

CULINARY TOURISM IN INDONESIA: THE DINING EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

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ABSTRACT

The promotion of food and associated dining opportunities has been widely used by DMOs as a pull factor to enhance destination attractiveness and stimulate visitation. Indonesia can potentially benefit from a culinary tourism focus in order to strengthen its appeal amongst international tourists. The geographic and cultural diversity of the destination has endowed the national cuisine with variety and taste and local foods offer a potentially unique point of differentiation. If destination authorities are to capitalise on such attributes, it is important for them to understand what tourists expect and value when dealing with food-related products or services. The literature has indicated that there have been few studies on culinary tourism and on tourist consumption of local food in destination settings area. In addition, much of the existing food tourism literature is Western-oriented and may require revisions to the findings if they are to be applied beyond the confines of the developed world. The present working paper aims to investigate the experiences which international visitors encounter at different stages of food consumption during visits to Indonesia, with a view to gaining an improved understanding of the role of Indonesian food in the tourism context. The visitor dining experiences will be investigated over three stages - pre, during and post-dining using a mixed method approach.

Keywords: *culinary tourism, dining experiences, international visitors, Indonesia*

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Tourism has emerged as one of the backbones of the Indonesian economy. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, in 2008 the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) attributable to tourism exceeded the growth of national GDP (6.31% and 6.06% respectively). Tourism amounted to Rp. 153.25 trillion, contributing 3.09% of national GDP (Rp. 4,954.03 trillion). In 2008, tourism was the fourth ranked commodity after oil and gas mining, crude oil, and rubber

products, and contributed US\$7.3 billion of the country's foreign exchange earnings. In terms of employment creation, 6.98 million out of 102.55 million job opportunities have been created in the tourism sector, contributing 6.81% to national employment (2010).

Seeking to capitalise further on this growing sector, the Indonesian government launched the "Visit Indonesia" tourism marketing campaign in December 2007 targeting both domestic and international markets. With a budget of US\$54 million, the campaign: "Indonesia, Ultimate in Diversity" was expected to attract 7 million foreign visitors and to generate US\$7 billion in foreign tourism receipts in 2010. Over 100 international events and cultural festivals were staged around the country to raise Indonesia's international profile (Afrida, 2010).

However, data published in the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (2009) show that Indonesia's destination competitiveness index is far below its equivalents – Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand (cited in Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2010). Furthermore, figures from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) illustrate that in 2008 more than 65 million tourists travelled to the ASEAN region (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Statistics published by UNWTO indicate that Malaysia successfully attracted 22.05 million in 2008, while 14.58 million visitors travelled to Thailand in the same year. There were 7.77 million visitors to Singapore whilst only 6.23 million tourists (less than 10% of the total tourists to the ASEAN region) travelled to Indonesia (UNWTO, 2010). Furthermore, a survey by Visa and PATA found that respondents neither recognized Indonesia as among the top ten most favoured destinations visited, nor considered it as the most likely destination in the Asia Pacific region to visit in the next two years (PATA, 2010). Nuryanti has argued that Indonesia should be able to attract more tourists, in view of its size and diversity (cited in Yurnaldi, 2010).

Strategies undertaken by most destination marketing organisations (DMOs) to attract tourists have relied almost exclusively on mass marketing techniques for destination promotion. King (2002) has criticised this approach, contending that DMOs need to engage more actively with consumers in order to identify their holiday motivations, facilitate their needs and satisfy their preferred experiences. Such actions have become more critical since consumers are seeking the most memorable experiences when purchasing or consuming products in the emerging experience-based economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Consumers are buying not only products but also the associated meanings, stories, and experiences, which in turn make such purchases different and unique (Yuan, 2009). Since tourism and hospitality products are experiential by nature (Williams, 2006), creating memorable experiences is critical to the success of tourism businesses (King, 2002; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007).

Food is an essential component of tourism, along with accommodation, transport, and attractions. As a basic human need, eating is an important activity undertaken by all travellers regardless of their main purpose of visit. Consuming food at the destination is a pleasurable, sensory experience (Kivela & Crofts, 2006), and food is central to the visitor experience as well as playing an important role in tourist decision-making and satisfaction (Henderson, 2009; Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Food has been widely used by DMOs as a pull factor to enhance destination attractiveness and to stimulate visitation (du Rand, Heath, & Alberts, 2003; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Moreover, Long (2004) has asserted that food should not be viewed simply as a single element of tourism products offered by a destination, but may be promoted as a destination attraction in and of itself.

Indonesia can potentially benefit from a culinary tourism focus to strengthen its appeal amongst international tourists. It's geographic and cultural diversity has endowed the national cuisine with variety and taste. Local foods offer a potentially unique point of differentiation. As Hegarty and O'Mahony (2001) have noted, particular cultures have distinct and often unique ways of engaging in food-related activities. Examples include different ways of preparing food (such as the ingredients used, the cooking methods and cooking utensils), serving (dining implements such as chopsticks or knives and forks; and the manner in which food is presented), as well as the rituals associated with the act of eating. To capitalise on such attributes, it is important to understand what tourists expect and value when dealing with food-related products or services. McKercher, Okumus and Okumus (2008) have proposed the adoption of careful and broadly based research on tourist food-related behaviours.

A literature review has shown that the themes addressed in previous food tourism related studies include tourist motivation to consume local food (Fields, 2002; Y. G. Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Y. H. Kim, Goh, & Yuan, 2010); food image in relation to destination marketing (Karim & Chi, 2010; Lin, 2006); and food tourist satisfaction (Correia, Moital, da Costa, & Peres, 2008; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2002). However, Kim *et al.* (2009), and Kivela and Crofts (2006) have advised that in the culinary tourism area, studies on tourist experiences in relation to local food consumption at a destination are rare and the area is still under-researched. Mitchell and Hall (2003) have contended that an understanding of tourist food consumption and experiences is a highly significant area of hospitality and tourism studies. Moreover, Henderson (2009) has noted that much of the academic and practitioner literature on food tourism has been Western in orientation and that the emerging principles and practices may require revision in light of findings from beyond the developed world. To date, no empirical study on tourism and gastronomy conducted in Asia has explored the Indonesian context.

While extensive work has been undertaken to examine tourist experiences in various tourism and hospitality settings (Chen & Chen, 2010; Chhetri, Arrowsmith, & Jackson, 2004; Hosany & Witham, 2009; Papadimitriou & Gibson, 2008), Ryan (2003) advises that few researchers have attempted to analyse the tourist experience as a whole (cited in Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Several studies have developed conceptual models to examine the tourist experience in an holistic way (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha, 2010; Yuan, 2009), but to date, none of these models have been applied in a single empirical work. More specifically, no model has specifically examined the various stages of the tourist experience pertaining to local food dining in destination settings.

This study therefore fills a research gap by conceptually and empirically investigating the local food consumption experiences of international visitors in destination settings. In the present study, visitor dining experiences will be examined over three stages of tourist experience. These are: 1) The pre-consumption phase (shortly after arrival and before any significant consumption of local food has occurred); 2) The during-consumption phase (while in Indonesia and having had some meals in the country); and 3) The after consumption phase. This strategy is employed because researchers assert that consumer experience could be best represented in three stages, encompassing the "events or feelings that occur prior, during, and after participation" (O'Sullivan & Spangler, 1998, p. 23).

Research Objective & Research Questions

The main study objective is to investigate the experiences which international visitors encounter at different stages of food consumption during visits to Indonesia, with a view to gaining an improved understanding of Indonesian food. To achieve this objective, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the preconceptions and expectations of international visitors to Indonesia relating to Indonesian food prior to consumption?
2. How do international visitors perceive the quality of local dining experiences in Indonesia relating to the food, social, cultural, and physical aspects of food consumption?
3. What are the levels of satisfaction and subsequent behavioural intentions among international visitors after encountering local food dining experiences?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food Tourism

Food tourism has recently attracted considerable attention as a tourism product and is considered to be an important subset of special interest tourism (McKercher, et al., 2008). The roles that food (and wine) play in attracting tourists to a destination have been explicitly acknowledged by governments, researchers, and industry (Hall & Mitchell, 2001; Henderson, 2009). Food has become recognised as part of the local culture which tourists consume (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hegarty & O'Mahony, 2001; Ignatov & Smith, 2006) and travel-related dining has become a major medium for tourists to experience the local destination culture (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Tourists can build their knowledge of the local cuisine by eating what the locals eat, and exploring new cuisines which they or their friends are unlikely to encounter at home (Fields, 2002). Food has the capacity to provide a unique point of difference for a destination and is widely used as a tool in tourism destination promotion (Amira, 2009; du Rand, et al., 2003; Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Karim, 2006; Lin, 2006). It also has the potential to improve local agricultural and economic development (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006), thereby distributing the broader opportunities that tourism provides within the community. From a tourism demand perspective, food is something at the local level that is influenced by the consumption patterns and perceived tourist preferences (Quan & Wang, 2004).

The Tourist Experience

According to Highmore (2002), the word “experience” can relate to two different states, namely: the during moment-by-moment lived experience and the after experience, which is subject to reflection and prescribed meaning. The latter state of experience has become the main focus of much research into tourism experience (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Experiences are often defined as being within a person who has engaged with an event at a physical, emotional, spiritual or intellectual level, and is left with memorable impressions (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). According to Yuan (2009), tourist experience is “the total outcome involving a combination of customers cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses gained from participating in activities and interacting with both tangible and intangible components in the consumption process, which in turn influences how consumers

interpret the world” (p.33). This definition implies that tourist experience can be formed and influenced by any component in the planning and preparation phases before the trip, during tourism consumption, and after consumption has occurred (Yuan, 2009).

O’Sullivan & Spangler (1998) have asserted that there are three stages of experience : 1) pre-experience stage, 2) participation stage, and 3) post-experience stage. The pre-experience stage refers to anything and everything involved prior to the actual participation in the experience itself. The participation stage is the consumer’s actual participation or involvement in the experience and it includes all encounters during the journey of purchasing and consuming the products or services (Knutson, et al., 2010).

Cutler and Carmichael (2010) have proposed a single conceptual model which demonstrates the multi-phased, multi-influential, and multi-outcome nature of the tourist experience. The model aims to provide an organised overview of the various dimensions of the tourist experience. Within their model, the tourist experience encompasses all that happens during a tourist event (travel to site, on-site activity, and return travel). The traveller visits a destination with ideas or expectations about kinds of experiences which might take place. These ideas or expectations are formed by the collective of individual social constructions as well as perceptions taken from media, product images, previous knowledge, and past experiences (Nickerson, 2006). Further, during the experience, three influential factors exist which are external to the individual. The physical aspects involve spatial and place-based elements of the destination, while social aspects include the various social influences on experience such as host-guest social contact. The influence of products and services represent factors such as service quality, leisure activities and the type of tourist-related products and services available (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). The personal realm also involves elements within an individual which consist of tourist knowledge, memory, perception, emotion, and self-identity. These elements shape experiences, as tourists arrive at a destination with individual memories, perceptions of the place and people, knowledge about the world and understandings of self (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

Another model developed by Yuan (2009) focuses on tourist perceptions when they engage in the product or service experience process. In Yuan’s model, perceptions build the connection between external stimuli and internal tourist responses. Certain cognitions and emotions are aroused as a result of perception. Cognition results from information sent to the conscious mind through the senses, while emotion is the tourists’ affective responses evoked during consumption experiences (such as excitement, joy, surprise, disappointment). Emotions and cognition are the values that consumers obtain from an experience.

The outcome of experience relates to the overall trip evaluation, which can be determined through satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Ryan, 2002). The relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intentions has appeared prominently in studies examining the outcomes of tourist experiences. Examples include the investigation of relationships among visitor experience in cultural tourism, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions (Chen & Chen, 2010; de Rojas & Camamero, 2008), visitor experiences through natural landscapes in Victoria (Chhetri, et al., 2004), and the cruise tourism experience (Hosany & Witham, 2009). In the food tourism area, many studies have focused on travel dining satisfaction and have revealed various determinants of tourist dining satisfaction (Correia, et al., 2008; Y. H. Kim, Kim, & Goh, 2010; Yuksel & Yuksel, 2002). In addition, studies including those conducted by Kivela and Crofts (2006) and Ryu and Jang (2006) have examined the ways in which tourists, behave and experience local gastronomy while visiting a destination.

Conceptual Framework of Visitor Dining Experiences

The present research seeks to investigate the destination-based dining experiences of international visitors at a destination by analysing the pre, during, and post experiences stages. Two conceptual models of the tourist experience have been chosen drawing upon the work of Yuan (2009), and Cutler and Carmichael (2010) who have provided the basis for a conceptual framework. The two models were developed with a view to examining tourist experiences in more general tourism settings. Both Yuan (2009) and Cutler and Carmichael (2010) have recommended further research to support the application of their models into different tourism and hospitality settings. As mentioned earlier, to date, none of the relevant studies have conceptually developed a holistic model to scrutinise the tourist experience in the context of local food dining in tourism destinations.

For the purpose of this study, the adopted models have been combined and modified into the context of visitor dining experiences with local food in destination settings. The dimensions of the dining experience and other elements of the proposed framework have been developed following an extensive literature review in the food tourism context, pertaining to tourist food-related behaviours. The conceptual framework is designed to answer the research questions and is proposed as follows:

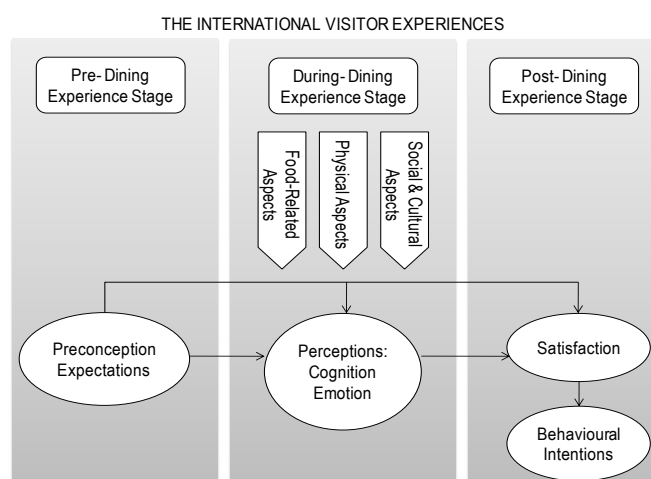


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework of Visitor Local Food Dining Experiences

Source: adapted and modified from (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Yuan, 2009)

Within the proposed framework, the “pre-dining experience” stage attempts to address the first research question regarding preconceptions that international visitors may possess about Indonesian food and the quality of culinary experiences that they anticipate prior to consumption. As noted earlier in relation to the study by McKercher *et al.* (2008), this phase of the research is designed to gain an understanding of what tourists expect and value when encountering and consuming Indonesian food and food habits. The “during-dining experience” stage will address the second research question as to the quality of eating experiences perceived by international visitors during their visit. The perceived experiential quality refers to four external aspects namely: 1) the food-related aspect; 2) the physical aspect; 3) the social and the cultural aspect. The perceived experiential quality will be measured on the basis of two dimensions of cognition and emotion of the visitor when perceiving those three external aspects. Finally, the “post-dining experience” stage will

attempt to fulfil the third research question about the level of tourist satisfaction and behavioural intentions following the consumption of Indonesian food.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The tourist experience is highly subjective and may only be interpreted by reflecting on the specific individuals involved and the specific settings where experience occurs. Whilst the majority of studies undertaken of experiences have employed quantitative perspectives, Jennings (2010) contends that there is a need to go beyond the quantitative approach in order to access tourist understandings, emotions and cognition at a deeper level. Moreover, Eunkyu *et al.* (2000) have pointed out the limitations of applying quantitative-based research, particularly related to measuring the tourist experience. Practical obstacles to developing and implementing a robust measurement scale should also be taken into account when designing the research, since a measurement instrument should incorporate not only contextual parameters, but also the sequencing of events encountered by tourists. To cover the multitude of experiential dimensions across three tourism phases would result in an extremely lengthy questionnaire leading to survey fatigue and the likelihood of unreliable results (cited in Palmer, 2010). In order to gain more comprehensive and meaningful data yielding more reliable results, this investigation of visitor dining experiences will employ what Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) have referred to as a “sequential mixed method design” where quantitative and qualitative research approaches are combined. Firstly, a quantitative approach will be employed through a field survey that will be undertaken to investigate international visitor pre-dining experiences prior to consuming Indonesian food. Secondly, a qualitative approach will be conducted through the implementation of a semi-structured interview with a sample of international visitors that completed the initial field survey questionnaire to examine their perceptions of the last two stages of the culinary tourism experience (the during- and the post- dining experiences).

Data Collection Methods

Phase 1: Field Survey

The field survey aims to address the first research question which is to investigate the preconceptions and expectations that international visitors have about Indonesian food prior to consumption of the food. Since the tourist experience is dynamic, it may imply that the timing of administering a research instrument may be as important as the measurement scales themselves (Palmer, 2010). It is therefore to ensure that visitors’ answers about their expectations of local Indonesian food will not be contaminated by perceptions of the actual experience process, this study will not use retrospective questions to measure visitor preconceived expectations. Rather, the measurement will be undertaken before the international visitors engage in the food consumption process. This study will access visitors at their hotels shortly after their arrival in East Java. With the consent of relevant managers,

visitors will be approached when they check-in at their hotel. One of the conditions of participation will be that they have not yet engaged in the consumption of local food.

The study population will include all international visitors to East Java, regardless of their purpose of travel. This means that the study population will not be limited to visitors travelling for holiday purposes, but also those who visit for purposes such as BMICE (business travel and meeting, incentives, convention, and exhibition), visiting friends and relatives (VFR), education, and cultural exchange. The population is interpreted liberally to enhance the participation of international visitors.

To access international visitors for the conduct of the survey, co-operation will be required from four and five star hotels. Hotels will be chosen as the sampling site because data from Statistics Indonesia shows that 75% of international visitors to East Java stay at 3-5 star hotels (BPS, 2010). By accessing tourists in this way the researcher will be able to enhance the likelihood of participation by international visitors. In addition, conducting a hotel-based survey will allow the researcher not only to reach holiday travellers but also BMICE travellers as survey participants since most of the business events in East Java are held in star hotels.

Once permission from the hotels is granted, a convenience sampling technique will be applied to select a prospective sample. Guests will be approached on their day of arrival and check-in at the hotel and will be asked to participate in the survey. Due to the limited study timeframe (3 years) and research budget, a minimum of 300 participants is projected.

As a research instrument, the development of the questionnaire will be based on an intensive literature review. Existing, valid measures used in previous related studies will be adapted and used along with questions that seek to gain an understanding of visitor demographic profiles (gender, age, occupation, education, country of origin, and income). Travel-related questions such as purpose of visit, length of stay and travel party size will also be included as will a series of questions designed to discover visitor preconceptions and expectations of local Indonesian food. This will include what they know about it, whether they expect to eat Indonesian food during their stay, and what food-related ideas they have about the food prior consumption, for example levels of spiciness and any knowledge of the regions food including history, stories or advice received from others prior to departure for Indonesia. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents will be asked if they are willing to participate in a further stage of research and to be contacted by the researcher for an in-depth interview at some time before they check-out of the hotels and leave East Java. It is anticipated that these interviews will be conducted in the hotel lobby for their convenience.

To ensure content validity of the questionnaire, attributes which are being measured will be firstly reviewed by the academics with expertise in gastronomy. After gaining feedback, a pilot study will be employed to test the reliability of the research instrument. A minimum of 30 respondents will be included in the pilot study and the reliability of the instrument will be defined.

Phase 2: Interviews with International Visitors

The in-depth interviews with international visitors will be semi-structured and will address the second research question - the perceptions aroused when they engage in food consumption. It also aims to address the third research question - to examine visitor satisfaction towards eating Indonesian food. An interview approach has been selected to encourage the free expression of interviewee thoughts and feelings, rather than simply describing them at a superficial level as may be achieved through the use of questionnaires (Y. G. Kim, et al., 2009). In addition, the interviews will allow the researcher to probe deeper into the way respondents interpret their experiences, particularly aspects of the social and cultural elements, which are important in creating unique and memorable experiences (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009).

A purposive sampling technique will be applied, based on the following criteria to recruit the interviewees: 1) Showing an interest or preference for having at least one dining experience of local Indonesian food as opposed to other foreign food (such as Japanese, Thai, or Italian. 2) Willingness to participate in the interview and be contacted by the researchers for interview. Respondent participation in a semi-structured interview is voluntary. Only those who are willing to be involved will be asked to provide their contact details so that the researcher can contact them to schedule a subsequent interview prior to check-in from the hotel and departure from Surabaya.

For convenience purposes, interviews will be conducted in English and undertaken in the hotel lobby. It is anticipated that a minimum of 20 interviews will be undertaken. Each interview will last about 20-30 minutes and will be digitally recorded with the consent of each participant. In keeping with the tenets of qualitative research, the final total will be determined at the point when theoretical saturation is reached. That is, the point at which additional data will add no further or new insights (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, if no new data arise with each subsequent interview then interviewing will be discontinued on the grounds that no new insights are likely to emerge.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be undertaken to interpret quantitative data obtained from the survey, revealing visitors preconception expectations. Meanwhile, qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews both with respondents and from industry informants will be transcribed and the translations will be undertaken of non-English interviews into English. Content analysis will be applied to analyse the interview results following the three processes noted below:

- a. Data reduction: narrative data will be prepared by converting raw material (field notes & audiotapes) into partially processed data (transcripts)
- b. Data display: narrative data will be coded and subjected into a particular analysis scheme (development of a typology of categories, topics or themes) which summarise a mass of narrative data.
- c. Conclusion drawing and verification

Moreover, linking of the quantitative and qualitative data will be employed for the purposes of further interpreting the results. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are three benefits of combining both types of data into the analysis process: 1) to enable confirmation or validation of each other via triangulation; 2) to elaborate or develop analysis, providing richer detail; and 3) to initiate new lines of thinking through attention to surprises or paradoxes and providing fresh ideas or insights.

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