Effects of local food attributes on tourist dining satisfaction and future: The moderating role of food culture difference

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the effects of local food attributes on tourists' dining satisfaction and future intention in Hong Kong. In addition, the moderating effect of food culture difference on the relationship between local food attributes and tourists' dining satisfaction was examined. Surveys from 1,274 tourists who had tasted local food in Hong Kong were used for data analyses. The moderating effect of food culture on the relationship between food novelty and satisfaction was larger for tourists whose home food culture was similar to the Hong Kong food culture. On the contrary, the moderating effect of food culture on the relationship between food quality and satisfaction was larger for tourists from a food culture that was dissimilar to the Hong Kong food culture. Hong Kong destination marketers can include distinctive and unusual features of local food in their promotional material with the knowledge that food culture difference affects tourists' dining satisfaction. The integration of local food into food culture difference using multilevel analysis offers constructive theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: Hong Kong, local food, satisfaction, food attributes, food culture, multilevel analysis, hierarchical linear modeling

Introduction

All tourists should taste local dishes whenever they visit an overseas destination. Particularly, local food is an important destination attribute that represents the local culture (Choe & Kim, 2019). Creating and maintaining a distinct image of local food helps enhance the image of a destination (Getz, Robinson, Andersson & Vujicic, 2014). Tourists spend more than 25% of their expenditure on food in a destination, thus representing the economic impact of food in tourism (Correia, Moital, Da Costa, & Peres 2008). Local food consumption theory posits that tasting local food is a main travel motivation for culinary tourists, because the experience offers diverse benefits, including pleasure and socialization (Choe & Kim, 2018; Henderson, 2009; Quan & Wang, 2004).

For the reasons stated above, food tourism has drawn a significant attention in both the academia and the industry over the last decade (Everett, 2016; Stanley & Stanley, 2014). Among the various topics regarding food tourism, the most popular include the motivations to consume local food or perceived value (e.g., Chang et al., 2010; Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim & Eves, 2012; Mak et al., 2012b). Other interesting topics include food tourism typology (e.g., Bardhi et al., 2010; Ellis, Park, Kim & Yeoman, 2018; Madaleno, Eusébio & Varum, 2019), food as a destination marketing tool (e.g., Lin et al., 2011), and local food systems or business linkage (e.g., Hall & Sharples, 2003; Smith & Xiao, 2008).

Despite this burgeoning research regarding food tourism, knowledge gaps still exist. First, the process by which the characteristics of food affect common diners' satisfaction and future intention are well documented in the previous studies (Ladhari, Brun & Morales, 2008; Liu et al., 2019). However, given that dining experiences in daily life and food experiences in tourism destinations obviously vary, they should be studied from different perspectives. For

example, international tourists experience national and regional identity by tasting local food in a destination (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; du Rand & Heath, 2006), whereas local people consider the practice as food consumption in a daily life. In addition, tourists' food consumption experiences are different from their everyday life in their home country. Therefore, examining their dining satisfaction in a destination is a very important topic to discuss. The introduction of various aspects involved in tasting local food has made it necessary to conduct further research on food tourism.

Second, differences in diners' general food experiences according to their cultural or national backgrounds have been well documented in the restaurant management field (e.g., Barrena et al., 2015; Seegebarth, Behrens, Klarmann, Hennigs& Scribner, 2016). Nonetheless, only a few studies have addressed tourists' perceptions of local food according to their nationality or region of residence (Chang et al., 2010; Mak et al., 2017; Pizam and Sussmann, 1995). International tourists have their own food culture, which can be relatively different from the destinations' food culture. Thus, the relationship between local food attributes and tourists' dining satisfaction could be strengthened or attenuated by the latter's perceptions concerning the comparative differences between their food culture at home and that of the destination. However, few efforts have been invested in empirically examining the role of tourists' food culture differences as a moderating variable between local food attributes and dining satisfaction.

Third, the majority of food tourism studies have focused on North America, Australia, and several European countries (Everett & Slocum, 2013; Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis, & Cambourne, 2003; Getz et al., 2014). To address the research gap, considerable research attention and academic contributions should be devoted to the food tourism in Asia. Hong Kong is a well-known destination because it has long culinary history and unique food experiences to

offer to tourists (Choe & Kim, 2018). However, efforts to investigate food tourism in Hong Kong have been limited (Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Choe & Kim, 2019). Thus, the current study attempts to assess tourists' local food consumption in the context of Hong Kong.

Finally, many studies regarding tourists' food experiences have employed a relatively small sample size of less than 350 people (e.g., Chang et al., 2010, 2011; Law et al., 2008; Madaleno et al., 2019; Nam & Lee, 2011; Sims, 2009) and represented the responses of only one national group (e.g., Chang et al., 2010; Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Ji et al., 2016; Kim and Eves, 2012). These studies are vulnerable to concerns about their generalizability in the food tourism context. For this reason, the current study collected a large sample of 1,274 tourists from 30 nations or regions who were experiencing local food in a foreign tourism destination. Given that nationality has been popularly used as a surrogate variable to define national food culture (e.g., Chang et al., 2010; Choe & Kim, 2019; Hwang, Kim, Choe & Chung, 2018; Nam & Lee, 2011; Seegebarth et al., 2016), the current study was designed to collect data from international tourists from different countries. Their responses to questions about the importance of tasting local food at the destination were gathered.

Based on this research rationale, the following research questions are presented: What are the relationships among local food attributes, dining satisfaction, and future intention? Does food culture difference act as a moderating factor in their relationships? More specifically, this study has four objectives: to examine the effect of local food attributes on dining satisfaction in a foreign tourist destination, to identify the effect of local food attributes on future intentions, to investigate the effect of dining satisfaction on future intentions, and to determine the moderating effect that food culture difference may have on the relationship between local food attributes and the dining satisfaction gained by tourists from their local food experiences.

Literature review and hypotheses

Effect of local food attributes on dining satisfaction

A food attribute is defined as "a quality of a food that has the potential to have an independent effect on food intake" (Kissileff, 2000, p. 64). Local food attributes refer to features that differentiate one type of food from another (Choe & Kim, 2019). Previous studies have identified three attributes of local food. The first attribute is related to an evaluation of a food's quality, including the taste and other sensory aspects of the food and how healthy and nutritious its ingredients are. The second attribute pertains to savoring traditional and authentic local culture (Stone et al., 2019; Tsai & Wang, 2017). This attribute is related to the novelty or exoticness of local cuisine, especially wherein tourists taste unfamiliar and nonroutine food in an overseas destination (Herrera, 2012; Tse & Crotts, 2005).

The third attribute relates to a restaurant's physical or service features. Above all, service quality at a restaurant is a critical factor that determines tourists' evaluation of a local food experience (Chang et al., 2011; Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Mak et al., 2012a; Quan & Wang, 2004). Food hygiene and restaurant cleanliness can also be regarded as crucial factors in tourists' assessments of local food experiences (Choe & Kim, 2018; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Griffith, 2006; Kim et al., 2016).

Tourists' satisfaction with eating the local food at a tourism destination refers to cognitive evaluations of service/food quality and affective evaluations resulting from consumption experiences (Ji et al., 2016; Yuan & Jang, 2008). Most food tourism studies show consistency, in that they find that local food attributes lead to tourists' dining satisfaction in a tourism destination. Sensory (e.g., taste and flavor) and health (e.g., hygiene) attributes and the novelty of local cuisine positively influence travel satisfaction and destination attractiveness

(Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Kim & Eves, 2012; Shaw, 2009; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2003).

Service quality and staff performance at local restaurants determine dining satisfaction in a destination (Kim & Eves, 2012; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Nield et al., 2000; Shaw, 2009). For example, one restaurant in Singapore has a herbal medicine doctor who prescribes customers' meals, and tourists enjoy their meal with full descriptions of the food's benefits to their health, ultimately creating tourist satisfaction (Shaw, 2009). When tourists perceive a high level of local cuisine provision (e.g., traditional cuisine and representative dishes in the destination), they show a high level of satisfaction with the food (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Ji et al., 2016). Ji et al. (2016) noted a significant positive relationship between novel food consumption and dining satisfaction.

Furthermore, restaurant attributes, such as a restaurant's atmosphere and hygiene conditions, positively influence overall satisfaction and holiday experience (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Griffith, 2006; Torres & Skillicorn, 2004). A social and friendly ambience in a local restaurant provides tourists with friendly interactions with local residents and enriches their experience of a destination (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2014; Kim et al., 2016; Law et al., 2008; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Nam & Lee, 2011; Sims, 2009). Yüksel and Yüksel (2003) reported that service quality is the most salient factor that affects overall tourist dining satisfaction in a destination, followed by food quality, hygiene, price, menu variety, location, and atmosphere. Rooted in the aforementioned discussion, Hypothesis 1 is proposed as follows:

H1: Positive assessment of local food attributes will lead to dining satisfaction in a tourism destination.

Effect of local food attributes on future intention

A future behavioral intention is defined as the likelihood that a person will engage in a specific behavior (Yin et al., 2017). As the ultimate goal of suppliers is to retain loyal customers so that a company can make a profit, they are eager to know future intention, which is considered an important mediator between behavioral determinants and actual behaviors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Previous food tourism studies have conceptualized tourists' future intentions as the intention to repurchase the local food, revisit the destination, and spread positive words about the local food to others (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kim et al., 2012; Mason & Nassivera, 2013; Yuan & Jang, 2008). For example, Chi and Qu (2008) conceptualized tourists' loyalty to a destination as their intention to revisit the destination and willingness to recommend it to others. They noted that a recommendation by previous visitors can create trust with potential tourists. Moreover, their recommendation is likely to influence people who are planning to take a holiday and in the process of choosing a destination. Hence, examining tourists' future intention is also necessary in the food tourism context.

However, in the food tourism context, only a few empirical studies have investigated the relationship between the assessment of local food attributes and future intentions (Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2014; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Mason & Nassivera, 2013). Kivela and Crotts (2006) found that travelers showed a willingness to revisit Hong Kong to enjoy its unique gastronomy. Mason and Nassivera (2013) found that food and wine events offering high-quality products and service directly influenced behavioral intentions. Specifically, they found that tourists who perceived a high level of food product quality and cleanliness at a food festival talked positively about the festival and were willing to revisit the festival destination (Mason & Nassivera, 2013).

Kim et al. (2012) identified three attributes of Korean food that is featured in a food-themed TV drama series. One of the three attributes, the popularity of the Korean food culture, significantly influenced the intention to visit Korea for food tourism, although the other two attributes—varied menus and harmonious and healthy menus—failed to explain this intention. Choe and Kim (2018) discovered that consumption value derived from food attributes directly influences the intention to revisit a foreign country for food tourism. Therefore, a positive experience of tasting local food in a tourism destination likely contributes to tourists' future intentions, including revisiting the country or making positive recommendations about the local food to others. On the basis of previous studies, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Positive assessment of local food attributes will lead to positive future intentions.

Effect of dining satisfaction on future intention

One of the important constructs associated with customers' future intentions is customer satisfaction. Numerous tourism studies have confirmed that overseas tourists' future intentions are influenced by satisfaction in the tourism context. However, efforts to identify the relationship of tourist satisfaction with tasting local food and tourists' future intentions have been limited in the food tourism field (Chi, Chua, Othman & Karim, 2013; Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2010; Tanford & Jung, 2017; Yuan & Jang, 2008). Yuan and Jang (2008) found that satisfaction with a wine festival positively affected tourists' future intentions toward buying local wines and visiting local wineries. Chi et al. (2013) tested a theoretical model comprising tourists' perceived food image, food satisfaction, culinary quality, and behavioral intentions in the Malaysian food tourism setting. Their study emphasized the important role of tourists' dining satisfaction in the

formation of positive behavioral intention, such as revisit intentions, repurchase intention, and word-or mouth communication.

Tanford and Jung (2017) used meta-analysis to prove a robust relationship between tourists' satisfaction and their future intentions in the festival context. Choe and Kim (2018) identified that a positive overall attitude toward local food positively influences future intentions. In their study, the attitude measure was considered to manifest the overall evaluation of local food value. In a similar vein, Kim et al. (2010) found that when tourists were satisfied with a food festival, they were willing to revisit the destination to attend the food festival. Furthermore, when tourists were satisfied with the food and beverages provided at the festival, they were willing to recommend the food festival to their friends and to visit the food festival again. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is as follows:

H3: Positive assessment of dining satisfaction will lead to positive future intentions.

Cross-level interaction effects: effect of food culture difference on the relationship between local food attributes and dining satisfaction

The term "food culture" refers to a culinary order whose characteristics are prevalent among a certain group of people (Askegaard & Madsen, 1998). One country's food culture can be similar/different from others in terms of food composition, ingredients, and preference; dietary habits; and table manner (Anderson, 2014; Newman, 2000; Rozin, 2006). For example, a rice congee, a noodle soup, or dim sum is the first meal of the day for people of Southern China, whereas breakfast consists of bread, cheese, and coffee in Nordic countries. A single food item is served one by one in many Western countries, whereas set food items are served at once in many Asian countries (Newman, 2000). There are varieties of rice in Asia (e.g., Basmati rice in India,

Jasmine rice in Thailand, Japonica rice in Japan, etc.) but rice rather than wheat or corn is the staple diet in Asian countries (Michelin Guide, 2018).

Food product attributes must be adapted to the exporting countries' preferences when there is a substantial food culture difference in the target market (Azar, 2001; Evens et al., 2008) because people not only choose food based on their individual preference but also based on their culture (Anderson, 2005). International tourists' perceptions of local food and their consumption experiences vary according to their cultural background. For example, Hartmann et al. (2015) investigated Chinese and German consumers' willingness to eat several edible insect food products, and found that Chinese consumers have a more positive attitude toward edible insect than German consumers in terms of familiarity, nutritional value, and taste (Hartmann et al., 2015).

Some tourism studies have identified the differences in food culture between national groups (Chang et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2014; Mak et al., 2017). Chang et al. (2011) explained that many people from the West treat the internal organs of animals as "bad" food. On the contrary, people from Asia actually consider them as "good" food because these types of food are rich in nutrients and are healthier options. Kim et al. (2014) compared the responses of three groups of different nationalities—Hong Kong, Thai, and Taiwanese—after they had been exposed to a Korean food-themed TV drama. Regarding the relationship of "national image" to "intention to visit Korea for food tourism," the Hong Kong respondents showed a stronger relationship between the two constructs compared with the Thai and Taiwanese respondents. The Hong Kong respondents also showed a stronger relationship between "healthy menu" and "intention to visit Korea for food tourism" compared with the other two national cohorts.

In the food tourism context, tasting local food during overseas travel is a way of experiencing the culture of the destination country (Kim et al., 2009; Sims, 2009). Thus, tourists' perceptual evaluation of local food consumption experiences varies according to their different national groups (Chang et al., 2010; Choe & Kim, 2018; Mak et al., 2017; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). For example, Pizam and Sussmann (1995) found that tourists from Japan, France, and Italy preferred to eat their own home country foods in the tourist destination, whereas American tourists preferred more local foods in the host destination. Even though their study has limitations in that the data used are outdated and the findings are not directly obtained from the tourists but from tour guides, it still provides preliminary evidence that an individual's food culture plays an important role in his/her food consumption in the international tourism destination.

Chang et al. (2011) investigated Chinese tourists' local dining experiences in Australia and reported that the respondents' own food culture served as the basis for their evaluation of the local food, which affected their overall dining experiences as well. Their study is meaningful in that it provided theoretical underpinning to advance the understanding of tourists' dining behavior. However, it failed to empirically prove the extent to which food culture difference plays a role between local food attributes and tourists' overall dining experience. Moreover, it does not suggest how Chinese tourists can perceive dining experiences differently in other Asian destinations that may have similar food cultures as China, such as Thailand, Japan, and India.

Another study of Chang et al. (2010) investigated the food preferences of Chinese tourists (Mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong) in Australia. Their study reported that Mainland Chinese tourists showed a high tendency to think of dining in a foreign country as "conspicuous consumption," which helps enhance their prestige and status. Meanwhile, Hong

Kong respondents indicated the novel attributes of Australian food, which differed from the Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese perceptions.

Recently, Choe and Kim (2018) found a moderating effect of tourists' cultural background on the relationships between tourists' perceived benefits and attitudes toward local food. In their study, tourists from Western and other Asian countries developed a more positive attitude toward Hong Kong local food by learning about the benefits of the local food culture than did Chinese tourists. Moreover, tourists from other Asian regions place greater importance on the health benefits of Hong Kong local food and thus generate positive attitudes toward the local food than the Western and Chinese tourist groups.

Based on the above discussion, the difference between a tourist's national and the local food culture may play a significant role during local food consumption. Food culture difference is a macro-level variable at the country/region level. As such, the interaction between country/region level (food culture difference) and individual level (local food attributes) likely substantially affects tourists' dining satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Food culture difference will moderate the effect of local food attributes on dining satisfaction.

Figure 1 shows the relationships between the constructs and hypotheses.

Figure 1

Methods

Measurement

The measurement items to test the relationships in Figure 1 were developed through an extensive literature review, a pre-test, and a pilot test. A thorough review of the literature on food attributes, dining satisfaction, future intentions, and food culture differences was initially conducted. The items for each construct were then derived and modified to fit the context of local food tourism. First, items to measure food attributes were extracted from previous food studies (Chang et al., 2010; Jang et al., 2009; Kim & Eves, 2012; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Law et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2011; Newman, 2000; Qu, 1997; Tse & Crotts, 2005).

Second, items representing dining satisfaction were operationalized on the basis of the literature (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Kim et al., 2010; Mason & Nassivera, 2013). Third, items to measure future intention after experiencing local food were adopted from previous studies (Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2014; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Mason & Nassivera, 2013). Last, items to measure food culture difference were adopted from previous studies (Anderson, 2014; Askegaard & Madsen, 1998; Azar, 2011; Newman, 2000). A five-point Likert scale was used to measure local food attributes, dining satisfaction, and future intention, (1 = “strongly disagree”; 3 = “neutral”; 5 = “strongly agree”). Food culture difference was measured by asking the difference in food culture between Hong Kong and the respondent's country using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “very different,” 3 = “neutral,” 5 = “very similar”).

A pre-test was implemented with 50 graduate students in Hong Kong who were majoring in hospitality and tourism to verify the face validity of the items before conducting the pilot test and the main survey. For the food attributes, 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. Regarding items to measure the food culture differences, the respondents expressed that it would be better to specify examples of the differences (e.g., stable diet, silverware, and eating habits). Thus, the afore-mentioned items were revised as "stable diet (e.g., rice, wheat, corn)," "silverware (e.g., chopsticks, spoon, knife, fork)," and "eating habits (e.g., talking while eating, speed of eating, slurping)."

Common method biases, which can cause measurement errors, should be considered in the development of the measurement items and the data collection process (Min, Park & Kim, 2016). Pertinent to measurement items, confusing question expression, favorable answers-expecting expression, double meaning wording in a question, and all positive-directional questions were excluded. Therefore, questionnaires were developed through a rigorous literature review, pre-test (50 graduate students), and pilot test (94 actual tourists to Hong Kong) before a questionnaire version was completed for the main survey. Through these processes, the ambiguous or double meaning-containing expressions were revised, and the questionnaire items (positive and negative) were combined to avoid the consistency motif bias. Screen questions were used to collect valid samples, and a main survey was administered at the airport where international tourists can reflect their local food tasting. These efforts helped dissipate concerns regarding context effects bias or transit mood state bias. In addition, this study conducted exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis to identify the dimensional structure of the scales, thus diminishing the measurement error (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010).

Then, a pilot test was conducted with a sample of 94 respondents: 20 from the USA and Europe, 20 from Mainland China, 10 from Taiwan, 25 from Korea, and 19 from Japan. Certain respondents commented on the vagueness of the local food items and advised specifying

particular 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, certain interviewees commented on the difficulty of understanding which Hong Kong local food was being referred to without being given any pictorial information. The other items were also reviewed and validated by the respondents.

All the previous comments informed the development of the main survey questionnaire. For example, photographs of Hong Kong local foods and their names were included in the questionnaire to help tourists understand which local food experiences were being referred to. The original questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into Chinese, French, German, Korean, Japanese, and Thai. Translators have two groups: professors in hospitality management who spoke different languages and professional translators who worked for a translation company. After compiling a draft, the translators were requested to back translate it into English. The final wording of the questionnaire was decided after comparing the two versions.

Data collection

Data were collected at the Hong Kong International Airport between November 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017. The survey was administered on weekends and weekdays to reflect differences in the travel-related characteristics of tourists. Thirteen undergraduate students were employed as interviewers. Two screening questions were applied to select respondents appropriate to the purpose of this study: “Did you taste local food during your stay in Hong Kong?” and “Was tasting 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 were invited to participate.

The interviewers were assigned to recruit participants from 30 specific national or regional groups to ensure a diverse sample of tourists. The interviewers approached the passengers who checked in at the counter of each country's national carrier. The interviewees who were residents of Hong Kong or who did not pass the two screening questions were not invited 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. Among a total of 1,392 questionnaires collected, 50 questionnaires containing many missing values, 19 questionnaires with only one category checked, and 49 questionnaires on which respondents had not indicated their nationality were ruled out. As a result, 1,274 questionnaires were included in the data analysis.

Data analysis

A series of exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) was used to identify the dimensionality of constructs to test the research hypotheses. Next, reliability tests within the derived domains and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to confirm different types of validity. In the next step, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was employed to test cross-level relations, whereas individual data were nested within groups (here, 30 countries/regions of origin for overseas tourists).

Results

Descriptive analyses

Of the 1,274 respondents, 54.1% were male and 51.2% were married. More than 32% of the respondents were in their 30s, whereas 28.7% were in their 20s. Approximately 72% of the respondents held a bachelor's degree, and 36% of them were Christians. Approximately 35% of

the respondents were company employees, and 25.7% of them had an annual household income of US$70,001 or more. A majority of the respondents (69.8%) were independent travelers. In addition, 58.6% of the respondents were visiting Hong Kong for vacation/leisure. Approximately 37% of them stayed in Hong Kong for three to four nights, and approximately 57.4% were repeat visitors. Last, the respondents originated from 30 national or regional areas. Table 1 shows the sociodemographic and travel-related features.

Table 1

Results of factor analyses

First, a series of EFAs for food attributes, dining satisfaction, future intention, and food culture difference was performed using Promax rotation. Eleven items for food attributes, two items for dining satisfaction, four items for future intention, and eight items for food culture difference were also factor analyzed, respectively. Table 2 shows that the results generated three factors for food attributes and a single factor for the other four constructs that had eigenvalues exceeding 1.00. The reliability alpha values for all domains or constructs were close to or exceeded 0.70—Nunnally's (1978) criterion. Therefore, the extracted domains demonstrated the internal consistency of items within each domain.

Table 2

Second, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to investigate the hypothesized multi-factor measurement model. The fit measures used in this study were as follows: the comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness of fit index (GFI), the non-normed fit index (NNFI),

and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The overall model fit and factor loadings were investigated after the CFA had been conducted. Hair et al. (2010) stated that standardized factor loading should exceed 0.5 to obtain convergent validity. Therefore, these items that did not meet this criterion were ruled out at the beginning of the CFA. The results of the CFA presented in Table 3 show that the confirmatory measurement model demonstrated a good fit. The CFI, GFI, and NNFI values exceeded the recommended value of 0.90. Furthermore, the value of RMSEA was lower than the suggested 0.08 threshold. All factor loadings (>0.50), composite construct reliability (CCR) (>0.70), and average variance extracted (AVE) (>0.50) were considered to satisfy the recommended standard (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010), with the exception of the CCR value for restaurant quality (CCR = 0.67). However, the estimated loadings for the indicators of restaurant quality were significant at $p <$ 0.001 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) and the AVE value was 0.5. Hence, convergent validity was deemed acceptable. Overall, the convergent validity and reliability of the constructs used in this study were acceptable.

Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the six factors, including individual- and country/region-level variables. The results of the correlation analysis supported the discriminant validity because all values of the square root of the AVE from all constructs were greater than the correlations among the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Tables 3 and 4

Hypothesis tests by hierarchical linear modeling

Food culture difference was aggregated across individual travelers within their country or region of origin. Despite the rationale for using an aggregation of food culture difference at the country/region level, statistical justifications for the aggregation were assessed using guidelines from previous studies (Bliese, 2000; James et al., 1984). First, James et al.'s (1984) $r_{WG(J)}$, the interrater agreement score, for national food culture difference was 0.91, which is above the cutoff value (0.70), thus supporting the aggregation. In addition, the scores for intra-class correlation (ICC1) and reliability of the group mean (ICC2) were 0.08 and 0.71, respectively. The ICC2 was above the cutoff value of 0.70, whereas the ICC1 was slightly lower than the cutoff value of 0.12 (Bliese, 2000). Despite the ICC1 value, the aggregation could be continued given the clear logical rationale and the high inter-rater agreement, $r_{WG(J)}$ (Biliese, 2000; Chen & Bliese, 2002).

A series of research models were investigated to test the four hypotheses using HLM (see Table 5). Hypothesis 1 regarding the effects of local food attributes on dining satisfaction was examined in Model 1. Model 1 shows that the effects of local food attributes on dining satisfaction were significant (food novelty, $\gamma = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$; food quality, $\gamma = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$; restaurant quality, $\gamma = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 regarding the effects of local food attributes and dining satisfaction on future intention were investigated in Models 2 and 3. The results of Model 2 indicate that the effect of local food attributes on future intention were significant (food novelty, $\gamma = 0.14$, $p < 0.001$; food quality, $\gamma = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$; restaurant quality, $\gamma = 0.07$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported. Furthermore, Hypothesis 3 was also supported as the effect of dining satisfaction on future intention was significant ($\gamma = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$), as seen in Model 3.

The results of Model 4 show that food culture difference moderated the effects of food novelty ($\gamma = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$) and food quality ($\gamma = -0.10$, $p < 0.05$) in predicting dining satisfaction in an exotic overseas destination. However, the effect of restaurant quality was not moderated by food culture difference ($\gamma = -0.06$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

Table 5

Discussion and implications

Theoretical implications

First, on an individual level, this study confirms that local food attributes are positively associated with tourists' dining satisfaction. If tourists' perception of food novelty, food quality, and restaurant quality is high, then they are highly satisfied with their dining experience at the destination. The results are understandable because local food comprises not only sensory qualities and physical appearance but also social and cultural characteristics. The authenticity, novelty, or exoticness of local food that reflects local culture is influential in generating tourists' dining satisfaction in a destination. This result is the similar as those of previous studies that indicate a positive association between the experiencing of local food and dining satisfaction in an overseas tourism destination (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Kim & Eves, 2012; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Nield et al., 2000). The present study also extends previous studies by identifying the role of distinctive domains (food novelty, food quality, and restaurant quality) inherent to food attributes in determining dining satisfaction.

Second, the relationship between all three domains of local food attributes and diners' behavior intention in the context of tourists' local food experiences was assessed. The results confirm that the novelty aspect of local food, high-quality local food, and the high quality of the

restaurant can be directly linked to tourists' positive future intentions. This finding is pertinent to destination management organizations because local food can be a medium for the promotion of a destination online and offline (Kim et al., 2016; Madaleno et al., 2019). The findings of the present study are consistent with those of past empirical studies indicating that travelers' unique gastronomic experiences in an overseas tourism destination lead to their willingness to revisit the destination (Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2014; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Nam & Lee, 2011).

Third, the results of this study show that when tourists are satisfied with their local dining, they are willing to show a high level of behavioral intention. Customers show intention by posting positive reviews online, experiencing the local cuisine again on their return to their home country, and coming back to the destination to taste additional local cuisines. The role of satisfaction in determining tourists' future behavioral intentions has been well demonstrated by previous studies (Choe & Kim, 2018; Ji et al., 2016; Yuan & Jang, 2008). Therefore, establishing a high level of tourist satisfaction has always been emphasized to destination managers to improve or sustain the competitiveness of food tourism destinations. Results on the positive impact of tourists' dining satisfaction on their future behavioral intentions can contribute to the extant food tourism literature.

Fourth, the moderating effects of food culture difference on the relationships between food novelty and dining satisfaction and between food quality and dining satisfaction were significant at the 0.05 level. This finding is in line with the results of previous studies which showed that tourists' cultural background can help to explain differences in tourists' perceptions of local food experiences (Chang et al., 2010; Choe & Kim, 2018; Mak et al., 2017; Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; Seegebarth et al., 2016; Verbeke & Poquiviqui López, 2005). These studies have used nationality as a proxy variable for food culture difference although nationality has

shortcomings as a proxy because one nation contains various subgroups. The present study successfully employed an instrument measuring food culture difference which can be used in place of nationality to represent food culture difference for future studies.

Managerial implications

First, the findings require cautious interpretation with regard the moderating effect of food culture between local food attributes and dining satisfaction because the direction of relationships was different. The novelty aspects of local food—such as unknown food, exotic local food ingredients, and authenticity of the local food and people—were a significant predictor of dining satisfaction. In addition, food culture difference moderated the relationship between food novelty and dining satisfaction.

The effect of food novelty on dining satisfaction was substantial for tourists who evidenced the similarity between their country's food culture and Hong Kong local food culture. Examples are tourists from Taiwan (mean score of food culture difference = 4.05), Mainland China (mean score of food culture difference = 3.44), and Thailand (mean score of food culture difference = 3.61). Thus, novel food can stimulate the interest of, and be intriguing to, tourists who live in a country with a similar food culture. A cultural interpretation of a food's uniqueness is important for those who live in a country with a similar food culture because the provision of unfamiliar/novel food is unexpected and evokes a memorable surprise.

Tourists wish to try something new, but at the same time, they also want to stay in their comfort zone and seek food familiarity (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Quan & Wang, 2004). The findings of the current study helped prove that this phenomenon also occurs in the context of tourists' local food consumption. Metaphorically, Asian tourists would not mind trying different

types of rice unless they can stay in their umbrella food category ("rice"). From the tourism marketing perspective, promotional materials should emphasize the novelty, exoticness, and authenticity of local delicacies for Taiwanese, Chinese, and Thai tourists who have a similar food culture with Hong Kong. Hence, local restaurants may prepare different menu descriptions for tourists from similar and different food cultures. The Hong Kong Tourism Board should also focus on the novelty aspects of local cuisines when designing their tourism websites for Asian tourists.

Second, the effect of food novelty on satisfaction was not as marked for those who reported dissimilarity between their country's and Hong Kong local food cultures. Examples are tourists from Finland (mean score of food culture difference = 1.99), Spain (mean score of food culture difference = 2.05), Switzerland (mean score of food culture difference = 2.08), France (mean score of food culture difference = 2.12), and Germany (mean score of food culture difference = 2.12). For tourists who are unfamiliar to different food culture from Hong Kong, trying authentic local food, such as rice, cow/pig bone soup, spicy soup, street food, and chicken feet, could offer fun or exoticness, but eating these foods are likely to lower their dining satisfaction. In a similar vein, dining culture, such as sharing dishes and eating using tiny ceramic spoons or plastic chopsticks, offers a unique experience of eating like the local residents. However, dining culture also likely fails to lead to dining satisfaction for tourists from a dissimilar dining culture as the dining experiences may be too novel to these tourists. Previous studies have shown that satisfaction with tasting novel foods in a new country can be enhanced by maintaining a balance between novelty and familiarity (Cohen, 1979; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Ji et al., 2016; Tse & Crotts, 2005).

Therefore, the Hong Kong Tourism Board should not use marketing messages that contain too many unfamiliar words or descriptions, especially if they are geared toward tourists from Western countries. When presenting local cuisines, efforts should also be invested to emphasize the similarities between Hong Kong and other national food cultures. For example, *siu mei* (roasted meat) in Hong Kong can be described as something similar to *schweinshaxe* (pork knuckle) for tourists from Germany, thus providing some form of assurance to tourists while introducing a novel cuisine.

Third, the results of this study indicate that when tourists' food culture is different from Hong Kong food culture, the effect of food quality on their dining satisfaction at the destination is enhanced. For tourists from countries whose food culture differs from that of Hong Kong, such as Finland, Spain, Switzerland, France or Germany, food quality is the most basic and important attribute of tourists' food consumption. Hence, the quality of the local food should be the most important factor to be considered to increase dining satisfaction (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Quan & Wang, 2004). Tourists from these countries may not fully understand what ingredients have been used to produce local food because their food culture is very different from that of Hong Kong. Therefore, efforts to interpret menus and to explain food ingredients to them are helpful to assure overseas tourists of the quality of the food and to build trust (Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Sims, 2009). For example, local food vendors should make an effort to obtain a Quality Tourism Services (QTS) scheme in Hong Kong and the certification is must be presented to tourists. Moreover, certification seals should also be included in restaurant posters, newsletters, and other promotional materials in order to appeal to tourists, particularly those from Western countries.

Fourth, although restaurant quality positively affects dining satisfaction, the relationship between these factors did not vary according to the gap between tourists' and Hong Kong local food culture. The grand mean of the two items relevant to restaurant quality was 3.58 (higher than neutral: 3.00). Hence, restaurant quality, such as the good hygiene condition of the local restaurant and the quality of service provided, is important in operating successful local restaurants that foreign tourists patronize, regardless of their food culture differences (Correia et al., 2008; Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2013; Molz, 2007; Nield et al., 2000; Qu, 1997).

Conclusion and suggestions for future study

Three domains of local food attributes exerted a significant positive effect on dining satisfaction and future intentions, whereas dining satisfaction positively affected future intentions. These findings are supported by those of previous studies that tested the quality of international tourists' dining experiences in international tourism destinations (e.g., Chang et al., 2010, 2011; Chi & Qu, 2008; Choe and Kim, 2018; Ellis et al., 2018; Ignatov & Smith, 2006; Karim et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Mak et al., 2017; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). The contribution of this study to the literature is that it is an initial attempt to investigate the moderating effect of food culture on the relationship between the perception of food attributes and satisfaction in a destination. Previously, tourists from the 30 countries/regions sampled in this study would perceive their local food experience in an exotic tourism destination as being dissimilar from their own country's food culture. To avoid this assumption, a multilevel model designed to integrate individual-level factors involving local food attributes and dining satisfaction must be developed, with a country/region-level factor specifying food culture difference.

This study is especially valuable because of its rigorous research procedures. Model development was based on an extensive literature review, and item development went through rigorous pre-testing and pilot testing. In the main survey, a large sample of foreign tourists (n = 1,274) was surveyed. The sample included diverse sociodemographics, including nationality. Reliability within each domain or construct and diverse types of validity were verified by running two types of factor analyses, together with the literature review, pre-test, and pilot test.

Suggestions for future research are as follows. First, this study employed food culture difference as a moderating variable. However, satisfaction with eating local food in overseas tourism destinations can also differ according to tourists' personality. For example, adventure-loving tourists may prefer unusual local food that differs from their usual foods (Cohen & Avielie, 2004; Kim & Eves, 2012; Mak et al., 2017; Nam & Lee, 2011; Tse & Crotts, 2005). Dining satisfaction may also be related to a tourist's level of experience or understanding of local food. For example, tasting the local food previously or having been often exposed to the food may influence the relationship between perception of food attributes and satisfaction. Further study is needed to identify the moderating effect of personality or level of past experience on the path between the perception of food attributes and satisfaction.

Second, future research needs to investigate the influence of differentiating factors other than the home region—such as religion, history, and percentage of immigrants—that can determine food culture differences (Azar, 2011; Bardhi et al., 2010; Barrena et al., 2015; Choe & Kim, 2018; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995; Rozin, 2006). Therefore, a research model or hypothesis is required that can test and compare tourist sub-cohorts differentiated by other external factors (e.g., Asian and Western, or different religions).

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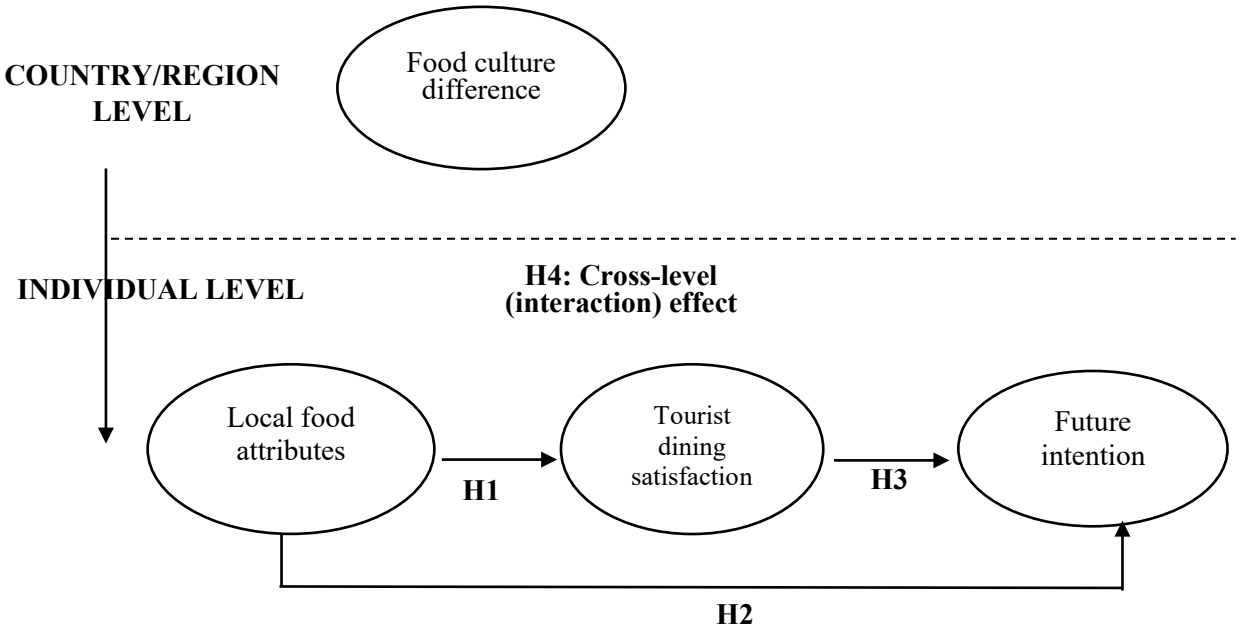

Figure 1. Multilevel research model

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics and travel-related behaviors (N = 1,274)

Characteristic	Percent (%)	Characteristic	Percent (%)
Gender		*Purpose of visit*	
Male	54.1	Vacation/leisure	58.6
Female	45.9	Business	19.6
Marital status		Visit friends and/or relatives	12.1
Single	41.4	Other	9.7
Married	51.2	*Nights stayed in Hong Kong*	
Other	7.4	1–2 nights	27.6
Age		3–4 nights	37.2
20s/below	28.7	5–6 nights	16.1
30s	32.2	7 nights or more	19.1
40s	18.2	*First-time vs repeat visitors*	
50s/older	20.9	First-time visitors	42.6
Education level		Repeat visitors	57.4
High school/below	12.8	*Country/region*	
College graduate	34.5	AMG/ARAB	3.0
Graduate school	37.9	Australia	5.1
Religion		Austria	0.9
Christian	36.0	Brazil	2.9
Muslim	8.3	Canada	3.6
Hindu	7.1	China	5.9
Catholic	10.8	Czech/Poland/Romania	2.7
Buddhist	5.3	EKT	1.8
Other	32.4	Finland	2.3
Occupation		France	4.7
Company employee	34.6	Germany	4.2
Self-owned business	14.3	India	6.6
Civil servant	4.2	Indonesia	3.1
Professional	11.4	Ireland	1.7
Housewife	3.4	Italy	3.4
Technician	2.3	Japan	3.5
Student	10.3	South Korea	3.5
Education	7.0	Netherland	2.0
Retired/Others	12.5	New Zealand	3.5
Annual household income (US$)		Philippines	2.0
Less than 10,000	15.8	Russia	2.0
10,001–25,000	19.7	Singapore	1.8
25,001–40,000	15.9	South Africa	2.2
40,001–55,000	11.0	Spain	2.7
55,001–70,000	12.0	Sweden	1.6
US$70,001 or more	25.7	Switzerland	2.7
Travel mode		Taiwan	5.4
Package tour	18.3	Thailand	1.7
Independent traveler	69.8	UK	7.6
Others	11.9	USA	5.9

Table 2. Factor analysis for local food attributes, dining satisfaction, future intention, and food culture difference

Food attributes	Communality	Factor loading	Mean
Domain 1 (Food novelty. 4.76[a]; 4.25[b]; α = 0.82)			
It was an opportunity to taste unknown food.	0.69	0.88	3.73
It was an opportunity to taste exotic ingredients.	0.66	0.84	3.63
It was an opportunity to taste authentic Hong Kong food.	0.60	0.63	3.94
It was an opportunity to taste local food with local people and foreign tourists.	0.53	0.60	3.82
It was an opportunity to experience the exotic ambiences of Hong Kong local restaurants.	0.62	0.59	3.72
Domain 2 (Food quality. 1.21[a]; 11.04[b]; α = 0.80)			
It was an opportunity to taste rice, noodles, and dumplings.	0.67	0.83	4.07
It was an opportunity to taste delicious food.	0.68	0.77	3.99
It was an opportunity to taste good-quality food.	0.67	0.74	3.88
It was an opportunity to taste various menus and ingredients.	0.59	0.72	3.93
Domain 3 (Restaurant quality. 1.14[a]; 10.33[b]; α = 0.68)			
It was an opportunity to experience the high level of service quality of local restaurants.	0.73	0.84	3.60
It was an opportunity to experience the good hygiene conditions of local restaurants.	0.67	0.84	3.55
Dining satisfaction			
Domain 1 (1.69[a]; 84.51[b]; α = 0.82)			
I was satisfied with the food quality of Hong Kong local food.	0.69	0.88	3.73
Overall, I was satisfied with Hong Kong local food restaurants.	0.66	0.84	3.63
Future intention			
Domain 1 (2.64[a]; 65.97[b]; α = 0.83)			
I would recommend Hong Kong local food to my family and/or friends.	0.71	0.85	3.82
I would visit a Hong Kong local food restaurant after I return to my country.	0.68	0.82	3.66
I would visit Hong Kong to explore more diverse Hong Kong local food within the next FIVE years.	0.64	0.80	3.73
I would leave positive reviews of Hong Kong local food on social media (e.g., Facebook, blogs, video clips, Messenger).	0.61	0.78	3.54
Food culture difference between Hong Kong local food and your country's food			
Domain 1 (4.10[a]; 51.25[b]; α = 0.86)			
The basic composition of meals is similar.	0.65	0.80	2.58
The ingredients used in the recipes are similar.	0.64	0.80	2.54
Dining manner is similar.	0.63	0.79	2.45
Kinds of side dishes are similar.	0.55	0.74	2.52
The staple diet (e.g., rice, wheat, corn) is similar.	0.52	0.72	2.73
Silverware (e.g., chopsticks, spoon, knife, fork) is similar.	0.52	0.72	2.50
Eating habits (e.g., talking while eating, speed of eating, slurping) are similar.	0.42	0.65	2.63
Leaving a tip is similar.	0.17	0.42	2.64

[a] = eigenvalue, [b] = variance, α = reliability value

Table 3. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis

Constructs and items	Factor loading	AVE[a]	CCR[b]
Individual level			
Food novelty			
It was an opportunity to taste unknown food.	0.71	0.50	0.80
It was an opportunity to taste exotic ingredients.	0.71		
It was an opportunity to taste authentic Hong Kong food.	0.74		
It was an opportunity to taste local food with local people and foreign tourists.	0.65		
Food quality			
It was an opportunity to taste rice, noodles, and dumplings.	0.66	0.50	0.80
It was an opportunity to taste delicious food.	0.78		
It was an opportunity to taste good-quality food.	0.70		
It was an opportunity to taste various menus and ingredients.	0.67		
Restaurant quality			
It was an opportunity to experience a high level of service quality of local restaurants.	0.72	0.50	0.67
It was an opportunity to experience the good hygiene conditions of local restaurants.	0.69		
Dining satisfaction			
I was satisfied with the food quality of Hong Kong local food.	0.83	0.69	0.82
Overall, I was satisfied with Hong Kong local food restaurants.	0.83		
Future intention			
I would recommend Hong Kong local food to my family and/or friends.	0.83	0.55	0.83
I would visit a Hong Kong local food restaurant after I return to my country.	0.75		
I would visit Hong Kong to explore more diverse Hong Kong local food within the next five years.	0.69		
I would leave positive reviews of Hong Kong local food on social media (e.g., Facebook, blogs, video clips, Messenger).	0.67		
Country/region level			
Food culture difference			
The basic composition of meals	0.80	0.50	0.87
The ingredients used in the recipes	0.79		
Dining manner	0.74		
Number of side dishes	0.67		
The staple diet (e.g., rice, wheat, corn)	0.69		
Silverware (e.g., chopsticks, spoon, knife, fork)	0.64		
Eating habits (e.g., talking while eating, speed of eating, slurping)	0.55		
CFI = 0.944, GFI = 0.932, TLI = 0.934, RMSEA = 0.049			

[a]AVE = Average variance extracted, [b]CCR = composite construct reliability.

Table 4. Correlations and discriminant validity

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Food novelty	3.78	0.72	**0.70**					
2. Food quality	3.97	0.63	0.57**	**0.71**				
3. Restaurant quality	3.57	0.76	0.38**	0.43**	**0.71**			
4. Dining satisfaction	3.83	0.71	0.44**	0.60**	0.43**	**0.83**		
5. Future intention	3.69	0.76	0.44**	0.54**	0.40**	0.65**	**0.74**	
6. Food culture difference	2.56	0.86	0.03	0.05	0.15**	0.03	0.09**	**0.71**

[a]Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square root of the AVE.
[b]Off-diagonal elements are the correlations among constructs.
**$p < 0.01$.

Table 5. Results of hierarchical linear modeling—hypothesis testing

	DV: Dining satisfaction	DV: Future intention		DV: Dining satisfaction
Level and variables	**Model 1 (H1)**	**Model 2 (H2)**	**Model 3 (H3)**	**Model 4 (H4)**
Level 1				
Intercept	3.83***	3.69***	3.69***	3.83***
Gender	−0.07	0.07	0.07	−0.07
Age	0.01	−0.01	−0.01	0.01
Education	0.02	−0.01	−0.01	0.01
Annual income	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01
Food novelty	0.08*	0.14***	.014**	0.09**
Food quality	0.53***	0.16***	.016**	0.52***
Restaurant quality	0.16***	0.07**	0.07**	0.15***
Dining satisfaction			0.53***	
Cross-level				
Food novelty x FCD				0.12*
Food quality x FCD				−0.10*
Restaurant quality x FCD				−0.06
Model deviance	1,695.90	1,948.72	1,707.61	1,698.36
R^2	0.16	0.35	0.46	0.42

Note 1: *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$; FCD, food culture difference.
Note 2: R^2 is based on the proportional reduction of levels 1 and 2 error variance resulting from predictors.