself. All these would lead to dissatisfaction and disunity between the ethnic groups.

He continued:

More promotions are progressively undertaken by us when international tourists arrive Malaysia. I still remember we welcomed international tourists at the arrival terminal KLIA [Kuala Lumpur International Airport] and served free nasi lemak and teh tarik to them. Our staff wore traditional costumes to represent every single ethnic group found in Malaysia. That was planned as part of marketing initiatives to promote the Visit Malaysia Year 2007.

This could be a similar approach to what MOTAC has been doing through its organisation of CitraRasa campaign at both national and state levels. In relation to stakeholders’ involvement, analysis revealed that MOTAC state offices proposed the idea to tourism-related Malaysian Government agencies and tourism and hospitality representatives. Further discussion was undertaken in several meetings prior to the actual event. This allowed every stakeholder to plan and inform MOTAC of what sort of contribution they could provide for the event. Every decision was made by mutual agreement of all parties. However, if there are slight changes or last minute issues encountered, MOTAC state offices are responsible for providing suggestions or finding alternatives. Table 7.6 shows the stakeholders involved in CitraRasa’s organisation at the state level.
Table 7.6: Stakeholders and their roles in organising CitraRasa at the state level
(Original for this study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tourism ministry state offices</td>
<td>a. The project leader, prepare the paperwork and the estimated costs for the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Monitor every stakeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Collect feedback from the stakeholders and visitors for future improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Related government agencies</td>
<td>a. MTPB – Promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Karangkraft – Handicraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. National Academy of Arts, Culture and Heritage – Cultural performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. FAMA – agricultural supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Local authorities</td>
<td>a. Council – set up and provide necessary facilities at the event location as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>well as waste disposal arrangements. Check on food operators’ business licensing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Health department – advise and monitor on food handlers’ hygiene and sanitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. The People’s Volunteer Corps (RELA) – safety and security including traffic and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>car parking control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Event organisers (optional)</td>
<td>a. Similar to the tourism ministry except funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Marketing and promotion are major aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Food entrepreneurs and vendors</td>
<td>a. Participating the event either by invitation or application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Plan the menu, food supplies and food presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Set up the allocated booth to make it attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tourism and hospitality</td>
<td>a. Hotel or restaurant – Chef for cooking demonstrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representatives</td>
<td>b. Travel agency – Bring tour groups to the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Others</td>
<td>a. This can be different from state-to-state based on their needs and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>available resource</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - Almost all stakeholders have to advertise the event details on their official websites on the front page. Any additional costs are covered by the stakeholders themselves.

The first three groups (the tourism ministry, related government agencies and local authorities) are actively involved in the planning through to the implementation stage. This is further extended to marketing initiatives and monitoring the event. On the other hand, the food entrepreneurs and vendors, as well as tourism and hospitality representatives, played crucial roles in delivering and achieving the aims of CitraRasa events in every state. To encourage their participation MOTAC allocates them funds—especially those who have to travel and find accommodation closer to the venue. For example, CitraRasa event at MATiC Jalan Ampang gathered restaurateurs and food vendors from all over Malaysia. Most of them mentioned that MOTAC covered their travelling and accommodation expenses and found some of the necessary food ingredients through the help of FAMA (specialising in agricultural and agro-based products).

In addition, as illustrated in Figure 7.4, the exhibitors are responsible for setting up and decorating their stalls to reflect their state and food speciality.
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

Photo 1: The view of venue and setup

Photo 2: Food stall represent the State-of-Pahang
Photo 3: Chef blanching noodles with unique style from State-of-Sarawak

Photo 4: Readymade food products for sale from State-of-Perak
A similar concept was found at CitraRasa event on Penang Island. It also appears to have been employed at many other CitraRasa events throughout Malaysia. Most of the event reports from other MOTAC state offices showed the same pattern of participation and activities.

iii) Malaysian cuisine represented at CitraRasa

At the events, the atmosphere was alive with visitors’ voices, and food-related experiences could be seen and felt while eating Malaysian foods. While sitting and enjoying the foods, some of the visitors expressed their personal opinions about the foods and culinary experiences which made them better understand the meaning of Malaysian cuisine that comes from various states. Some visitors talked about the freshness of the food. To them, freshness refers to the restaurateurs preparing food from scratch, using fresh ingredients at the event’s location. In addition, there were some visitors (domestic tourists/local residents) who engaged with the exhibitors to seek clarity about the food, asking about the ingredients used and how the dishes were prepared. Among the questions, the most frequently asked was how to learn and understand how the food was cooked using local ingredients and traditional cooking methods. However, this judgement
would be harder for international tourists, particularly for those with little knowledge of and experience with Malaysian cuisine.

Apart from the freshness of the ingredients, the selection of various foods, food sensory attributes (colour, texture, etc.) and ‘togetherness’ (i.e. people eating together and sharing the same table regardless of ethnic background) are seen by some international tourists as unique features of CitraRasa events. International tourists, particularly the Europeans and Australians, found that even though Malaysia is considered to be a small-sized country in comparison to many other Western countries, there are many food choices which differ from state-to-state. To them, some of local dishes have a unique taste, ingredients and cooking method. The notion of togetherness was also recognised by tourists (both domestic and international):

"Both of us [are] really having a great time travelling in Malaysia. The best food experience that we noticed is Malaysians enjoy their food together. You can see yourself how wonderful Malaysians are regardless of ethnicity, they share the table to enjoy the food and talk and laugh together! Very exciting food experience. We never had this experience when we were in Indonesia and Thailand. (#UK Tourist at CitraRasa MATiC, Jalan Ampang, 25 May 2014)

Most foods were made to order, with everyone sharing and enjoying food at the same table regardless of skin colour and ethnic background. In addition, the smell of the food prepared at the event venue invited them to taste and get closer to Malaysian cuisine. This clearly indicates Malaysian cuisine provides sensory experiences that can be used to market Malaysia. Combining Malaysian cuisine and cultural performances (including traditional music) was seen by MOTAC and relevant tourism government agencies as an important component of marketing and promoting Malaysian cuisine. This finding is similar to that presented in sub-section 6.5.2 in Chapter Six, in which music and cultural performances were not just for the sake of entertaining visitors, but were part of the package in experiencing and better understanding Malaysian cuisine. CitraRasa events aim to show, especially to international tourists, how much the local cuisine is strongly linked to Malaysian identity. Enjoying Malaysian food was made more meaningful when accompanied by the rhythm of traditional songs.
To some visitors, particularly domestic tourists, traditional music and cultural performances often comfort them while enjoying food and sometimes reminds them of past experiences:

I remember this song! I was attending one of 2007 cultural festivals in Terengganu. My family and I were eating keropok lekor and nasi kerabu [signature dishes of Terengganu] at the same time we watched a cultural performance with this song. We had really enjoyed the food and the show. Until now we still talk about how delicious the food was whenever we heard this song. (#Tourist from Ipoh, Perak at CitraRasa MATiC, Jalan Ampang, 23 May 2014)

With regards to how food stalls are presented at CitraRasa events, in every state the events emphasise traditions and culture in open spaces, where it is possible to easily access segments of the target market. Furthermore, organising a significant event like CitraRasa in public areas with a limited budget significantly influences the decision about what to serve and how to present it to visitors. To the exhibitors, limited facilities, including cookware and silverware, caused them to be more creative with the food presentation:

…we try to present our food as nicely as possible but the problem is the organisers only provide long tables [stalls] and we have to figure out how to decorate the stall and display our food. Moreover, the organisers only allow us to use polystyrene plates, bowls and plastic cutlery so that it is easy to clean up once the visitors have finished eating. (#Pahang stall at CitraRasa MATiC, 27 May 2014)

However, another exhibitor from CitraRasa believed that the way food was presented was not only for attracting tourists but also for making them appreciate and understand the concept of Malaysian cuisine:

Hawker food operators like us are really proud of our food. I’ve been selling food at one of the hawker streets in Penang Island since the 1990s. At that time, I just wanted to sell food for money [income]. However, slowly I started to realise that customers including tourists are more knowledgeable. They know what they want to eat and how the food should look. So I believe cooking is one part, and presentation is another important part of Malaysian cuisine. (#Hawker 7 at CitraRasa Penang)

The above statement indicates that Malaysian cuisine is not just about understanding the content of the food served on a plate. Presentation of the food is seen as another important
aspect, particularly at this event where most tourists have only basic ideas about the tourist destination’s cuisine.

In addition, it was found that the Malaysian Government, through CitraRasa’s food events, showcases Malaysia’s cuisine to reflect an image of a multicultural country as the core of its destination identity. To MOTAC, the multicultural identity in Malaysia is not limited to a particular skin colour, language or religion. Marketing Malaysia through its cuisine is different today than in the past, with the present emphasis on incorporating multicultural aspects into understanding Malaysian cuisine. That is what the Project Manager of CitraRasa seems to be saying:

Local cuisine identity can be one of the mediums to communicate a country’s image. It used to be very easy to market Malaysia through its cuisine many years ago. However, these days, with this concept [multiculturalism] it is difficult to communicate through a plate of food because the tourism industry is more competitive. In fact, many countries now proclaim themselves as multicultural tourist destinations. So, we have to be one step ahead, not just to compete but also to convey an image of our own individuality. Therefore, we promote diversity of Malaysian cuisine in almost all tourism advertising material, either using specific food or through the backgrounds of the people. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

Using the term ‘diversity’ to promote Malaysian cuisine worldwide is seen as a strategic marketing initiative implemented by the Malaysian Government to represent the multicultural nation. This can be clearly identified through images of specific types of dishes (such as char kuey teow for the Chinese, satay for the Malay and roti canai for the Indian) displayed in almost all food-related tourism advertising materials. Each dish represents different ethnic groups that can be found in Malaysia.

The observation of CitraRasa food events organised in MATiC and SPICE on Penang Island found that there are variations of Malaysian foods in every menu listed and displayed at each stall, representing the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese and Indian). This confirms that, through CitraRasa food events, the Malaysian Government has not only tried to encourage and support the promotion of food businesses and other food-related activities but has also kept a hold of the multicultural identity aspect. This could be due to the national tourism agenda, which is to promote business growth and boost the economy as discussed in Chapter Four.
Finally, unlike food-related marketing and promotional activities abroad (i.e. MKP, as discussed in Chapter Six), Halal is another aspect that is highlighted at most CitraRasa events. It was interesting at CitraRasa Penang in November 2014 to see the majority of hawkers placing Halal logos on their banners and food labels – not just for the purpose of positioning the country as a Muslim destination but also to capture a more diverse tourist market.

It could be concluded that Malaysian cuisine is represented by highlighting three things: food diversity, cultural values and culinary activities. The marketing strategy that has been put forward to promote Malaysian cuisine becomes more meaningful and effective with the addition of cultural performances. However, it remains unclear to what extent these cultural activities help people, especially foreigners, distinguish Malaysian cuisine from that of other countries. Obviously, signature foods or dishes that are chosen to represent Malaysian cuisine are tangible; they can be seen, touched and tasted, unlike cultural performances and symbolic ideas which are more intangible and are often used by the Malaysian Government in food-related marketing and promotion initiatives.

7.7 The Key Issues in Managing CitraRasa

According to Brown, Jago, Chalip, Ali and Mules (2011), marketing a tourist destination through events can attract and promote a range of tourist attractions, provide wider media coverage for the destination and increase tourists’ awareness of a location for future travelling. Furthermore, a properly planned marketing strategy will establish a strong brand, which increases the level of confidence among stakeholders and creates a clear destination image (Keller, 1998; Fyall & Garrod, 2005). However, without a doubt, any place or destination that attracts tourists is challenging to manage and market (Fyall, 2011). This has also been found to be the case in Malaysia, particularly in marketing the country as an international tourist destination through CitraRasa. Despite the success achieved through CitraRasa, there are four main issues which have impeded the success of this food marketing campaign. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

Based on data gathered, the first two issues identified in the organisation of CitraRasa are: constant changes to signature foods and management conflicts. Since 2009 CitraRasa has organised three different food events. The same organisers have been responsible for planning and organising these food events, which focus on different segments of the tourist population. Annual changes to the signature dishes which represent Malaysian cuisine have influenced who should be involved (i.e. the private sector). These largely
influence the final decision on the signature dishes made before the work is carried out in preparation for the events, and change the levels of priority among the stakeholders. This was expressed by two international tourists at CitraRasa events in MATiC and Penang Island:

I really enjoy Malaysian food … especially the hot and spicy taste! I never miss this food event, almost every year I’m here [Penang Island]. I can’t exactly tell you my understanding about Malaysian cuisine, but I know there are a variety of foods and new foods every time I come to this event. (#Australian tourist, CitraRasa Penang Island, 24 October 2014)

Some strategies to get a number of stakeholders involved in marketing Malaysia as an international tourist destination through its local cuisine have created frustration among stakeholders. This is a result of each stakeholder having different expectations about the outcomes that could benefit their organisations or different expectations about return on investment (ROI). This has also increased pressure on the Malaysian Government in making decisions about achieving a balance between marketing Malaysia, establishing a cuisine’s identity and supporting local businesses. In reality, CitraRasa aims to promote and establish the identity of Malaysian cuisine so that it can create a strong image of the country in tourists’ minds, such as creating a multicultural identity through specific dishes that represent each ethnic group in Malaysia.

From the perspective of stakeholders, individual and common benefits as well as cooperation and competition, are the remaining main issues in conflict management in marketing Malaysia as an international tourist destination through its local cuisine. This is aligned with Wang’s (2008) findings on understanding conflict management in collaborative destination marketing. This study, through thematic analysis on data collected from interviews and observations, found that both issues (individual versus common benefits, and cooperation versus competition) occurred due to communication gaps and misunderstandings about the organisation of CitraRasa events. These occurred largely at the planning and operational stages. There is a communication gap between the planners and operators regarding the main purpose of CitraRasa. In other words, what has been planned and desired by planners was different from the assumptions of the operators. Even though meetings were conducted to convey clear messages, communication was only identified as an issue by the stakeholders’ representatives (the planners).
However, misunderstandings pertaining to CitraRasa events have also led to conflict between ethnic groups which have sometimes occurred at these events. To some extent, this conflict has gone beyond simple misunderstanding – the basis of this dissatisfaction might actually be related to ethnic tensions between Malays and Chinese. For example, at CitraRasa food event from 24 until 25 October 2014 in Penang Island it was interesting that most of the Malay hawkers expressed their dissatisfaction about participating in the event. They believed that their presence was just for the sake of showcasing the spirit of multiculturalism, as the Malaysian Government had been promoting a multicultural image of the country which had been imposed through tourism-related policies (as discussed in Chapter Four). One of the Malay hawkers said:

They only take us to meet the requirements. Just look at all those [Chinese] hawkers. Normally, if the event is in Penang the Malay hawkers cannot get this opportunity unless we know someone or they just want to meet the government requirements.

(#Malay Hawker 1, CitraRasa Penang Island)

Furthermore, their stalls were assigned to the ends of the rows, whereas the Chinese hawkers who dominated the event were assigned much more favourable positions. Consequently, there were arguments between the Malay hawkers and the event organisers. The Malay hawkers expressed their dissatisfaction because they were not making enough sales and they blamed the event organisers. The situation became worse when four Malay hawkers boycotted the event by not showing up on the second day. The Malay hawkers felt they were being treated unfairly. The event organiser relocated the Malay hawkers who did come on the second day to a more central location close to the main entrance, which may have resulted in more business. This incident, in the context of broader divisions in Malaysian society as a whole, showed that the different power carried by different ethnic groups (e.g. the economic power of the Chinese and the political power of the Malays) impacted on the Malaysian Government’s destination marketing efforts and were visible to the visitors and tourists. This is shown in Table 7.7.

In addition to these issues, the involvement of multiple stakeholders with different interests has strongly influenced the direction of CitraRasa. However, MOTAC has the authority to influence the final decision made by any stakeholder, especially the event organisers. Most stakeholders who get involved in any CitraRasa food-related events believed that priority should be given to the MOTAC agenda before making any decisions or changes.
This is shown in the two following quotes:

Any decision or last-minute changes we need to refer to CitraRasa’s project manager [MOTAC] to make sure we are doing the right things for the campaign. This is also important for building a good relationship between the private sector and the Malaysian Government. (#Director of AsiaReach Events, 8 April 2014)

This is MOTAC’s marketing initiative for local cuisine. We believe we need to respect their decision although sometimes we have to make a few changes at the last minute. We try to stick with what has been decided and make sure MOTAC is happy with it. If they are happy, our organisation will have a strong reputation and we will maintain our relationship with the government. (#Sarawak Stall, CitraRasa MATiC)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 7.7: CitraRasa food event 2014 on Penang Island</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>First day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photo 1: No hawker stalls at the centre part of the event location on the first day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photo 2: No hawker stalls at the centre part of the event location on the second day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photo 3: ‘Satay Ibrahim’ – one of Malay hawkers was located under the tent on the first day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo 4: ‘Satay Ibrahim’ has moved to centre part of the event on the second day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo 4: Almost empty on the second day – stalls which were supposed to house the Malay hawkers.</td>
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</table>

Although MIGF only joined CitraRasa food marketing campaign in 2009, the event organiser believed that every stakeholder needed to respect and follow the decisions made by MOTAC. This was important for maintaining the relationship between the public and
private sectors and the consistent support from the Malaysian Government, which could benefit both parties.

It is interesting to note that the ‘psychological contract’ was met in every food event under CitraRasa food marketing campaign. Robinson (1996) stated that a foundation of the employee–organisation relationship is a psychological contract, comprised of beliefs about reciprocal obligations between the two parties. It suggests that fulfilment of this contract is based on a relationship in which a person tries to fulfil the needs of others only if the others fulfil the needs of that person. Thus, the Malaysian Government and various stakeholders held strong expectations of each other, and it was the anticipation of meeting those expectations that motivated the two parties to continue in that relationship. For example:

Our manager wants us to do this, so we just came out with a plan and proposed whatever suited our restaurant at the same time. Of course we did something that represents Malay cuisine because that’s what we are good at and it is our restaurant speciality. I know we [the hotel management] are expecting to get more trophies this year and to increase our sales. (#Restaurant Manager of Bunga Emas, The Royale Chulan Hotel Kuala Lumpur, 17 October 2014)

It was also found that most visitors interviewed, especially international tourists, tried to obtain further details about the food they tasted at the event they attended. However, the exhibitors (participating restaurants), especially at CitraRasa MATiC and Penang Island seemed unclear about the history of the food they were serving. The most frequent answers exhibitors gave to visitors were that the food was ‘famous’ in town, ‘popular’ in Malaysia and ‘traditional family recipes’. In contrast, at TasteMIGF the chefs, including the Malaysian Food Ambassador (Chef Wan), fully incorporated cultural and historical stories while performing cooking demonstrations. Furthermore, observing cooking demonstrations at TasteMiGF revealed that the chefs emphasised the importance of using local ingredients, as well as traditional cooking utensils and cookery skills in making Malaysian cuisine. Without explaining the story of the foods that make up Malaysian cuisine it is difficult for tourists to have a better understanding of it.

Finally, the findings reveal that different interests and intentions among stakeholders have made the marketing of Malaysian cuisine as part of international destination marketing strategies more complex and difficult to assess. This is reflected in the fact that most of the Malaysian Government agencies appear only to be concerned with their Key
Performance Indicators (KPIs), rather than with achieving the main goal of CitraRasa campaign itself:

CitraRasa is one of [our] annual tourism marketing initiatives. Apart from promoting Malaysian cuisine, this food marketing campaign was designed as our [MOTAC] activities to achieve the ministry’s KPIs. (#Project Manager of CitraRasa, MOTAC, 4 April 2014)

The private sector stakeholders, on the other hand, are looking forward to getting better exposure and recognition so that more business opportunities can be gained in the future.

All these factors have combined and are mixed together in CitraRasa, which in the end creates a complicated understanding of the campaign objectives and confusion in understanding Malaysian cuisine.

7.8 Chapter Summary

CitraRasa food marketing campaign was organised throughout Malaysia to diversify a range of tourism products and experiences. It has also attempted to create an image of Malaysian cuisine so that any tourists who travel to Malaysia would have a clearer picture and understanding of local delicacies. In addition, CitraRasa is an example of how the Malaysian Government’s involvement in food-related events has had a significant impact on its modus operandi and content.

CitraRasa was chosen as a case study for this thesis as it is the central marketing initiative developed by the Malaysian Government to integrate local cuisine into the promotion of the country as an international tourist destination. This is in an effort to respond to the second (RO2) and third (RO3) research objective of this study. It was found that the Malaysian Government, together with relevant tourism agencies and private sector businesses, employed various forms of marketing communication. These range from the mass media to social media. Word-of-mouth is believed to be a vital aspect in marketing Malaysian cuisine and it can occur either before, during and/or after tourists taste the local food at CitraRasa food-related events. In addition, food-related activities, such as cooking demonstrations and cooking competitions, were part of the co-creation strategies adopted to attract attention, especially from tourists, and get them to taste and appreciate the uniqueness of Malaysian cuisine. All these initiatives required a strong commitment from both the public and private sectors.
After presenting the above findings, this chapter further explored how Malaysian cuisine was represented in CitraRasa’s marketing and promotional activities which promote the country as an international tourist destination (i.e. the fourth research objective). The Malaysian Government has had control over this matter since CitraRasa was launched in 2009. Although three signature dishes were decided through online votes from the public, the final decision was still in the Malaysian Government’s hands. This shows the power of the Malaysian Government in deciding which and how local foods should be used to represent Malaysian cuisine and to reflect the country’s identity.

In terms of enhancing food experiences, cooking skills and cultural values are seen as effective ways to help tourists better understand Malaysian cuisine. Furthermore, food experiences, for example allowing visitors to sample or smell Malaysian cuisine, has been a common approach in food-related events in CitraRasa campaign. An influx of food products which are made from Malaysian ingredients or carry Malaysian brands would help efforts to increase tourists’ awareness of Malaysian cuisine. Additionally, the Malaysian Government has progressively marketed and promoted Malaysian cuisine by promoting Halal certification.

Despite various initiatives that have been employed by the Malaysian Government and its relevant tourism agencies, without a doubt there are several issues relating to marketing and promoting local cuisine as part of destination attractions and experiences through CitraRasa. Communication gaps between the planners (what was planned) and the operator (how it was organised and achieved) has resulted in misunderstanding between stakeholders. It was found that the hierarchical structure of control in CitraRasa has caused less interaction and little information to pass between planners and operators. Ethnic tension was also identified as an issue in this regard. To some extent, more fundamental ethnic tensions play a part how CitraRasa events are organised.

All in all, CitraRasa is seen as a medium to market and brand the country through its local cuisine, mainly to promote food-related businesses and destination experiences. Tourism only gains benefits from CitraRasa when there are crowds dining at restaurants or attending food-related events. However, the biggest challenge facing the Malaysian Government is to balance promoting Malaysian cuisine for the sake of the food industry and for marketing Malaysia as a tourism destination. Certainly, by utilising local cuisine to serve the needs of both, the food and tourism industries could benefit the country in
terms of boosting the economy, and a strong cuisine image could be created in the minds of tourists.

The next chapter, Chapter Eight, brings together the findings of Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven and summarises them to respond to the research objectives of this study. In addition, the chapter considers the implications of the findings in relation to the Malaysian Government’s efforts to integrate local cuisine into the country’s international tourist destination strategies.
Chapter 8 – CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

The central focus of this PhD research was to develop ‘a critical understanding of how local cuisine is integrated into the Malaysian Government’s destination marketing strategies’. The analysis covers: i) an understanding of the tourism-related policy environment that has driven the integration of local cuisine in marketing tourist destinations (presented in Chapter Four), ii) the various roles and activities of the Malaysian Government and its relationships with stakeholders (presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven), iii) an identification of the food tourism marketing initiatives (presented in Chapter Five, Six and Seven), and iv) an analysis on how Malaysian cuisine has been represented in relevant marketing and promotional activities (presented in Chapter Five). This research utilised two major Malaysian food marketing campaigns to explore the detailed process of local cuisine integration into international marketing strategies for Malaysia. The research design, as illustrated in Figure 3.1 (Chapter Three), adopted a qualitative methodology as the core methodological approach to gather primary data from various sources in the form of interviews, observations and informal conversations. In addition, archival documents and resources were also collected and analysed to clarify, triangulate and further support the findings.

This chapter begins by reiterating the key findings that have been identified and reported on in the empirical Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven based on the research objectives established for this study (Section 8.2). The second part of this chapter discusses the theoretical contributions (Section 8.3), revisiting the conceptual framework (Section 8.4) and implications (Section 8.5) of the research findings, which contribute to a better understanding of the integration of local cuisine into an international tourist destination’s marketing strategies. Finally, the third part of this chapter, Section 8.6, elaborates on the research limitations, especially in regards to the methodological considerations which form the foundation for future research in the area.

8.2 Recapitulation of the findings of this research

This section summarises the key findings that emerged from the analyses presented in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven and their implications.
For nearly two decades academics have shown an interest in exploring gastronomy as a branch of the tourism and hospitality research field. Many studies on food as an intangible tourism experience were published between 1993 and 2015. Quite a large number of publications on related fields of study were found between 2005 and 2013 concerning the relationship between food at a tourist destination and tourists’ travel experiences. Furthermore, studies on tourist destination and food tourism are also found in the literature. Nevertheless, before 1993, most studies on food or more appropriately ‘local cuisine’ were focused on human need or one of the service quality parameters that comprise the tourism and hospitality experience. On the other hand, from the lens of cultural and heritage tourism, local cuisine was classified as an expression of ethnicity (Timothy, 2011).

Therefore, this study investigated the phenomenon of destination marketing from the perspective of local cuisine, an area that has only recently been discussed in tourism research, particularly in a region which comprises diverse ethnic groups, such as Malaysia. Moreover, examining tourism management within a multicultural society and investigating the use of local cuisine in destination marketing strategies provide a deeper understanding of collaboration between stakeholders (who are also from various ethnic groups) within the destination, as well as the key issues encountered by them.

Chapter Four explored the tourism policy environment that has shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine in destination marketing strategies (RO1). Multiple stakeholders were identified, highlighting conflicting values within the policy environment for the marketing strategies. In the case of Malaysia’s tourism industry, the chapter identified that the federal government is represented by MOTAC, which is responsible for the administration, facilitation, and monitoring of Malaysia’s tourism industry development. Furthermore, the state governments have also played a role in the development and expansion of the tourism industry. Even though Malaysia has a federal-orientation – that is, the federal government has legitimate power to control and monitor tourism activities and products – collaboration between the federal and state governments is crucial to ensuring the success of marketing Malaysia through its local cuisine.

This study has found that ‘tourism industry’ was introduced into Malaysian government policy in 1966 as one of the national income generators to promote the country’s economic growth. The industry has gradually grown since then. In 2010 the tourism industry was announced as one of 12 National Key Economic Areas to which investment
is due to be allocated by the federal government through the ETP until the year 2020. In the case of integrating local cuisine into the international destination marketing strategies for Malaysia, the federal government agencies comprise MOTAC (and MTPB) and MITI (through MATRADE). These agencies are the two core ministries that facilitate MKP and CitraRasa food marketing campaigns. It was also found that there was cooperation and collaboration with other ministries and departments associated with the food and tourism industries, such as MOA, the Islamic Department under the Prime Minister’s Department and MOH. In addition to these cooperative and collaborative relationships, the national agenda (i.e. NEP, NDP and ETP) and Rancangan Malaysia (i.e. RMK) – which is presented by the Prime Minister every five years has been the driver in integrating local cuisine into the government’s international destination marketing strategies for Malaysia. In essence, it is a crowded scene of stakeholders with competing values for the destination marketing strategies.

Chapter Five explored how Malaysian cuisine is represented in the marketing and promotional activities of MKP’s and CitraRasa, which promote the country as an international tourist destination (RO4). The results of the chapter contribute to a better understanding of how ideas of Malaysian cuisine are marketed in either pictorial or textual forms developed by the Malaysian Government, together with its tourism-related agencies in related marketing collateral and websites, as well as the food trail brochures. The results from the content, discourse and semiotic analyses of the photographs and texts may create an awareness of its cuisine identity and hence brand Malaysia as a tourist destination.

Content analysis of both photographs and text found that the Malaysian Government has focused attention on choosing well-defined images and appropriate words to express the ideas behind its local cuisine. This is essential for the country to build a clear and distinct cuisine image, especially in light of the competition from its neighbours, such as Singapore and Indonesia, whose cuisines share similar dishes. Therefore, relevant government agencies which are involved in planning and strategizing cuisine marketing initiatives should develop identities for the destinations (Horng & Tsai, 2010). For example, the photographic analysis found that emphasising the various colourful ingredients found in the food not only conveys ideas about the creativity of food presentation, but also provides potential tourists with insightful information about the uniqueness of Malaysian cuisine. This can be seen through the repetition of the same meals and ingredients, such as nasi lemak, satay and red chillies. Additionally, this
approach will encourage potential tourists to visualise and anticipate the types of cuisine experiences that they will have while travelling in Malaysia.

It was also found that Malaysian cuisine is predominantly represented through photographs showing ‘close-ups of meals’, ‘local fruit’ and ‘local ingredients’. Clear images of the ingredients used in most Malaysian food and cuisine to show tourists the types of food that they will encounter and experience when travelling around the country. Analysis of the text identifies specific words, such as ‘spicy’, ‘hot’, ‘savoury’, and ‘tasty’, are repeatedly used in most of the Malaysian Government’s marketing materials, conveying ‘sensory appeal’. This helps to create awareness amongst tourists about the Malaysian cuisine identity. These findings were further supported by the outcomes from the semiotic analysis. Multicultural and freshness themes commonly appeared in conveying visual messages about Malaysian cuisine through food photographs. As for the findings of the discourse analysis, it was found that MOTAC, MTPB and MATRADE paid more attention and detail to describing Malaysian cuisine. Several local foods were found to be described in complex terms, and this has likely caused confusion and incorrect information about Malaysian cuisine.

In Chapter Six, the analysis centred on MKP as the first case study of this research. It was demonstrated that MKP is an example of a gastro-diplomacy program which uses cuisine as the core marketing tool to promote and brand Malaysia as an international tourist destination. It was established by the Malaysian Government in 2006 under the administration of MATRADE and MITI. The purpose of MKP is to use cuisine as the core marketing tool to promote and brand Malaysia as an international tourist destination. For the past 10 years MKP has continuously received both financial support (e.g. funding called MKFF to set up restaurant businesses overseas) and non-financial support (e.g. marketing and promotional activities) from the Malaysian Government. MKP has attracted a number of powerful stakeholders who have acted to design and implement the food-marketing program. The program is seen as an international platform to market and promote the country as an international tourist destination through its local cuisine, mainly through opening restaurant businesses overseas and exporting food products. This chapter, Chapter Five, addresses three aspects in achieving the second and third research objectives of this study.

It was also found that MKP employed various marketing communication tools to market and promote Malaysian cuisine. Moreover, collaboration between the stakeholders helped
in expanding the scope of promotional activities through their official websites and printed marketing collateral. The Malaysian Food Ambassador is one marketing strategy developed by MATRADE to represent the Malaysian Government and speak to existing and potential tourists about Malaysian cuisine. The Malaysian Government incorporated cooking competitions and food-related contests to attract crowds and motivate potential tourists to taste Malaysian cuisine and have a chance to win a trip to Malaysia. This acted to indirectly promote the Malaysian tourism industry.

Chapter Seven explored CitraRasa, the second case study, as another major food marketing campaign developed and established in 2009 by the Malaysian Government, through MOTAC in joint collaboration with MTPB. CitraRasa is a food marketing campaign listed on the MTPB’s annual domestic marketing calendar, which is organised together with MOTAC (as the DMO) throughout the country. It was identified that CitraRasa aimed to project an image of Malaysian cuisine to tourists so that they would have a better understanding of local delicacies and specialties. The chapter addresses the second, third and fourth research objective of this study. From the analyses it was found that the Malaysian Government, in cooperation and collaboration with various stakeholders, employed several forms of marketing communication ranging from mass media to social media. In this case, word-of-mouth was believed to be a vital aspect in marketing Malaysian cuisine. In terms of marketing initiatives, food-related activities such as cooking demonstrations and cooking competitions were part of the co-creation strategies used to attract tourists’ attention to taste-test and learn more about Malaysian cuisine. Apart from that, it was also found that cooking skills and cultural values were seen as effective ways to help tourists better understand Malaysian cuisine.

Furthermore, food experiences involving visitors either sampling or enjoying the colours and aromas of the foods have been a common approach in food-related events in CitraRasa campaign. An influx of food products which are made from Malaysian ingredients or carry Malaysian brands help efforts to increase tourists’ awareness of Malaysian cuisine. Additionally, the Malaysian Government has progressively marketed and promoted Malaysian cuisine by promoting Halal certification. CitraRasa is seen as a medium to market and brand the country through its local cuisine, mainly to promote food-related businesses and destination experiences.
8.3 Theoretical Contribution

Based on the key findings identified above, the aim of this section is to identify the theoretical contributions that arise from this study. This study has contributed to theory by enhancing the conceptual understanding of the integration of local cuisine into international tourist destination strategies. Incorporating the existing tourist marketing and food tourism concepts have provided a clearer picture of how local cuisine is used to market a tourist destination. The significant contributions derived from this study close the existing gaps in understanding how and why local cuisine has been integrated into international destination marketing strategies to promote tourist destination, particularly in Malaysia. These contributions are dealt with in relation to each of the four research objectives that the study addressed:

Research Objective 1 (RO1) – To explore the tourism policy environment which has shaped the integration of Malaysian cuisine into destination marketing strategies.

This study has confirmed the importance of the relationship between Malaysia’s identity as a multicultural country, the tourism industry and the food industry as a driving force behind the utilisation of local cuisine as significant components of tourist destination products and experiences. However, the findings of this study highlight that the Malaysian Government was able to assert considerable power and control over the kinds of foods and cuisine that were selected to showcase Malaysia through the destination marketing programs that were examined. Policy-making in this arena is seen as a form of political activity that can significantly influence the kinds of local cuisine that are promoted. In the case of MKP (i.e. Chapter Six), this study found that promoting and marketing Malaysian cuisine overseas requires a synergy and flexibility between foreign countries’ and Malaysia’s food and tourism related policies. This is a significant contribution that informs the need for the Malaysian Government and its relevant tourism agencies to understand the importance of synergy and flexibility in the utilisation of local cuisine in international destination marketing strategies. As articulated by Dredge and Jenkins (2011), planning and policy making in marketing tourist destinations requires consideration of the broader political agenda, together with stakeholders’ involvement.

This study has found that utilising local cuisine for Malaysia’s marketing strategies not only symbolises the multicultural identity of the nation but also provides some level of ‘power sharing’ among the three dominant ethnic groups; that is, the Malays, Chinese and Indians. However, there is an undercurrent of ethnic tension that was made manifest at
times in the ways by which cuisine (which cuisine and whose cuisine) was used for
destination marketing purposes. Malaysia may well be able to learn from Singapore’s
food tourism marketing strategies through actively facilitating the development of hawker
centres or food courts that embraced the multicultural ideals espoused at least rhetorically
by the Malaysian Government. This approach has not only has been successful as a
marketing strategy for Singapore as a food tourism destination, but also shows how the
Singapore Tourism Board (i.e. the DMO) has been able to successfully implement and
monitor food tourism development and associated destination marketing activities.

This study also found that the Malaysian Government sees local cuisine not just as a plate
of food but as a symbol of togetherness, unity of a broad range of ethnic and religious
(i.e. Halal – Muslim country) groups. Multicultural identity becomes the core value in
marketing Malaysia as an international tourist destination through its local cuisine. This
finding is similar to the study conducted by Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) concerning the
selling of Canada’s culinary traditions through destination marketing strategies. The CTC
faced difficulties in promoting local cuisine due to the broad range of ethnic groups that
comprise Canada.

Nevertheless, to define local cuisine in a multicultural country such as Malaysia is very
challenging. The Malaysian Government believes that, through MKP and CitraRasa (i.e.
annual food marketing campaigns), which themselves are undertaken in collaboration
with a number of stakeholders nationwide representing the tourism and food industries, a
stronger Malaysian ‘brand’ can be created that will be successful in attracting
international tourists to experience the ethnic diversity represented through its diversity
of local cuisine. Furthermore, incorporating innovative strategies such as signature dishes
that to some extent represent each ethnic group comprising Malaysia can create
opportunities to showcase ethnic diversity through cuisine. However, as I have shown,
considerable ethnic tensions remain in the process of selecting and promoting these
signature dishes. Indeed, the selection process was found to be somewhat opaque, with
the selection criteria not being made explicit. Local cuisine, in the context of Malaysian
destination marketing policies and practices, is therefore influenced not only by locally
grown ingredients and cooking styles but also by ethnic and, by extension, religious
identities.
Research Objective 2 (RO2) – To examine the roles and activities which the Malaysian Government and its relevant agencies are employing to present local cuisine as integral to Malaysian tourism and cultural identity.

The study’s findings reveal that the planning and development of food marketing campaigns to promote a tourist destination’s cuisine require the authentic involvement and support of a range of related stakeholders. As argued in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven, the private sector remains the champion of the tourism industry, whilst the government acts as a facilitator. Tourism-related agencies, especially the DMOs, are responsible for destination marketing and promotional activities. This is aligned with Pike’s (2004, 2008) concept of the three primary tourism stakeholders. CitraRasa was seen as practising this concept. The Malaysian Government, through its relevant agencies, takes responsibility to identify specific local dishes (i.e. known in Malaysia as signature dishes) to not only represent the country but also the entire population (i.e. multicultural identity) of Malaysia. The involvement of various government agencies as well as industry stakeholders is crucial not only in the effort of marketing Malaysia as a tourist destination through its local cuisine but also to market food products internationally. This ‘outward’ approach encourages demand for local food (i.e. Malaysian restaurant businesses overseas), food products (i.e. domestic agricultural activities and food manufacturing), as well as simultaneously branding Malaysia through its local cuisine, which indirectly promotes the country as an international tourist destination.

This study also found that there is little emphasis in current literature on the challenge of marketing and promoting local cuisine within the context of tourist destinations with multicultural constituencies, or on the effects of competition and even rivalries between competing national destinations. This study, using the case of Malaysia, contributes to a clearer understanding of this dimension of destination marketing. Rivalry between tourist destinations that share similar cuisine identities were seen as a substantial challenge in utilising local cuisine to market a tourist destination. This research further contributes to the body of knowledge on how a tourist destination’s government, such as the Malaysian Government, handles rivalry issues with neighbouring countries – which in Malaysia’s case include Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand. Tourist destinations find themselves competing directly with each other at both international and regional levels (Presenza et al., 2005). As argued by Gertrell (1993) and Wang (2011), this competition is due to political and economic changes in the macro-environment at the tourist destination which force the DMO to create and position the tourist destination’s image in the marketplace.
as well as act as a representative for local buyers and sellers. Therefore, in the context of the Malaysian Government, utilising local cuisine is regarded as a means of establishing and strengthening Malaysia’s brand in the international tourism marketplace.

Additionally, the relationship between globalisation and local cuisine can be one of the most crucial challenges for the Malaysian Government in its efforts to integrate the country’s cuisine as part of international marketing strategies for Malaysia. Similarly, the CTC believes that the main challenge to promoting Canadian cuisine as part of international marketing strategies derives from the ethnic diversity stemming from the many cultural groups who have immigrated to the country. Therefore, the CTC promotes Canadian cuisine by branding the country as a nation of immigrants (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006).

Research Objective 3 (RO3) – To analyse the strategic marketing initiatives that have been developed by the Malaysian Government to integrate local cuisine into the promotion of the country as an international tourist destination.

In examining the strategic marketing initiatives that have been developed by Malaysian Government to integrate local cuisine into the promotion of the country as an international tourist destination, it was found that the Malaysian Government employed various marketing initiatives to promote local cuisine and create identity awareness among tourists. Recruiting both mass media and social media channels to disseminate relevant information about local cuisine, either in visual (e.g. photographs) or textual form, was regarded as critical in the marketing of Malaysia as a destination through cuisine. In addition, other marketing initiatives, such as cooking demonstrations, exhibitions and contests, were found to be capable of providing ‘first-hand’ information and gastronomic experiences (i.e. gain knowledge based on sensory or food taste-testing) to the targeted audiences. Through these marketing initiatives, co-creation of tourist experiences was employed to facilitate closer involvement between tourists and the cuisines. These strategies aligned with Richards (2012) and Hall (2012), who argued that creating food-related activities and opportunities for experiencing cuisine are critical in the marketing and promotion of a tourist destination’s local cuisine. In the cases of MKP and CitraRasa, the food-related activities that are incorporated into these initiatives provide ‘first-hand’ food experience for potential tourists in tourism-generating regions as well as enabling the Malaysian tourism agencies to engage with a variety of market segments. Food experiences help tourists to ‘feel’, ‘evaluate’ and ‘gain a better understanding’ of
Malaysia’s identity through its local cuisine. Nevertheless, there are challenges for the Malaysian Government with respect to differentiating between food tourists and other types of tourists in terms of their information searches and their level of enthusiasm toward eating and learning about foreign foods and cuisines (Okumus et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2014).

Apart from the above initiatives, this study clarified that the idea of highlighting signature dishes can be important in marketing Malaysian cuisine as part of building and establishing the country’s identity and image as an international tourist destination with a multicultural constituency. Moreover, the Halal logo has been used to inform potential tourists that local cuisine in Malaysia is not only unique in the sense of the broad range of ethnic groups that underpin the cuisine but also that aspects of the cuisine are strongly influenced by Islamic laws and customs. By employing Halal labelling and enforcing it through policy, Malaysia has been successful in attracting tourists from the Middle East. Furthermore, signature dishes have their strength in differentiating between Malaysian and neighbouring countries’ cuisines. Signature dishes act as ‘food ambassadors’ to convey the story about the overall idea of Malaysian cuisine. The concept of signature dishes is seen as a successful initiative in comparison to national (i.e. Appadurai, 1988; Rozin, 1992), heritage (i.e. Metro-Roland, 2013; Timothy, 2015) or iconic (i.e. Everett, 2015) cuisine. National, heritage and iconic cuisines speak about a place or lifestyle of a people or ethnic group, whereas the signature dishes were used as a tool to inform a clear concept of local cuisine identity for Malaysia and position brand image in the mind of tourists. Although destination identity is seen as the core aspect in promoting and marketing local cuisine for Malaysia, using specific foods or dishes enables the country to be understood and recognised more easily worldwide. It is similar to the concept of branding a product.

**Research Objective 4 (RO4)** – To explore how Malaysian cuisine is represented in marketing and promotional activities which promote the country as an international tourist destination.

The content, discourse and semiotic analyses of the photographs and texts constituting tourism brochures and other marketing collateral revealed that Malaysia was not only well known for its diversity of cultures and races, but also established a clearer understanding of the local cuisine and its emotional and cultural significance. This, at the same time, would help to reduce impediments for tourists to experience local cuisine (Su
& Hong, 2012). The Malaysian Government has positioned Malaysia as an international tourist destination in which a diversity of local cuisines reflect the ethnic and regional diversity. The promotion of local cuisine reflects and in turn promotes Malaysia’s multicultural identity. This finding is aligned with Henderson’s (2009) argument that local cuisine should be a critical component in highlighting the tourist destination image and advertising theme. This is essential for the country with respect to building a clear and distinct cuisine image, especially in light of the competition from its neighbours, such as Singapore and Indonesia, whose cuisines share similar dishes. For example, the photographic analysis found that emphasising the various colourful ingredients found in the food not only conveys ideas about the creativity of food presentation, but also provides potential tourists with insightful information about the uniqueness of Malaysian cuisine. This can be seen through the repetition of the same meals and ingredients, such as nasi lemak, satay and red chillies, within the sample of marketing collateral examined and analysed. Additionally, this approach will encourage potential tourists to visualise and anticipate the types of cuisine experiences that they will have while travelling in Malaysia. Not only that, it was also found that the highlights of multicultural identity are seen as strategies to tap different target tourists/audiences/markets. For example, noodles with chopsticks for Chinese tourists, flat bread and curries for Indian tourists and Halal food for Muslim tourists.

8.4 Revisiting the Conceptual Framework

In Chapter Two, a conceptual framework was developed that was informed by the literature and which guided my research project. It was a conceptual device that allowed me to develop an understanding between the three elements (destination identities, tourism and local cuisine) which I sought to examine in the empirical study that I undertook. Based on the findings discussed in Chapter Four, Five, Six and Seven, the conceptual framework in Chapter Two (i.e. Figure 2.3 on page 32) has been revised and redeveloped and is presented in Figure 8.1.
Figure 8.1: A framework for integrating destination identities, tourism and local cuisine
(Original for this study)

As shown in Figure 8.1, the tourist destination’s tourism policy arena remains as critical in the process of integrating local cuisine into tourist destination identities and in the marketing strategies that ultimately aspire to creating these identities. In the case of Malaysia, national tourism policy and planning acts as the foundation stone for the entire tourism industry development. Although there is strong central governance, the regional (i.e. state) tourism policies and planning frameworks also play an influential role in efforts to integrate local cuisine as part of the suite of tourist destination marketing strategies for the country. The conceptual model also identifies other factors such as political, physical environmental, industry stakeholders, are all considered important in influencing and shaping destination identity and the role of local cuisine. In the case of Malaysia, the administrative structures of the country (i.e. federal constitutional monarchy which has a parliamentary democracy system of government) has strongly influenced the power of the Malaysian Government to plan, develop and execute the way in which local cuisine can be integrated into international destination marketing strategies. Geographical aspects, by way of contrast, are another set of forces which determine the competition/rivalry between neighbouring countries. A strong engagement
and collaboration with stakeholders (i.e. public and private sectors) is crucial when it comes to successfully marketing a destination on the basis of local cuisine. Socio-demographics and cultures are another set of forces that shape the creation of destination identities through the integration of local cuisine into international destination marketing strategies. In the case of Malaysia, a broad range of ethnic groups and different styles of food traditions and practices are among important aspects that have shaped local cuisine in Malaysia. Finally, food-related activities such as food businesses, agriculture, and food manufacturing are the driving force to produce, prepare and serve food that define association between destination identities and local cuisine.

All of the above factors influence and shape the creation of destination identities constructed out of an engagement with local cuisine and have been found to be important in the context of my study of the integration of local cuisine into the destination marketing strategies of the Malaysian Government. The empirical study has provided a much more nuanced and finely-grained understanding of the processes that constitute destination marketing than had been achieved just from my reading of the literature. The resulting model that I have developed (Figure 8.1) describes the situation in Malaysia and could be applied to other destinations and can also be used as a conceptual framework.

8.5 Implications

This PhD research is founded within a social constructivist paradigm that sought to provide a better understanding of how local cuisine (that is, Malaysian cuisine) is integrated into the Malaysian Government’s destination marketing strategies. In particular, the following findings can assist practitioners in integrating local cuisine into their international destination marketing strategies for Malaysia, and potentially similar locations.

This research has employed local cuisine concepts, destination identities, tourism policy and planning, and destination marketing theories to inform the analysis and interpretation of this research. In the case of Malaysia, multicultural identity has been clustered under marketing and branding. Tourism-related policies provide a clear direction in planning and implementing the marketing strategic plan. In contrast, local cuisine combined with tourism creates an awareness of the specific tourist destination to produce a strong destination image. Integration of local cuisine as part of tourism policy and planning helps to communicate the development of Malaysia’s identity and reflects, at least in part, political aspirations towards multiculturalism. It was found that Malaysia’s federal-
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

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orientation and national agenda are the two most important references in the efforts to integrate local cuisine into the country’s tourist destination marketing strategies. These findings suggest that governance structure and tourism related policies of a particular tourist destination has a direct impact on the role of local and or regional government in determining how and why local cuisine should be marketed as part of tourist attraction and experiences. Therefore, this study suggests that policymakers of a particular tourist destination should play an important role in carefully planning and developing marketing strategies involving the integration of local cuisine.

Furthermore, adapting relevant cuisine marketing strategies from neighbouring countries, such as Singapore and Thailand, which also experience competition from destinations with similar cuisines could provide the Malaysian Government with more tools to better integrate local cuisine into their tourism marketing strategies. This would help in terms of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each or every implementation. Thus, well-planned marketing strategies help to create a clear image of local cuisine that reflects the tourist destination.

With regard to stakeholders’ roles and activities, it is crucial at the tourist destination to identify tourism products that have the power to persuade tourists to come, and at the same time establish the tourist destination’s identity. In the context of local cuisine and tourism development, this study has found that the most important aspect for tourist destination marketing and management is recognising who has legitimate power to make a final decision on which and how foods or dishes can be marketed. The Malaysian Government and its relevant agencies are aiming to integrate local cuisine into Malaysia’s tourism and cultural identity, this study found that the government mainly acts as the facilitator for the marketing initiatives. The private sector, as discussed earlier, implements and operationalises the all of the marketing strategies that have been planned. As for marketing, even though the DMO is ultimately in charge, this study suggests that the involvement and cooperation of various stakeholders is necessary to help disseminate relevant information related to Malaysian cuisine. Involvement of a multitude of stakeholders, as discussed in Chapter Two, could raise conflict in partnerships with actors from a diverse range of backgrounds and with specific interests. In the case of Malaysia, the DMO (i.e. MTPB) attempts to strike not only a balance between the individual organisation’s (i.e. DMO, private sector/industry association, and etc.) benefits and the common benefits, but also the three dominant ethnic groups that make up the Malaysian population. This can be achieved via participation from food businesses from various
ethnic background. However, once again, continuous support from the relevant stakeholders is crucial in carrying out such marketing initiatives and promotional activities. All these require strategic planning with thorough deliberation as well as continuous support and involvement from both public and private sectors. The Malaysian Government needs to play an important role in determining and encouraging both food and tourism activities and observing their progress. Furthermore, as a country with a multicultural identity, this study found that more balanced involvement of ethnic groups in both the food and tourism industries should not be neglected and should indeed be encouraged. However, there is a political and social reality operating here with regard to ethnic relations and politics in Malaysia that provides a backdrop to the integration of cuisine into tourism marketing. This reality means that there are still tensions and fissures that exist between the three main ethnic groups. These will not be addressed through gastro-tourism policy.

This study identified that strategic marketing initiatives have been developed by the Malaysian Government to integrate local cuisine into the promotion of the country as an international tourist destination. Results showed that the Malaysian Food Ambassador and cooking demonstrators at CitraRasa’s food events are appointed as the representatives who speak and share stories about Malaysian cuisine on behalf of the Malaysian Government as well as the Malaysian nation. This initiative, at the same time, provides opportunity for the Malaysian Government to get closer to potential tourists and get ‘direct contact’ and obtain ‘instant’ feedback on their perception and understanding of local cuisine. In addition, the recruitment of mass media and social media indicate that the Malaysian Government and various stakeholders believe that these are among the most efficient communication channels to disseminate stories and information about Malaysian cuisine. Furthermore, mass media and social media were shown to be the most accessible forms of communication given that they are accessed by many people at any time, with broad worldwide coverage.

Finally, ideas of local cuisine are marketed in either pictorial or textual forms, thus demonstrating the focus of the Malaysian Government’s efforts in selling the uniqueness of local cuisine and shaping its destination identity. Obviously, this study has found that local cuisine is marketed and promoted as part of Malaysia’s tourism attraction and experiences based on its multicultural identity. In other words, food not only conveys ideas about the creativity of food presentation, but also provides potential tourists with insightful information about the essence for the country to build a clear and distinct
cuisine image, especially in light of the competition from its neighbours, such as Singapore and Indonesia, whose cuisines share similar dishes. This study suggests that the Malaysian Government needs to pay more attention to the details presented in marketing information (i.e. both photographs and texts) such as tourism collateral and official websites. It was found that most of the text concerning Malaysian cuisine was overly descriptive, which could be confusing to the readers. Furthermore, in some photographs the messages that were being presented were difficult to identify and were somewhat ambiguous. Some of the dishes deliver specific ideas which contribute to Malaysia’s identity development such as exoticness (i.e. Sabah and Sarawak) and specific food experiences (i.e. noodles for Chinese tourists). All these unique local food experiences in different regions of Malaysia help to promote the country overall as a food tourism destination. However, this can be questionable in term of their effectiveness with respect to creating and establishing the notion of local cuisine for Malaysia’s identity development. Given that the Malaysian Government has shown strong support for and put a great deal of effort into delivering colourful and user-friendly marketing materials that contain details about local cuisine, the country is better promoted as an international tourist destination.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that practitioners, particularly those related to tourism and the food industry, ensure that they can collaborate to ensure the success of marketing and branding their country through using local cuisine. This joint collaboration can encourage and motivate potential and existing tourists to travel to a particular tourist destination. However, these initiatives will be impossible without strong and continuous support from the tourist destination’s government and its relevant agencies. Moreover, the most difficult challenge faced by the Malaysian Government in undertaking this effort/initiative is to define the concept of local cuisine due to the multicultural identity of the nation. The List of National Heritage Dishes appears to be an attempt to ensure that there is reasonably fair representation of cuisine items from the three dominant ethnic groups and so minimise intra-ethnic conflict around Malaysian cuisine. Involvement of the various stakeholders, from both government and tourism and food industries can be seen as a more practical demonstration of cooperation between the three dominant ethnicities. This could be improved and refined in terms of how to ensure equal chances of participation and involvement by various stakeholders. Integrating local cuisine into international destination marketing strategies is not about placing the right photographs
with correct descriptions, it goes beyond that (i.e. providing sensory experience and harnessing the story behind the food itself).

8.6 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this section is to identify and explain the limitations of this study. The limitations of this research are largely driven by the generalisability of the findings and the research method. Addressing the limitations provides several possible considerations for future inquiry to improve our understanding of the integration of local cuisine into international tourist destination marketing strategies. It is hoped that future research, as suggested by this study, is able to contribute to the tourism literature and enhance the existing body of knowledge pertaining to local cuisine and tourist destination marketing.

This research only focused on two case studies, specifically food marketing campaigns that were highly facilitated and supported by the Malaysian Government. As described and justified in Chapter Three, the choice of MKP and CitraRasa as the case studies were based on the involvement of Malaysian Government and their aims as well as modus operandi. However, there are still limitations to the case study approach. The specific context of the case studies limits the applicability of the findings for other countries or tourist destinations that do not have government-led food marketing campaigns like Malaysia. Therefore, this study suggests future research projects/scholars to identify and justify their case study selection based on specific theory. This study also highly recommends that future studies should focus on comparison cases between two or more tourist destinations with similar food marketing campaign so as to provide more theoretical and practical insight on the local cuisine marketing strategies and practices. In addition, given that there are five main MKP market segments worldwide, future research may expand the study scope and look into other countries, such as the UK, US, Canada and many others. Future research in this area will help to provide a deeper understanding of how different marketing and promotion initiatives have been used and implemented tourist destination, as well as the challenges associated with a multicultural background.

As mentioned and discussed in Chapter Three, one of the case studies employed in this research project mainly focused on the domestic market. However, international tourists were also encouraged to attend and experience CitraRasa. One of the challenges was to identify international tourists especially those who came from Asian regions. The only real way to address this issue in a larger study would be to ascertain people’s national identity at the start of any conversations or interviews with them.
Moreover, it is also acknowledged that there are some limitations in adopting a qualitative research approach, especially the capability to generalise the findings, which are restricted to the study participants. Furthermore, due to the time and financial constraints (i.e. the study and scholarship period), the data (semi-structured interviews, systematic observations, and informal conversations) were collected between 2013 and 2014. Several potential informants declined or were not able to participate in this study due to tight work schedules. It was also found that some of the informants refused to be interviewed because they were concerned that they could jeopardise their career if they made statements. It seems that discussing local cuisine is considered controversial. However, this may not necessarily be the case. From my own experiences of working as part of the Malaysian Public Service, there can be a considerable reticence in discussing matters associated with Government policy, regardless of the specific topic. Some may well have believed that they do not have the power or authority to discuss and represent the organisation for this study. However, I do believe that, as a Malaysian researcher, I was able to gain access and establish a higher degree of trust than would have been the case if had I been a researcher from another country (i.e. an outsider). Efforts were made to collect archival documents to analyse and gain a better understanding of the historical background of integrating local cuisine into Malaysia’s international destination marketing strategies. However, some of the archival documents have limited access and remain confidential. Therefore, this study was unable to interview several key informants and access some relevant archival documents.

From a methodological point-of-view, it would be useful if future studies could involve a researcher as part of a team to experience the entire process of integrating local cuisine into international tourist destination marketing strategies. This would allow researchers to observe the deliberation between various stakeholders, especially at the planning stage. More details of debates and negotiations among the stakeholders can be explored in terms of selecting and choosing specific foods or dishes to represent the tourist destination’s cuisine identity. In addition, this would provide an opportunity for future research to identify and examine the social networks between and within the organising team (i.e. between the various stakeholders). However, it may not be realistic for a single researcher to integrate him or herself into the destination marketing process at the degree to which I am suggesting, unless that researcher was themselves undertaking an ethnographic PhD study that provided the opportunity for such a long-term immersion into the process.
Reference list


An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia


MTPB, Kedah Office, (n.d.). *Explore, experience, enjoy... Alor Setar food trail see it differently* [Brochure]. Kedah, Malaysia: Author.


An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia


Richards, G. (2015b). Food experience as integrated destination marketing strategy. In the paper presented at the *World Food Tourism Summit in Estoril, Portugal, 10 April 2015*.


APPENDICES
Appendix 1  SCU Human Research Ethics Committee Approval

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC)
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE (HRESC)

NOTIFICATION

To:  Associate Professor Kevin Markwell/ Mohd Hairi Jalis  
School of Tourism and Hospitality  
kevin.markwell@scu.edu.au; m.jalis.10@student.scu.edu.au

From:  Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee  
Division of Research, R. Block

Date:  17 October 2013

Project name:  An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into an International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

Approval Number ECN-13-262

The Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee has established, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research – Section 5 Processes of Research Governance and Ethical Review, a procedure for expedited review and ratification by a delegated authority of the HREC.

Thank you for your expedited ethics application dated 17 October 2013. This has been considered by the Chair, HREC, Professor Bill Boyd. He considers your research to be well planned and ready to commence.

All ethics approvals are subject to standard conditions of approval. These must be noted by researchers as there is compliance and monitoring advice included in these conditions.

Ms Sue Kelly  
HREC Administration  
T: (02) 6626 9139  
E: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

Professor Bill Boyd  
Chair, HREC  
E: william.boyd@scu.edu.au
The following standard conditions of approval are mandatory for all research projects which have been approved by the HREC or a HRESC and have received an ethics approval number.

All reporting is to be submitted through the Human Research Ethics Office, either at Lismore, Coffs Harbour or GCTwil. The email addresses are:

ethics_lismore@scu.edu.au
ethics_coffs@scu.edu.au

Forms for annual reports, renewals, completions and changes of protocol are available at the website:

Standard Conditions in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement) (NS).

1. Monitoring

NS 5.5.1 – 5.5.10

Responsibility for ensuring that research is reliably monitored lies with the institution under which the research is conducted. Mechanisms for monitoring can include:
(a) reports from researchers;
(b) reports from independent agencies (such as a data and safety monitoring board);
(c) review of adverse event reports;
(d) random inspections of research sites, data, or consent documentation; and
(e) interviews with research participants or other forms of feedback from them.

2. Approvals

(a) All ethics approvals are valid for 12 months unless specified otherwise. If research is continuing after 12 months, then the ethics approval MUST be renewed. Complete the Annual Report/Renewal form and send to the ethics office.

(b) NS 5.5.5

The researchers will provide a report every 12 months on the progress to date or outcome in the case of completed research including detail about:
Maintenance and security of the records.
Compliance with the approved proposal.
Compliance with any conditions of approval.
Changes of protocol to the research.

3. Reporting to the HREC

(c) The researchers will immediately notify the ethics office, on the appropriate form, any change in protocol. NS 5.5.3

(d) A completion report, on the appropriate form, must be forwarded to the ethics office.

(e) The researchers will immediately notify the ethics office about any circumstance that might affect ethical acceptance of the research protocol. NS 5.5.3

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CREDITS Provider: NSW Office of the Ombudsman, WA Office of the Ombudsman

An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia
2. Research conducted overseas

NS 4.8.1 – 4.8.21

Researchers conducting a study in a country other than Australia, need to be aware of any protocols for that country and ensure that they are followed ethically and with appropriate cultural sensitivity.

3. Participant Complaints

NS 5.6.1 – 5.6.7

General information

Institutions may receive complaints about researchers or the conduct of research, or about the conduct of a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or other review body.

Complaints may be made by participants, researchers, staff of institutions, or others. All complaints should be handled promptly and sensitively. All participants in research conducted by Southern Cross University should be advised of the above procedure and be given a copy of the contact details for the Complaints Officer. They should also be aware of the ethics approval number issued by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

The following paragraph is to be included in any plain language statements for participants in research.

Complaints about the ethical conduct of this research should be addressed in writing to the following:

Ethics Complaints Officer
HREC
Southern Cross University
PO Box 167
Lismore, NSW, 2480
Email: ethics.lismore@scc.edu.au

All complaints are investigated fully and according to due process under the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and this University. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 2  Sample of Observation Sheet

### Malaysia International Gourmet Festival 2014
Observation Sheet – Overall Venue Physical Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th># Number of Participation</th>
<th>Division of Zone and Number</th>
<th>Photo #</th>
<th>Special Theme/Features/Layout</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start from: 1. Hotel restaurant 2. Standalone restaurant 3. Chain Franchise 4. Food retailer</td>
<td>A Main Entrance</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Take photo(s) of the floor layout</em> Identify the position of the stall and the visitors’ movement flow from the main entrance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End at:</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
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<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Malaysia International Gourmet Festival 2014
Observation Sheet – Stall Physical Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone: A B C D E</th>
<th>Stall #</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Photo #</th>
<th>Exhibit/Organization</th>
<th>Food Specialty/Theme</th>
<th>Special Theme/Features</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Any particular food that attract visitor’s attention.</em></td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Malaysia International Gourmet Festival 2014
Observation Sheet – The People, Frequency and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Stall #</th>
<th>Photo #</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Estimated # of People</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>People (count)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic tourists</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1. Food ingredients display</td>
<td>Positively engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>International tourism</td>
<td>200-300</td>
<td>2. Cooking demonstration</td>
<td>Positively engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group tour (International)</td>
<td>500-600</td>
<td>3. Food sampling</td>
<td>Positively engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group tour (Domestic)</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>4. Cooking/food contest</td>
<td>Positively engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local residence</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>5. Others</td>
<td>Positively engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others (School/academic group visit and etc)</td>
<td>1000-</td>
<td>6. Others</td>
<td>Positively engaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number of Others (in the fourth column) - identify if there is any relevant tourism agency or tour operator involved during the event.

**Date:**

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### Malaysia International Gourmet Festival 2014
Observation Sheet – Photography Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone:</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Photo #</td>
<td>Photo Description</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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</table>

*Consistent collection of images of the same point in each zone/stall. Please put a note if there is any other image taken at the event.

**Date:**
Appendix 3  Consent Form for Participant

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT

Title of Research Project:
An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine in International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia

Tick the box that applies, sign and date and give to the researcher

I agree to take part in the Southern Cross University research project specified above.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand the information about my participation in the research project, which has been provided to me by the researchers.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I agree to allow the interview to be *audio-taped and/or *video-taped.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I agree to make myself available for further interview if required.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I understand that I can cease my participation at any time.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand that my participation in this research will be treated with confidentiality.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand that any information that may identify me will be de-identified at the time of analysis of any data.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed or published.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand that all information gathered in this research will be kept confidentially for 7 years at the University.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I am aware that I can contact the researchers at any time with any queries. Their contact details are provided to me.  Yes ☐  No ☐

I understand that this research project has been approved by the SCU Human Research Ethics Committee.  Yes ☐  No ☐

Participants name: __________________________

Participants signature: _______________________

Date: _______________________

☐ Please tick this box and provide your email or mail address below if you wish to receive feedback about the research.

Email: __________________________

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Appendix 4  Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO

CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Paris, 17 October 2003

MISC/2003/CLT/CH/14
CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization hereinafter referred to as UNESCO, meeting in Paris, from 29 September to 17 October 2003, at its 32nd session,

Referring to existing international human rights instruments, in particular to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,

Considering the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development, as underscored in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore of 1989, in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, and in the Istanbul Declaration of 2002 adopted by the Third Round Table of Ministers of Culture,

Considering the deep-seated interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage,

Recognizing that the processes of globalization and social transformation, alongside the conditions they create for renewed dialogue among communities, also give rise, as does the phenomenon of intolerance, to grave threats of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular owing to a lack of resources for safeguarding such heritage,

Being aware of the universal will and the common concern to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of humanity,

Recognizing that communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of the intangible cultural heritage, thus helping to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity,

Noting the far-reaching impact of the activities of UNESCO in establishing normative instruments for the protection of the cultural heritage, in particular the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972,

Noting further that no binding multilateral instrument as yet exists for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage,

Considering that existing international agreements, recommendations and resolutions concerning the cultural and natural heritage need to be effectively enriched and supplemented by means of new provisions relating to the intangible cultural heritage,

Considering the need to build greater awareness, especially among the younger generations, of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage and of its safeguarding,

Considering that the international community should contribute, together with the States Parties to this Convention, to the safeguarding of such heritage in a spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance.
Appendix 5  Malaysian Government Structure in Food and Tourism

MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT

Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC)

Minister

Deputy Secretary (Tourism Industry)

5 Divisions
Strategic planning, VMY, Industry Development, Infrastructure, & MaTiC

Secretariat
Visit Malaysia Year

Malaysia Information Tourism Centre (MaTiC)

Deputy Secretary (Mgt & Monitorin)

7 Divisions
HR, Admin, Account, Information Tech, Licensing, MM2H, & State Offices

Deputy Secretary (Culture)

5 Units
Internal Audit, Legal, Integrity, KPI, & Corporate Communication

3 Divisions
Policy & Planning, International Relation, & Event Management

Event Management

13 MOTAC State Offices

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB)

9 Departments & Agencies

Department of National Heritage

Malaysian Food Heritage 2009

DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL

DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Fabulous Food
1Malaysia 2009 until 2013

CitraRasa 2006 & 2014 (until today)

A Taste of Malaysia 2012

An Analysis of the Integration of Local Cuisine into International Destination Marketing Strategies for Malaysia