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Research paper

## Cultural inheritance of Hakka cuisine: A perspective from tourists' experiences

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on traditional Hakka food and assesses how culinary experiences allow traditional Hakka cuisine to be passed from generation to generation. Ten people interested in Hakka cuisine were invited to participate. The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique was used to analyze photographs taken by the respondents and to assess the gastronomic cultural inheritance of traditional Hakka foods from a tourist perspective. The analytical results indicate that the factors involved in experiencing the cultural inheritance of Hakka cuisine through tourism include cultural images, cultural attraction, food histories, activity promotions, and experience functions. The experience of participating in Hakka cultural heritage was analyzed to identify delivery models and factors based on consensus maps. An important part of the tourist experience is providing endemic attractions that enable tourists to actively participate in the practice process. Suggestions for culinary tourism and directions for future research are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism and the culinary arts have an inseparable relationship (Hornig, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2012). Tourism studies combine many fields, including literature, art, cuisine, and politics (Stringfellow, Maclean, & O'Gorman, 2013). Food is a symbolic aspect of society and demonstrates specific meanings in the context of traditions and special occasions (Fieldhouse, 1995). Food tourism is quickly becoming one of the most interesting and popular areas of the tourism industry (Kim, Kim, & Goh, 2011). Tourism dining can be regarded as a 'peak touristic' experience rather than simply a 'peak' experience (Quan & Wang, 2004), and it is an important factor of both cuisine and non-cuisine tourists' experiences in a travel destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Therefore, food tourism has become a main conduit through which tourists can experience the local culture of tourist destinations (Kim et al., 2011).

Taiwan has been influenced by many external cultures, including Austronesian culture, Taiwanese culture, Hakka culture, Yunnan culture, and other foreign cultures. Ethnic integration has led to many cultural changes. Traditional food embodies the unique delicacies and abstruse inheritance of a culture's humanity,

history, and spirit. Therefore, traditional food inherits the local culture of tourist destinations (Trichopoulos, Soukara, & Vasilopoulos, 2007). Tourism dining is now a major way for tourists to experience the local culture of a tourist destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2006).

The Taiwanese Hakka, a group of Han Chinese who live predominantly in Taiwan, have become a distinctive people group, acquiring ethnic characteristics of the South after several periods of migration (Chang, 2016). Taiwanese Hakka culture is a combination of cultures, incorporating ethnic self-consciousness, immigration, multi-culturalism, and mountain culture (Wang, 2007). In Taiwan, there has been a marginalization of the Hakka culture, but it remains distinctive and attractive to tourists. The Hakka Affairs Council in Taiwan attempted to improve Hakka cultural interaction in tourism destinations by hosting many impressive and culturally meaningful activities, such as the Hakka Tung Blossom Festival, the Sun-Yi Wood Carving Festival, and the Hakka Cuisine Festival. These events feature the specialties of Hakka culinary culture, including its humanities, history, and spirit. Through these events, tourists are able to understand and experience Hakka cuisine and culture (Hakka Affairs Council of Executive Yuan, Taiwan, 2015).

The first impression of Hakka cuisine is that it is 'salty, fragrant, and fatty' because the Hakka endured long-term migration and

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worked while living in a rather poor environment: the salty and fragrant dishes compelled those who ate them to eat more rice, and fatty dishes alleviated hunger. The Hakka believe that eating rice products can produce more energy and they eat rice at least once a day if they can afford it (Lin, 2015).

Tourists learn about the eating habits of local residents by trying their cuisine. Traditional food creates a local connection with the destinations and highlights the inheritance of a local food culture. Scholars have noted that tourists are impressed when they experience the food culture of a destination by eating traditional foods (Pieniak, Verbeke, Vanhonacker, Guerrero, & Hersleth, 2009). However, a gap exists regarding how the cultural inheritance of Hakka cuisine stems from culinary tourism experiences. To address this gap, this study aims to investigate how Hakka gourmet culture is inherited through culinary tourism experiences, how Hakka cultural experiences can be delivered sustainably through food, and how tourists experience cultural inheritance through traditional Hakka cuisine.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Traditional food and cuisine experiences

Guerrero et al. (2009) defined 'traditional food' as a part of life and as something eaten frequently, commonly, or seasonally, especially at specific occasions, celebrations, or festivals. Traditional food must also be homemade or made by artisans, and the traditional cooking and eating of it must be transmitted from one generation to another. The processing of both the raw materials and traditional food products should be performed locally (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009). Although simple skills and processes are used to make traditional local foods, they are high-quality products, and these handmade foods are intended for celebrations representing the local culture (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). However, because indigenous inheritance is required to produce authentic food, every local cuisine presents the core performance of a destination's intangible inheritance, and by experiencing the cuisine, tourists can obtain a genuinely authentic cultural experience (Kim et al., 2009; Okumus, Okumus, & Mc Kercher, 2007).

Because local traditional foods represent the root causes and the symbolic spirit of local culture and history, tourists can enter a region directly or indirectly to understand the region's culture and history (Mykletun & Gyimóthy, 2010). Experiencing the local cuisine is an effective way for tourists to learn about and understand the local culture, and tourists believe that local cuisines can enrich their knowledge and taste (Kim et al., 2009). Therefore, the tourism industry has used food tourism to attract tourists to their destinations and to enable tourists to understand different cultures by experiencing local cuisine. The experience of local cuisine provides an opportunity for tourists to learn about local culture, and the attractions of cultural tourism include gaining knowledge and understanding foreign cultures and their backgrounds (Kim et al., 2009).

### 2.2. Cultural inheritance

Culture is a common framework of the same value system that guides the behaviors of its members (Geertze, 1973). This framework provides people with regulations to follow, and it is an important part of culture. Due to cultural differences, the value of traditional foods depends on their history and the places from which they emerged (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2011). Thus, traditional foods enable younger generations to build their own living targets by actively using the wisdom and experiences of their ancestors (Mykletun & Gyimóthy, 2010). Similarly, people from

different generations can experience both recent and ancient cultures because traditional foods are associated with the local sources of a country (Guerrero et al., 2009).

Karim and Chi (2010) reported that cooking or food events are an important part of food tourism. Tourists are likely to accept new cultures or local foods in tourist destinations if they do not feel pushed to do so. Renko, Renko, and Polonijo (2010) indicated that food, as an important tourism resource, plays an active role in improving the tourist's experience. Many studies on the role of food in culture indicate that it is a key factor not only in basic tourism consumption but also in increasing destination images (Kim et al., 2009). Local cuisines represent a core aspect of cultural heritage: thus, tourists can have an authentic cultural experience through consumption or experience (Okumus et al., 2007).

### 2.3. Tourist experiences by photograph analysis

Taking pictures is a way for tourists to remember their travel experiences. Photographs turn tourists' experiences from being abstract to being specific (Lo, Mc Kercher, Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2011). Photographs also reflect the mental images of the photographer (Crawshaw & Urry, 1997). Photographers use their own experiences and technology primarily to express feelings and thoughts that cannot be described specifically by words (Garrod, 2008). Andersson (2004) investigated how photographs taken by backpackers describe their travel experiences. The photographs detail tourists' memories of when they experienced and took pictures of an event for their records. Therefore, taking pictures of personal experiences can transmit rich meanings at multiple levels of expression to illustrate inner unspeakable situations. In photographs, simulated function can indicate the relationship between the mental behaviors of tourists and a destination. Photographs can also be used to identify large differences in tourist evaluations (Naoui, Airey, Iijima, & Niininen, 2006).

Photographs inspire citizens to convey the sounds and views of a particular place and inspire researchers to make important observations about sustainable societies or cultures (Kerstetter & Bricker, 2009). Assessing photographs helps us understand the relationships among affection, motivations, and destination image dimensions (Pan, Lee, & Tsai, 2014). The examination of photographs includes a discussion of the internal thoughts of the respondent who took the pictures and analysis of the thoughts and emotions pertaining to the picture (Tuohino & Pitkänen, 2004).

Zaltman and Coulter (1995) found that the description of a picture has many important functions, such as providing preliminary information, data, and other important characteristics. Zaltman (1997) developed a research method for understanding an individual's hidden inner thoughts, named the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET). The personal mental function that is outside of an individual's self-awareness play a role in linking sensory systems and cognition, and ZMET elicits the indirect transmission of inner human thoughts via word expression (Gwendolyn, 2000). This study thus assesses the cultural inheritance of Hakka cuisine from tourists' experiences using ZMET.

## 3. Methodology

This study used two stages, – a questionnaire survey and a ZMET survey – to investigate how Hakka cuisine delivers traditional culture through tourists' cuisine experiences. Because a sample size of eight to 16 is generally employed in studies using ZMET (Christensen & Olson, 2002; Zaltman, 1997), 15 informants with intensive involvement in Hakka culture were recruited through a purposive sampling method.

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