



## Serving indigenous dishes in hotels: An inquiry into the conative response of menu decision makers



Alberta Bondzi-Simpson<sup>a</sup>, Julian K. Ayeh<sup>b,\*</sup>

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

<sup>b</sup> College of Humanities and Social Sciences, UAE University, United Arab Emirates

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Local cuisines  
Attitude  
Intention  
Subjective norms  
Perceived difficulties  
Perceived customer patronage  
Theory of planned behaviour  
Culinary tourism  
Food service

### ABSTRACT

Indigenous cuisines – in many developing economies – play a central role in the celebrations, cultural practices and festivals of the local people, but their presence on hotel food service menu is often insignificant. Yet, little is known about the determinants of menu decision making with regards to the inclusion of indigenous dishes on the hotel menu. Using a survey of menu decision makers from 184 small and medium sized hotels, this study explores the factors affecting menu decision-makers' attitudes and intention to place more variety of indigenous dishes on the hotel menu. Findings shed intriguing insights into the role of antecedents like normative beliefs, perceived benefits to business, perceived difficulties in production and service of indigenous dishes as well as customer patronage. Among other implications for theory and practice, the findings foray into the debate on the relevance of attitude in driving behavioural intention in workplace situations.

### 1. Introduction

Globally, the food service industry churns out millions of meals daily; these meals range from fast food to gourmet cuisines (Lillicrap et al., 2002). But it is the authentic cultural experience offered by local foods that has caught the attention of destination marketers and researchers (e.g., Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Arthur, 2010; Hall et al., 2003; Pang, 2002). In the hospitality and tourism industry, authenticity is a vital trait and a key motivator for tourists (Changi et al., 2010). It allows an establishment or a destination to achieve competitive advantage. Production, consumption and sale of indigenous dishes not only help to promote food safety, health and nutrition and development of local economies (Bird et al., 2008), but it also plays a major role in establishing the authenticity of a destination.

In many developing countries, indigenous foods are vital role to the celebrations, cultural practices and festivals of the local people but their presence on the hotel menu may be insignificant often due to the *westernisation* of the hotel menu (Bondzi-Simpson, 2015a). Du Rand et al. (2003) observe that many local people do not hold their own cuisine in high regard and often view it as not sophisticated enough to be served to their esteemed guests. Guests of hotels in some destinations, most often than not, will have to get out of the hotels to local eateries or street vendors to get the opportunity to try indigenous dishes. However, institutionalised tourists (Cohen, 1972) may usually consider such eating places as too exotic and risky, and are thus,

deprived of this opportunity. Arthur (2010) and Bondzi-Simpson (2015a) observed that local dishes may not be popular even among the indigenes who eat out. However, the ability to create a niche in tourism using indigenous dishes will depend on the adoption of these dishes unto the menus of restaurants and hotels. Cohen and Avieli (2004) observed that for local cuisine to become a popular attraction – in its own right – for international tourism, dishes must be filtered through tourism-oriented culinary establishments such as restaurants and hotels; by so doing, local foods will be transformed to suit tourist tastes and, at the same time, foreign dishes will be introduced by tourists into local cuisine and converted to meet local tastes. It is therefore critical for hotel menu decision makers, particularly in developing economies, to present more variety of indigenous local dishes.

Yet little is known about the determinants of menu decision making with regards to the inclusion of indigenous dishes on the hotel menu. While socio-psychology theories like the theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1988, 1991) may offer useful insights, their relevance and applicability to the particular context of menu decision making has not been given appropriate attention. Attitude towards products and services, according to Hair et al. (2011a), is the closest a researcher could get to understanding future behaviour towards a product or service. Thus, this study emanates from the background of the importance of local food in the hospitality industry and the role that the attitudes of menu decision-makers could play in enhancing the presence of indigenous dishes on the hotel menu. The

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [abondzi-simpson@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:abondzi-simpson@ucc.edu.gh) (A. Bondzi-Simpson), [julian@uaeu.ac.ae](mailto:julian@uaeu.ac.ae) (J.K. Ayeh).

current study therefore investigates the factors affecting menu decision-makers' attitudes and intention to place more variety of indigenous dishes on the hotel menu.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Indigenous dishes and the hospitality industry

The hospitality and tourism literature presents a myriad of perspectives on the role of indigenous or local/regional cuisines in tourism promotion. Some scholars are of the opinion that there are a number of impediments that inhibit tourists' consumption of 'strange' food in its local context (Cohen and Avieli, 2004), others are of the view that the time has come for local food to take its rightful position in the development and sustainability of hospitality and tourism (Hall et al., 2003). Still, others question whether local foods hold a sufficiently strong appeal to attract visitors and whether it could be elevated to become a key attraction in many underdeveloped destinations (Du et al., 2003). In these instances, far more than a fair proportion of research on indigenous dishes have been dedicated to consumers, to the detriment of unearthing germane issues from service providers' perspective.

Murphy et al. (2000) opined that it is visitors who consume tourism products and as such, products and services should be tailored to their tastes and preferences. A number of studies have therefore enquired into the preferences of tourists with regard to local foods. Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013), for instance, studied the traditional food preferences of tourists to Ghana to ascertain which of the various traditional foods available in the country are liked by tourists. But, Moulin (2000) questions – in connection with food; must every wish of the tourist be our command? If so, then, where does the concept of acculturation come in if people would get everything they prefer, the way they like it? Is exploring different cultures and practices not part of the thrill of travel and tourism? Acquired taste of foreign, unfamiliar food may have benefits that go beyond the destination where the local food was experienced, to the origin of the consumer.

Paulson-Box and Williamson (2007) observed that there is an astronomical growth in the ethnic food market, and this growth could, among other reasons, be attributed to the international growth and development of chain hotels and restaurants. They also cite time spent abroad as one of the reasons for this growth. Paulson-Box and Williamson observed that travelling abroad and experiencing unfamiliar cuisines increases awareness and willingness to experience new foods and, hence, it may well mean that overseas exposures influences the rise in patronage and sales of ethnic foods. Mak et al. (2012) also name familiarity and past experience as factors that influence tourist food consumption. Therefore, if the tourist is not exposed to indigenous dishes, their preferences or consumption patterns will not gravitate towards those dishes. They may also not recognize or appreciate it when they encounter such cuisines in other countries or in their countries of origin.

### 2.2. Theory and hypotheses

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the base theory for this study, is a cynosure in behavioural predictive research. It has been widely used in consumer behaviour studies such as Ryu and Jang (2006); Lada et al. (2009); Ha and Janda (2012). TPB proposes a model about how human action is guided. It provides a deliberative processing model, which implies that individuals make behavioural decisions based on careful consideration of available information. It predicts the occurrence of a specific behaviour provided that the behaviour is intentional. TPB was developed from the Theory of Reasoned Action to address the observed limitations in TRA (Ajzen, 1988, 1991). The theory adds a third variable to explain behavioural intention. According to the TPB, human behaviour is informed by three factors; attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural

control (Ajzen, 1991). In other words, behaviour is the consequence of behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs. Perceived behavioural control was conceptualised as the perceived social pressure to perform the given behaviour. Essentially, the concept of TPB, according to Francis et al. (2002), can be summarised as a predictive tool for envisaging whether a person intends to do something. The needed information are:

- Whether the person is in favour of doing it (attitude).
- How much the person feels social pressure to do it (subjective norm).
- Whether the person feels in control of the action in question (perceived behavioural control).

Ajzen (1989) defines attitude as an individual's "disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event" (p. 241). In the present study, the attitude construct is in reference to menu decision makers' evaluation of a specified behaviour concerning a particular object – the introduction of more variety of locally indigenous dishes to the hotel's food service menu. The TPB (Ajzen, 1988) suggests that attitude informs intention and is a major predictor of the intention to undertake any behaviour. Thus, a person's negative or positive evaluation of a behaviour will influence their decision to perform or not perform that behaviour (Lukas et al., 2004). Many studies have confirmed the significant influence of attitude on intention (e.g., Bagozzi, 2000; Cordano and Frieze, 2005; Marquardt and Hoeger, 2009; Stevens et al., 2005) and thus, the hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>).** *Attitude towards adding more variety of indigenous dishes unto the hotel menu positively influences intention to do so.*

Subjective norm was conceptualised as the perceived social pressure to perform the given behaviour. As such, the greater the subjective norm, the stronger a person's conative response to perform a given behaviour (Ajzen, 2006). Francis et al. (2002) described subjective norm as the extent to which a person perceives that people important to that person think that the behaviour should be performed. The value of the opinion of any given referent is often weighted by the motivation that the person has to comply with the desire of that referent. Some studies in other contexts have underscored the influential role of this normative beliefs construct on behavioural intention (e.g., Davis et al., 1989; Bang et al., 2000; Aila et al., 2012).

**Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>).** *Normative beliefs positively influence intention to add more variety of indigenous dishes unto the hotel menu.*

Even though the unit of measurement of the model for the Theory of Planned Behaviour is individual-based (Glanz et al., 2008), a number of arguments have been made to oppose the assertion that the TPB model is not suitable for evaluating decisions in organisational contexts because of the dynamic and intricate multi-phase, multi-person, multi-departmental and multi-objective nature of the decision process in organisations (Johnston and Lewin, 1996; Thompson and Panayiotopoulos, 1999). Alexander (2006) and Southey (2011) advance this debate by affirming that the aforementioned argument is not cogent enough in that, when it comes to small businesses, the mainstay of their nature is that decision-making is vested in and tends to be the domain of a single individual who may be the owner/manager or the appointee of the owner/manager. Thus, the predictive capacity inherent in the TPB model can as well be relevant in small business decision making. As sound as this argument may seem, others suggest that there are more considerations in business behaviour than may persist in private individual action (Quaddus and Hofmeyer, 2007). The current study assumes this view. In other words, using TPB to understand the concept of decision-making in SMEs would require some modifications, though decision-making in SMEs is largely vested in a single individual.

In this tenor, the literature proposes several models in the quest to predict intention and behaviour in business decision making; most of

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5108208>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5108208>

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