Gastronomy experiential traits and their effects on intentions for recommendation: a fuzzy set approach

Abstract

Local food is a motivation that drives international tourists to visit a certain destination and to enrich their experiential quality. Although considerable effort has been exerted in investigating the relationship between the importance of local food and satisfaction and future intentions, no study has explored gastronomical experience by using fuzzy set analysis. The present study aims to explore the influence of local food attributes on customer satisfaction and intentions to recommend through a fuzzy set analysis. This study uses empirical data from 1,376 international tourists visiting Hong Kong. Findings suggest that the attributes of local food and their influence on the intentions to recommend vary in accordance with the type of restaurants operating in Hong Kong. The results of this study shed practical implications, such as the development of different symbolic meanings of gastronomy and service for international diners at different restaurants.

Keywords: gastronomy tourism, local food, tourist experience, experiential traits, future intention

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1. INTRODUCTION

Local food enhances the image of a tourism destination (Chang & Mak, 2018), and can become a symbolic representation of the country or city where it is produced (Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018; Watson, 2011). Indeed, local food plays an important role as a country's cultural ambassador because of the ways in which it penetrates foreign cultures and bridges cultural barriers (Mak et al., 2012; Choe & Kim, 2019). The popularity of local food amongst visiting tourists, furthermore, provides a stimulus to local industries, including agriculture, dairy farming, restaurants, cooking companies, hotels, retail, and souvenir shops (Hwang, Kim, Choe, & Chung, 2018; Stanley & Stanley, 2014).

Tourists traveling overseas often participate in various activities. One of these activities is tasting local food, which has become a significant factor in determining satisfaction with tourism experience and future intentions (Choe & Kim, 2018; Ellis et al., 2018). Local food has a diverse value, including local, ethnic, and national traditions, as well as history, customs, culture, and eating habits beyond gastronomic or dietary values (Choe & Kim, 2018; Tsai, 2016). Hence, destinations have regarded local food as a tool to promote their spot, enhance their destination image, and reinforce destination branding (Enright and Newton 2005). The role of local food has been examined as a destination marketing tool (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Kim & Choe, 2018). Other studies have investigated economic benefits generated by selling food products and the globalization of national/ethnic food (Hwang et al., 2018; Mak et al., 2012a).

The motivation to enjoy local food in a tourism destination refers to the psychological need to consume local food in an exotic or unfamiliar destination (Choe & Kim, 2019; Fields, 2002). Motivation is an expression of the needs relevant to food tourists' actual experiences

and evaluations (Stone, Soulard, Migacz, & Wolf, 2018). Therefore, the core concept of the psychological concern is what tourists "take home" from experiencing local food in a destination. Motivation to enjoy local food attributes include seeking emotional or epistemic benefits (Kim & Choe, 2019).

A review of the academic literature reveals several gaps in research. First, many food tourism studies have focused on identifying only one outcome, such as food benefit (e.g., Tsai, 2016), food value (e.g., Meretse, Mykletun, & Einarsen, 2016), motivation (e.g., Fields, 2002; Stone et al., 2018), or preference (e.g., Kivela & Crotts, 2005). Yet, in order to understand food tourists' psychological complexity, it is necessary to test an integrated model of explanatory concepts or constructs. Second, the analytical methods employed in previous studies (e.g., multiple regression, structural equation modeling, cluster analysis, one-way ANOVA) have been commonly used. This study adopts a new analytical approach, using fuzzy set analysis to explore local food attributes, satisfaction, and recommendations. Moreover, attention is also given to analyzing their associations, considering that all the traits varied and that the recommendation effect is equivalent to the combined effect of all traits. This approach aims to understand the ways in which a set of traits elucidate gastronomy experiences at different restaurants. This will contribute to a better understanding of the future intentions of tourists after their experiences at exotic tourism locations. Fuzzy set analysis is used to understand the complete spectrum of attitudes of each respondent rather than discretely leveraging particular attitudes in isolation (Ragin, 2008).

The present study uses a configurational design that evaluates the various causal conditions that lead people to recommend tourist destinations to others. The design is sensitive to different social contexts, different local food attributes, and varying levels of satisfaction. Given that local food tourism behavior varies based on multiple context-dependent conditions, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is well-suited to demonstrating

how all of the aforementioned local food attributes and satisfaction levels influence future intentions. Furthermore, this study helps in disentangling the differences in the various sorts of experience offered by different restaurants. Studies about gastronomy experiences have proved that ambience and service are particularly critical in determining tourists' levels of satisfaction (Correia et al., 2009), although there has been very little previous research that has tested tourists' experiences within the established types of restaurants.

This study has four major objectives. First, this study aims to identify the local food attributes that local food tourists highly seek. Second, this study tries to investigate the function of local food attributes and satisfaction with local food in accounting for recommendation to others by using the configuration design, which is supported by fuzzy set theory. Third, this study attempts to understand the combination of attributes that most affect recommendation intentions, considering that all attributes can vary simultaneously. Fourth this research aims to identify the effects of different restaurants' settings on recommendation.

2. LOCAL FOOD GASTRONOMY AND ITS EFFECTS ON INTENTIONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Local food attributes refer to features of a local food that has potential to have an independent effect on food intake (Choe & Kim, 2019; Mak et al., 2012). In terms of tourists' local food consumption experiences, local food attributes perceived by tourists may be distinguished from perceptions of everyday food consumption (Mitchell & Hall, 2003). Eating local food is a physical need as well as a cultural and social activity. When tourists eat authentic food at a destination, they satisfy their hunger, experience local culture, and interact with their hosts. Therefore, a wide variety of local food attributes during tourists' consumption of local food naturally affect future intention.

A review of local food tourism literature suggests that local food attributes can be summarized as falling into the categories of food quality, tradition, uniqueness, and service

quality (Chi et al., 2013; Kim & Choe, 2019; Kim & Evans, 2012; Verbeke and Lopez, 2005). Previous studies have consistently shown that positive perceptions of the quality of local food positively effects future intentions (Adongo et al., 2015; Chi et al., 2013; Horng et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2018; Kim & Evans, 2012; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Mynttinen et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2018). A study by Kim and Evans (2012) found that the sensory appeal of local food is a significant factor leading to its consumption in tourist destinations. In a study by Jiménez-Beltrán et al. (2016), tapas, a traditional Spanish cuisine, is described as possessing a diversity of food attributes, such as "good quality," "attractiveness", "fresh ingredients," and "various tastes." Although respondents consumed local foods with which they were not familiar, they gave positive feedback because the experience had satisfied their curiosity and their gastronomic motivation. Verbeke and Lopez (2005) described how Belgian tourists' appreciation of Latin-American food was dependent on attributes such as "price," "color," "appeal," "taste," "spiciness," and "cleanness." In addition, their study has helped in identifying a linkage between favorable perceptions of these attributes and a high level of positive future intentions. Chi et al. (2013) found that people who perceive Malaysian food according to the attributes of "food quality," "food diversity," "enjoyment," and "food distinctiveness" show both satisfaction with their consumption of local food and positive future intentions.

2.1 Local food service quality and its effects on recommendation

Most studies on restaurant service quality demonstrate that service quality is a major determinant for entailing satisfaction and future intentions (Jang et al., 2011; Liu & Jang, 2009a; Liu & Jang, 2009b; Wang & Mattila, 2015). Liu and Jang (2009b) addressed a positive relationship between dining atmosphere (interior design/spatial layout, ambience, and human elements) and behavioral intentions. Jang et al. (2012) confirmed that authentic

atmosphere in an ethnic restaurant influences the emotions and behavioral intentions of tourists in Chinese restaurants in the US.

The present study focuses on local food at an exotic location, which is different from general food, dining environment, and restaurant service quality in an unfamiliar restaurant. Studies have emphasized the importance of service quality in consuming local food in stimulating future intentions in the international tourism context (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Kim & Choe, 2018; Mynttinen et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2018). Ab Karim and Chi (2010) asserted the importance of restaurant quality, such as friendliness of service personnel in a tourist destination. Mynttinen et al. (2015) identified that Russian tourists who highly perceived restaurant and food quality of Finland local food reveal trust with the local food and willingness to recommend. Similarly, Kim and Choe (2018) classified the attributes of Hong Kong local food as "exotic and fun," "global food," "attractive food," "healthy and nutritious food," and "realistic restaurants." The outcomes of their SEM model showed that generation Y who highly perceived local food as "realistic restaurant" showcases behavioral involvement, such as having interest in the local food or sharing information.

In sum, consuming the local cuisine with five senses enables travelers to retain symbolic and unforgettable memories and to feel positive emotions. Particularly, food tourists, whose major motivation to travel is eating, appreciate exciting moments, surprised feelings, pleasure, and hedonism at a good service restaurant in a destination. Thus, service quality at local food restaurants is positively related to recommendation to others.

2.2 Local food uniqueness and its effects on recommendation

Food tourists anticipate that experiencing local dishes while travelling overseas will be different from experiencing these foods in their home countries. Tourists who are motivated to travel by the desire for such novel gastronomic experiences are called food, gastronomic,

or culinary tourists (Cheung, 2009; Correia et al., 2008; Hall & Sharples, 2003). Tasting authentic and unknown food is an important consideration for foot tourists when they are selecting local food in a destination (Chang et al., 2010; Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017; Guan 2012; Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2013; Stanley & Stanley, 2014; Stone & Migacz, 2016).

Neophilia, the tendency to prefer tasting new and unfamiliar foods, can be contrasted with neophobia, the opposite tendency, where people avoid tasting novel foods due to a fear of what is gastronomically unfamiliar(Giordano, Clodoveo, Gennaro, & Corbob, 2018; Pliner & Hobden, 1992). Food tourists are far more likely to be of the former, neophile, disposition. The environment in which they consume novel food, moreover, produces dining emotions that are memory-evoking (Mak et al., 2012). Many international tourists desire an "environmental bubble" in which to savor new experiences in a destination, and they wish to taste "orthodox" or "authentic" local food and perceive "symbolic" value (Chang et al., 2018; Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

Previous studies have concurred in finding that the experience of unique local food in an overseas tourism destination contributes to a high level of satisfaction in tourists' travel experience and an intention to share their experience with others (Chang et al., 2010; Kim & Choe, 2018; Stanley & Stanley, 2014; Stone et al., 2019). For example, when tourists are exposed to exotic and novel food through video clips or TV programs, their curiosity about local food is increased, as is the likelihood that they will recommend a destination to others (Kim & Choe, 2018). Chang et al. (2010) found that Chinese tourists who assessed local food in Australia according to the attributes of "unknown food" and "authentic foreign cuisine" demonstrated a high level of intention to share their experience.

Stone and Migacz (2016) addressed that food novelty is an important local food characteristic, as the feature provides sensational and gratified feelings by relishing novel, fresh, and original features of the local food in a destination. According to Guan (2012),

foreign tourists report that the Chinese local food heightens the novelty/cultural aspects of food attributes inherent to traditional or local specialty, and sensory attributes (e.g., flavor and color) are important in formulating their experiential quality. In addition, exotic ambience of local restaurants offers an opportunity to enjoy another culture different from their own country (Stanley & Stanley, 2014). As a result, pleasant dietary memory naturally leads to satisfaction with local food consumption and willingness to share their experience with others.

2.3 Local food tradition and its effects on recommendation

According to food cultural distance theory (Azar, 2011), cultural distance manifests a subjective distance that evaluates the similarity or dissimilarity of local food with regards to taste, ingredients, recipe, dining customs, preference, tradition, religion, ethnic traits, and symbolic meaning. Food culture is a rigorous surrogate for cultural hiatus (Chang et al., 2018; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hwang et al., 2018), and tasting authentic and traditional local food enriches tourists' experience of a destination (Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2013; Stone & Migacz, 2016; Quan & Wang, 2004). For example, tourists considered local food consumption a novel experience and a means to acquire knowledge or cultural assets (Quan & Wang, 2004). In a similar vein, seeking tradition and culture of Cordoba food was an important motivation to visit a tourism destination (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016). For example, Smalahove, or the Voss sheep's head meal as a traditional West Norwegian cuisine, offers tourists scariness but new exciting feelings (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009). In their study, authentic local food allows tourists to feel reminiscence and thrill.

Therefore, tourists want to learn the stories pertinent to local food and culture as well as reinforce their cultural capital by tasting local cuisine (Choe & Kim, 2018; Meretse et al., 2016; Stanley & Stanley, 2014). Meretse et al. (2016) analyzed the benefits of attendants at

food festivals and found that they seek epistemic benefits, such as testing visitors' cooking skills, learning new things at the food festival, and attempting to experience something distinct from daily food. Overseas tourists' experience of local cuisines augments new experiences of learning and adaptation beyond desires to dissipate hunger or gain nutritional value (Long 2004). As a consequence, the motivation to understand the tradition of local food through consuming exotic cuisine in an overseas tourism location is consistent with providing epistemic benefits, such as satisfying knowledge about the local food culture, which heightens curiosity and novelty (Kim & Choe, 2019).

2.4 Effect of satisfaction with local food consumption on recommendation

As most tourist behavior studies indicated, the level of satisfaction with tourism experience directly influences future intentions including recommendation to others. However, local food tourism context has limited efforts to test satisfaction empirically with local food consumption leading to recommendation (Choe & Kim, 2018; Correia et al., 2008; Horng et al., 2012; Kim & Choe, 2019). The attribute–benefit–value–intention (ABVI) model proposed by Kim and Choe (2019) certified the relationship between perception of local food consumption value and behavioral intentions. They found positive association between constructs ($\beta = 0.35$). In addition, Horng et al. (2012) identified that the positive evaluation of a location as food tourism destination leads to future intentions in multiple regression models. Correia et al. (2008) determined that satisfactory gastronomic experience is automatically related to future intentions. Choe and Kim (2018) explored the relationship between the attitude on local food and the intention to recommend and found a positive relationship between constructs ($\beta = 0.28$). Therefore, satisfaction and recommendation are strongly and positively interrelated with each other.

2.5. Effects of different restaurant settings on recommendation

Harrington et al. (2011) analyzed the attributes and socio-demographic characteristics of fine dining restaurants to further the understanding of tourists' choices. The setting was proved to be important for diners even if only one type of restaurant was considered. Research in other fields has proved that a restaurant's dining ambience exerts an emotional effect on consumers, whether the restaurant is located in an outlet, a mall, or a hotel (Sayed, Farrag, & Belk, 2003). Ryu and Jang (2005) proposed a dinescape scale that they later applied in a study of upscale restaurants (Ryu & Jang, 2007). The study identified that servicescape is critical to diners' behavioral intentions. In a similar vein, even though Heung and Gu (2012) tested the effects of atmospherics on behavioral intentions within a range of different types of restaurant, the different types of cuisine that they served were not found to have had a significant impact on behavioral intentions. A previous study by Heung and Ngai (2008) found that the food served by restaurants is their core product and the most important determinant of consumer satisfaction. Considering the results of previous studies ,the typologies of restaurants are the most important factor determining the future intentions of international food tourists.

2.6 QCA in tourism literature

QCA was initiated by Ragin's (1987, 2008) concept that since explanatory variables are affected by a set interaction, assessing symmetric set relations is more beneficial for understanding the nature of individual behavior, as compared with computing the net effects of independent variables in a linear model (Woodside, Hsu & Marshall, 2011). QCA has since been adopted across a wide range of disciplines (De Meur & Rihoux, 2002; Ragin, 2014; Rihoux, 2003). However, there has been only limited application of this method in tourism studies (Correia et al., 2019; D'Urso et al., 2016; Fotiadis et al., 2016; Hashemi & Hanser, 2018; Kallmuenzer, Kraus,

Peters, Steiner, & Cheng, 2019; Papatheodorou & Pappas, 2017; Ham, Koo, & Chung, in press; Woodside et al., 2011). For example, Cardoso and Ferreira (2000) used QCA to explain Portugal's strategies for excelling in European integration, whilst Woodside et al. (2011) adopted QCA to explain the general theory of cultural consequences. Papatheodorou and Pappas (2017) applied QCA to the study of tourism crisis management, whilst Fotiadis et al. (2016) used QCA to analyze rural tourism excellence through investigating the factors that lay behind the success of rural tourism hosts. D'Urso et al. (2016) adopted fuzzy-set theory to understand clustering tourism cohorts that demonstrate group organization. In a study of Hashemi and Hanser (2018), QCA identified the influence of national culture on tourists' destination choices in Asia and the Middle East. Their study showed that, from a mixture of six different conditions affecting the selection of destination, cultural values and the cultural distance of a destination relative to tourists' origin country were particularly influential in explaining tourists' intentions.

Recently, Correia et al. (2019) utilized fuzzy theory to determine the ways in which luxury values affect tourists' shopping attitudes and to identify the relationship between luxury values and sociodemographic profiles. Kallmuenzer et al. (2019) assessed the effects of a complex interplay of factors, both internal and external, on the financial performance of tourism firms. They found that six different configurations, namely, environmental uncertainty settings, multidimensional entrepreneurial orientation, financial endowment, and personal and professional networks contributed to explaining tourism firms' performance. Finally, a study by Ham et al. (in press) that investigated the relationship between smart tourism and performance found, after running QCA, that information technology readiness was a key factor in promoting competitive smart tourism.

Previous studies have concluded that, because the analysis of tourism experiences requires multidimensionality, the use of a fuzzy set approach will generate more benefits than

multiple regression. In addition, the technique does not assume symmetrical causal relations in a reality that is asymmetrical, as is the case with tourism experiences in general and with gastronomy in particular. This study applied a fuzzy set method to understand tourists' perceptions of gastronomic experiential traits at an overseas tourism destination and explored the relationships of local food attributes and satisfaction levels to recommendation.

3. METHODS

3.1 Measurement

This study was designed to analyze the relationships among main local food attributes, satisfaction, and recommendation. Thus, these constructs were developed through comprehensive literature review and pre- and pilot tests. An initial group of items to demonstrate local food attributes in Hong Kong was extracted as a result of reviewing previous local food tourism studies (Choe & Kim, 2018; Chi et al., 2013; Guan, 2012; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Lee, 2014; Lee et al., 2009; Mak et al., 2012a). To showcase satisfaction after tasting local food at the tourism destination and recommendation, a cohort of items was derived from studies (Choe & Kim, 2018; Horng et al., 2012; Kim & Evans, 2012; Kim et al., 2014; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Five-point Likert scales were applied to all items (1 = "strongly disagree," 3 = "neutral," and 5 = strongly agree").

In the pre-test stage, several words and items, including "authentic" and "dumplings, noodles, and rice," were included to manifest characteristics of Hong Kong local food. A pilot test was conducted to determine whether the questionnaire draft has validity by asking 94 actual tourists in Hong Kong. To follow respondents' comments, photos of local cuisines were included to enhance understandability of traditional and orthodox local foods. The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Mandarin, traditional Chinese, German, French, Korean, Japanese, and Thai by professional translators who work in a

translation company and professors in hospitality management who can command both their mother tongues and English. To match the English version and different language versions, a back translation was conducted at meetings with those who participated in the translation process. Finally, final versions in different languages were prepared for the main survey.

3.2 Data collection

To obtain data for the main survey, surveys were conducted at the Hong Kong International Airport for 8 months daily by 13 college students who were trained concerning target samples, objectives of this project, and screening questions. Respondents were asked to write their names on the questionnaires to avoid insincere questionnaires that might occur in case of negligence of interviewers. To select target samples, two screening areas were used, namely, experience of savoring local food in Hong Kong and the level of importance of tasting local food in this travel. Consequently, respondents who answered once or more in a question of tasting local food while on this travel and "important" on a three-point Likert scale. which indicated the level of importance of eating local food during this travel, were considered to be target samples.

To reflect actual situation of inbound tourists to Hong Kong, questionnaires were allotted to tourists who came from major inbound tourism-generating countries. Data collection lasted for 8 months. Data collection targeted respondents who were sitting in front of each country's national carrier at the counter or waiting at the announced gate of the airlines to express appreciation. One souvenir, such as fridge magnet, postcard, bag tag, or supermarket shopping bag, was provided to each respondent. From the 1,392 collected questionnaires, 16 questionnaires with multiple missing values on items of key constructs used as independent or dependent variables were eliminated. As a result, 1,376 questionnaires were utilized for further data analysis. Therefore, 99.8% of the collected questionnaires were used, indicating that the sample error was 2.2% with 95% confidence. It is noteworthy that

the sample estimated to ensure generalizability could be restricted to 384 observations. These observations were analyzed using a QCA framework to ensure that the combination of dimensions accurately accounted for the intention to recommend Hong Kong's local food.

3.3 Research design and data analysis

As with previous studies (Correia et al., 2019; D'Urso et al., 2016), the analysis designed for performing QCA comprised three stages. The first stage performed exploratory factor analysis to reduce the items of each construct for an exploratory factor analysis in addition to reliability tests. The second stage confirmed factor structure through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Third, a configurational design was adopted using QCA to test the sufficient conditions for ensuring the probability of recommend gastronomy experiences, depicted by the type of restaurant experienced. The configurational design comprised five experiential traits that may simultaneously influence recommendation: food quality (hereafter F), satisfaction (hereafter S), uniqueness (hereafter U), service (hereafter SE), and tradition (hereafter SE). These traits combine in the configurational set (F·S·U·SE·T). All of these traits contribute to influence recommendations and the effect is combined. Capitalized letters indicate that a trait is in the configurational set of recommendation. Minor letters indicate that a trait does not contribute to a configurational set of recommendation. The traits were derived from the literature in accordance with CFA. Eigenvalues of these traits were recorded to perform QCA. Figure 1 shows conceptualization of gastronomy experience fuzzy model.

[Figure 1 Here]

4. RESULTS

4.1 Profiles of respondents

Respondents were mostly male (54%), married (51.4%), and in their 30s and 40s (51.1%). They came from Europe (37.9%), followed by Asia (34.0%), the US, and Canada (12.3%).

Regarding educational level, respondents were mostly college graduates or had higher degrees (72.6%). Concerning religion, they were Protestant (35.2%), followed by Catholic (11.2%) and Muslim (8.6%). With regard to purpose of travel, pleasure trip showed the highest percentage (58.1%), followed by business (20.1%) and visit to friends and relatives (12.1%). They came in independent tour (69.3%), package tour (18.9%), and others (11.8%). As responses to the type of restaurants to taste local food, they identified local restaurants where local people often go (31.6%), casual (30.1%), and fine dining restaurants (13.6%). Regarding occupation, the highest percentage was company employee (30.6%), self-owned business (14.5%), professional (11.0%), and student (10.5%).

4.2 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

A factor analysis with a varimax rotation method was performed to reduce the items of constructs and identify the underlying dimensionality of the constructs. A construct of local food attributes generated four factors that were greater than the eigenvalue of 1.0. The amounts of the explained variance were 28.64%, 20.67%, 16.27%, and 16.09%. The scree plot confirmed the four-factor structure. All factor loadings were higher than 0.47, showing satisfaction with Comrey and Lee (1992). As the values for the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy on each construct were higher than 0.81, the results confirmed the validation of the factor model. Results of Bartlett's test of sphericity showed $\chi^2 = 8{,}935$ ($p = 0.000$), indicating the existence of one or more factors. Reliability alpha values were 0.91, 0.83, 0.86, and 0.86, which are higher than the criterion (.70) recommended by Nunnally (1978). The factors were labelled food quality, food uniqueness, food tradition, and food service quality. Mean values for all items ranged from 3.608 to 4.098.

Results of factor analyses with varimax rotation method for satisfaction with local food and recommendation provided single factor models. Eigenvalues for satisfaction and

recommendation were 3.95 and 1.84, respectively, whereas the explained variances were 56.48% and 91.98%, respectively. The values manifesting the KMO measure of sampling adequacy on the two constructs were 0.867 and 0.600, respectively, which indicated that the factor models were acceptable. Results of Bartlett's test of sphericity for the two constructs showed $\chi^2 = 4{,}343$ ($p = 0.000$) and $\chi^2 = 1{,}676$ ($p = 0.000$), respectively, indicating the existence of one or more factors. The reliability alpha values for each construct were 0.90 and 0.91, respectively, which showed a high level of internal consistency. Mean values for satisfaction items ranged from 3.557 to 3.823, whereas values for recommendation were 3.908 and 3.854, respectively. Table 1 shows the results.

[Table 1 Here]

4.3 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

CFA was performed using the generalized least squares method to assess the discriminant and convergent validity of the constructs identified through EFA. The validity was measured by fit indices in CFA in which all constructs were permitted to correlate freely. CFA resulted in a final measurement model with 18 items on these constructs, as illustrated in Tables 2 and 3. As shown in Table 2, the final model results exhibited levels of validity and reliability that can be considered good or very good, with composite reliability far exceeding the minimum recommended criterion ($\alpha \geq 0.70$ and $\rho \geq 0.70$). The average variance extracted (AVE) value obtained clearly exceeded the reference value (≥ 0.50) recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). According to Hair et al. (2010), the correlation between variables must be less than 0.95, a criterion with which all the variables complied.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) stated that AVE can be used to assess discriminant validity. Hence, the elements of the main diagonal (square root of the AVE) for each construct should show values higher than the correlation coefficients among different

constructs (elements of the corresponding rows and columns not on the main diagonal) (Barclay et al., 1995). The total latent variables in our model satisfied this condition, thereby confirming the existence of discriminant validity, and suggested that the theoretical model fits the data well. Furthermore, the overall fit indices (χ^2 = 1324.951, df = 194, χ^2/df = 6.83 (p = 0.000), CFI = 0.938, FMIN = 0.964, RMSEA = 0.054) are within the reference values provided by Hair et al. (2010), thereby confirming the model's goodness of fit. Tables 2 and 3 show the results.

[Tables 2 and 3 Here]

4.4 Research design for fuzzy-set analysis

Tourists' gastronomy experience depends on the context where they experience gastronomic experiential traits on a combination of conditions that exert on their willingness to recommend Hong Kong gastronomy. Therefore, QCA was adopted because of its particular aptness for testing a set of theoretical characteristics that validate initial propositions. A parsimonious analysis is performed such that conditions with low significant explanatory power are automatically removed.

The five conditions derived by the literature for explaining the propensity to recommend the experience to others were organized on a truth table and each observation is represented by a combination of "0" or "1" that generates a zero or one recommendation outcome. The technique uses a minimization problem solver where parsimonious variables are eliminated until the solver reaches the minimal conditions to account for the recommendation propensity with reliability (Ragin, 2014).

The five sets considered in this research were food quality, food uniqueness, food tradition, service quality, and satisfaction to understand the individual membership in a condition. All sets were assumed as dichotomous configurations, where "0" represents fully out and "1" denotes fully in. For example, the crisp set F·T·SE·U·S indicates that food quality, tradition, service, uniqueness, and satisfaction explained recommendations, as food quality, satisfaction, and service are fully in, whereas tradition and uniqueness are fully out. The five configurations considered to explain the propensity to recommend are as follows:

Recommendation probability = F·T·SQ·U·S depicted by type of restaurant. (1)

A questionnaire with a number of items defining each of the sets considered was administered to tourists who have had gastronomic experiences while visiting Hong Kong. A five-point Likert scale from low end (totally disagree) to high end (totally agree) was used. These items were reduced through EFA to define the variables that best describe each of the sets. The composition of each component was then confirmed with CFA. The eigenvalues of the components confirmed were rescaled on a three-point scale to ensure median values. Then, the sets were standardized to apply a fuzzy set design.

All configurations were considered as antecedents of recommendation under different restaurants experienced to ensure that full variability of the data is addressed (Rihoux, 2006). As a fuzzy set uses Boolean algorithm, the solution is a generalization of the outcome within a parsimonious solution. As a gastronomy experience constitutes multidimensional construct, the assumption is that one set is insufficient to explain tourists' experience in Hong Kong restaurants. In the composite configurational condition of the five sets, the assumption is that the probability of recommending gastronomic experiences is higher and varies considering

the type of restaurant that the tourists experienced. The research proposal in Eq. (1) results in 5*5 combinations, where each set may have full membership in the configuration(figure 1).

4.5 Results of fuzzy-set analysis

The gastronomy experience traits derived were rescaled in a three-point scale to ensure valid calibration. These new scaled traits were standardized as 0 and 1 values following Ragin (2008). The calibration values assumed for characterizing the degree of membership in the target set were 0.05, 0.5, and 0.95 to indicate full non-membership, maximum membership dispersion, and full membership, respectively. This procedure ensured that data would not lose the variance of the original measure with standardization. Moreover, introducing a minimum operator (1-A) allows to define the degree to which an individual intention to recommend the gastronomic experience derives from a combination of factors. As this method uses a Boolean algorithm consistently, coverage was ensured. Consistency represents the level of a certain condition achieved to explain the outcome, whereas coverage indicates the coefficient of determination. In accordance with Ragin's (2008) suggestion, an assumed consistency index of at least 0.8 and a coverage index of at least 0.45 were used to represent a high membership score in explaining a configuration with asymmetric sufficient distribution.

As illustrated in Table 4, all derived configurations presented high consistency and good level of coverage. The configurations established were one for the total sample population (n = 1,376) and the one for each type of restaurant where the experiences were undertaken (four types of restaurants).

[Table 4 Here]

Table 5 presents tourists' gastronomy experiential traits and recommendation value configurations for the whole sample. Tourists experienced local food at casual and local restaurants frequented by local residents, local restaurants frequented by tourists, and Michelin restaurants. The configurational results suggested that a tourist recommends a gastronomy experience in Hong Kong on the basis of service, which is the only antecedent that is fully in. When defining the best configurations accordingly, results varied. When tourists frequented casual restaurants, the reduced configurations are (f·u·SE·T; f·S·u·t) suggesting that service quality and tradition are sufficient conditions for ensuring that tourists become promoters of Hong Kong food quality or satisfaction is sufficient to ensure recommendation.

In terms of local restaurants frequented by locals, the achieved configurations were two (f·s·u·t; s·u·SE), which suggested that food quality or the service found at the local restaurants is sufficient to justify tourists' recommendations. In local restaurants frequented by tourists, the original configurations were reduced to three (F·s·u·SE·t; f·s·U·SE; f·u·SE·T), which suggested that recommendations arise on the combination of food quality and service, uniqueness and service, or even service and tradition. At Michelin restaurants, only one configuration arose but with three combined antecedents (F·S·u·T), which suggested that food quality, satisfaction, and tradition are mandatory for ensuring recommendation.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is the first to identify the main conditions each type of restaurants may offer to attract gastronomic tourists who want to taste local cuisine. This study has explored local food attributes, satisfaction, service, and the tradition of the cuisine as factors that lead to recommendations. It has also analyzed their associations using fuzzy set analysis. There were several major findings. First, the factors leading to

recommendation are labelled under four categories: food quality, food uniqueness, tradition, and service quality. These four domains are consistent with those proposed in previous literature. For example, the importance of food quality is widely supported by previous studies (Horng et al., 2012; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2018; Kim & Evans, 2012; Tsai, 2016). The significance of food uniqueness is also confirmed by the findings of previous studies (Chang et al., 2010; Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017; Guan, 2012; Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2013). Similarly, the importance of food tradition is supported by studies on local food tourism (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Quan & Wang, 2004; Stone & Migacz, 2016), whilst the importance of service quality is supported by the findings of other researchers (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Kim & Choe, 2018; Stone et al., 2018).

Second, the results of the present study suggest that tourists are likely to recommend their gastronomy experiences in Hong Kong on the basis of service, which is the only antecedent that is fully in the criteria. These findings are supported by the conclusions of previous studies, in which a strong correlation was identified between the favorable perception of local food and behavioral intentions, corresponding with the findings of empirical studies (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Kim & Choe, 2018; Mynttinen et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2018).

Third, the findings suggest that service quality and tradition ensure that tourists who frequent casual restaurants become ambassadors for the quality of Hong Kong's food, and that their satisfaction is sufficient to ensure word-of-mouth recommendation. Previous studies that address the role of local food tradition in the choice of overseas tourism destination confirm these findings (Choe & Kim, 2018; Meretse et al., 2016; Stanley & Stanley, 2014).

Fourth, with regard to local restaurants that are frequented by local people, the study found that the most important factors are food quality and a quality of service that are sufficient to justify the international tourists' recommendations. Therefore, casual dining

restaurants where tourists dine alongside local people are places where food quality and service quality are important factors influencing whether or not tourists make positive recommendations to others about their experience. Service culture at a casual restaurant can differ from that to which international tourists are accustomed in their own country. For example, in Hong Kong hot tea is served rather than the pop soda or cold tea that is often served in western countries. In addition, hot food such as poached vegetables or hot soups are more common than cold food. When international tourists are surprised by such differences in the sorts of food that is served, there is a risk that they become neophobic toward Hong Kong's local cuisine. Causal dining restaurants should therefore learn dining cultural dissonance in order to cater to international diners' needs.

Fifth, previous studies (Ellis et al., 2018; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Stone et al., 2019) affirmed that sampling local food is considered an essential experience by tourists who desire to interact with a destination's local populace. Even though the dining habits of local people are natural to them and traditional to their culture, international tourists experience such dining culture as exotically different, especially those with a wide cultural difference. For example, western tourists may be confused by a Chinese round table because they are used to eating from a personally ordered menu. These unique and memorable experiences can determine their intention to recommend these novel gastronomical experiences to others.

Sixth, results show that tourists experience local food in four different types of restaurants, namely, casual restaurants, local restaurants frequented by local residents, local restaurants frequented by tourists, and Michelin restaurants. Here, unique experiences at casual restaurants, local restaurants frequently by locals, and Michelin restaurants were not found to be an influential exploratory variable in determining recommendation. This implies that these types of restaurant are lacking in the uniqueness of the local food that they serve.

There is therefore a need to enhance the unique components of these restaurants, such as by hanging Chinese paintings or displaying porcelains.

6. ACADEMIC AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has identified four local food attributes, namely, food quality, food uniqueness, food tradition, and food service quality. In particular, food uniqueness and tradition represent important traits of local foods. This study adopted a fuzzy set analysis in order to understand the experiential quality at the different restaurants in an overseas tourism destination. The results demonstrate the complicated dynamics of international diners' attitudes rather than discretely leveraging those attitudes (Ragin, 2008). The findings indicate that the attributes of local food and their influence on the future intentions of tourists to recommend vary on the basis of the type of restaurants operating in Hong Kong. Previous studies neglected to identify the types of restaurants where international tourists eat at overseas tourism destinations. The results of this study contribute towards an understanding of how restaurant type affects the experiences of international food tourists.

From the practical point of view of local restaurants, it is important to highlight that the intentions for recommendation are based on the combination of food quality and service, uniqueness and service, or even service and tradition. Accordingly, Tsai and Lu (2012) proved that ethnic restaurants must optimize service, food quality, and traditional setting to ensure that they provide the uniqueness that tourists are looking for. At Michelin restaurants, food quality, satisfaction, and tradition are essential. Vásquez and Chik (2015) found in a qualitative research of online reviews that customers at Michelin restaurants saw themselves as experts, and as such, they ask for authenticity, taste, quality, and the perceived value of their experiences. Local food, as has been shown, has become an important factor influencing tourist motivations, offering particular opportunities for individual restaurants at the micro-

level and tourist destinations at the macro-level to strengthen their image. As to the recommendations for practice, considering that the power of attributes is likely to change based on the type of restaurant, it is logical to suggest the implementation of market segmentation strategies at individual restaurants. For instance, restaurant operators may develop different meanings of food quality and service for customers dining at different restaurants, as these features are common attributes regardless of the type of restaurant. Attributes such as tradition, on the other hand, that are unique to certain restaurants or destinations can be considered as the key differentiating factors for improving the image of Michelin restaurants.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

As in all studies, this study has limitations to be addressed. First, in addition to the quantitative research method, a qualitative analysis through in-depth interview or content analysis can further investigate the dimension of each gastronomy experiential trait. Second, items including two domains, food service quality and food tradition were two. Now that it can lead to a concern of reliability and validity future research needs to include more items on the domains. Third, sociodemographic traits may be added to depict how and to what extent social compliance may influence the intentions for recommendations. Fourth, the findings are limited to a certain geographic area, that is, Hong Kong, and to a certain type of Westernized Chinese gastronomic market. Given that perceptions of national cuisines vary on the basis of international tourists' food cultural background (Chang et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2016a; Mak et al., 2012a; Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007), future research must explore international tourist's perception of experiential quality of diverse cuisine.

Furthermore, international tourists' perceptions of local restaurants can vary in accordance with the types of restaurants. For example, a traditional restaurant provides authentic food menus and antique ambience, whereas a modernized restaurant offers fusion

food menus and a fashionable dining environment. Therefore, future study must identify whether the results are similar. Similarly, the preference for local food or local food consumption can be different based on sociodemographic characteristics (Choe & Kim, 2019; Guan, 2012; Hwang et al., 2018; Hjalager, 2002). Thus, future study must assess whether the results of the present study are distinctive in accordance with sociodemographic characteristics.

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Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis (N = 1,376)

Constructs and items	Factor loading	Mean	Std. dev.
Local food attributes			
Domain 1: Food quality (3.15$^{\alpha}$; 28.64%; α = 0.91)			
Opportunity to taste adequate food portion.	0.816	3.977	0.738
Opportunity to taste delicious food.	0.814	4.084	0.764
Opportunity to taste good quality food.	0.780	3.908	0.790
Opportunity to try Hong Kong local food enabled me to learn what this cuisine tastes like.	0.761	4.033	0.704
Domain 2: Food uniqueness (2.27$^{\alpha}$; 20.67%; α = 0.83)			
Opportunity to taste food that is different from my country's food.	0.595	4.098	0.911
Opportunity to taste unknown food.	0.581	4.048	0.856
Opportunity to taste exotic ingredients.	0.467	4.044	0.923
Domain 3: Food tradition (1.79$^{\alpha}$; 16.27%; α = 0.86)			
Opportunity to taste traditional Hong Kong food.	0.656	4.019	0.906
Opportunity to taste rice, noodles, and dumplings.	0.629	4.012	0.873
Domain 4: Food service quality (1.77$^{\alpha}$; 16.09%; α = 0.86)			
Opportunity to experience a high level of service quality of local restaurants.	0.526	3.759	0.841
Opportunity to experience good hygiene conditions of local restaurants.	0.507	3.608	0.912
Satisfaction with local food (3.95$^{\alpha}$; 56.48%; α = 0.90)			
I was satisfied with the quality of Hong Kong local food.	0.825	3.823	0.810
I was satisfied with Hong Kong local food restaurant.	0.757	3.795	0.791
I would visit a Hong Kong local food restaurant after I return to my country.	0.752	3.628	0.948
I felt positive about Hong Kong after tasting their local food.	0.742	3.701	0.855
I felt that I knew more about Hong Kong after tasting their local food.	0.740	3.681	0.849
I would visit Hong Kong to explore further diverse local food within the next 5 years.	0.730	3.717	1.006
I became familiar with Hong Kong after tasting their local food.	0.709	3.557	0.872
Recommendations (1.84$^{\alpha}$; 91.98%; α = 0.91)			
I will talk to families and friends about my experiences with Hong Kong local food.	0.959	3.908	0.836
I will boast to others about tasting Hong Kong local food.	0.959	3.854	0.871

Note: $^{\alpha}$ indicates eigenvalue.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis (N = 1,376)

Items	Causality	Constructs	Standardized regression coefficient	S.E.	C.R.
Opportunity to try Hong Kong local food enabled me to learn what this cuisine tastes like.	←	Food quality	0.785	--	--
Opportunity to taste adequate food portion.	←	Food quality	0.884	0.032	36.66*
Opportunity to taste delicious food.	←	Food quality	0.888	0.033	36.89*
Opportunity to taste good quality food.	←	Food quality	0.844	0.035	34.57*
Opportunity to taste food that is different from my country's food.	←	Food uniqueness	0.733		
Opportunity to taste unknown food.	←	Food uniqueness	0.96	0.042	29.44*
Opportunity to taste exotic ingredients.	←	Food uniqueness	0.721	0.037	26.67*
Opportunity to taste traditional Hong Kong food.	←	Food tradition	0.891	--	--
Opportunity to taste rice, noodles, and dumplings.	←	Food tradition	0.845	0.034	26.88*
Opportunity to experience a high level of service quality of local restaurants.	←	Food service quality	0.905	--	--
Opportunity to experience good hygiene conditions of local restaurants.	←	Food service quality	0.835	0.046	21.62*
I became familiar with Hong Kong after tasting their local food.	←	Satisfaction	0.658	--	--
I would like to visit Hong Kong to explore further diverse local food within the next 5 years.	←	Satisfaction	0.666	0.053	21.95*
I felt that I knew more about Hong Kong after tasting their local food.	←	Satisfaction	0.650	0.045	21.49*
I felt positive about Hong Kong after tasting their local food.	←	Satisfaction	0.751	0.046	24.28*
I would like to visit a Hong Kong local food restaurant after I return to my country.	←	Satisfaction	0.708	0.050	23.13*
I was satisfied with Hong Kong local food restaurant.	←	Satisfaction	0.735	0.042	23.87*
I was satisfied with the quality of Hong Kong local food.	←	Satisfaction	0.730	0.043	23.73*
I will talk to families and friends about my experiences with Hong Kong local food.	←	Recommendation	0.91	--	--
I will boast to others about tasting Hong Kong local food.	←	Recommendation	0.92	0.020	39.69*

Note: * $p < .001$.

Table 3. Convergent and discriminant validity

Constructs	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	F	T	U	SE	S	R
F	0.913	0.725	0.402	0.254	0.851					
T	0.860	0.754	0.282	0.182	0.531	0.868				
U	0.851	0.660	0.156	0.109	0.348	0.395	0.812			
SE	0.862	0.758	0.197	0.122	0.444	0.261	0.209	0.871		
S	0.899	0.500	0.421	0.266	0.634	0.488	0.309	0.415	0.705	
R	0.913	0.839	0.421	0.222	0.519	0.407	0.357	0.357	0.647	0.916

Note: G = gastronomy, T = food tradition, U = food uniqueness, SE = food service quality, S = satisfaction, R = recommendation

Table 4. Calibration scale to investigate antecedents of overall assessment sample

Constructs	Cases	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max	Set mean	Set std. dev
Food quality	1,376	1.998	0.817	1	3	0.499	0.408
Food uniqueness	1,376	2.103	0.873	1	3	0.542	0.437
Food tradition	1,376	1.997	0.818	1	3	0.498	0.408
Food service quality	1,376	2.307	0.939	1	3	0.649	0.471
Satisfaction	1,376	2.222	0.917	1	3	0.599	0.462
Recommendation	1,376	1.999	0.817	1	3	0.499	0.408

Table 5. Models of tourists' gastronomy experiential traits and recommendation value configurations

Set	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Solution consistency
Recommend Hong Kong gastronomy			
f·s·u·SE	0.403	0.403	0.821
Total coverage (0.403)| solution consistency (0.812)			
Recommend Hong Kong gastronomy/casual restaurants			
f·u·SE·T	0.332	0.364	0.837
f·S·u·t	0.514	0.531	0.897
Total coverage (0.529)| solution consistency (0.812)			
Recommend Hong Kong gastronomy/local restaurants frequented by locals			
F·s·u·t	0.440	0.430	0.889
s·u·SE	0.508	0.562	0.808
Total coverage (0.483)| solution consistency (0.799)			
Recommend Hong Kong gastronomy/local restaurants frequented by tourists			
F·s·u·SE·t	0.416	0.480	0.871
f·s·U·SE	0.331	0.371	0.849
f·u·SE·T	0.442	0.480	0.818
Total coverage (0.442)| solution consistency (0.807)			
Recommend Hong Kong gastronomy/Michelin restaurants			
F·S·u·T	0.513	0.513	0.920
Total coverage (0.513)| solution consistency (0.920)			
F = food quality, S = satisfaction, U = food uniqueness, SE = food service quality, T = food tradition			

Figure 1. Conceptualization of gastronomy experience fuzzy model