



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research

Understanding Chinese tourists' food consumption in the United States[☆]Kaiyang Wu^a, Carola Raab^a, Wen Chang^{a,*}, Anjala Krishen^b^a University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154-6021, USA^b University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Lee Business School, Department of Marketing & International Business, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154-6010, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 October 2015

Received in revised form 1 January 2016

Accepted 1 March 2016

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Tourists

Chinese

Food consumption

PLS-SEM

Multi-group analysis

ABSTRACT

Chinese tourism is a booming market that various international tourism destinations want to attract. Although Chinese tourists have an enormous economic impact on the restaurant industry, they seem to consume only Chinese cuisine during their international trips. This study applies the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and uses the PLS-SEM method to evaluate different factors that influence Chinese tourists' consumption behavior toward local food in the United States. The results of this study show that the concerns for food safety (negatively) and table manners could aggravate Chinese tourists' attitudes toward consuming unfamiliar local food. However, communication and the food's sensory appeal are not significant in predicting their attitudes toward local food. A multigroup analysis also shows that food neophobia, a food-related personality trait, moderates Chinese tourists' decisions in regard to consuming local food.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The development of tourism plays a vital role in the growth of the global economy (Lee & Chang, 2008). Spending by Chinese tourists grew substantially from 79 billion dollars in 2009 to 110 billion dollars in 2013 (The World Bank, 2014). Further, the U.S. Department of Commerce (2014) reports that almost 2 million Chinese tourists visited the United States in 2013, 23% more than in 2012. This number might dramatically increase because the United States extended the length of short-term business and tourist visas for Chinese citizens on November 12, 2014 (U.S. Department of State, 2014). Hence, a better understanding of Chinese tourists' travel expenditures in the United States is crucial to the U.S. businesses that serve these customers.

Among the different travel expenditures, food consumption constitutes up to one third of the total spending of tourists (Telfer & Wall, 2000). The U.S. Department of Commerce (2014) reports that food consumption is the only activity that gradually increases among Chinese tourists while visiting the United States. However, a field study by Chang, Kivela, and Mak (2010) finds that Chinese food remains the main preference for the majority of Chinese tourists when they visit Western countries. This finding is consistent with Cohen and Avieli's (2004) argument that local foods can be attractions but their unfamiliarity can also be an impediment to consumption. Hence, a better

understanding of the behavior of rejecting local food while traveling abroad is appealing to both business owners and researchers.

This study references the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to understand the factors that influence Chinese tourists' food consumption in the United States. The TPB posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls together influence an individual's behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Consequently, different beliefs determine an individual's attitude. A review of the research (Bu, Kim, & Son, 2013; Cohen & Avieli, 2004) calls attention to both the importance of the local food market and the impact of particular beliefs (i.e., safety concern, communication gap, table manners, and the food's sensory appeal) on tourists' attitudes toward food consumption. Because unfamiliar local food is novel to tourists, Kim, Eves, and Scarles (2009) suggest that understanding food neophobia, a food-related personality trait, is important when researching tourists' food consumption. Overall, the purpose of this study is to explore the predictive factors on tourists', particularly Chinese tourists', food consumption in the United States.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

Tourists' food consumption is a prevalent research topic in the literature on consumer behavior (Kim et al., 2009; Seo, Kim, Oh, & Yun, 2013). However, the research shows two contrasting perspectives on food in tourism. One stream of research considers food as a tourist attraction (Hjalager & Richards, 2003), while the other stream of research finds food as an impediment that prevents tourists from exploring the food attractions of a travel destination (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Because tourists in general tend to connect travel with risk and uncertainty, international tourists can feel uncomfortable in new environments and be resistant to unfamiliar local food (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005).

[☆] The authors appreciate the insights and suggestions by Tony Henthorne and Gregory Moody from University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: wuk@unlv.nevada.edu (K. Wu), carola.raab@unlv.edu (C. Raab), wen.chang@unlv.edu (W. Chang), anjala.krishen@unlv.edu (A. Krishen).

This study predicts Chinese tourists' behavior toward food consumption in the United States. Hence, the differences between the two countries' food cultures are relevant to understanding that behavior. Cooper (1986) points out that in Chinese culture, sharing main courses with other people at the table and only taking an appropriate portion is important. This sharing rarely happens in the United States where people usually order and eat their own food. Further, Atkins and Bowler (2001) mention that culture plays a significant role in what a person considers appropriate to eat. For instance, Chinese gastronomy perceives bird nests as nutritious; however, other cultures consider this ingredient frightening (Cheung & Wu, 2012). Thus, the fact that Chinese tourists frequently dine in Chinatowns during their visits is not surprising.

In order to better understand tourists' food consumption behavior, this research applies the TPB as the fundamental framework. Ajzen (1991) introduced the TPB, and since then various studies (Wu, Cheng, & Cheng, 2015; Zapkau, Schwens, Steinmetz, & Kabst, 2015) have adopted this theory to predict an individual's behavior. Several studies apply the TPB to food consumption in tourism and hospitality (Horng, Su, & So, 2013; Padgett, Kim, Goh, & Huffman, 2013). Hultman, Kazeminia, and Ghasemi (2015) use the TPB to understand Swedish and Taiwanese tourists' decisions on ecotourism, which is an example of using this theoretical framework to predict international tourists' behavior.

The study bases the first hypotheses on the TPB literature (for more details refer to Ajzen, 1991):

H₁. As Chinese tourists' attitude toward consuming unfamiliar local food becomes more positive, their intention to consume increases.

H₂. As Chinese tourists' subjective norms about consuming unfamiliar local food become more positive, their intention to consume increases.

H₃. As Chinese tourists' perceived behavioral control about consuming unfamiliar local food improves, their intention to consume increases.

Ajzen (1991) argues that predictions on the attitudes toward certain behaviors come from different behavioral beliefs. Hence, the present study introduces the beliefs that influence tourists' behavioral attitudes toward consuming unfamiliar local foods.

When traveling, the consumption of unfamiliar local food and, unsanitary food practices can make tourists ill. Hence, the fear of illness can be the principal reason for tourists' suspicion of local food (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). This type of health concern is consistent with food safety. When the Avian flu, a disease that spreads from migrating birds to humans, erupted in Asian countries, these countries saw a decrease in the volume of tourists and the consumption of poultry dishes. The research (Ha & Jang, 2010) also finds that food safety is very important for food preference. Because of the concerns about food safety, tourists might have more unfavorable attitudes toward consuming unfamiliar local food during their travel abroad. Thus, this study hypothesizes:

H₄. As the safety concern about consuming unfamiliar local food increases, tourists' attitude toward consuming this food becomes more negative.

Cohen and Avieli (2004) find that difficulties in communication aggravate the anxieties of tourists. Already suspicious of being cheated or overcharged, travelers tend to express awkward feelings when they enter dining places that locals patronize. Hence, successfully providing proper communication with tourists in a dining setting can possibly resolve the tourists' anxieties that can then result in more positive attitudes toward consuming local food. Hence, this study hypothesizes:

H₅. As communication from servers becomes more helpful, tourists' attitude toward consuming unfamiliar local food becomes more positive.

Table manners vary among different cultures. Each country has its unique gastronomical traditions, such as the selection of food,

presentation of dishes, and the skill in preparation (Long, 2004). Bessiere (1998) states that table manners are a very important part of experiencing the culture in a travel destination, particularly the understanding of the local cuisine. Therefore, if tourists feel more comfortable about the local table manners, they gain a more positive attitude toward having unfamiliar local food. Thus, this study hypothesizes:

H₆. As tourists feel more comfortable with different table manners, their attitude toward consuming unfamiliar local food becomes more positive.

Further, the food's sensory appeal is also important. The literature defines sensory appeal as a tourist's need to experience a travel destination through specific sensory modes, such as touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing (Pollard, Steptoe, & Wardle, 1998; Urry, 2002). The research (Clark & Wood, 1998; Namkung & Jang, 2008) also shows that individuals' sensory perception of the food's appeal is a strong determinant of their evaluation of the food's quality. The difference between the food tourists' consume in their home countries and the unfamiliar local food they consume during visits could induce negative reactions, particularly for those tourists who have a higher need for a food's sensory appeal. This study, therefore, hypothesizes:

H₇. As tourists' concern for the food's sensory appeal increases, their attitude toward consuming unfamiliar local food becomes more negative.

Furthermore, Ajzen (2005) states that personality traits could also affect certain behavior. Thus, the research (Chang et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2009) explores the concept of food neophobia. Food neophobia, literally "fear of the new," is a characteristic of omnivores, such as humans, that leads to the avoidance of new or unfamiliar foods (Hobden & Pliner, 1995). Kim et al. (2009) propose that food neophobia is the trait that affects tourists' behavior toward food consumption and successfully verify this statement in a follow-up study (Kim et al., 2013). However, Hafiz, Zainal, Nizan, and Shahariah (2013) find that food neophobia is an insignificant predictor of tourists' food consumption. These inconclusive results call for more attention to the premise that food neophobia works as a trait that influences tourists' behaviors toward food consumption. The present study argues that food neophobia moderates the aforementioned relations. Therefore, this study hypothesizes the following:

H₈. Stronger effects will occur in the results of the above hypotheses (H₁ ~ H₇) among the tourists who have high food neophobia compared to those who have low food neophobia.

Fig. 1 displays the proposed theoretical model.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and data collection

This study surveys Chinese tourists who visited the United States between March 2013 and September 2014. The study conducts a snowball sampling to collect the data by using international travelers the authors know through personal relationships (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2012). The survey initially uses English and then language professionals translate the English into Chinese and provide back translation. The questionnaire provides an explanation of the local food in Chinese. After translation, an online survey website provides a link to the Chinese questionnaire, and five initial participants receive this link. The online survey requests that all of the participants invite their friends and family who qualify to take the survey. In total, 421 people agree to participate and 304 of them complete the survey. The study eliminates inadequate surveys (e.g., length of the completion time and acquiescence bias) to leave a total sample size of 278, which yields an effective response rate of 66%. The average age of the sample is 43 (SD = 14.5). Table 1 presents the demographic information on the participants.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5109926>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5109926>

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