El rol de la comida local en el comportamiento de los turistas: un enfoque de modelo de ecuaciones estructurales

The role of local food in tourists' behavior: a structural equation modelling approach

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Abstract

Even though local food represents a major tourist attraction due to cultural heritage and food experiences, very few studies have reported tourists' behavioral components regarding local food consumption. The main objective of this study is to analyze the tourists' behavioral model and examine the influence of the tourists' motivation and satisfaction on their loyalty towards local food consumption. Ayutthaya city, Thailand, is selected because of its authentic traditional food and tourism activities linked to it. Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) are employed to assure the suitable proposed factor, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is applied to test the hypothesized relationship between the constructs of satisfaction with the local food, motivation, and behavioral intention. Results of this study

revealed that tourist motivations have a significant and direct influence on satisfaction and behavioral intentions statistically. As the findings, the more tourists are motivated to consume local food, the more satisfied and more intention to revisit and recommend the tourists. Any study aiming to understand the local food tourists' behavior is helpful to take these constructs into consideration.

Keywords: motivations; satisfaction; behavioral intention; local food industry; structural equation modeling; tourism.

Resumen

Aunque la comida local representa una importante atracción turística debido al patrimonio cultural y las experiencias gastronómicas, muy pocos estudios han informado sobre los componentes del comportamiento de los turistas con respecto al consumo de alimentos locales. El objetivo principal de este estudio es analizar el modelo de comportamiento de los turistas y examinar la influencia de la motivación y satisfacción de los turistas en su lealtad hacia el consumo de alimentos locales. Se selecciona la ciudad de Ayutthaya, Tailandia, por su auténtica comida tradicional y las actividades turísticas vinculadas a ella. Se emplean Análisis Factoriales Confirmatorios (CFA) para asegurar el factor propuesto adecuado, y se aplica el Modelo de Ecuaciones Estructurales (MEE) para contrastar la hipótesis entre los constructos de satisfacción con la comida local, la motivación y la intención de comportamiento. Los resultados de este estudio revelaron que las motivaciones turísticas tienen una influencia directa y estadísticamente significativa sobre la satisfacción y las intenciones de comportamiento. Se encuentra que, cuanto más motivados están los turistas a consumir comida local, más satisfechos y más intención de volver a visitar y recomendar comida local a otras personas. Los constructos analizados en esta investigación son útiles para cualquier estudio que tenga como objetivo comprender el comportamiento de los turistas gastronómicos a nivel local.

Palabras clave: motivaciones; satisfacción; intención de comportamiento; industria de comida local; modelo de ecuaciones estructurales; turismo.

1 Introduction

Cuisine and dining out have been found to be the most favorite activity for international visitors in a destination (Mckercher et al., 2008; Tsai & Wang, 2016; Young et al., 2018). Local food is part of the main elements to attract tourists from around the world to visit the tourism destinations (Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021; Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Pérez-Gálvez, López-Guzmán, Cordova-Buiza & Medina-Viruel, 2017). Gastronomy enhances and integrates tourist destinations as gastronomic attractions (Pérez-Gálvez, Jaramillo-Granda, López-Guzman & Reinoso-Coronel, 2017). Besides, food tourism provides visitors with authentic culinary education and a far greater understanding, appreciation, and connection to a destination (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Food tourism strengthens local identity and unique culture, supporting destination development by creating a relationship between food and tourism (Sormaz et al., 2016). Gastronomy plays a significant role in the way tourists experience the destinations and indicate that some travelers would return to the same destination to taste its unique gastronomy.

Many travelers consume local food for the purpose of learning about local culture and culinary traditions (The World Food Travel Association, 2021). Local food is well known as a tourism product in many countries such as Thailand, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Spain, Italy, and France (Chang, 2021; Chimbanrai & Wongsaroj, 2015; Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021; Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Kim, Park & Lamb, 2019; Privitera & Saverio, 2015). For these reasons, tourism providers are now focusing on food tourism as a primary product of destination marketing. Thus, food and beverage industry is crucial for the tourism value chain. For example, tourists spend approximately 25% of their budget on food and beverage (World Food Travel Association, 2020) so, consequently, the cuisine of a tourism destination is highly important in the quality of the holiday experience (World Tourism Organization, 2012).

Scholars attempt to identify and understand why people are interested in local food as a tourism attraction. They have explored some behavioral models in various types of tourism and destinations (Han & Hyup, 2018; Kil et al., 2014; Lee, 2009; Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Wu, 2016; Yi et al., 2018; Yürük et al., 2017), but the emphasis on local food tourism is less investigated (Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2013; Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009;

Privitera & Saverio, 2015; Wu, 2016; Young et al., 2018), and food tourism is regularly analyzed from the point of view of a big tourism destination. Furthermore, they apply various components to prove their conceptual behavior models. According to theory from previous studies, the combination of significant attributes is performed in this paper to develop a conceptual model of local food consumption (Chi et al., 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012). It is necessary to understand certain factors affecting the improvement of local food as tourist attractions. By means of empirical research, this study is rigorously investigating a specific tourist destination as Ayutthaya, Thailand.

Thailand is known well for unique local experiences such as the street market, food festivals, and Thai cuisines. Ayutthaya is a town that has historical significance, outstanding both physical history, and civilization. Ayutthaya has prospered into a significant gastronomic tourism destination due to unique local products (Tunkhao28, 2021; Pullphothong & Sopha, 2013).

As stated above, there is little research on gastronomic tourism. At the moment, there are no studies that investigate the tourists' behavior in a Thai local food tourism destination, such as Ayutthaya. Thus, the city of Ayutthaya, a tourism destination with an authentic traditional food tourism destination, is consequently picked to explain its behavioral model on local food consumption.

Therefore, this research aims to investigate the relationships among tourists' behavioral components on aspects of local food consumption. In addition, from a theoretical point of view, this research can help to understand tourists' behavior in a local food destination. The three following objectives are formulated: (1) to analyze the sociodemographic and behavioral characteristics of the visitors of a local food destination; (2) to explore each component of the tourists' behavior model in a food tourism destination (i.e., motivation, satisfaction, and loyalty); (3) to explain the relationships between the different components of tourists' behavior in a local food destination.

2 Literature review

2.1   Food and local food tourism

Cuisine has become a significant tourist attraction in many regions (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; López-Guzmán et al., 2017). Food tourism can be defined as 'the act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place' (The World Food Travel Association, 2021). Local food is defined as 'food and drinks produced in the local area or grown locally, and local specialty food with a local identity' (Chang et al., 2010). This concept of local food is employed throughout this study. The relationship between gastronomy and tourism has been indispensable, especially in the destination-related to culture and heritage. Tourists appreciating the cultural destination are not only curious about its heritage knowledge but also desire to have sensorial experiences (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). According to Chang et al. (2010), cultural influence is a crucial determinant of tourists' food preferences.

Theoretical concepts of food tourism are presented from several perspectives. Rousta & Jamshidi (2020) examined the effect of local food consumption value by focusing on destination food images and attitudes towards local food consumption, while Kim, Eves & Scarles (2009) propose a model of local food consumption by referring to motivational factors, demographic factors, and physiological factors (i.e., food neophilia and food neophobia). Food tourists' behavior also is investigated by referring perceived value and satisfaction to their revisiting intention (Kim, Kim & Goh, 2011).

The profile of gastronomic tourists is diverse and different sociodemographic characteristics may affect tourists' behavior. For example, Moral-Cuadra et al. (2021) find that an increase in age involves a better appreciation for food variety, their taste and an increment of their intention to return to a destination. Also, according to Gupta et al. (2020), the sociodemographic profile of tourists (i.e. country of origin, gender, age, religion and education level) is also linked to their food consumption behavior.

2.2   Tourist motivations

Travel motivations have a significant role in developing tourism because they affect tourist behavior (Afonso et al., 2018; Pestana et al., 2020). Travel motivation is one of the most important psychological tourist influences (Van Vuuren & Slabbert, 2011). For the food tourism concept, tourists travel to the destination motivated by cuisine as the country image such as Thai, Chinese, Italian, French, Spanish food, etc. (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019). Many studies relating to travel motivations have attempted to identify motivational factors. Mak et

al. (2012) propose five motivational factors that influence tourist food consumption: symbolic, obligatory, contrast, extension, and pleasure. The study by Kim, Eves & Scarles (2009) suggests nine motivational factors of local food consumption: an exciting experience, escape from a routine, health concern, learning knowledge, authentic experience, togetherness, prestige, sensory appeal, and physical environment. They investigated motivational dimensions in a UK case study, and they found five primary dimensions: cultural experience; interpersonal relation; excitement; sensory appeal; and health concern (Kim et al., 2013). Likewise, similar attributes are used to explain the study that the gastronomic experience is a motivational factor in tourist movements (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019). Mora et al. (2021) also identify a list of motivations and test their effect on gastronomic perceived value and gastronomic experience.

2.3   Tourist satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as 'the key factor that drives when the product or service's performance exceeds expectations. Satisfaction is a post-purchase state of consumer's mind whether mirrors how much the consumer likes or dislikes the service after experiencing it' (Meesala & Paul, 2016). In tourism, tourists' satisfaction comes from comparing and fulfilling expectations through the real experience during their trips. The satisfaction of tourists is a requirement for the success of a tourist destination since this satisfaction is one of the most critical predictors in building tourists' future behavior (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019). This aspect is supported by Ozdemir et al. (2012) that satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination to others.

Chi et al. (2013) presented three main factors influencing tourists' satisfaction toward food consumption in Malaysia (restaurant atmosphere and service; convenience and local cultural experience; and food quality and variety). Similarly, research on the role of food service in tourist satisfaction visiting the Black Sea resorts of Romania found that the satisfaction of customers based on their perceptions of food quality, value for money, variety of dishes, the attractiveness of surroundings, and presentation of food increase their level of loyalty intentions (Nield et al., 2000). This study defines that food service is a significant factor in determining tourist satisfaction. In comparison, food and beverage price was explored as a principal dimension affecting tourist satisfaction in a case study of Trang province in

Thailand (Thaothampitak & Weerakit, 2006). However, Choe & Kim (2019) identified a dimensional scale to measure tourists' local food consumption value. According to this work, taste/quality, epistemic, interaction, health, emotional, and price value are potential dimensions that affect the tourist satisfaction of tasting local food. Mora et al. (2021) explore gastronomic satisfaction through the following three items: its importance to the satisfaction in the destination, whether it was a good decision to taste the gastronomy of the destination, and the satisfaction level with the gastronomy of the destination.

2.4   Tourist behavioral intentions

Behavioral intentions have been empirically investigated in tourism research (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Behavioral intention or future behavior is used as a critical indicator to assess any business's achievement of a travel marketing strategy (Chi et al., 2013). In prior studies, behavioral intentions can be divided into three components: intention to revisit, intention to recommend, and word-of-mouth communication (Prayag et al., 2013). However, in research linked to food tourism, intention to visit a destination for gastronomic tourism was only considered as a central element of future behavior construct by (Kim, Kim & Goh, 2011). Bayih & Singh (2020) cited that both the repetition of the visit and the recommendation can be predicted from variables related to the destination's image, perceived quality, motivation, and visitor satisfaction.

The intention to revisit the destination is observed as a critical outcome to investigate factors affecting tourists' local food consumption value (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020). The intention to recommend refers to 'the informal person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service' (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Behavioral intention can be achieved when tourists are satisfied with all fulfilled expectations (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019). For example, Mora et al. (2021) consider behavioural intentions in the loyalty component and include items on: recommendation to visit the destination when asking gastronomic advice, encouragement to family and friends to visit certain restaurants, intention to return to a restaurant, intention to buy product of the local gastronomy tried during the trip, and recommendation of local gastronomic products of the destinations visited. Accordingly, the concept of behavioral intentions in this study is defined based on the literature cited.

2.5 Relationship among motivation, satisfaction, and behavioral intention

Motivation and satisfaction have been relatively examined in the field of leisure and tourism (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Jaapar et al., 2017; Pestana et al., 2020). Motivation items are used as a component of the behavior leading to satisfaction with the tourist destination (Albayrak & Caber, 2018). According to López-Guzmán et al. (2017), tourist motivations associated with food experience contribute to greater satisfaction from participating in gastronomic festivals. They mention that the level of satisfaction concerning local gastronomy is determined by the reasons that tourists motivate their consumption. Similar results by Berbel-Pineda et al. (2019), considering cuisine as an element of tourist motivation, reveal that different dimensions of motivations positively influence satisfaction.

A review of the past studies reveals that both tourist motivations and satisfaction were confirmed to have a positive relationship with behavioral intentions (Bayih & Singh, 2020; Mora et al., 2021). Comparing travel decision-makers in adventure tourism, Sato et al. (2018) proposed the hypothesized structural model of motivation, satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The behavioral intention was referred to as an outcome of motivation, satisfaction in this literature. This concept was backed up by Pestana, Parreira, & Moutinho (2020), who define that motivational differences positively affect the behavioral intentions of senior travelers. Nevertheless, the direct relations between tourist motivations and behavioral intentions were often neglected in antecedent studies (Battour et al., 2012; Lee, 2009; Shukor et al., 2017). Meanwhile, other authors regard that a mediating role of satisfaction better predicts the effect of motivation on post-purchase tourist behavior (Shukor et al., 2017; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

The relationship between tourists' satisfaction and their behavioral intentions has been widely studied (Alberto et al., 2017; Chien et al., 2018). In the tourism field, various works have used this indicator as a central role to measure behavioral loyalty intentions (Chiu et al., 2016; Han & Hyup, 2018). Most research states that the tourist satisfaction field is a major construct in explaining their intention to revisit and recommend, as shown in empirical studies (Ozdemir et al., 2012; Yürük et al., 2017). On the other side, satisfaction is a significant predictor of word-of-mouth transmission and intention to repurchase (Nyer, 1997). This study advises that future behaviors should be best to build a model using satisfaction. This

idea is formed in empirical tourism research in various contexts (Dimitriades, 2006; Gallarza & Saura, 2006). Thus, satisfaction is found to affect behavioral intentions in a positive direction directly. Also, satisfaction is determined to be a mediating construct between travel motivation and behavioral intentions.

Based on these empirical perspectives, the literature review of the current study associated with gastronomy-based tourist studies is quite limited. Although previous research addresses the relationship between tourist motivation, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, the whole model of tourists towards local food in tourism destinations has not been yet examined. In the literature review set out above, motivation, satisfaction, and intentions have been noticed as the significant elements to understand the pattern of tourists' behavior. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated:
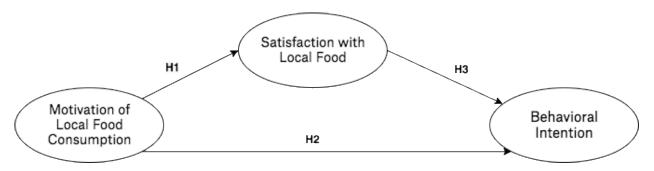
H1: Tourists' motivations toward local food have a direct and positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

H2: Tourists' motivations toward local food have a direct and positive effect on behavioral intentions.

H3: Tourist satisfaction regarding local food consumption has a direct and positive impact on behavioral intentions.

The research model of this study is designed to identify the relationship among motivations, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of tourists to local food. The observed items used to evaluate these behavioral components are chosen based on previous research (Dimitriades, 2006; Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Kee et al., 2017; Lee, 2009; Ozdemir et al., 2012; Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Shukor et al., 2017). The proposed hypothetical model of this research adapted from previous studies is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Source: author elaboration

3   Destination background

The study is carried out in the city of Ayutthaya, located in Thailand. Ayutthaya is an ancient city full of historical attractions as it was the capital of Thailand for 417 years before moving to Bangkok. The historic city of Ayutthaya is well known for gorgeous temples and palaces. For this reason, it has become an attractive tourist destination. The ancient city of Ayutthaya is managed as a historical park, declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1991. In addition to the outstanding historical sites, Ayutthaya has also presented its fabulous culture and history through its heritage food (Teanpewroj, 2017).

Ayutthaya has presently prospered into a significant gastronomic tourism destination due to cultural heritage and food. The well-known authentic dishes in Ayutthaya among tourists include the following: Kouy Tiew Rue (noodle soup served with vegetables, either pork or beef, entrails, and pork crackling), Kung Mae Nam Pao (charcoal-grilled Ayutthaya river prawn served with spicy seafood sauce), and Roti Sai Mai (cotton candy wrapped with roti flour). The highlight of local food tourism in Ayutthaya comprises the floating market where tourists can find dishes cooked on boats and served to customers sitting and eating on decks next to the boats. The night market and street food are also the city's star attractions for tourists to discover the local cuisine and taste various small snacks or dishes.

As Ayutthaya areas are noted for their culture and heritage, the surrounding architecture gave expression to this historic metropolis. As a result, the main accommodation options for tourists in Ayutthaya consists of resorts. The resort is a popular place for tourists to experience traditional Thai-style houses (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2022). Ayutthaya houses usually feature a wooden structure reflecting the local people's living style.

Guesthouses and hostels are principally located all over the city. It is also a popular type of accommodation in Ayutthaya. A homestay is an option for people who seek the opportunity to learn a variety of cultures from residents, such as residence activities, local gastronomy, and religious practices. This type of accommodation is often located on the outskirts of Ayutthaya town, while hotels offer all kinds of facilities and are located in the center, near major tourist spots.

4   Methodology

The survey instrument comprises five main sections: sociodemographic characteristics, motivations, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The measurement indicators of constructs are selected and developed from relevant prior research (Chi et al., 2013; Fard & Saberi, 2015; Hau, 2014; Kim & Eves, 2012; Pérez-Gálvez, López-Guzmán, Cordova-Buiza, Medina-Viruel, 2017; Shukor et al., 2017; Young et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). In terms of measurement, the first two parts of the survey instrument included closed and open-ended questions purposed to understand the demographic information and tourist behavior. The three other parts of the survey are measured on a five-point Likert-type scale to measure the importance score of each item. Six participants tested the pilot survey to estimate a questionnaire length, as well as to test the clarity and the appropriateness of the questions.

To analyze the influence of tourists' motivation, satisfaction, and loyalty regarding local food consumption, the target population was domestic and foreign tourists visiting Ayutthaya. Sample selection was based on non-probability sampling using the convenience sample of 211 national and international tourists visiting Ayutthaya. Considering the total number of international tourists in Ayutthaya in 2018 was 8 million (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018), so considered as infinite population, with a confidence interval of 95%, assuming maximum indetermination, the sampling error is ±6.75%.

Questionnaires were carried out in front of Ayutthaya train station and at the entrances of major attractions, including Wat Mahathat temple and Wat Phra Si Sanphet, whereas self-administered questionnaires were conducted by using QR code to access the questionnaires platform. All responses were submitted through online questionnaires

separating English and Thai versions. These locations are the most important touristic points and services of Ayutthaya. For example, between the months of July and December 2018, a total of 77,977 tourists travelled to Ayutthaya by train and 1.75 million people visited the temples and historical sites (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018).

This study is based on a quantitative research approach. The data were analyzed using SPSS and Mplus software to obtain empirical results. Firstly, descriptive statistics were performed to examine the demographic characteristics and tourist behavior profile relating to consuming local food. Secondly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assure the validity of the measurement model of the motivations, satisfaction, and loyalty constructs. The scale of each element in this study was based on prior studies on food tourism research (Chi et al., 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012). Lastly, structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized relationship between these latent constructs.

5 Results

5.1 Sociodemographic and behavioral profile

First, the demographic information and behavioral profile is presented in Table 1. The total received responses were 211 tourists visiting Ayutthaya. Half of the sample are domestic travelers, around 20% are Asian and the rest are tourists from outside Asia, mainly from Europe. Female respondents slightly outnumber male respondents. The most common civil status is single and half of the sample has finished undergraduate studies. In terms of occupation, over half of the respondents are employed. Concerning tourist behavior characteristics of respondents, approximately a quarter of the sample obtain information about local food in Ayutthaya from the Internet and another quarter from friends and relatives. Finally, regarding the reason to try local food in Ayutthaya, the most common is to rely on the own decision, followed by recommendation from friends and relatives.

Table 1. Demographic and behavioral characteristics

Variable	Category	Distribution (n=211)
Continent	Thailand	101 (47.9%)

	Rest of Asia Europe South America North America Australia	45 (21.3%) 51 (24.2%) 1 (0.5%) 11 (5.2%) 2 (0.9%)
Gender	Male	99 (46.9%)
	Female	112 (53.1%)
Marital status	Single	104 (50%)
	Married	83 (39.9%)
	Divorced	21 (10.1%)
Education level	Secondary or below	36 (17.2%)
	Undergraduate	103 (49.3%)
	Master's and above	70 (33.5%)
Employment status	Student	29 (13.8%)
	Employee	114 (54.3%)
	Business owner	24 (11.4%)
	House worker	10 (4.8%)
	Retired	21 (10.0%)
	Unemployed	12 (5.7%)
Monthly income	1000€ or less	97 (46.9%)
	1001 to 2000 €	55 (26.6%)
	2001-3000€	26 (12.6%)
	3000€ or higher	29 (14%)
Information sources of local food in Ayutthaya	Internet	106 (25.7%)
	Media	70 (17%)
	Travel agency	21 (5.1%)
	I already knew of it	51 (12.4%)
	Friends/relatives	102 (24.8%)
	Books/magazines	26 (6.3%)
	Fairs/exhibitions	19 (4.6%)
	Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)	17 (4.1%)
Reasons for tasting local food	It was my own decision.	116 (39.3%)
	A friend/relative.	92 (31.2%)
	A tour guide / a tourism professional	18 (6.1%)

	A guidebook, the media, or the internet.	69 (23.4%)

Table 2 includes the descriptive statistics of the items of motivation, satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Skewness and kurtosis levels are acceptable and indicate standard normal distribution. As seen in the motivation means, tourists are mainly motivated by aspects linked to authentic experiences and to increase knowledge of different cultures.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of motivation, satisfaction and behavioral intentions items

Constructs	Code	Question	Mean	St.Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Motivation	MOT1	To understand local cultures.	4.09	1.008	-.915	-.028
	MOT2	To discover something new.	4.00	.892	-.782	.406
	MOT3	To increase my knowledge of different cultures.	4.10	.897	-.837	.190
	MOT4	Tasting local food is an authentic experience.	4.23	.865	-.993	.532
	MOT5	Local food experience makes me excited	3.99	1.023	-.923	.315
	MOT6	Feel exhilarated	3.84	1.001	-.591	-.315
	MOT7	To talk about local food experiences to others.	3.68	1.142	-.632	-.347
	MOT8	friendship.	3.63	1.128	-.821	.113
	MOT9	Have a passion for advising local food experiences to travelers	3.70	1.061	-.781	.363
	MOT10	An enjoyable time with friends and/or family	3.82	1.073	-.792	.064
	MOT11	The local food I eat on holiday tastes good	4.09	.996	-1.018	.638
	MOT12	Local food in the original place tastes different than in my country	3.77	1.085	-.825	.162
	MOT13	Nutritious local food	3.78	.896	-.428	-.310
	MOT14	Contains fresh, locally produced ingredients	3.93	.892	-.601	.085
	MOT15	Healthy	3.73	.930	-.405	-.165
Satisfaction	SAT1	Availability of ethnic restaurants	4.08	.877	-.585	-.536
	SAT2	Experience local culture	4.58	.650	-1.298	.495
	SAT3	Food quality	3.96	.844	-.551	.025
	SAT4	Food variety	3.98	.856	-.745	.589
	SAT5	Meal experience	4.02	.913	-.806	.309
Behavioral Intention	INT1	Intention to revisit	3.44	1.375	-.541	-.898
	INT2	Intention to recommend local food to others	4.24	.986	-1.196	.720
	INT3	Intention to encourage others to visit Ayutthaya	4.36	0.941	-1.474	1.481

5.2   Measurement model

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was first conducted. Results (Table 3) indicate five factors of motivations, the single satisfactions factor and behavioral intentions factor with

acceptable Cronbach's Alpha, exceeding cut-off values of 0.6. Total variance explained is also indicated and it shows acceptable levels over 50%.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to verify the measurement model's fit before testing the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This measurement model defines the construct validity between manifest variables and latent variables. The overall measurement model was supported to fit the data by the goodness of fit measures. The criteria for the goodness of fit (GOF) was used by looking at the value of the Chi-square test ($\chi 2$), the Probability Level (P), the Chi-square test by degrees of freedom ($\chi 2/DF$), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Acceptable threshold levels of fit indices were recommended by Hooper et al. (2008) are: TLI and CFI > 0.9, RMSE < 0, SRMR < 0.08. The CFA results indicated that the model adequately fits the data (X^2 = 312.60, df = 222, x^2/df = 1.41, P < 0.05, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.06.). The convergent validity of the measurement model was assessed by measuring standardized loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and Composite reliability (CR).

The findings in Table 3 revealed that standardized factor loadings of each variable surpass the cut-off value of 0.5, recommended by Hair et al. (2010), and t-values of the items were indicated to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level. All AVE scores for three constructs are greater than the criterion of 0.50, and all CR values exceed the acceptable level of 0.70, recommended by Fornell & Larcker (1981). Consequently, the validity of the convergence was asserted that indicators in the construct had a reasonable scale to identify the measurement model. Discriminant validity of the measurement model was confirmed by comparing the squared correlations and the square root of AVE values. The result represented that all square roots of AVE values in diagonal were higher than correlations between other factors, specifying each construct was distinctly different (Table 4).

Table 3. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis for the measurement model

Constructs	Indicators	EFA		CFA		
		Cronbach's Alpha	% Variance Explained	Std. Loading	AVE	CR
Motivation	**Factor 1: Culture Experience (CE)**	0.840	40.8		0.57	0.90
	MOT1 To understand local cultures.			0.727		
	MOT2 To discover something new.			0.756		
	MOT3 To increase my knowledge of different cultures.			0.787		
	MOT4 Tasting local food is an authentic experience.			0.751		
	Factor 2: Exciting experience (EE)	0.777	4.7		0.64	0.86
	MOT5 Local food experience makes me excited			0.790		
	MOT6 Feel exhilarated			0.804		
	Factor 3: Interpersonal Relationship (IR)	0.836	11.8		0.57	0.90
	MOT7 To talk about local food experiences to others.			0.737		
	MOT8 friendship.			0.734		
	MOT9 Have a passion for advising local food experiences to travelers			0.850		
	MOT10 An enjoyable time with friends and/or family			0.687		
	Factor 4: Sensory Appeal: (SA)	0.611	7.4		0.45	0.73
	MOT11 The local food I eat on holiday tastes good			0.715		
	MOT12 Local food in the original place tastes different than in my country			0.617		
	Factor 5: Health Concern (HC)	0.847	8.7		0.65	0.91
	MOT13 Nutritious local food			0.799		
	MOT14 Contains fresh, locally produced ingredients			0.853		
	MOT15 Healthy			0.762		
Satisfaction	SAT1: Availability of ethnic restaurants	0.812	57.6	0.689	0.72	0.94
	SAT2: Experience local culture			0.786		
	SAT3: Food quality			0.696		
	SAT4: Food variety			0.759		

	SAT5: Meal experience			0.824		
Behavioral Intention	INT1: Intention to revisit	0.679	65.4	0.833	0.58	0.92
	INT2: Intention to recommend local food to others			0.900		
	INT3: Intention to encourage others to visit Ayutthaya			0.817		

Note: Std. loading (standardized loadings); AVE (average variance extracted); CR (construct reliability); Significant at the 0.01 level

Source: author elaboration

Table 4. Discriminant validity of the construct

CONSTRUCTS	CE	EE	IR	SA	HC	SAT	INT
Culture Experience (CE)	0.756						
Exciting Experience (EE)	0.692*	0.797					
Interpersonal Relationship (IR)	0.376*	0.484*	0.754				
Sensory Appeal (SA)	0.379*	0.461*	0.344*	0.668			
Health Concern (HC)	0.474*	0.544*	0.408*	0.395*	0.805		
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.504*	0.591*	0.183*	0.164*	0.480*	0.753	
Behavioral Intention (INT)	0.618*	0.579*	0.434*	0.387*	0.511*	0.507*	0.851

Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; the square root of AVE is on the diagonal.

Source: author elaboration

5.3   Structural equation model

The structural model between constructs is measured, comprising three latent factors: 'motivation', 'satisfaction', and 'behavioral intentions. Initially, the overall fit index was measured to assess whether the existing data was suitable for this structural model. The overall goodness of fit results for the structural model is summarized in the following criteria, shown in Table 5. According to these results, the entire goodness-of-fit indexes of the proposed structural model passed the acceptable level. Thus, the theoretical model fits the data, acceptably for testing the observed hypotheses.
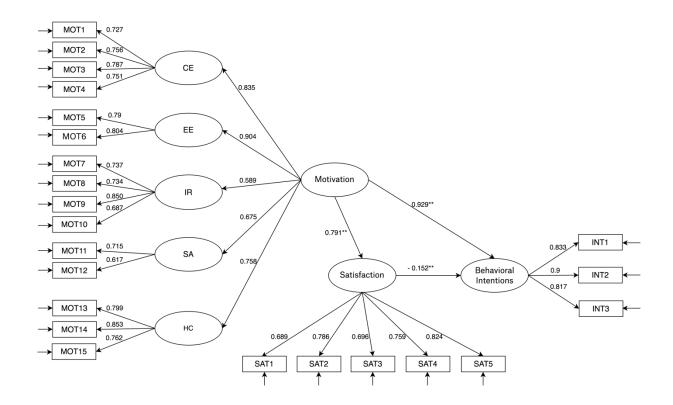
Finally, the causal relationships between constructs were ascertained for the proposed hypotheses by the structural model (see Figure 2). The path analysis reveals that the tourist motivation on local food consumption significantly and directly affects satisfaction (standardized estimate = 0.791; P < 0.000). Thus, H1 (Tourists' motivations toward local food have a direct and positive effect on tourist satisfaction) proposed in this case study is accepted. Concerning H2 (Tourists' motivations toward local food have a direct and positive effect on behavioral intentions), it is accepted that there is a significant and positive direct effect between motivation and behavioral intention (standardized estimate = 0.929; P < 0.000). The relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intention was not found to positively influence behavioral intentions (standardized estimate = -0.152; P < 0.000). Hence, these results did not support H3 (Tourists' satisfaction regarding local food consumption has a direct and positive impact on behavioral intentions).

Table 5. The overall goodness-of-fit indices for the estimated structural model

GOODNESS OF FIT INDEXES								
Criteria	χ2	df	P-value	χ2/DF<2	CFI>0.9	TLI>0.9	RMSEA<0.07	SRMR<0.08
The proposed model	312.601	222	p< 0.05	1.408	0.953	0.947	0.044	0.056

Source: author elaboration

Figure 2. The Structural Equation Model (SEM)

MOT1 0.727
MOT2 0.756
MOT3 0.787
MOT4 0.751
CE
MOT5 0.79
MOT6 0.804
EE
MOT7 0.737
MOT8 0.734
MOT9 0.850
MOT10 0.687
IR
MOT11 0.715
MOT12 0.617
SA
MOT13 0.799
MOT14 0.853
MOT15 0.762
HC

CE 0.835
EE 0.904
IR 0.589
SA 0.675
HC 0.758

Motivation

Motivation → Behavioral Intentions 0.929**
Motivation → Satisfaction 0.791**
Satisfaction → Behavioral Intentions − 0.152**

Satisfaction
SAT1 0.689
SAT2 0.786
SAT3 0.696
SAT4 0.759
SAT5 0.824

Behavioral Intentions
INT1 0.833
INT2 0.9
INT3 0.817

Source: author elaboration

6   Conclusion

This study aims to comprehensively understand the behavioral model of local food consumption in tourism destinations by exploring the case of tourists visiting Ayutthaya, Thailand. This research analyses tourists' motivation, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions to have a general view of the behavioral model towards local food. The existence of different motivations towards food is an interesting variable in destination selection and tourism experiences (Kim & Eves, 2012). The relationship between travel motivation, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in domestic tourism has been confirmed by the structural analysis of the designed behavioral model (Bayih & Singh, 2020). This finding strengthens past investigations conducted by Sato et al. (2018). Motivation and satisfaction are significant elements for predicting future tourists' behavior. Many studies also support these findings (Han & Hyup, 2018; Pérez-Gálvez, López-Guzmán, Cordova-Buiza & Medina-Viruel, 2017; Shukor et al., 2017).

For the exploration of tourist motivation based on local food consumption, the motivational factors in the model are proposed by Kim, Eves & Scarles (2009). The empirical results show

that tourists are motivated to consume local cuisine because they mainly desire to learn about local cultures, seeking something new such as an authentic experience, different traditions, and exciting experience through tasting local food. The first hypothesis addresses these motivations and how they have a positive effect on tourists' satisfactions levels:

H1: Tourists' motivations toward local food have a direct and positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

The findings of this study confirm H1. Tourists' motivations directly and positively affect tourists' satisfaction, corroborating other studies like Pérez-Gálvez, Jaramillo-Granda, López-Guzmán & Reinoso-Coronel (2017). Likewise, previous literature agree on the relationship between tourist motivation and satisfaction from both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Pérez-Gálvez, López-Guzmán, Cordova-Buiza & Medina-Viruel, 2017). Similarly, the level of tourist satisfaction is also conditioned by the motivations of local food consumption behavioral models in food tourism research (Ellis et al., 2018).

In addition to the above findings, tourist motivations have been considered to have an important role in tourists' behavioral models as they directly and positively influence behavioral intentions for food tourism. In this study, the following hypothesis regarding this relationship is formulated:

H2: Tourists' motivations toward local food have a direct and positive effect on behavioral intentions.

Results of this study show a positive and significant influence of motivations on behavioral intentions. These findings partially align with those of Kil et al. (2014) declaring that traveler motivation drives future behavioral intentions. On the other hand, motivation was not found to have a direct significant loyalty behavior in other studies (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019). They argue that the relationship between tourist motivation and behavioral intentions should be mediated by satisfaction (Lee, 2009). The conceptual proposition about the relationship between motivation and behavioral intentions is strengthened by Bayih & Singh (2020). This study identifies that tourist intentions to revisit and recommend are positively influenced by

their motivation for domestic tourism. This reason is consistent with Ignatov & Smith (2006), who state that, in gastronomy tourism, tourists who are interested mainly in food products and beverages tend to seek new experiences and exploration regarding cuisine. Obviously, the crucial factors of tourist motivation influencing food tourism are tasting local food as an authentic experience and rising the own cultural knowledge.

The relation between food satisfaction with the tourist destination is studied (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Chi et al., 2013; Kim, Kim & Goh, 2011). In the context of significant factors of tourist satisfaction, the results show that tourists are satisfied with local food due to perceiving experience with local culture, insistently by Chi et al. (2013). These factors should be considered primarily to address the level of satisfaction towards local food. Mak et al. (2012) point out a valuable factor influencing tourists' satisfaction with food consumption is the dining experience obtained in tourism activities.

Looking at the relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions, uncovering these relationships is mainly based on the findings of the estimated structural equation model (Bayih & Singh, 2020; Chi et al., 2013; Omar et al., 2015). The influence of local food satisfaction is essential to determine future behavior. Furthermore, tourists tend to revisit and encourage other people to travel to the destination if they feel satisfied (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Young et al., 2018). In this study, the following hypothesis is formulated to address this relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions:

H3: Tourist satisfaction regarding local food consumption has a direct and positive impact on behavioral intentions.

Results of this study show a significant influence of satisfaction on behavioral intentions. However, this influence is negative, so H3 is not supported. It can be interestingly interpreted that the satisfaction of tasting local food does not ultimately guarantee tourists revisit or recommendation intentions. Thus, it doesn't mean that tourists are always loyal if they are satisfied with the local food in the place, but it depends on their traveling motivation. Previous studies support these results and state that the predictor of tourist behavioral intention is mediated through satisfaction or attitude (Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Kil et al., 2014).

7   Discussion

This research fulfills the gap by introducing the conceptual model to examine the important role of local food in tourism. From a theoretical point of view, the study contributes to the understanding of tourists' behavior in a local food destination by investigating the relationship between motivation, satisfaction with local food, and behavioral intentions. In addition, this research proves with empirical evidence that in food tourism, tourists' behavioral intentions could be explained and predicted by tourist motivation toward local cuisine. Food motivation is clearly identified as a cornerstone of tourist revisit.

To better understand the concept of local food tourism, with the opportunity to develop local food known as a tourist attraction, it is necessary to understand the significant factors affecting local food consumption. This study provides helpful information on tourists' behavioral models regarding local food consumption. It contributes to the perception of local food consumption in the destinations. To reach more potential visitors, the promotion of local food events and products needs to consider these key factors. For example, marketers should promote local food by representing authentic experiences, cultural knowledge, and local lifestyle through cuisine. The reasonable prices are also a notable factor to be considered.

The tourism sector should build campaigns by considering unique local products as an effective marketing strategy in the destination. This provides the business a competitive advantage and gains a robust market share, especially in the foreign market. It clarifies that the tourist motivation associated with local food has an essential effect on future behavior traveling to Ayutthaya. In addition, these findings on tourists' behavior may be helpful for public authorities as they can facilitate the formulation, priorization and implementations of all types of tourism strategies and actions, especially those related to food tourism consumption, products and services.

In the context of this study, a high level of satisfaction is found. Consequently, authorities and operators of tourism can improve local food-based tourism experiences by considering the critical factors. This study suggests marketers should primarily consider these attributes to fulfill tourists' expectations toward local food consumption.

Furthermore, public authorities have different roles regarding food products and services. For example, they regulate and plan policies including food consumption, safety protocols, etc. Results of this study may be helpful for public entities when planning and formulating these protocols, policies and regulations. For example, it is interesting to notice the significant influence of health-related motivations on tourists' satisfaction level. Thus, a good framework to ensure food safety would be crucial for these destinations where local food is an important part of their tourism offer.

Finally, the analysis from this study can be a data source for public authorities to promote local Thai food in Ayutthaya as an added value and tourist industry sustainability in the future, as well as a good source of information to improve the knowledge about local food in Ayutthaya from both locals and tourists.

There are some limitations to this study that should be pointed out. The present study is a beginning point for further research in the extent of behavioral models on local food and tourism. Methodologically, in order to reduce the sampling error, further research could be developed and the sample size increased.

In addition, it is noted that this research focuses on a specific case study which is Ayutthaya, Thailand. However, behavioral patterns found in this research should be tested and proved again in other food tourism destinations to verify it in other countries which are also famous for their local food, such as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Spain, Italy, and France. Different characteristics of the tourism destinations may lead to different results. First, Ayutthaya food tourism offer is barely influenced by international cuisine, so it could be interesting to see if the behavior of tourists in places where many cuisines interact are the same. Furthermore, Ayutthaya is a small town compared to big cities and capitals and most of the tourism services are operated by locals or Thai residents. Thus, it would be interesting to compare tourists' behavior of tourists in these big cities where tourism activity is more developed and where international brands have been doing business for some years. Second, tourists who visit Ayutthaya are mainly Asians who seek authentic experiences mainly linked to its temples and heritage, so it is crucial to consider cultural tourists in this destination and the consequences it may have when regulating and preserving heritage. The question that may arise here is whether tourists who do not seek these authentic cultural experiences linked to

local food would behave the same way or not in different destinations and how public authorities need to adapt to these differences in behavior.

Furthermore, the proposed model tested in the study only investigates the relationship between the main constructs of the model, but it has not focused on analyzing the influence of observed variables on other latent variables. Hence, subsequent research recommends testing hypotheses between them in order to consider which indicators have a significant impact on behavioral intentions, for example. Finally, future research should investigate the role of tourist demographics and behavioral characteristics on the decision to consume local food. The result would have important implications for destination competitiveness and local food product development as well as marketing and positioning themselves in accordance with the characteristics of the target markets.

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Annex I. Research Questionnaire

Local food consumption in a tourism destination: a proposal of a tourists' behavioral model

A case study of Thailand

Part 1: Tourist Behavior

1. How many times have you been to Ayutthaya, including this trip?

☐ This is the first time.   ☐ 2-3 times.   ☐ 4 times or more.

2. How have you heard about Local food in Ayutthaya?

☐ Internet   ☐ Media   ☐ Travel agency

☐ I already knew of it   ☐ Friends/relatives   ☐ Books/magazines

☐ Fairs/exhibitions   ☐ Tourism Authority of Thailand   ☐ Others…………………

3. How many times have you been to Ayutthaya, including this trip?

☐ This is the first time.   ☐ 2-5 times   ☐ 6-9 times   ☐ 10 times or more

4. How many times have you eaten local food in Thailand?

☐ This is the first time.   ☐ 2-5 times   ☐ 6-9 times   ☐ 10 times or more

5. How many times have you eaten local food in Ayutthaya?

☐ This is the first time.   ☐ 2-5 times   ☐ 6-9 times   ☐ 10 times or more

6. How did you decide to eat local food in Ayutthaya?

☐ It was my own decision.

☐ A friend/relative recommended it to me.

☐ A tour guide / a tourism professional recommended it to me.

☐ I read the information in a guidebook, in the media or on the internet.

7. Have you tasted local food in other countries?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Part 2: Tourists' Motivation

Please rate the importance of the following elements when deciding to eat local food in Ayutthaya, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 5 means 'strongly agree'.

Items	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Tasting local food offers a unique opportunity to understand local cultures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Experiencing local food allows me to discover something new.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Experiencing local food gives me an opportunity to increase my knowledge about different cultures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Tasting local food in an original place is an authentic experience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Experience of local food in its original place makes me excited.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Tasting local food makes me feel exhilarated.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I like to talk to everybody about my local food experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Having local food increases friendship or kinship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I want to give advice about local food experiences to people who want to travel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Tasting local food enables me to have an enjoyable time with friends and/or family.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. It is important to me that the local food I eat on holiday tastes good.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. The taste of local food in its original countries is different to the taste of same food in own my country.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Local food is nutritious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Local food contains a lot of fresh ingredients produced in a local area.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Tasting local food keeps me healthy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 3: Tourists' Satisfaction

Please specify your level of satisfaction with the following statements based on local food in Ayutthaya, where 1 means 'very dissatisfied', and 5 means 'very satisfied'.

Items	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Availability of ethnic restaurants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Experience local culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Service quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Food variety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Meal experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 4: Behavioral Intention

Please specify your level of agreement with the following statements, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 5 means 'strongly agree'.

Items	Very dissatisfied			Very satisfied	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I will revisit Ayutthaya.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I will recommend local food in Ayutthaya to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I will encourage others to visit Ayutthaya.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 5: Personal Information

1. What country are you from?   ………………………………………

2. Gender   ☐ Female   ☐ Male

3. Marital Status   ☐ Single   ☐ Married   ☐ Divorced

4. Education level (highest)

       ☐ Secondary school or above   ☐ Undergraduate degree

       ☐ Master's degree or above

5. Occupation

       ☐ Student   ☐ Company employee   ☐ Business owner/self-employed

       ☐ Homemaker   ☐ Retired   ☐ Unemployed   ☐ Others……….

6. Monthly income

       ☐ 11000€ or less   ☐ 1001 - 2000€

       ☐ 2001 - 3000€   ☐ 3001€ or higher