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Testing an attribute-benefit-value-intention (ABVI) model of local food consumption as perceived by foreign tourists

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the attribute-benefit-value-intention (ABVI) model of local food consumption as perceived by foreign tourists. The model was designed to test the structural relationships between local food attributes, perceived benefits, consumption value and behavioral intentions.

Design/methodology/approach – The structural relationships of foreign tourists' perceptions of local food consumption were conceptualized, and hypotheses were proposed. The main survey was conducted using a large sample of 1,323 tourists in Hong Kong.

Findings – "Food quality", "food novelty" and "restaurant quality" significantly affected "emotional" and "epistemic benefit". "Emotional benefit" had a significant effect on "consumption value" and "behavioral intention", while "epistemic benefit" only influenced "consumption value".

Practical implications – Local food marketers and DMOs need to promote the product features that are relevant to tourists' benefits. Restaurant marketers need to develop distinctive strategies for tourists from different national backgrounds.

Originality/value – This study proposed and empirically tested a new model of tourists' local food consumption, including two benefits, consumption value and behavioral intention.

Keywords Consumption, Value, Local food, Attribute, Benefit

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

There is increasing interest in local food tourism. However, a thorough literature review revealed a significant research gap. First, most food tourism studies have independently investigated local food attributes, benefits, values and future intentions without understanding of causal relationships of these constructs (Choe and Kim, 2018). Little effort to assess the role of local food attributes in explaining benefits, value and future intentions has been made. Second, no empirical study has used quantitative methods to examine the structural relationships between multi-dimensional local food attributes and behavioral intentions through benefits and consumption value. By

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conducting such a study, it is possible to understand any relationships among the meanings of local food in a tourism destination, their effect on consumption and their association with actual local food tourism.

In this study, local food is defined as food that is grown or produced in a local area; it can be specialty food or regionally branded food that represents a local identity. This study focuses on Hong Kong food because the sample of this study consists of international tourists to Hong Kong. As Hong Kong cuisines reflect Cantonese food ingredients, recipes and dietary culture, they are distinctive from other Chinese foods (Choe and Kim, 2018). This study had three major objectives. The first was to identify the attributes, benefits and consumption value of local food in a tourism destination. The second was to investigate the structural relationships between local food attributes, benefits, consumption value and behavioral intention, using structural equation modeling (SEM). Through this study, we expect to improve our current understanding of the meanings decoded in the process of consuming local food in a foreign tourism destination.

Literature review and hypotheses

This section describes the dyadic relationships between the four constructs. The proposed structural model comprising multiple hypotheses is depicted in Figure 1. The overall model elucidates the sequential process of perception of a foreign tourist who experiences local food in a tourism location: that is, he/she perceives food benefits which are linked to final value through consuming food attributes.

Perception of local food attributes and benefits

Attributes indicate the features or characteristics of a product or service (Kim *et al.*, 2016). Tourists' local food consumption in a destination is associated with diverse local food attributes (Guan, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2016; Nield *et al.*, 2000). For example, Guan (2012) found that the attributes of local cuisine attractiveness were composed of special flavor, high reputation, authenticity, reasonable price, secret recipes, novelty, hygiene, food street, good service, distinctive surroundings and special eating customs. Nield *et al.* (2000) identified local food quality, number of dishes, value for money, standard of local food services, variety of dishes, local food presentation, overall meal experience, speed of service and attractiveness of surroundings as local food attributes in a destination.

Benefits refer to the desired outcomes from the consumption of a product (Choe and Kim, 2018; Kim and Kim, in press; Meretse *et al.*, 2016). Previous studies have addressed a variety of the benefits of consumer products, including functional, social, affective, epistemic,

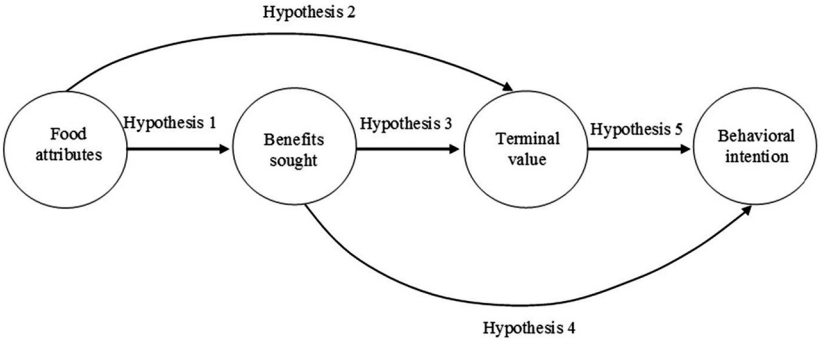

Figure 1.
Proposed attribute-benefit-value-intention (ABVI) model of local food consumption

aesthetic, hedonic, situational and holistic benefits (Lai, 1995; Sheth *et al.*, 1991; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Most of the products in these studies correspond to durable goods, manufacturing goods and service goods. However, the characteristics of such products are different from those of local foods that foreign tourists can enjoy in a tourism destination (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Choe and Kim, 2018; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Mkono *et al.*, 2013). For example, the benefits that a foreign tourist perceives through eating local foods include exotic enjoyment, the curiosity of eating novel local food, interest in the host country's food culture, expectation of good memories and self-expression as a tourist compared to their friends who do not experience such foods and environments (Choe and Kim, 2018; Mak *et al.*, 2012a, 2012b, 2017). Therefore, two types of benefits are gained from local food consumption at a tourism destination overseas: emotional and epistemic.

Regarding emotional benefits, Barrena and Sánchez (2013) investigated diners' acceptance of novel food by examining the hierarchical value map; for example, the food attributes of *couscous* (a novel ethnic food), such as appearance and taste, were linked to emotional benefits, such as being appetizing and enjoyable to eat. Although Barrena and Sánchez's (2013) study was conducted in the daily context, it provides a basis for anticipating how tourists will benefit from the attributes of new local food they experience at a tourist destination. Lee (2014) found that Korean food attributes such as diversity, low fat ingredients and familiarity were strongly associated with emotional benefits such as enjoyment of taste, vitality of life, psychological relaxation, comfort and positive attitude. In particular, diners appreciated vitality of life and psychological relaxation as very important emotional benefits of consuming Korean food.

Consuming exotic cuisine in an overseas tourism location can also provide epistemic benefits such as fulfilling curiosity, experiencing novelty and gaining knowledge because most tourists consider local food consumption as a novel experience and a means by which to expand their knowledge or cultural capital (Quan and Wang, 2004). When visitors experience local cuisines, they are not simply gaining nutrition from food, but are going through the process of learning and adaptation (Long, 2004). Through local food consumption, tourists learn about the history of different cultures and can explore traditions and unique cultures (Fields, 2002; Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000; Madaleno *et al.*, 2017). That is, tourists can learn about new ways of cooking and eating, the local food ingredients used in the dish and stories about the local cuisine. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H1. Local food attributes have a positive effect on the benefits a tourist seeks from consuming local food.

Perception of local food attributes and consumption value

Value refers to the end state of existence or to ultimate modes of living that have been idealized (Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2016). Various studies have attempted to assess the perception of value, which is essential in understanding tourists' ultimate travel goal (Kim and Kim, in press; Kim *et al.*, 2016; Wu *et al.*, 2009). The most popular instrument for assessing value is the nine-item list of values (LOV) (Kahle, 1983), which measures the following: sense of belonging, excitement, fun and enjoyment, warm relationships with others, self-fulfillment, being well respected, sense of accomplishment, security and self-respect.

The consumption values sought from tasting local food in overseas destinations differ from emotional or epistemic benefits because consumption values refer to the high-level mental state perceived through seeking these benefits (Choe and Kim, 2018). The consumption values have abstract social aspects or aspects that extend beyond the self, such as happiness, self-actualization, love and curiosity about another world. Comparatively, as benefits are less abstract than values and are met by direct consumption at the diner's

individual experience level, individual benefits are more diverse than consumption values. Thus, the number of benefits is greater than the number of consumption values (Ha and Jang, 2013; Jeng and Yeh, 2016).

Perceptions of food attributes lead to perceptions of a food's consumption value. Food attributes such as the quality and nutrition of ethnic food have also been associated with good eating habits and healthy food and linked to enhanced quality of life and security (Barrena and Sánchez, 2013; Choe and Kim, 2018). Likewise, Kivela and Crotts (2006) emphasized that gastronomy is an important attribute that plays a major role in affecting tourists' overall experience in a destination. Nield *et al.* (2000) found that food service attributes such as quality of food, value for money, variety of dishes, attractiveness of surroundings and presentation of food significantly affected tourists' overall satisfaction with their local food experiences. Tasting local food is traditionally regarded in the hospitality field as a fundamental factor that results in high-end values such as a sense of fulfillment, happiness, hedonism and interest in other worlds (Choe and Kim, 2018; Kivela *et al.*, 1999; Sulek and Hensley, 2004). In summary, a tourist who has a positive perception of local food attributes is likely to perceive a higher level of consumption value. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Local food attributes have a positive effect on tourists' perceptions of consumption value.

Benefits and consumption value

In a model of consumer value for the consumer market, the results of Lai's (1995) study implied that benefits lead to consumer value, even though he did not test the relationship. In the local food consumption context, there has been limited effort to test the relationship. As discussed, those who perceive benefits from eating local food are likely to perceive consumption value. By consuming hospitality and tourism products, a tourist may be in search of the emotional benefits that a food diner can gain, including fun, pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction (Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Voss *et al.*, 2003; Kim *et al.*, 2018). The emotional benefits of eating food finally lead to high-end value (Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Barrena and Sánchez, 2013; Ha and Jang, 2013). For example, Ha and Jang (2013) discovered that diners who perceived positive emotional benefits, such as keeping good relationships with family/friends, building good memories and good mood, also perceived ultimate values, such as self-esteem and a keen interest in creating social bonds.

Second, studies have indicated that epistemic benefit positively affects customers' high-order consumption value toward a provided facility or service (Getz *et al.*, 2014; Jang and Feng, 2007; Kim *et al.*, 2016; Williams and Soutar, 2009). For example, Getz *et al.* (2014) found that the experiential qualities of authenticity and uniqueness perceived by consuming food help to enhance the perception of consumption values such as self-actualization and the pursuit of a happy life. Consequently, both the emotional and epistemic benefits of experiencing local food in an exotic destination are likely to affect tourists' perceptions of ultimate value. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. The benefits of consuming local food have a positive effect on the perception of consumption value.

Benefits and behavioral intention

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined behavioral intention as the likelihood that a person will engage in a specific behavior. Behavioral intention is an antecedent of behavior in the future

(Kim *et al.*, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2014). Thus, most studies use tourists' intention to revisit a restaurant and willingness to recommend the establishment to others as their key outcome measures. In the food tourism context, the concept of behavioral intention includes the intention to revisit a destination and spread information through word of mouth (Kim *et al.*, 2018; Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Madaleno *et al.*, 2017).

The literature indicates that benefits are the key antecedents of diners' behavioral intention (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Ha and Jang, 2010; Williams and Soutar, 2009). For example, diners who gain emotional benefits such as relaxation and excitement from eating local food are more willing to revisit an ethnic restaurant (Ha and Jang, 2010). In a similar vein, eating pleasure and learning benefit were found to significantly influence tourists' future intentions (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). Chang *et al.* (2010) discovered that Chinese tourists who described local food in Australia as "unknown food" and "authentic foreign cuisine" were more likely to recommend the destination to their friends. Getz *et al.* (2014) found that tourists' behavior, such as the number of local food events they attended, differed according to the benefits they were seeking (Getz *et al.*, 2014). Based on the findings of previous studies, it is assumed that, when tourists perceive the positive emotional and epistemic benefits of a behavior, their intention to engage in the behavior will increase. Therefore, tourists are likely to make relevant recommendations or eat the local cuisine again in the future. The relationship between benefits and behavioral intention is proposed in the following hypothesis:

H4. The benefits that tourists seek from consuming local food have a positive effect on their behavioral intention.

Consumption value and behavioral intention

An individual's value perception, which is the most abstract aspect of social cognition, determines what an individual does in a situation (Bardi and Schwartz, 2003; Kahle, 1980; Kim and Kim, in press). In other words, a consumer's behavior can be affected by their personal value orientation. For example, a tourist who pursues hedonic value will rejoice in fun or like deviant behavior in a tourism place, regardless of organizational/national culture when away from home (Kim and McKercher, 2011). Lee *et al.* (2014) produced a hierarchical value map of Chinese consumers' healthy drink consumption decisions within the Chinese market. They found that Schwartz's personal values such as security, hedonism, benevolence and self-direction were associated with healthy drink consumption decisions.

Ha and Jang (2013) identified consumer-dining values according to different types of restaurant. The most important consumption values for fast food restaurant diners were convenience, success and economy; for casual restaurant diners, emotional value and belonging value were more important; and for customers of fine dining restaurants, emotion value and quality of life value were most appreciated. This finding indicates that different consumption values lead to different dining behaviors.

Bardi and Schwartz (2003) stated that most behavior could be explained by multiple abstract values. For example, people on food tourism trips may seek various values, including enjoying different food from that in their own country (pursuit of knowledge curiosity toward other cultures), compliance with their friends' expectations (conformity value), gaining energy from new experiences (personal happiness value) and relaxation in an exotic space (fun and enjoyment value). Therefore, it can be assumed that tourists' behavioral intention, such as willingness to recommend the local food to others or willingness to return to the destination to taste the local cuisine, depends on the level of perceived value. However, studies have not explored the link between consumption value

and consumption behavior in a local food tourism context. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5. Perception of consumption value has a positive effect on behavioral intention

Methodology

Measurement

The measurement items were developed through an extensive literature review, pre-test and pilot test. Initially, a thorough literature review of food attributes, benefits, values and behavioral intention was conducted. The items for each construct were then derived and modified to fit the context of local food tourism. First, a pool of initial items for measuring local food attributes was extracted on the basis of a review of previous food and food tourism studies (Guan, 2012; Jang *et al.*, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2014; Lee, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2009). Second, a pool of items representing the benefits obtained from consuming local food in a destination was operationalized on the basis of previous studies (Choe and Kim, 2018; Ha and Jang, 2013; Kim and Eves, 2012). A pool of items to indicate local food consumption value was adopted from Khale's (1986) LOV and other studies in the food tourism context (Barrena and Sánchez, 2013; Getz *et al.*, 2014; Jang and Feng, 2007). Lastly, items to measure future intention after experiencing local food were adopted from previous studies (Kim *et al.*, 2014; Kivela and Crotts, 2006).

Before conducting the pilot test and main survey, a pre-test to verify the face validity of the items was implemented with 50 graduate students in Hong Kong who were majoring in hospitality and tourism. The respondents recommended using the words "authentic" and "dumplings, noodles, and rice" to manifest the features of Hong Kong local food. Accordingly, these terms were included in the food attribute items. Then, a pilot test was conducted using a sample of 94 respondents who were traveling from different regions: 20 from the USA and Europe, 20 from mainland China, 10 from Taiwan, 25 from Korea and 19 from Japan. Some respondents commented on the vagueness of the local food items and advised specifying local foods. Regarding the behavioral intention items, the respondents advised that examples of social media should be given, rather than simply describing positive reviews on social media. In addition, some of the interviewees commented on the difficulty of understanding what Hong Kong local food was being referred to without any pictorial information.

These comments were considered in the development of the main survey questionnaire. For example, photos of Hong Kong local foods and their names were included in the questionnaire to help tourists understand their local food experiences. The local food which local people usually eat included traditional Cantonese foods such as dim sum, sea food, wonton soup, porridge and barbeque. The original questionnaire was developed in English and was translated into Chinese, French, German, Korean, Japanese and Thai. There were two groups of translators: professors in hospitality management who spoke different languages and professional translators who were working for a translation company. After compiling a draft, the translators were requested to back-translate it into English. After comparing the two versions, the final versions were completed. All items, with the exception of sociodemographic, restaurant-related and travel-related variables, which were measured using categorical data type, were measured using five-point Likert scales (1 = "strongly disagree"; 3 = "neutral"; and 5 = strongly agree").

Data collection

Data were collected at the Hong Kong International Airport between November 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017. The survey was administered on both weekends and weekdays to reflect

differences in the travel-related characteristics of tourists. In total, 13 undergraduate students were employed as interviewers after receiving interview training that included the method of contact with potential respondents, explanation of the research objectives, explanation of the definition of local food and the need to write a respondent's name on the questionnaire. The interviewers received a monetary incentive (US$4 per questionnaire). To confirm whether each questionnaire was answered by the respondent, it was asked for interviewers to receive signatures of the respondents on the questionnaire. It is also a school requirement to submit the list to the university the researcher is affiliated with.

To select appropriate respondents for the purpose of this study, two screening questions were applied: "Did you taste local food during your stay in Hong Kong?" and "Was tasting local food important during your trip to Hong Kong?" Those who had experienced local food at least once and confirmed the importance of tasting local food by answering "important" on three-point scale ("Not important"-"neutral"-"important") were selected.

To select a diversified sample of tourists, the interviewers were assigned to collect participants from specific national or regional groups. Interviewers approached passengers who checked in at the counter of each country's national carrier. Interviewees who were resident in Hong Kong or did not pass the two screening questions were not asked to fill out the questionnaire. As a token of gratitude for participating in the survey, a gift (equivalent to US$5) such as a shopping bag, fridge magnet, postcard or luggage bag tag was provided. A total of 1,392 questionnaires were collected. However, 50 questionnaires containing many missing values and 19 questionnaires with only one category number on the five-point Likert scale measurements checked were removed from the data set. Therefore, 1,323 questionnaires were included in the data analysis.

Data analysis

The data analysis consisted of four steps. After testing the frequencies of all variables, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions of four constructs: local food attributes, consumption benefits, value and behavioral intention. Then, SmartPLS 3.0 was used to confirm the measurement model and correlation paths. Lastly, multi-group analysis using SmartPLS 3.0 was conducted to identify differences in the path coefficients. Partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is based on principal component analysis, which maximizes the variance explained by endogenous variables and is appropriate for exploratory research (Doh *et al.*, 2017).

PLS analysis is suitable for assessing models with complex relationships, and there are minimal restrictions on the measurement scale and residual distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2011). If the research objective is to predict target constructs or identify antecedents rather than confirming a theory, PLS-SEM should be conducted rather than covariance-based SEM (Hair *et al.*, 2011). As this study firstly attempts to examine the interrelationships among local food attributes, benefits, consumption value and behavioral intention in the tourism context, which is more exploratory in nature, the use of PLS was appropriate for the aim of this current research.

Results

Demographic profile and travel-related characteristics

Nearly 55 per cent of the respondents were male, and about 51 per cent were married. The majority of the respondents (about 73 per cent) were college graduates or above. With regard to employment, company employees made up the largest proportion of the participants (almost 30 per cent). Regarding age, approximately 33 per cent of the respondents were in their 30s. The annual household income category with the highest percentage of

respondents was US$10,001-40,000 (37 per cent). The respondents' countries of origin were as follows: European countries and Russia (38 per cent), America (12 per cent), China and Taiwan (11 per cent), Australia and New Zealand (9 per cent), Korea and Japan (7 per cent) and Africa (6 per cent); approximately, 17 per cent of the respondents were from other Asian countries.

Regarding travel-related characteristics, about 42 per cent of the respondents reported that this was their first visit to Hong Kong. About 58 per cent were visiting Hong Kong for leisure purposes. The most popular restaurants visited by tourists were local restaurants where Hong Kong residents usually eat (n = 734), followed by casual dining restaurants (n = 692), local restaurants strongly recommended by a friend or tour guide (n = 466), fine dining restaurants (n = 418) and Michelin-starred restaurants (n = 156).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and reliability test

According to DeVellis (2003), the generalizability and reliability of the results can be demonstrated by replicating a factor analytic solution using a separate sample. Moreover, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) models must not be specified based on EFA results from the same sample (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Kline, 2011). Therefore, the data were randomly divided into two sets for cross-validation. EFA was used for the first data set (n = 666) and CFA for the second (N = 657).

To extract the underlying domains of local food attributes, principal components and promax rotation methods were used. As shown in Table I, the factor analysis using 12 items

Domain	Item	Communality	Factor loading	Mean
Food quality (4.57[a], 38.09[b], 0.76[c])	It was an opportunity to taste delicious food	0.64	0.79	3.98
	It was an opportunity to taste various menus and ingredients	0.55	0.71	3.94
	It was an opportunity to taste rice, noodles and dumplings	0.51	0.71	3.96
	It was an opportunity to taste adequate food portion	0.45	0.67	3.70
	It was an opportunity to taste good-quality food	0.57	0.65	3.86
Food novelty (1.34[a], 11.15[b], 0.77[c])	It was an opportunity to taste unknown food	0.70	0.90	3.73
	It was an opportunity to taste exotic ingredients	0.65	0.82	3.61
	It was an opportunity to taste authentic Hong Kong food	0.54	0.62	3.93
	It was an opportunity to taste local food with local people and foreign tourists	0.52	0.53	3.80
Restaurant quality (1.02[a], 8.50[b], 0.68[c])	It was an opportunity to experience the good hygiene conditions of local restaurants	0.72	0.90	3.53
	It was an opportunity to experience the exotic ambiences of Hong Kong local restaurants	0.60	0.73	3.60
	It was an opportunity to experience the value for money of local restaurants	0.49	0.64	3.49

Notes: [a]= Eigenvalue; [b]= variance; [c]= reliability α. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.88

Table I.
EFA for the food attributes (n = 666)

generated a three-factor model in which the items had an eigenvalue greater than 1. The factor structure explained 57.74 per cent of the variance. All factor loadings, the correlations between the observed measurements and the factors, exceeded Stevens (2002) criterion of 0.40. All reliability α scores within the three domains were greater than 0.68, close to Nunnally's (1978) criterion of 0.70, indicating the internal consistency of the items within each factor. The extracted domains were labeled "food quality", "food novelty" and "restaurant quality". The mean values for the 12 items ranged from 3.49 to 3.96.

EFA of the nine items measuring the benefits of local food consumption using principal components and promax rotation methods generated a two-factor model in which the items had an eigenvalue greater than 1. The factor structure explained 65.44 per cent of the variance. All factor loadings were greater than 0.58, and all reliability α scores were higher than 0.83. The extracted domains were labeled "emotional benefit" and "epistemic benefit". The mean scores for the nine items ranged from 3.41 to 3.86.

EFA of the seven local food consumption value items and four behavioral intention items generated a single-factor model for each. Each construct explained 53.92 per cent and 65.72 per cent of the variance, respectively, and all factor loadings were greater than 0.68. The reliability α were 0.86 and 0.82, respectively. The results are reported in Table II.

Confirmatory factor analysis

CFA was conducted using SmartPLS 3.0 software with the second half of the data (N = 657). First, indicator reliability was assessed by examining the confirmatory factor loadings. All indicator variances were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. One item ("It was an opportunity to taste adequate local food portion") that had a standardized factor loading of less than 0.6 was removed based on the recommendation of Bagozzi and Yi (1988). In the revised measurement model, all factor loadings were significant and above the cut-off point of 0.6. The AVE values were all greater than 0.5, confirming convergent validity (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Composite reliability and Cronbach's α were calculated to assess internal consistency. All composite reliability values were greater than 0.84 and all Cronbach's α values were greater than 0.71, thus indicating a sufficiently high level of reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, Fornell and Larker (1981) test of shared variance between pairs of constructs and cross-loadings was used to assess discriminant validity. As shown in Table IV, the squared roots of the AVE values for each construct were greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations. All of the items loaded on their intended constructs, and there were no cross-loading items, thus confirming discriminant validity.

Hypothesis testing

The results of the structural equation model testing are displayed in Figure 2. Compared with the proposed model shown in Figure 1, the model in Figure 2 contains three local food attribute domains, two benefits domains, a single consumption value domain and a single behavioral intention domain. The structural model was finally estimated with the whole data set (n = 1,323) using SmartPLS and a bootstrap resampling method to obtain p-values. Table V reports the parameter estimates for the hypothesized direct paths. The R^2 values to explain the power of explaining each endogenous variable by exogenous variables are reported in Figure 2. The R^2 values to predict emotional benefit, epistemic benefit, consumption value and behavioral intention were 0.46, 0.45, 0.61 and 0.50, respectively.

H1 was supported. Food quality, food novelty and restaurant quality positively affected emotional benefit (β = 0.32, β = 0.29, β = 0.20; all $p < 0.001$), while food quality, food

Domain	Item	Communality	Factor loading	Mean
Benefits				
Emotional benefit (4.86[a], 53.99[b], 0.86[c])	I could boast to others about tasting Hong Kong local food	0.68	0.87	3.65
	I could build a good memory by tasting Hong Kong local food	0.72	0.85	3.85
	Tasting Hong Kong local food helped me to relax	0.57	0.81	3.41
	I liked to talk to families and friends about my Hong Kong local food experiences	0.63	0.74	3.86
	Tasting Hong Kong local food in its original place made me excited	0.64	0.58	3.79
Epistemic benefit (1.03[a], 11.45[b], 0.83[c])	Tasting Hong Kong local food served by local people in its original place helped me to understand the local culture	0.69	0.87	3.77
	Tasting Hong Kong local food allowed me to discover something new	0.71	0.86	3.89
	Tasting Hong Kong local food enabled me to learn what this cuisine tastes like	0.63	0.82	3.79
	Tasting Hong Kong local food increased my knowledge about a different culture	0.63	0.66	3.84
Consumption value				
Consumption value (3.77[a], 53.92[b], 0.86[c])	Personal happiness	0.58	0.76	3.82
	Pursuit of a healthy life	0.46	0.68	3.46
	Fun and enjoyment	0.58	0.76	3.92
	Social bonds and interest in other people	0.55	0.74	3.55
	Self-achievement	0.61	0.78	3.63
	Pursuit of understanding unknown cultures	0.49	0.70	3.93
	Love for friends and/or family	0.51	0.72	3.54
Behavioral intention				
Behavioral intention (2.63[a], 65.72[b], 0.82[c])	I would like to visit a Hong Kong local food restaurant after I return to my country	0.69	0.83	3.66
	I would like recommend Hong Kong local food to my family and/or friends	0.72	0.85	3.83
	I would like to leave positive reviews of Hong Kong local food on social media (e.g. Facebook, blogs, video clips, Messenger)	0.60	0.78	3.53
	I would like to visit Hong Kong to explore more diverse Hong Kong local food within the next FIVE years	0.62	0.79	3.76

Notes: [a]= Eigenvalue; [b]= variance; [c]= reliability α. KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.92, 0.89, 0.80

Table II. EFA of benefits, value and behavioral intention (n = 666)

novelty and restaurant quality positively affected epistemic benefit ($\beta = 0.28, \beta = 0.35, \beta = 0.17$; all $p < 0.001$). *H2* was partially supported. Food quality and restaurant quality positively affected value ($\beta = 0.14, \beta = 0.15$; all $p < 0.001$), while food novelty did not affect consumption value ($\beta = -0.03, p > 0.05$). *H3* was supported. Emotional benefit and epistemic benefit had a positive influence on value ($\beta = 0.47, \beta = 0.19$; all $p < 0.001$). *H4* was partially supported. |Emotional benefit positively influenced behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$), whereas epistemic benefit did not ($\beta = 0.03$, $p > 0.05$). *H5* was supported. Consumption value had a positive effect on behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$).

Domain	Item	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
Food quality	It was an opportunity to taste delicious food	0.85	0.78	0.86	0.60
	It was an opportunity to taste various menus and ingredients	0.76			
	It was an opportunity to taste rice, noodles and dumplings	0.72			
	It was an opportunity to taste good-quality food	0.78			
Food novelty	It was an opportunity to taste unknown food	0.83	0.81	0.88	0.64
	It was an opportunity to taste exotic ingredients	0.81			
	It was an opportunity to taste authentic Hong Kong food	0.82			
	It was an opportunity to taste local food with local people and foreign tourists	0.74			
Restaurant quality	It was opportunity to experience good hygiene conditions of local restaurants	0.79	0.71	0.84	0.63
	It was an opportunity to experience exotic ambiences of Hong Kong local restaurants	0.76			
	It was an opportunity to experience value for money of local restaurants	0.82			
Emotional benefit	I could boast to others about tasting Hong Kong local food	0.80	0.85	0.89	0.62
	I could build a good memory by tasting Hong Kong local food	0.85			
	Tasting Hong Kong local food helped me to relax	0.71			
	I like to talk to family and friends about my Hong Kong local food experiences	0.77			
	Tasting Hong Kong local food in its original place made me excited	0.80			
Epistemic benefit	Tasting Hong Kong local food served by local people in its original place helped me to understand the local culture	0.84	0.84	0.90	0.68
	Tasting Hong Kong local food allowed me to discover something new	0.83			
	Tasting Hong Kong local food enabled me to learn what this cuisine tastes like	0.80			
	Tasting Hong Kong local food increased my knowledge about a different culture	0.83			
Consumption value	Personal happiness	0.81	0.88	0.91	0.58
	Pursuit of a healthy life	0.67			
	Fun and enjoyment	0.84			
	Social bonds and interest in other people	0.73			
	Self-achievement	0.80			
	Pursuit of understanding unknown cultures	0.74			
	Love for friends and/or family	0.75			
Behavioral intention	I will visit a Hong Kong local food restaurant after I return to my country	0.81	0.83	0.89	0.67
	I will recommend Hong Kong local food to my family and/or friends	0.86			
	I will leave positive reviews of Hong Kong local food on social media (e.g. Facebook, blogs, video clips, Messenger)	0.79			
	I will visit Hong Kong to explore more diverse Hong Kong local food within the next five years	0.80			

Notes: α = Cronbach's α; CR: Composite reliability AVE: Average variance extracted

Table III. PLS CFA (n = 657)

Table IV. Correlations among latent constructs (N = 1,323)

	Food quality	Food novelty	Restaurant quality	Emotional benefit	Epistemic benefit	Value	Behavioral intention
Food quality	*0.78*						
Food novelty	0.58	*0.80*					
Restaurant quality	0.54	0.58	*0.79*				
Emotional benefit	0.60	0.60	0.53	*0.79*			
Epistemic benefit	0.57	0.63	0.53	0.68	*0.83*		
Value	0.59	0.56	0.55	0.76	0.66	*0.76*	
Behavioral intention	0.58	0.48	0.47	0.68	0.54	0.66	*0.82*

Note: Items on the diagonal (in italic) represent squared root of AVE scores

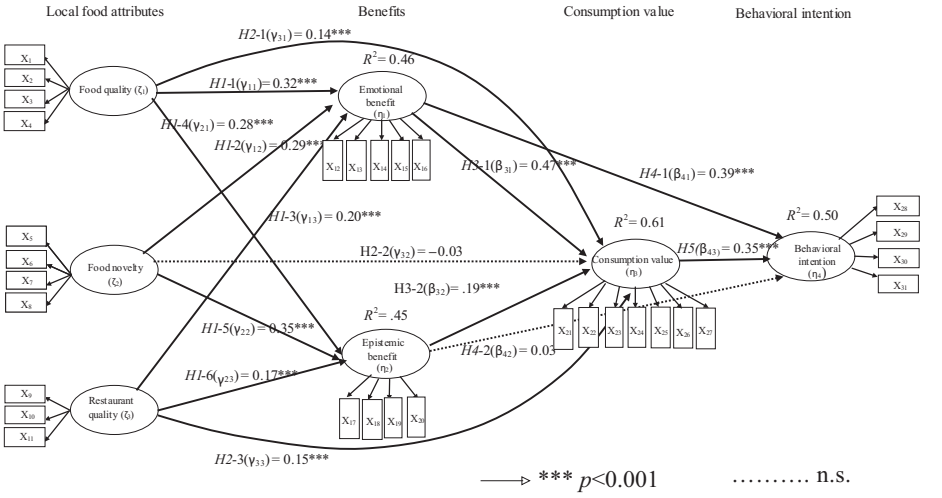

Figure 2. ABVI model of local food consumption

Table V. SEM analysis (N = 1,323)

Regression path	Standardized coefficient	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1-1: Food quality → Emotional benefit	0.32	10.42***	0.000	Support
H1-2: Food novelty → Emotional benefit	0.29	8.68***	0.000	Support
H1-3: Restaurant quality → Emotional benefit	0.20	6.64***	0.000	Support
H1-4: Food quality → Epistemic benefit	0.28	8.99***	0.000	Support
H1-5: Food novelty → Epistemic benefit	0.35	10.43***	0.000	Support
H1-6: Restaurant quality → Epistemic benefit	0.17	5.47***	0.000	Support
H2-1: Food quality → Value	0.14	5.31***	0.000	Support
H2-2: Food novelty → Value	–0.03	1.00	0.320	Reject
H2-3: Restaurant quality → Value	0.15	5.62***	0.000	Support
H3-1: Emotional benefit→ Value	0.47	15.49***	0.000	Support
H3-2: Epistemic benefit→ Value	0.19	5.69***	0.000	Support
H4-1: Emotional benefit→ Behavioral intention	0.39	10.07***	0.000	Support
H4-2: Epistemic benefit→ Behavioral intention	0.03	0.95	0.344	Reject
H5: Value → Behavioral intention	0.35	9.94***	0.000	Support

Discussion and implications

Based on the above results, the key findings of the study are discussed as follows. First, the characteristics and features of local food were influential in explaining both emotional benefit and epistemic benefit. For example, tourists who perceived a local restaurant as clean, exhibiting value for money and having an exotic ambience were more likely to seek a higher level of emotional and epistemic benefits. This result is consistent with studies that have found a strong relationship between local food attributes such as food quality, food novelty and restaurant quality and customers' perceived benefits (Barrena and Sánchez, 2013; Meretse *et al.*, 2016; Mkono *et al.*, 2013). This finding provides evidence of the "self-relevant consequences" that consumers believe they will gain from the consumption of a product (Grunert, 1995). It demonstrates how local food characteristics (e.g. food quality, food novelty, restaurant quality) are closely linked to tourists' self-relevant consequences such as generating excitement, discovering new tastes and learning about another culture.

Second, it is interesting to note that food quality and restaurant quality were significant predictors of consumption value, whereas food novelty was not. This result supports those of previous studies, indicating that local food attributes such as quality, nutrition and variety of dishes were strongly related to consumption value (Barrena and Sánchez, 2013; Lee, 2014; Nield *et al.*, 2000). It is noteworthy, however, that tourists perceived consumption value only through the perceived benefits of food novelty. A potential explanation of this result is that the typology of tourists greatly differs with respect to local food consumption (Hjalager, 2002; Hall and Sharples, 2003; Torres, 2002). For some tourists, experiencing different tastes, flavors, sauces and smells in a destination may make them feel not happy or satisfied, but instead uncomfortable and unfamiliar (Bardhi *et al.*, 2010; Cohen, and Avieli, 2004; Torres, 2002).

Third, emotional benefit significantly affected behavioral intention, whereas epistemic benefit did not. To some extent, this result is unexpected because previous studies have suggested that, when tourists discover something new and learn about the local food culture, they are more willing to recommend the destination to others and to revisit in the future (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Getz *et al.*, 2014; Ha and Jang, 2010; Kivela and Crotts, 2006). The result may indicate that tourists are unlikely to have positive behavioral intentions even if they perceive some learning or educational benefits from eating the local cuisine in a destination. They are more likely to recommend the local food to others and to taste the local cuisine again in the future through perceiving the consumption value and experiencing both emotional and epistemic benefits.

Fourth, consumption value showed a significant direct effect on behavioral intention. This confirms the previous finding that consumption value determines how an individual acts in a situation (Bardi and Schwartz, 2003; Kahle, 1980; Lee *et al.*, 2014). This finding adds value because it is the first attempt to empirically prove the influence of consumption value on tourists' behavioral intention in the contexts of tourists' local food experiences.

Implications

This study offers several important academic implications. First, we developed a conceptual model of local food consumption and empirically tested it. The conceptual model differs from those of previous studies that simply addressed the dyadic relationships between two constructs, such as local food attributes and benefits (Barrena and Sánchez, 2013; Lee, 2014; Mkono *et al*, .2013), attributes and value (Barrena *et al.*, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2009), benefits and value (Getz *et al.*, 2014; Jang and Feng, 2007), benefits and intention (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Kivela and Crotts, 2006) and value and intention (Bardi and Schwartz, 2003; Kim *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the model should benefit future studies aiming to identify the sequential

relationships between local food attributes and the intention to consume local food in a foreign tourism place.

The findings of this study also provide insightful practical implications for local food businesses and DMOs. First, the conceptual model indicates which local food attributes influence the behavioral intention to taste or promote local food through benefits and consumption value. Thus, local food businesses can easily understand the links between benefits and attributes, benefits and value, value and behavioral intention and benefits and behavioral intention. Second, the effects of local food attributes such as food quality, food novelty and restaurant quality on both emotional and epistemic benefits were significant. This suggests that restaurant marketers should emphasize the characteristics of local cuisines by explaining how those product features are relevant to tourists' benefits. For example, a certification system could be introduced to emphasize the restaurant quality in a destination.

Food novelty did not directly affect consumption value; however, an indirect effect ($0.29 \times 0.47 = 0.14$; $p < 0.001$) was found through emotional benefit. It means that food novelty does not affect consumption value directly, whereas indirect effects, such as food novelty to consumption value through emotional benefit, exist. Therefore, local restaurants should capitalize on emotional aspects formulated by food novelty. Restaurant staff should be trained to gently persuade tourists about the benefits of experiencing local cuisines. Local restaurants should make the most of menu descriptions to explain the benefits of local cuisines to overseas tourists.

As the findings show, tourists who obtained emotional benefit from experiencing the local food had more positive behavioral intentions. Thus, local food marketers should consider how to maximize the effects of emotional benefits through their marketing channels. Emphasizing positive feelings such as excitement, relaxation, good memories and nostalgia can help to create positive intentions. Images such as boasting about tasting local food to family and friends can be used in marketing brochures, video clips and promotional advertisements for future tourists.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the diverse characteristics of local cuisines in a destination play a crucial role in tourists' perception of benefits, consumption value and future intention. This study is valuable because the proposed model manifests the importance of local food in satisfying tourists and increasing their intention to revisit. SEM was very effective for understanding foreign tourists' psychological reactions holistically, compared with previous studies that dealt with the mutual relationships between two constructs. Consequently, not only food stakeholders but also DMOs may gain useful insights into how to enhance tourists' satisfaction through experiencing the local cuisine and successfully promoting the national brand.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

This study is vulnerable to some limitations. First, the perception of local food attributes can vary according to the type of food. Further research is needed to compare the results of this study with those of studies conducted with food from other nations or local food with diverse tourist groups because the societal, cultural and artistic values attached to local food are likely to differ across societies and cultures (Chang *et al.*, 2010; Kim *et al.*, 2016a; Mak *et al.*, 2012a; Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007).

Second, this study did not analyze the data according to the different types of restaurants. For example, eating dim sum might differ from fine dining, a casual restaurant

and street food stalls. It would be interesting to compare the results according to restaurant types in a future study. Lastly, the findings may be more helpful to DMOs and food marketers if the moderating effect of tourists' specific nationality could be examined. Moreover, further research is needed to determine whether the results of this study differ with respect to tourists' social demographic characteristics such as gender, age and income.

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