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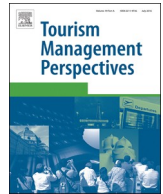
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Beyond the authentic taste: The tourist experience at a food museum restaurant

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors influencing food experiences perceived by food tourists in the context of a food museum and its associated restaurant. A qualitative exploratory approach was employed, using Chinese tourists visiting Hangzhou Cuisine Museum in Zhejiang province. This research finds that food tourists look for knowledge accumulation and gastronomic experiences when visiting a food museum and restaurant complex, and each experience is formed by both tourist and setting factors. The findings highlight the significant and more complex engagement of setting factors in the museum restaurants. The institutionalised characteristics of museums are equally expected within the in-house restaurants, and social trust in the museum along with external factors that verify authentic representation of the museum contributed to the perceived authenticity of the food tourist's dining experience. This paper discusses broad implications for food experience design at food museums and restaurants as emerging tourism attractions.

1. Introduction

Food tourism is fast-growing and the significance of local food consumption in tourism has been widely acknowledged (Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018; Everett, 2019; Henderson, 2009). Whilst there is no consensus on its definition due to its inherently multidisciplinary nature (Ellis et al., 2018), food tourism is commonly understood as “visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary motivating factor for travel” (Hall & Sharples, 2003, p.10).

Several critical research gaps still remain in the relevant literature. Firstly, as summarised in the seminal work of Ellis et al. (2018), previous studies have focused on motivations (Chang & Yuan, 2011; Fields, 2002; Kim, Goh, & Yuan, 2010; Kim, Park, & Lamb, 2019; Park, Reisinger, & Kang, 2008), and little is known about the factors influencing food tourist experiences apart from a few exceptions (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009, 2013; Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012).

Secondly, studies have discussed the food experience of tourists in the context of culinary event and food festivals (Chang & Yuan, 2011; López-Guzmán, Uribe Lotero, Perez Galvez, & Rios Rivera, 2017), and food tourism destinations (Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Ellis, 2015; Stone, Soulard, Migacz, & Wolf, 2018). Despite the diversity and eclectic nature of food tourism (Everett & Slocum, 2013), the relevant literature

remains scarce in the context of different types of food tourism attractions which may include high-end fine-dining, cooking classes, or food museums (Yeoman, McMahon-Beattie, & Wheatley, 2015).

Thirdly, with very few exceptions (Goolaup, Soler, & Nunkoo, 2018; Kim et al., 2019), previous food tourism studies have mainly been conducted utilising quantitative research methods (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014; Chen & Huang, 2016; Kim et al., 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012), as is the case with tourism studies in general (Okumus, Koseoglu, & Ma, 2018). Nevertheless, adopting more qualitative research techniques would mitigate the currently disproportionate amount of quantitative research; enabling the analysis of more nuanced food tourists' accounts of lived experiences and their perceptions of influential factors contributing to food encounters.

Lastly but not least, previous studies have tended to generate research data regarding international leisure tourists by examining dining preferences. It has been criticised for its lack of rigour and a tendency to overgeneralise food tourism experiences (Kim et al., 2019; McKercher, Okumus, & Okumus, 2008). Thus, our current understanding of what influences the experience of food tourists remains incomplete, given that there are key differences between food experiences of conventional holiday makers and specialist food tourists (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014).

These identified research gaps generate a sound basis for this study to investigate the factors influencing the food experiences of domestic

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food tourists in the setting of a food museum-restaurant complex. There is an increasing number of food-themed museums in the world which showcase local produce (e.g., the Kiwi museum in New Zealand) or the history of a nation's food production industry (e.g., the Cup Noodle museum in Japan), but the curation of a tasting experience are not as well defined/developed as ones in this exhibition. This research focuses on food tourist's experience in a food museum which is particular to the regional culinary heritage and culture and serves featured dishes at in-house restaurants. The research aims to shed light on the food tourism phenomenon as experienced by food tourists through visits to a regional food museum and restaurants, and to enable future studies to compare the characteristics among different types of food tourism attractions and destinations in order to deepen our understanding of the food tourism experience from a more holistic perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1. Factors influencing local food selection and consumption

Enjoying regional and local dishes has become an increasingly important part of the tourist experience (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017, 2019; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kim & Ellis, 2015). Prior studies have employed a cultural anthropology perspective to examine tourists' quest for 'otherness' by tasting local cuisine on their trips to new locations (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Fox, 2007; Kim & Ellis, 2015; Kim & Iwashita, 2016); the role of local food experiences in creating positive memories and authentic travel experiences from an experience economy perspective (Goolaup et al., 2018; Tsai, 2016), and increasing tourists' intentions to recommend and revisit from a marketing and consumer behaviour perspective (Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour, 2015; Kim et al., 2009, 2013; Kivela & Crotts, 2006).

In line with the above, some studies have also investigated what influences tourists to choose specific local dishes. Tourists may have several concerns over local cuisines in (un)familiar destinations, including hygiene standards, health considerations, communication gaps, and the limited knowledge of the local cuisine (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Having acknowledged these concerns, Kim et al. (2009) conceptually developed and empirically tested a model of the factors influencing local food consumption in holiday destinations. The model includes three categories: (1) 'motivational factors' such as exciting experiences, escape from routine, health concerns, improving knowledge, authentic experiences, togetherness, prestige, sensory appeal, and physical environment; (2) 'demographic factors' including gender, age, and education; and (3) 'physiological factors' such as food neophilia and food neophobia. In a similar vein, Mak et al. (2012) identified five socio-cultural and psychological factors that influence tourist's local food consumption: cultural or religious influences for example, halal, socio-demographic factors, food-related personality traits such as food neophilia and neophobia, past experience, and motivational factors.

Whilst these studies on the influential factors relating to local food consumption are relevant for the current inquiry, the findings predominantly examine the decision-making process relating to food selection. Other studies have identified several influential factors for overall tourist satisfaction with a local food experience. In Romania, quality of food, value for money, variety of dishes, attractiveness of surroundings, and presentation of food were found to be the key attributes affecting the overall food experience (Nield, Kozak, & LeGrys, 2000). In Indonesia and Japan, heritage and local ingredients are significant constructs of the food experience that affect the tourists' overall satisfaction (Hendijani, 2016; Kim et al., 2019). However, this research finds a critical gap regarding the little-known factors influencing the food experience per se.

2.2. Food experience in food tourism

Food tourism literature over last two decades had mainly examined

five themes – motivation, culture, authenticity, management and marketing, and destination orientation (Ellis et al., 2018). Cultural experience is the core value shared in all five themes, and thus food tourism is about “cultural anthropology through understanding the interactions of tourists with places through the medium of food” (Ellis et al., 2018, p. 261). Previous studies from a tourist experience perspective tend to focus on tourists' involvement in food-related activities and describe food-focused experiences as important motivations or a combination of both (Kim et al., 2019; Mak et al., 2012; Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2017).

Consequently, it is highlighted the importance of cultural experience including obtaining knowledge and understanding local identity and culture influenced by local foods and foodways (Bessière, 2013; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009; Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Ellis, 2015; Moscardo, Minihan, & O'Leary, 2015). This is especially so as food tourists primarily travel for food experiences and thus are more likely to learn about regional foods, kitchen cultures, and their social, cultural and/or historical meanings (Iizuka & Kikuchi, 2016; Kim et al., 2019; Williams, Yuan, & Williams Jr, 2019). For that reason, Goolaup et al. (2018) even attempted to understand extraordinary food experiences through the lens of Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital. The tourists' food cultural capital exists in three forms, that is, embodied, objectified and institutionalised food cultural capital and is indicative of the food tourists prefer to consume. The embodied capital is a disposition of the mind and not transferrable as it is formed in a social context. The objectified capital is a form of cultural goods, and the institutionalised capital confers a qualification status (Bourdieu, 1986).

Such a dimension of food culture appears more evident in food tourism than in general food consumption while travelling. The different levels of food cultural capital exhibit different food preferences but is not uniform from one culture to another. It is because authenticity and cultural contrast (between host and guest) so-called 'the otherness' (Doorne, Ateljevic, & Bai, 2003) in particular, largely determines the food tourist's perception of a memorable, positive food experience (Stone et al., 2018). Therefore, to some extent the central role of culture explains why differences in dining experiences occur on leisure trips in the context of food tourism, reinforcing the need to pay more attention to cultural elements to understand the underlying factors influencing tourist food experiences.

3. Chinese food tourism and Hangzhou Cuisine Museum

In recent years, food consumption has become more and more important in China's domestic tourism. In 2017, domestic tourists' food consumption was up by 201% when they travelled around China, as shown in a report on independent travel and customised tourism trends in China (Mafengwo and China Tourism Academy, 2017). Chinese tourists have become more enthusiastic about tailored experiences on their domestic trips. While their interests in shopping have decreased, their consumption in sports, entertainment, and culture including local delicacies, has increased by 334% upon previous years (Mafengwo and UnionPay Smart, 2017).

Despite the dramatic increase in food experiences among Chinese domestic tourists, existing studies have extensively discussed local food experiences of outbound Chinese tourists. For example, previous studies have identified food preferences of Chinese tourists in Australia (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010) and food consumption of Chinese tourists in the U.S. (Wu, Raab, Chang, & Krishen, 2016) and Spain (Lin, Guia Julve, Xu, & Cui, 2020). However, the findings of Chinese outbound tourists' food experience do not easily translate to understand domestic tourists' food experiences, as the tourists' familiarity with domestic and international cuisines and possibly motivations and behaviours are different (Kim et al., 2019). In addition, the food consumption of Chinese food tourists and tourists in general is seldom differentiated, further obfuscating the understanding of trends in food consumption and experience of Chinese domestic and international tourists. This study, therefore,

targets self-defined food tourists and explores exclusively the food tourists' local food experience at a food cultural attraction: Hangzhou Cuisine Museum (hereafter HCM).

In China, there has been an increase in food culture museums in the past decade. By 2018, there have been more than 143 food culture museums across China (Zhou, 2018). Some regions have more food culture museums since those regions are known for their distinctive cuisines, such as in Beijing, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shandong, Henan, Sichuan, and Guangdong. As food culture museums have grown in popularity, the exhibits have become more diverse, ranging from famous dishes, speciality food, local cuisine, to condiments, catering equipment, and raw materials.

The HCM is located in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province in East China. As one of China's seven ancient capitals, Hangzhou is rich in history, culture, and natural scenery. Three sites, the West Lake Cultural Landscape, the Grand Canal, and the Archaeological Ruin of Liangzhu City, are on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. With a unique combination of attractive landscape and modern city, cultural heritage and rapid social and economic development, Hangzhou has become one of the most renowned and prosperous Chinese cities enjoyed by both domestic and international tourists.

The HCM covers 12,470 square meters, showcasing the development and inheritance of Hangzhou Cuisine. The museum is composed of exhibition space, experiential space, and dining space, inviting visitors to 'watch, play, taste, and learn' (Xu, 2012). Tracing thousands of years of Hangzhou cuisine, the exhibition displays more than 110 dietary artefacts and 300 pieces of lifelike food models. Some showcased dishes were well-known in Chinese history, combined with the stories of famous people such as politicians, literati, and poets in the past. The museum also features several restaurants – the Hangzhou Cuisine Museum Restaurants (hereafter HCMRs) – where visitors can order and taste featured Hangzhou dishes, that are exhibited in the museum. As the HCM, run by Hangzhou Cuisine Museum Cuisine Culture Co. Ltd., is motivated to make profits, the experience space and dining space are much larger than the exhibition space and it offers 1500 seats for visitors to sample the Hangzhou dishes and culinary culture.

4. Research method

Since existing studies on the factors influencing food tourists' dining experiences are limited, this study adopted qualitative interview technique to explore the subjective perceptions of the tourists' dining experiences. The semi-structured style of open-ended questions were designed to enable specific themes to emerge and the gathering of rich and descriptive data using examples of different tourist experiences (Jordan & Gibson, 2004). Key questions for this study included (see Appendix 1): (1) What factors influence your food selection and taste perception at the HCMRs? (2) Are these factors equally important to you when you eat in an ordinary restaurant? and (3) What are differences between dining in the museum restaurant as an attraction and dining in an ordinary restaurant?

The respondents consisted of Chinese domestic tourists who were approached at HCM in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China from September to December 2018. Only those who considered themselves as food tourists (as defined earlier in this study) were interviewed, where their motivation to visit the HCM and HCMRs aligned with the research themes. Twenty respondents gave their informed consent to participate in this study. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin, being the native language of all respondents. The interviews lasted from 30 to 60 min. As the last few interviews provided similar feedback, it became evident that saturation of the data had been achieved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Demographics of the respondents (using pseudonym names) are listed in Table 1. The sample included equal numbers of men and women. Their age profile was spread across the cohort categories, with 60% of them below the age of 30, with various occupations. Among those respondents ranging from 20 years old to 62 years old, the

average age was 32 years old. The majority of the respondents travelled with either friends or families (85%), while the rest (15%) were travelling alone. Exactly half of the respondents were travelling from the neighbouring provinces of Hangzhou, such as Beijing municipality ($n = 2$), Zhejiang ($n = 5$), Shanxi ($n = 3$), and Shandong ($n = 2$), and the remaining were travelling from far North, West and South China including Jilin, Sichuan, and Guangxi province. Almost half of the respondents were visiting Hangzhou for the first time, while others were repeat visitors of which half had been to Hangzhou more than four times. They were all first-time visitors to the HCM.

The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was performed to categorise and group the data and to identify the key themes accordingly (Ayres, 2008). The analysis was inductive, directed by the data. To begin with, the transcripts were read and reviewed before analysing them. Meaningful statements in the transcripts, relevant to answering the research question, were assigned codes. The codes were then examined to identify the potential themes regarding the factors that influence food tourists' dining experiences. Finally, the themes were reviewed and refined, with consideration for the overall picture and the relationship between themes. Table 2 holistically demonstrates eight influential factors identified as being relevant for food tourist's experiences via two modes at two levels with direct quotes generated from the raw interview data.

5. Findings

The findings highlight that the respondent's food experience at the HCMRs was twofold: knowledge accumulation and gastronomic experience. These food experiences were formed by both the 'tourist' and the experience 'setting' factors with more emphasis on the 'setting' factors, as demonstrated in Fig. 1.

Knowledge accumulation was formed by the tourist's cognitive knowledge from the pre-visit and was enriched during the on-site experience at the exhibition and restaurants. All respondents visited the exhibition prior to the dining experience, which subsequently became a sensorial tasting experience that confirmed the learnt knowledge and contributed to the overall knowledge of Hangzhou cuisine. The respondents had an expectation of cultural elements being present in the dining spaces as a gesture of the exhibited local culinary culture. As such, the gastronomic experience at the restaurants was regarded as an extension of the exhibition experience as well as a natural completion of the whole museum experience. The gastronomic experience was also underpinned by discrepancies between the previous and present on-site tasting experiences, tourist's socially, individually developed personal taste, and the attractiveness of food served in the restaurants.

Respondents trusted in the museum restaurants to serve authentic Hangzhou food, mainly due to the inherent characteristics of the museum and testimonials of the museum's reliability created by the media and peers which highly influenced tourist's perceived authenticity of the museum restaurant experience. More details of the relationships between these factors are discussed below.

5.1. Knowledge acquisition and on-site tasting confirmation

The food tourists obtained knowledge via two modes – 1) knowledge accumulation from the pre-visit; and 2) the on-site visit. This study confirmed that both modes contribute to their food experience at the museum restaurants and cognitive knowledge of the local cuisine was physically and sensorially confirmed through tasting.

First, there was the peer influence on the food experience at the pre-visit stage. For example, when asked the reason why a particular dish was impressive in terms of their tasting experience, Mr. Daixia Gao responded using his companion's words: "As my colleague said, its layering was very complex, and the taste is quite authentic." While food tourists may stick to their own taste preferences, and while they are certain about their biological reactions to the food's taste, their multi-

Table 1
Profile of respondents ($n = 20$).

No.	Name (Pseudonym)	Gender ^a	Age	Occupation	Residential Area	Accompaniers	Times of Visit to Hangzhou
1	Xiaolei Zhang	M	46	Engineer	Taiyuan, Shanxi Province	Wife	More than 4 times
2	Haiyue Qiu	F	20	Student	Ningbo, Zhejiang Province	Classmate	4
3	Wenxiang Jiang	M	28	Doctor	Beijing Municipality	Colleague	1
4	Dandie Xie	F	51	Employee	Zhoushan, Zhejiang Province	Husband	More than 4 times
5	Yi Miao	F	28	Teacher	Huzhou, Zhejiang Province	Boyfriend	More than 4 times
6	Zou Wang	M	40	Employee	Shandong Province	Friends	4
7	Xiangdong Weng	F	32	Businessman	Quanzhou, Fujian Province	Friends	3
8	Yao Yang	F	24	Student	Wuhan, Hubei Province	Mother	1
9	Bo Wang	M	28	Staff	Shanxi Province	Wife	1
10	Ruohong Su	F	22	Student	Nanning, Guangxi Province	Alone	3
11	Yeqing Wang	F	25	Student	Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province	Boyfriend	More than 4 times
12	Guogang Yao	M	34	Staff	Chengdu, Sichuan Province	Colleague	1
13	Daixia Gao	M	24	Doctor	Shandong Province	Colleague	1
14	Yu lin	M	47	Public servant	Beijing Municipality	Friends	More than 4 times
15	Lin Dong	M	28	Staff	Changzhu, Jiangsu Province	Alone	3
16	Wenyu Liu	M	34	Businessman	Shenzhen, Guangdong Province	Alone	1
17	Hua Liu	F	62	Lawyer	Dalian, Shenyang Province	Husband	1
18	Wenjing Jin	F	24	Student	Jilin Province	Parents	1
19	Haoyi Cao	M	24	Student	Yiwu, Zhejiang Province	Friends	More than 4 times
20	Yi Wei	F	26	Staff	Shanxi Province	Friends	1

^a Note: F, female; M, male.

Table 2
Eight influential factors of food tourist's experience via two modes at two levels.

Exemplified supportive quotes	Factors	Modes	Levels
"As my colleague said, its layering was very complex, and the taste is quite authentic (Mr Daixia Gao)"	Cognitive knowledge from the pre-visit	Knowledge accumulation	Tourist level
"I saw something similar to <i>Zha Xiang Ling</i> before. That is the tiger skin-like yellow croaker. They are similar in appearance, but completely different inside... But this <i>Zha Xiang Ling</i> is only crisp. I thought there was something inside. But there isn't. I was disappointed and the taste wasn't as good as I expected (Ms Haiyue Qiu)"	Previous tasting experience	Gastronomic experience	
"It is good, not special though. I usually do not order [this kind of dish] ... (Mr Wenyu Liu)"	Socially and individually developed taste		
"I get used to strong flavours, because I have been in Sichuan. Compared with Sichuan dishes, <i>Dongpo Pork</i> in the HCMRs is quite plain (Mr Bo Wang)"			
"The food models [in the museum] were wonderful, and the portions were generously large. But the serving sizes in the HCMR were smaller, which led to negative psychological effects on my perceived food experience of the dish (Mr Daixia Gao)"	Cognitive knowledge from the on-site exhibition	Knowledge accumulation	Setting level
"The museum restaurant should keep the original taste of Hangzhou cuisine, and let the visitors know what authentic Hangzhou cuisine truly means and tastes [...] For me, it only makes sense if the museum restaurant can offer the most authentic Hangzhou cuisine [...] and I really enjoyed the Hangzhou dishes I ordered (Mr Haoyi Cao)"	Confirmed sensorial knowledge from the on-site tasting at museum restaurants		
"I saw it on the list at the exhibition of Top Ten Hangzhou Dishes. Because its name (that is, <i>Zha Xiang Ling</i>) sounded good and it was famous in the region, I wanted to try it. Life would be more wonderful when we try new experiences (Mr Wenyu Liu)"	On-site tasting experience	Gastronomic experience	
"First is the taste. [...] This is the most fundamental thing, which goes for all food experience (Mr Xiaolei Zhang)"	Food attractiveness		
"This is because, for me, in terms of tasting good food, the taste should be the most important (Mr Lin Dong)"			
"I suppose, to feature the same characteristics of the museum, the menu [and dishes] would be special and refer to the history of each dish presented in the museum... visual elements, such as the entire design of the restaurant, the styles of the tables and chairs, and the waiters' uniforms, need to be uniquely and consistently related to the ones of the museum in order to influence the total enjoyment of the dining experience...(Ms Ruohong Su)"	Cultural experience elements of the restaurant atmosphere		

sensorial appreciation of the food, such as their verbal and intellectual reactions to it, were partially influenced by their peers. As such, Goolaup et al. (2018) also support the notion that for food tourists in particular, discussing with companions who shared similar interests, learning from each other, and further developing their knowledge were important in influencing one's own food experience and nurtured food's cultural capital.

In addition to the pre-visit knowledge, the knowledge acquisition whilst in the exhibition substantially influenced the food experiences both positively and negatively. Their knowledge acquisition was deepened and enabled the food tourists to enrich their food-related cultural

capital (Goolaup et al., 2018). Food tourists obtained information in the exhibition and assessed the replicas of dishes on display as appealing and appetite forming leading to high expectations. Consequently, their replica dishes provided immediate references for their perceived food experiences. For instance, Daixia compared the dishes in the HCMRs with the food replicas showcased in the HCM and commented below:

The food models [in the museum] were wonderful, and the portions were generously large. But the serving sizes in the HCMR were smaller, which led to negative psychological effects on my perceived food experience of the dish.

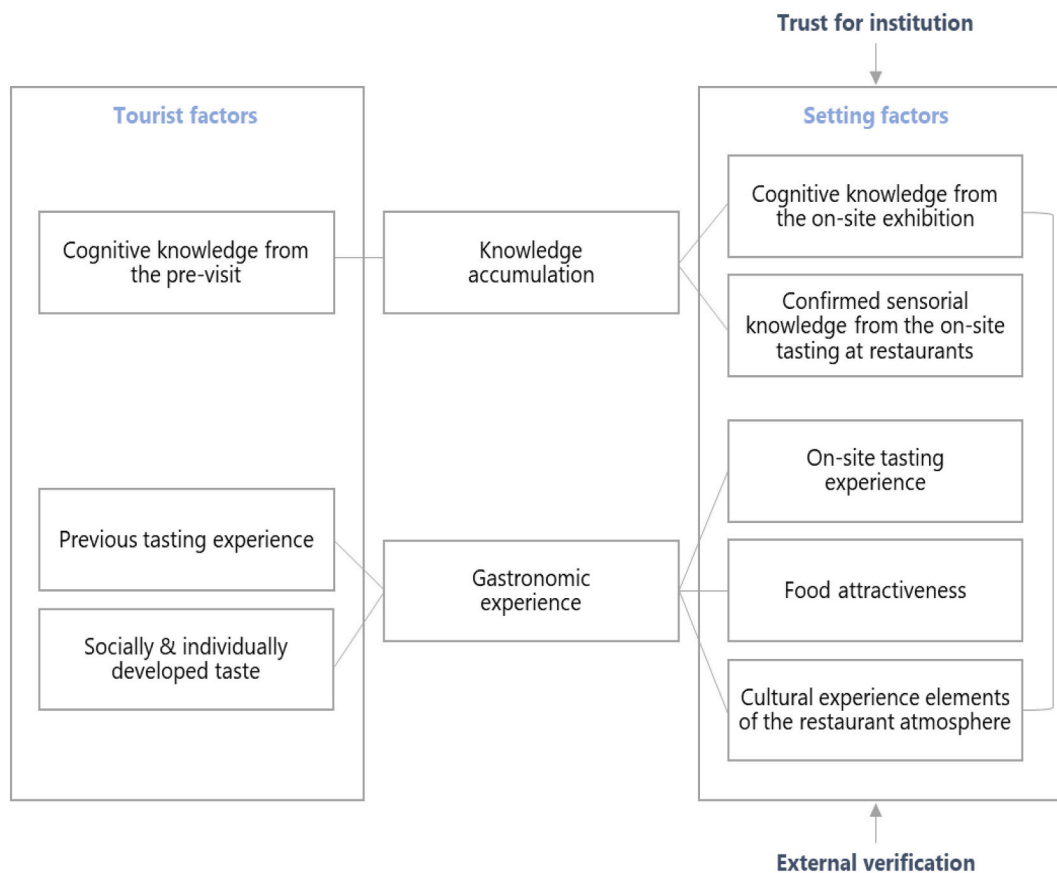


Fig. 1. Factors influencing food tourist's experience in a food museum restaurant.

For many respondents, particularly keen on 'the original taste' of the regional dishes in situ, the anticipated authentic taste played a significant role in their perceptions of the food experiences. The respondents in this study tended to emphasise local speciality food and its authentic taste over other requirements such as local ingredients and local manufacture, which were highlighted in previous food tourism studies (Sims, 2009). The on-site tasting experience at the restaurants was therefore regarded as an opportunity to experience the authentic Hangzhou flavour and taste, and those sensorial food experiences were trusted and committed to memory as confirmed knowledge.

5.2. Discrepancy between the previous and the on-site tasting experience

The respondents ordered some dishes they had tasted before elsewhere and this enabled them to develop either a positive or negative evaluation of their food experience, by comparing same or seemingly similar dishes which they had experienced previously elsewhere. Haiyue provided further support of this aspect when she compared a dish in the HCMRs to another she had had before:

I saw something similar to *Zha Xiang Ling* before. That is the tiger skin-like yellow croaker. They are similar in appearance, but completely different inside. The tiger skin-like yellow croaker is actually a yellow croaker inside with the flour (fried, then tiger skin-like) outside. But this *Zha Xiang Ling* is only crisp. I thought there was something inside. But there isn't. I was disappointed and the taste wasn't as good as I expected.

As such, the prior tasting experience critically influenced tourists' sampling of learnt foods in the museum restaurants, and the discrepancy between the former experience and the on-site tasting experience, regardless the truth of the original Hangzhou flavour, influenced the food experience in the museum restaurants.

5.3. Socially and individually developed taste

Personal taste contextualised by social and individual factors/influences was found to play an important role in the tourists' menu selection and their food experience. Some research participants explicitly commented on the dishes based on their socially developed tastes from their region of origin. For instance, as Bo suggested, "I get used to strong flavours, because I have been in Sichuan. Compared with Sichuan dishes, *Dongpo Pork* in the HCMRs is quite plain." In contrast, Yi who is from Huzhou where the local dishes normally taste bland, commented on the consumed dish (i.e., *Water shield fish ball*) as "glittering and smooth", "pretty good" and "tastes lite", revealing a connection between her personal taste preference and the positive remark.

Meanwhile, individually developed tastes, often described as attributes of food *neophilia* (being inclined toward experimenting with new food experiences) and *neophobia* (being a dread or aversion of novelty) influenced the gastronomic experience. Respondents such as Wenyu, demonstrated how his taste developed through food *neophilia*. He commented on his choice of *Zha Xiang Ling* as below:

It is good, not special though. I usually do not order [this kind of dish], but I saw it on the list at the exhibition of Top Ten Hangzhou Dishes. Because its name (that is., *Zha Xiang Ling*) sounded good and it was famous in the region, I wanted to try it. Life would be more wonderful when we try new experiences.

Personal tastes developed by more varied food experiences may result in a greater capacity to imagine the flavour of a dish or expectations of it. Respondents who showed similar attitudes to Wenyu toward food as a life experience commented the food offerings were not so special or unique, although they are happy to choose *Zha Xiang Ling* for a new experience. The findings inform that socially, personally developed tastes generate substantial variables in tourist's gastronomic experience regardless of the original flavour of the food.

5.4. Experiential restaurant setting: Food attractiveness and cultural atmosphere

Similar to dining at ordinary restaurants, most respondents considered the attractiveness of the food in terms of taste and presentation as the major factors influencing their food experience. For example, as Xiaolei suggested, “First is the taste. [...] This is the most fundamental thing, which goes for all food experience”. More specifically, Yeqing mentioned the freshness of ingredients, such as “the fish tastes like just caught” and “the vegetables have not been stored for a long time”, which contributes to the tastiness of food. Some further described their perception of food taste with frequently used Chinese words appertaining to colour, fragrance, and flavour (*se*, *xiang*, and *wei* in Chinese). For instance, Lin explained why he greatly valued and appreciated the tastiness and presentation of the food in the HCMRs as below:

This is because, for me, in terms of tasting good food, the taste should be the most important. I think at least the taste and presentation should be palatable and attractive enough. Otherwise it is hard for me to consider a dish as delicious food [and thus affect my food experience].

Furthermore, Lin immediately expressed his ideas about tasting good food as opposed to other aspects of the museum restaurant, presumably because, for food tourists like him, the food experience is primarily concerned with the quality and enjoyment of the taste of food and how well it has been cooked and presented.

In addition to food attractiveness, the restaurant atmosphere was an important experience ‘setting’ factor influencing the gastronomic experience. More than 80% of respondents claimed that they especially valued the dining atmosphere in the museum restaurant. It is noted that they expected the museum restaurants to be “elegant” and “delightfully leisurely,” and explained that the concept of atmosphere is associated with the setting of the museum and its restaurants as well as the surroundings.

Some respondents emphasised the need for a consistency between the museum and the restaurants in terms of their interior decorations and settings. Some even complained that the cultural atmosphere in the HCMRs was far less attractive than in the museum, because the restaurants themselves, with their somewhat inconsistent atmosphere, adversely affected their gastronomic experiences. Ruohong, for instance, best exemplified how the museum restaurant could fit the context of the museum and thus create a coherent food experience in the museum restaurants.

I suppose, to feature the same characteristics of the museum, the menu [and dishes] would be special and refer to the history of each dish presented in the museum. The decoration can also be improved. The visual elements, such as the entire design of the restaurant, the styles of the tables and chairs, and the waiters' uniforms, need to be uniquely and consistently related to the ones of the museum in order to influence the total enjoyment of the dining experience. Perhaps hang some introductions of the Hangzhou signature dishes on the wall in the restaurant, as if it is a small-scale version of the museum.

5.5. Trust for museum: A venue of the institutionalised authentic food experience

The participants held high expectations that affected their food experiences in the food museum restaurant in two different ways: (1) public's general belief in museums as reliable and trustworthy institutions for collection, preservation and interpretation, and thus of educational benefit; and (2) external sources such as media programmes and personal recommendation that support/testify to the quality and authentic representation of the museum and the food offered at the in-house restaurants. These aspects both positively and adversely affected the respondents' food experiences. Firstly, many expected the museum restaurants to be more authentic and original than anywhere else. The

food tourists like Yi who were looking for authenticity, and thus it was anticipated that the restaurants operated by the food museum such as the HCMR ought to be more reliable, professional, and authentic. As an example, Haoyi commented below:

...I think that other commercial restaurants may change the cooking methods of Hangzhou cuisine in order to cater to popular taste. But the museum restaurant should keep the original taste of Hangzhou cuisine, and let the visitors know what authentic Hangzhou cuisine truly means and tastes [...] For me, it only makes sense if the museum restaurant can offer the most authentic Hangzhou cuisine [...] and I really enjoyed the Hangzhou dishes I ordered.

Why does food authenticity matter more in a museum setting for food tourists? What Haoyi's quote also implies is that food tourists' underlying educational needs and desire (that is., to know what true Hangzhou cuisine is) fosters their high expectations for the museum restaurants to provide “the most authentic Hangzhou cuisine”. As such, it confirms that the educational element becomes imperative in the museum setting of food tourism. In a previous study based on tourist reviews, Moscardo et al. (2015) have suggested that food tourism is a means of learning and self-development for food tourists. Such underlying educational needs identified here are also consistent with the findings of a more recent study—where, for most respondents, authenticity includes “some educational element regarding a different culture, a kitchen technique, or information about a particular food or drink” (Williams et al., 2019, p. 13).

Secondly, some respondents also developed a trust and had certain expectations for the HCMRs based on external sources of verification, based on the recommendations of colleagues and friends, the appearance of the restaurant and food presented on media such as TV. Food tourists had a deep interest in the authenticity of the regional cuisine, and the external sources that support the institutional processes and its offerings within a museum setting, which enriched the tourist's experiences through both educational and gastronomic experiences, and thus enhanced the perceived authenticity of the museum restaurant experience.

6. Discussions

The findings of the current study make important theoretical contributions to the existing literature. The dining experiences of food tourists at the museum restaurants cannot be explained using conventional approaches to a tourist's food choice and consumption on holiday in relation to motivational factors regarding the holiday food experience (e.g., Kim et al., 2009; Mak et al., 2012, 2017; Nield et al., 2000). This research, however, discovers that the dining experiences in the museum-restaurants complex are influenced by both tourists and toured experience setting factors, and yet the setting factors are more profound in influencing the on-site dining experiences. The food experiences in both a destination and at the museum scale are rooted in regional culinary culture, and thus, the cultural experiences are commonly shared. This is different from the destination context where social, cultural, and food experiences provide greater choices and options for a longer stay; a museum-restaurant complex is more planned and staged with specific theme(s), and thus, collections, display, interpretation and interaction are purposefully designed. As such, tourist's food experiences in this space are curated which relies highly on the setting factors of the space (Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2012).

Given the unique setting of a museum restaurant, the restaurant atmosphere, featuring culturally curated elements in the gastronomic experience space is greatly valued and serves as an important factor in influencing the tourist's food experiences. Previous studies support the notion that tourists expect to have food experiences in authentic settings (Kim et al., 2019; Moscardo et al., 2015), but those of a museum restaurant yield greater opportunities to enrich the cultural experience associated with food tourism, consequently affecting the food tourist's

gastronomic experiences. Museum restaurants in particular, are considered as a natural extension of the toured objects contributing positively to the on-going cultural experience namely, regional culinary culture and cuisine. This is all encompassing from the knowledge acquisition stage experienced during the exhibition to the tasting stage in the restaurants. In this regard, the restaurant atmosphere not only signifies a physical condition but includes the interpretation of the food experiences which are consistent with the exhibition.

Food tourists collectively expected and preferred a coherent approach between the atmosphere within the food museum restaurant and the experience of the museum exhibition, and they became dissatisfied with their food taste experience when there was a discrepancy in the atmosphere between the museum restaurant and the museum exhibition. This can be interpreted as 'schema discrepancy' (Schützwohl, 1998) where the schema represents one's theories and understandings of the nature of objects and reality, and thus surprise is elicited when events or situations deviate from the schema, leading to feelings of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Additionally, the food tourists expressed high expectations of trust with the museum restaurant itself. Their high expectations for the food experiences and taste perception in the HCMRs stemmed from the public belief in the museum as a reliable and trustworthy educational institute (Fu, Kim, & Zhou, 2014) and various external sources such as television programmes and media channels that affirmed the credibility of the museum. This is also supported by previous food tourism studies in the Japanese (Kim et al., 2019) and Chinese contexts (Xu, Kim, & Reijnders, 2019). Many expected the museum restaurant to offer truly authentic cuisine more so than ordinary restaurants, meaning they anticipated the food museum restaurant to serve authentic local cuisine true to the original taste and preparation of the dishes as showcased in the museum. It is similar to the case of the Japanese domestic tourists visiting the historic udon noodle village (Kim et al., 2019; Kim & Iwashita, 2016) whose foodscape created by food production and consumption is described as an 'open-air historical museum', showcasing "the provenance and heritage, the details of where, how and whom of food creation" (Ellis et al., 2018, p. 257).

The tourist factors, that is the food tourists' knowledge acquisition, previous tasting experiences and taste preferences, all significantly influenced their food experiences in the museum restaurant. Particularly, the influence of knowledge acquisition on their perceived food experiences was highly evident, particularly in cases where tourists paid close attention to the museum exhibition and retained key information which was followed immediately afterwards by eating at the museum restaurant. In some cases, as noticed in this study, tourists' newly acquired knowledge of the foods (and foodways) may affect their tasting experiences adversely. This may be due to unmatched expectations, though the extent of such an influence seems to vary from person to person (Gallace, Boschin, & Spence, 2011). This can be interpreted by what Goolaup et al. (2018) termed as 'food cultural capital' at various levels. This partially explains why food tourists can have different food experiences when tasting the same dishes.

The influence of past experience, rather, seems to work for the same or similar dishes if a food tourist draws a connection between them. Previous researchers have examined how cognitive factors such as knowledge acquisition and past experiences influence the food experience-related behaviours, including menu selection, appetitive responses, and multi-sensory taste perceptions (Djordjevic, Zatorre, & Jones-Gotman, 2004; Okajima & Spence, 2011; Small & Prescott, 2005). Prior experiences were confirmed as an important factor affecting tourists' local food consumptions (Mak et al., 2012; Tse & Crotts, 2005), motivations (Kim et al., 2019; Mak et al., 2017), and behavioural intentions (Ryu & Jang, 2006). However, the immediate comparison between previous and on-site experiences were highlighted in this research, and it found that a discrepancy between the experience of taste of same or similar dishes can adversely affect the tourists' perceived authenticity of local food taste.

Finally, personal taste is found to affect the tourists' gastronomic experiences, as some respondents commented on the perceived taste of dishes based on their own personal taste preferences. However, the significance of personal taste on the tourist's gastronomic experiences is derived from the underlying social, cultural and individual experiences that form a personal sense of taste, and consequently influence the expectation of favourable/unfavourable tastes of the toured local food. Tourists have acquired the taste of their regional foods which vary in different localities, especially in China and many Asian countries. The socially and individually developed tastes are a significant influence on the gastronomic experiences that affect one's subsequent judgement and perception of the original flavour and taste of the toured and tasted foods. The food-related personal traits and tastes have been found to affect tourists' food consumption and motivation (Kim et al., 2009, 2013; Kim et al., 2019; Mak et al., 2012, 2017), but this study adds to current knowledge by revealing social and cultural associations related to a personal sense of taste and its influence on the food tourist's gastronomic experience of the local food.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the factors influencing food experiences of food tourists. While earlier studies have suggested the key factors and their impacts on local food consumption and future intentions in various contexts (Adongo et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2009, 2013; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Mak et al., 2012), limited attention has been paid to what affects food experiences of food tourists in the context of a food museum-restaurant complex as a food tourism attraction. This research centred on 20 in-depth interviews with Chinese domestic tourists at Hangzhou Cuisine Museum in Zhejiang province, and the study found that influential factors were the tourist and the setting factors which shaped two types of food experiences: knowledge accumulation and gastronomic experience.

Compared to previous food tourism studies, this study identified the significance of the setting factors which constituted both the institutionalised setting (i.e., the museum) and the food service setting (i.e., the museum restaurants). Tourists' high expectations of the museum collection including the authentic representation of regional food in the institutionalised setting of museum were equally applied to the museum restaurants. However, tourist factor variables, such as personal knowledge, previous experience and individual taste preferences, affected the curated dining experience at the museum restaurants. The emphasis on the cultural atmosphere and the immediate confirmation on site were of most merit for food tourists at the museum restaurants.

Within the context of this research, practical implications for stakeholders involved in developing food tourism destinations and/or attractions including food museums are suggested. A tasting experience within a food museum cannot be taken as a superficial add-on detail. The case study is a unique food tourism attraction. It was specially designed and successfully developed to achieve the multiple purpose of conservation, education, and taste in an institutionalised setting. Not all food museums can be developed with this in mind, but a food tasting space or a restaurant in a food museum must take a number of considerations into account in order to fulfil both educational and gastronomic experiences which are demanded by food tourists.

As food tourists tend to expect food museum restaurants to be more authentic and more professional than ordinary restaurants, it would be worthwhile considering the importance of cultural atmosphere and food authenticity for restaurants, in order to create authentic and memorable food experiences. Cultural atmosphere in museum restaurants is important, as food tourists embrace coherent food experiences which resonated with their visit to the food museum. To enhance the atmosphere of the food museum restaurant and therefore enrich the cultural experience, cultural, historical and geographic representations may be helpful. Such representations range from designs and decorations reflecting the regional culture and history associated with the

foods and foodways, to furniture, tableware, and information on the dishes. These representations should be congruent with the exhibited artefacts and their interpretation to create consistency between the exhibition and food service as thematically expressed through the regional cuisine. The serving sizes of dishes in the HCMR should correspond with the displayed food models in the museum.

It is important to note that this type of food tourism attraction should pay careful attention to design interpretation. More sensorial interpretation in exhibitions can enhance the food taste experience following a tour of the exhibition and may alter the typical food behaviour associated with certain personality traits which may otherwise have a limiting effect on food choice. Particularly, this applies to food tourists because they are more enthusiastic and adventurous in their attitude to sampling new food experiences, despite having well established taste preferences which have been socially and individually developed over their lifetime.

Thus, interpretation at food museum restaurants should include design factors regarding the menu and original flavour of local dishes, including specific information on how food tourists may maximise their food experience. As the findings reported, there are various personal factors such as past tasting experience, personal taste preference and personal traits that may negatively influence on-site taste experience and alter the perception of authentic regional food. To avoid arbitrary judgements on the food experienced, museum restaurants need to present specific information for commonly known dishes for example, *Dongpo Pork*, but where the flavour or recipes are different or have been adapted in the museum restaurant. This type of interpretation or information should be professionally presented by well-trained local maître d's whilst taking orders.

To ensure food authenticity, it is essential for a restaurant to strictly adhere to local or regional signature cuisines, rather than including other foods. The local or regional cuisine provided in the restaurant needs to be authentic representing the original taste, texture and appearance, instead of incorporating adaptations of recipes and dishes so that a food museum restaurant can differentiate itself from other general or even local speciality restaurants. A successful collection of own speciality food is also necessary, to avoid food tourists being disappointed when iconic dishes showcased in a food museum are unavailable for tasting.

The contribution of this study to the relevant literature needs to be interpreted taking into account its limitations. This research was exploratory in nature, and the respondents in the study were limited to domestic tourists visiting the food museum and its restaurants in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China, making it difficult to identify generic patterns, such as the extent to which individual and inter-related factors influences one's food experiences. Therefore, future studies using mixed methods would be more comprehensive in investigating the degree of influence and the relationship between influential factors. Furthermore, it will be more beneficial to examine relationships regarding motivations, experiences, satisfaction, and the factors influencing these variables, given the extent of interwoven and multi-directional nature of food tourist behaviours has received little attention.

Secondly, our findings are dependent on the data collected from one food museum restaurant using a relatively small sample size. It is, therefore, difficult to generalise findings to other settings or different types of food tourism attractions due to the limited context of this study. Other food museum restaurants may possess a different set of dynamics of food tourists' experiences. Research in a food museum restaurant within other socio-cultural contexts may enrich the findings of this study. Also, future research could consider investigating food tourists' experiences from multiple food tourism attractions at a food tourism destination making comparisons possible. Quantitative or mixed approaches using a larger sample size will enable further beneficial results/outcomes that can be generalised to assist with drawing firmer conclusions.

Finally, the focus of this study is on the food (taste) experiences in

the food museum restaurant, relating to an emerging type of food tourism attraction. Consequently, there is insufficient data to present a more holistic picture of tourist food experiences (e.g., Chang & Yuan, 2011; López-Guzmán et al., 2017). More attention should therefore be paid to food experiences and overall tourist dining experiences in under-represented food attractions, such as food-related museums, food routes, and food and drink trails. With more findings in these areas, a better understanding of food tourists participating in different types of food tourism as well as the phenomenon of food tourism will be achieved.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100749>.

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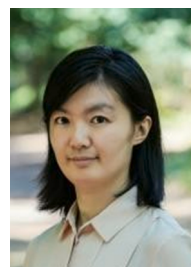
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