



# Will they tell others to taste? International tourists' experience of Ghanaian cuisines



Charles A. Adongo<sup>a,\*</sup>, Samuel W. Anuga<sup>b,1</sup>, Frederick Dayour<sup>c,2</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

<sup>b</sup> Department of Geography and Resources Development, University of Ghana, Ghana

<sup>c</sup> Department of Community Development, University for Development Studies, Ghana

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 8 September 2014

Accepted 15 March 2015

### Keywords:

Experience

Ghana

Local foods

Memorable experience

Recommend

Tourist experience

## ABSTRACT

Memorable local food experiences can influence tourists' intentions to recommend. However, food tourism literature has provided limited insights in this area of scholarship. This paper sought to explore international tourists' experiences regarding local foods in Ghana. The results from a random survey of 654 international tourists indicate that local food experience is multiple ranging from cultural, educational, novelty, hedonism–meaningfulness, and adverse experience. The study also found that tourists' local food experience has a statistically significant influence on their willingness to recommend. The study, therefore, concluded that the provision of memorable experience could be a viable approach for generating referral marketing of local foods. Theoretical and practical implications of the study findings are discussed.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism, as a form of trade, involves buying and selling of experiences (Mahika, 2011; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Woodside & King, 2001). Some researchers consider the term 'experience' as an experiential fulfillment (Arnould & Price, 1993), a cognitive-affect (Schmitt, 1999) or a quality (Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Willson, 2002). However, it is largely regarded as a function of an individual's psychological process due to an object he or she encounters (Renko, Renko, & Polonijo, 2010). At the destination level, tourists' experiences are considered as multi-dimensional consumption of the tourism system of which local foods are part (Moscardo, 2009; Updhyay & Sharma, 2014). In this context, local food is conceptualised as food grown and processed within a particular locality with indigenous ingredients (Nummedal & Hall, 2006). Emphasis is, however, made that local food in this context does not necessarily mean that 100% local produce.

Tourists consumption of local food while on holiday was mostly an issue of utilitarianism, but today it has grown beyond just a need for survival to include one consumed to enhance holiday experience (Jang, Liu, & Namkung, 2011; Richards, 2012). While there is no consensus on the specific attributes that constitute tourist local food experience, food

quality issues including food appearance and taste, service environment and behaviour of service providers (Adam, Adongo, & Dayour, 2014; Ha & Jang, 2010; Karim & Chi, 2010) have been mentioned. Evidence has also shown that food tourism is a means for tourists to participate and discover the geography and culture of destinations different from the known (Everett, 2012; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Updhyay & Sharma, 2014). On that account, there is a change from the traditional sand, sun and sea-based holiday activities and sightseeing to culinary tourism (Richards, 2012). The centrality of food in tourism is further heightened by the fact that it is a product that arouses almost all the human senses – touch, taste, smell and sight; hence, its strategic position in tourist holiday experiences (Young, 1933).

Generally, what runs through most researches on tourists' experiences, is emphasis on positive memorability. A positive experience is seen as a favourable encounter which is easily recalled after the event has occurred (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). Contrastingly, much evidence regarding food and food related products from African destinations gives indications of negative experiences (Amuquandoh, 2011; Carter, 1998). Negative experiences denote tourists' encounters which are thought of and recalled as unfavourable after the event. Therefore, it is the proposition of this study that tourists' encounter with a destination's local food can be positive, negative or a combination. Dining experience is not only a determinant of tourists' level of satisfaction, but more importantly, a shaper of one's willingness to recommend (Pearce & Packer, 2013; Ryu & Jang, 2006; Su & Hsu, 2013).

Memorable experiences are said to predict post-purchase behaviour better than service quality and customer satisfaction (Keiningham &

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: + 233 209312658.

E-mail addresses: [adongodelaski@gmail.com](mailto:adongodelaski@gmail.com) (C.A. Adongo), [greatsamuel33@yahoo.com](mailto:greatsamuel33@yahoo.com) (S.W. Anuga), [fdayour@gmail.com](mailto:fdayour@gmail.com) (F. Dayour).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +233 200423317.

<sup>2</sup> Tel.: +233 207654943.

Vavra, 2001; Kim et al., 2012). If the forgoing assertion is anything to go by, an understanding of tourists' memorable experiences with local foods is central. Kim et al. (2012) developed a scale for measuring tourist memorable experiences. The utility of the scale has been confirmed by various studies (Kim, 2013, Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014) in some tourism setting. For example, Otoo and Amuquandoh (2014) employed it in the study of volunteer tourists' experiences in Ghana. However, its usefulness in the food settings, in particular is considerably lacking. Ghana is one of the Western African destinations, which in addition to its ecological and historical resources, is luring tourists along its traditional cuisines as cultural artefacts that can enhance visitors experiences. As a region with different geographical and cultural diversity from those that tourists are used to, the destination management hopes to achieve competitive advantage through its food and beverage offerings (GTA, 2013). Tung and Ritchie (2011) note that Destination Management Organizations' (DMOs) role is to ensure that destination's products and services create lasting impressions on its patrons. One way to do that is to identify the components of the product that matter to the consumer.

In Africa, tourism related studies have rarely focused on tourists' memorable local food experiences. Available studies on tourists' experiences in the destination (notably, Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014) have generally focused on the broader destination's offerings rather than product-based (for example local foods). But, there is the need to recognize that a wider consideration of tourists' experiences may not lead to a thorough understanding of the concept. The present study is, therefore, a modest contribution as it assesses and explores the influence of international tourists' experiences with Ghanaian foods on their willingness to recommend local foods. Findings are expected to have both theoretical and practical relevance. From the theoretical standpoint, the study seeks to address the knowledge gap by providing holistic insights on tourists' local food experiences by adapting the MTE scale by Kim et al. (2012).

Also, this study adds to the existing literature by highlighting the link between each of the dimensions of the MTE scale and tourists' willingness to recommend local Ghanaian foods. Besides, a study of this nature is significant because promotion of local food has implications for the economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability of tourism destinations (Sims, 2010). Ghana is a country where government is making efforts to strengthen the agricultural-tourism sector value chain through local produce (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). From this perspective, it is worth investigating inbound tourists' local food experiences since it has implications on their demand of local food. Bravi and Gasca (2014) aver that the attractiveness of a destination is revealed in the utility that tourists attain from its product mix including local foods. Gaining insights on tourists' local foods experiences can provide valuable inputs that could help improve Ghana's attractiveness as a destination. More importantly, unravelling adverse feeling tourists construct regarding local foods can provide useful information to food vendors on the specific areas that need improvement in order to meet the expectation of patrons. Further, an understanding of the relationship between tourists' local food experiences and their willingness to recommend can be a conduit for evaluating customer loyalty and thus customer relationship management.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Conceptualisations of tourist experience

The term 'experience' is one that continues to elicit multiple definitions, measurements and conceptualisations that are inherently contradictory and paradoxical. To this end, it is considered a concept that is illusive and indistinct in construct (Huang & Hsu, 2010). For instance, experience is seen as an event which leaves a lasting impression on one's mind (Ma, Gao, Scott, & Ding, 2013). Also, Bigne and Andreu (2004) consider it as a series of event(s) that occupy individuals in a

personal way. Sharpley and Stone (2011) simply maintain that it is what the tourist experiences. Incorporating 'memory', Kim et al. (2012) denote 'experience' as a recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination visited. Following from these definitions, first, it can be inferred that experience is an outcome of an encounter with an object of interest. Second, it could include the outcomes of services/activities at the destination whose consumption is occasioned by patronage of the actual object.

Researchers have also made various attempts to capture the phenomenon, experiences. Cohen (1979) proposes five constructs of tourist experiences, namely recreational, diversional, experiential, experimental and existential. Conversely, Pine and Gilmore (1999) delineate four realms of experience: education, aesthetics, escapism and entertainment. Employing psychological strands, Le Bel, Sears, and Dube (2004) regard tourism experience as sensory (or physical), social, emotional and intellectual. Still, Otto and Ritchie (1996) comprehensively theorise six (6) components of tourism experience: hedonism, interactive/social, novelty/escape, comfort, safety, and stimulating/challenge seeking dimensions.

Reliable and valid as these earlier theoretical models maybe, Kim et al. (2012) argue that they overlooked 'memory' — experience as a reflection, an important mediator of behavioural intentions. Kim et al. propose a seven dimensional MTE scale (hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty). This scale, nonetheless, is also inadequate since it emphasises experiences as positively memorable. In a bid to deal with this limitation, negative experiences are incorporated into the MTE scale which form the basis of discussion on tourists local food experiences in this study. Given the multiplicity of the tourism experience, no single model or scale can claim superiority in measurement, but the decision to use this scale is based on its all-encompassing and contemporary nature. More importantly, it is worthwhile to state that the scale captures some important local food experience factors that have long been overlooked, but merit in-depth investigation, such as hedonism, meaningfulness, involvement and intellectual development.

### 2.2. Food tourism experience

Much of the pleasure in travel has been linked with dining out and sampling novel foods (Gee, Maken, & Choy, 1997). Given this, local food is seen as playing a significant role towards enhancing sensual indulgence (Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012). For Mak, Lumbers, Eves, and Chang (2012), tourists' consumption of indigenous food arouses certain emotional responses, including enjoyment, sensory stimulation and fulfilment, most especially, when such experiences are novel. Novelty denotes newness and or unusualness associated with eating food and beverage outside one's environment (Tse & Crotts, 2005). Gee et al. (1997) found that one of the reasons why people travel is to dine out and sample novel foods. If this observation by Gee et al. (1997) on why tourists travel is anything accurate, then it stands to reason that unusual, strange, or distinctive dining experiences are more probable to be recalled than typical events (Rajaram, 1996). Novelty encompasses four main indicators: once-in-a-lifetime experience, uniqueness, an experience different from previous one and new (Kim et al., 2012).

Within a cultural domain, the consumption of local foods affords visitors the opportunity to appreciate the rich and diverse culture of the destinations they visit. Eating and drinking a particular local food and beverage during holidays implies partaking in the local culture of the people (Wijaya, King, Nguyen, & Morrison, 2013). It is an opportunity to closely experience the authentic local culture of a group of people in a geographical area — including the way they cook, eat and drink as well as experience the friendliness of the locals (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Mittelberg and Palgi (2011) and Tung and Ritchie (2011) posit that experiencing the local eateries of a particular destination enriches the memorability of the tourism experience.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013674>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013674>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)