Determining the Attributes of Gastronomic Tourism Experience: Applying Impact-Range Performance and Asymmetry Analyses

Abstract

Cooking classes are a good example of third-generation gastronomic tourism experiences. It is important to determine which cooking class experience attributes are important to participants and assess the performance of these experiences. We assess the importance and performance of cooking class experiences and their impact on overall satisfaction. We first apply the conventional IPA approach, critically assessing the shortcomings of this approach. Next, we use three-factor customer satisfaction theory with the alternative approaches of IRPA and IAA to determine these impacts. The findings have marketing and operational implications by identifying which cooking class experience attributes to highlight and deliver.

Keywords: Cooking class experience, importance-performance analysis, impact range performance analysis, impact asymmetry analysis, Thailand

Gastronomic Tourism: Cooking Class Experience

As an evolving tourism experience, gastronomic or food tourism has shifted from being a peripheral concern to a core reason for tourist visitation (Richards, 2015). Gastronomic tourism has been used to market destinations (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007), to differentiate destinations (Kivela & Crotts, 2005), to spread the culture of destinations (Hjalager & Richards, 2002) and to boost the local economy (Kivela & Crotts, 2006) through a variety of tourism activities such as food festivals (Wu, Wong, & Cheng, 2014), farm weekends (Long, 2013) and cooking classes (Spence & Van Teijlingen, 2005). Three evolutionary phases of the gastronomic tourism experience have been documented (Richards, 2015), namely, the first generation of gastronomic attractions, the second generation of the rise of *the foodie* seeking gastronomic experiences, and the third generation of holistic gastronomic experiences. As Richards (2015) points out, the first of these phases involves the production of themed experiences to stimulate the consumer while the second phase involves co-creation of experiences between producers and consumers with the leading role on the part of the consumer (compare with Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The third generation emphasizes the holistic nature of food experiences and their ability to bond people through food (Boswijk, Thijssen, & Peelen, 2007). Cooking classes fall under the third

generation of experience due to their "ability to connect people around shared consumption of products that involve all the senses" (Richards, 2015, p. 9). As an emerging food tourism concept, cooking classes give food tourists opportunities to engage in authentic experiences. These tourists possess a strong desire to learn new cooking skills from local people (Bell, 2015). While it has been earlier recognized that food has become a primary motivator for travel, many researchers have remarked on the scarcity of studies identifying the relative importance of various elements of the food tourism experience. Addressing this lacuna, Kim and Eves (2012) identified five major dimensions that explain food tourism experiences, namely cultural experience, interpersonal relations, excitement, sensory appeal, and health concerns. Singsomboon (2014) adds that knowledge acquisition is an important experience sought by tourists participating in cooking classes.

Food tourists seek a wide array of different experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004) and destination managers must understand the relevant attributes needed to satisfy their desire for such experiences and to better market food tourism activities (Torres, 2003). In essence, consumers' assessment of a good or service is influenced by their satisfaction with individual product attributes (Pizam & Ellis, 1999). Other scholars argue that how food products are assessed depends on individual personality traits. For instance, Kim, Suh, and Eves (2010) point out that food visitors with neophobic (avoidance of unfamiliar food) personality traits are less likely to be satisfied and engage in repeat purchases of food experiences than those with food involvement personality traits. Kim et al. (2010, p. 224) further contend that food event tourists "have a tendency of low food neophobia." Nonetheless, specific food attributes that are important for tourists interested in food activities are rarely discussed in the extant literature. Touching on this problem tangentially, Ko, Kang, Kang, and Lee (2018) profiled foreign tourists on a Korean food tour and identified four distinct clusters of experiences ("authenticity seekers," "knowledge seekers," "guidance seekers," and "experience seekers"). They compared these clusters across seven food tour service factors (food service, tour guide, authenticity, product flexibility, product validity, educational value and credibility) which revealed significant differences among the clusters. For example, attributes such as product flexibility including dietary restrictions, personal preferences, and flexible starting times are more important to the "experience seekers" than to those in other clusters.

As food tourism becomes a key motivator of travel, destination management organizations and policy makers need to understand experience attributes that affect satisfaction. Cooking classes

are particularly emblematic of third generation gastronomic experiences in that they involve tourists more explicitly and extensively in the production of the food experience than typical food tourism contexts such as restaurants. They also bring people together in ways that transcend the producer/consumer or server/served relationships that characterize much of the interaction between tourists and service providers. For this reason, it is also reasonable to hypothesize that they involve different quality components than other operations and are worthy of study as a distinct type of food tourism context. By profiling food tourists, specifically those engaging in cooking classes, and identifying the importance and performance of the tourism experience, key drivers of satisfaction can be identified to enable destination management organizations and food tourism businesses to act to enhance destination loyalty. Consequently, further research is needed to assess the importance and performance of cooking class experience attributes for destination management organizations and policy makers, to ensure satisfaction and encourage repeat purchases of the cooking class tourism product. Hence, the research objectives of this study are: 1) to assess the actual performance vis-à-vis the importance of the food experience attributes; 2) to determine the impact of cooking class experience attributes on performance outcomes; and 3) to judge the differences between the methods of three different important / performance assessment techniques.

Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and Alternative Techniques

Understanding the drivers of satisfaction, loyalty and repeat purchases is a key requirement for tourism attraction managers and policymakers. These stakeholders often assess performance or satisfaction through a range of attributes related to the tourism product by determining which of these attributes are the best performing and then using different statistical techniques to determine which of these attributes are most likely to affect satisfaction, loyalty and repeat purchases (Boley, McGehee, & Hammett, 2017). One technique used to assess the relative importance and performance of these attributes is Importance - Performance Analysis (IPA). This technique has the ability to simultaneously assess customers' judgment of the importance of product attributes and service providers performance in those attributes (Azzopardi & Nash, 2013). The traditional IPA plots mean scores of perceived importance and perceived performance on a two-dimensional grid. The grand means (mean across all the attributes) or medians are then used as dividing lines for the grid so that four quadrants are produced (Figure 1). Attributes that plot in Quadrant I (low

performance; high importance) require immediate action from management and policymakers (Deng, 2007). Management is advised to concentrate resources here to improve the performance of these attributes. Attributes that are located in Quadrant II (low performance and low importance) are not perceived to be of concern to management. Although their performance is relatively low, these attributes are relatively unimportant. The management directive for this quadrant is 'Low priority.' Resources devoted to attributes in Quadrant III, for which performance is high and the importance low, could be potentially wasted, and would be better deployed to other attributes (Chu & Choi, 2000). This quadrant's management manifesto is 'Possible overkill.' Lastly, attributes falling in Quadrant IV (high performance; high importance) indicate attributes for which the service has a competitive advantage and can be leveraged and promoted as major strengths (Enright & Newton, 2004). Management is advised to 'Keep up the good work' for attributes in this quadrant.

With a long list of attributes, scholars often perform factor analysis to determine the underlying dimensions of the importance and performance attributes. Many IPAs have been performed and described in tourism and hospitality literature. Lai and Hitchcock (2015) review 59 IPA studies in hospitality and tourism that cover a range of contexts from hotels, restaurants, destinations, parks, tour guides, sports centers, spa goers, conferences, exhibitions, meetings, and convention centres. No studies to date have used these technique to explore satisfaction with third-generation food experiences.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

One of the reasons for using IPA is the ease of interpretation through visual means. Managers perceive that an IPA can be a useful tool for identifying service quality areas that require remedial strategic actions (Sethna, 1982). An IPA is a managerial tool that can be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of products, services, attractions and destinations (see Table 1). However, more recently, many scholars have highlighted methodological (Azzopardi & Nash, 2013; Lai & Hitchcock, 2015; Oh, 2001) and conceptual problems of IPA (Sever, 2015). Conceptually, both Mikulić and Prebežac (2008) and Slevitch and Oh (2010) raise the issues of the lack of a clear definition of attribute-importance with Deng (2007) highlighting two "erroneous assumptions" of traditional IPAs. The first assumption is that the importance of the attribute and

the performance of the same attribute are independent variables. The second assumption is that there is a linear and symmetrical relationship between importance and performance.

Methodologically, Back and Lee (2015) note that there is a lack of predictive validity in traditional IPAs (Oh, 2001). They also note that often performance and importance responses are skewed heavily toward the positive end of the scale implying that attributes that are below the grand mean of importance and performance should not necessarily be categorized as 'low' (Bacon, 2003). Along the same lines, Velikova, Slevitch, and Mathe-Soulek (2017) report that IPA relies on self-reported importance which does not show whether the attribute is important if it is provided or if it is important if it is absent. In addition, Sever (2015) identifies about nine conceptual (e.g. lack of precise definition of importance) and methodological issues (e.g. lack of validity and reliability criteria) of IPA. Nonetheless, this study failed to define the meaning of the term attribute-importance and hence these weaknesses require further research.

Consequently, there have been calls to address the criticisms raised against IPA especially those related to the issue of nonlinearity and an asymmetrical relationship (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998; Mikulić & Prebežac, 2008; Oliver, 1997); direct versus indirect measurements (Deng, Kuo & Chen, 2008; Sever, 2015) and conceptualization of the term attribute importance. As a result, several techniques, usually based on a combination of other techniques, have been developed. These techniques include those based on benchmarking and three-factor theory (e.g. Deng et al., 2008); IPA and the Kano model (e.g. Kuo, Chen, & Deng, 2012) and penalty-reward contrast analysis (PRCA), impact range-performance analysis (IRPA) and impact-asymmetry analysis (IAA) (e.g. Coghlan, 2012; Lee & Min, 2013; Mikulić & Prebežac, 2008, 2011). For example, Deng et al. (2008) suggest a combination of a three-factor model and benchmarking, which allow measurements of the relative importance of attributes and the use of partial correlation and natural logarithms to measure implicitly derived importance of the attribute to overcome the weakness of IPA's use of stated importance, compared to dervied importance. Kuo et al. (2012) propose a combination of IPA and the Kano model to overcome the respective weaknesses of both techniques, namely the one-dimensional qualities in IPA and the neglect of attribute importance and performance in the Kano model.

However, these approaches still fail to address some important weaknesses of IPA such as the range of impact of attribute performance on overall satisfaction and the conceptualization of the term attribute importance, leading Mikulic and Prebezac (2008; 2011) to propose a new three-

step analytical framework (PRCA-IRPA-IAA) that can help to address IPA issues, with the argument that the suggestion by IPA that dissatisfiers should be prioritized is misleading since it overlooks two major factors of the range of the attribute impacts on satisfaction and the degree of asymmetry of an attribute's impacts. This new analytical framework involves three chronologically validated techniques to address the limitations of IPA through the use of: 1. PRCA which transforms attributes into two simple variables of penalty (low performance) and reward (high performance) and further regress on overall satisfaction; 2. IRPA which constitutes a revised IPA that adopts the attributes' range of impact on overall satisfaction in place of the attribute-importance that has been conceptually difficulty to define; and 3. IAA which analyses the asymmetry of attribute impact on overall satisfaction debunking IPA's assumption of lack of asymmetry (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2008).

Individually, each of the techniques has strengths and weaknesses (see Table 1) even though studies comparing all methods concurrently are scarce. PRCA, for instance, assumes a non-linear relationship between low and high performance and satisfaction (Velikova et al., 2017) but it does not clearly indicate the range of impact on satisfaction even though studies show that different product or service attributes have varying impacts on overall customer satisfaction (Lee & Min, 2013). An extension with IRPA allows an analysis of an attributes' potential to impact on overall satisfaction in instances of extremely high and low attribute-performance, making it easier to determine improvement priority. Nonetheless, IRPA does not provide insights on the degree of asymmetry of an attribute's impacts to generate satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which is taken-into-account by IAA as it allows categorization of attributes into high impact, medium impact and low impact attributes based on whether a given attribute is a delighter, satisfier, hybrid, dissatisfier or frustrator (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2008; 2011). Accordingly, "improvement priority should rise with increasing levels of a range of impact on overall customer satisfaction" (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2008, p. 564). However, since IAA is an extension of other techniques, its success depends on these techniques (see Table 1).

Despite such efforts to rectify the major issues of IPA, an empirical study comparing the various techniques to justify their appropriateness for decision-making is lacking particularly within culinary research. More than a decade ago, Smith and Costello (2009) employed IPA to identify the critical performance of 27 attributes of a culinary event and found that all importance-attribute scores were higher than performance and three out of four attribute items had a predictive

effect on overall satisfaction. However, Harrington, Ottenbacher, and LöWenhagen (2015) criticize the lack of studies examining the impacts of culinary attributes and service impacts on revisit intention and employ an expectancy-based approach to confirm that culinary and hospitality attributes were an important consideration to return to a culinary destination.

Evidently, within the culinary literature, empirical strengths and weaknesses of the new framework suggested by Mikulić and Prebežac (2008) are unknown and remain elusive to tourism academia, necessitating a comparison of the soundness of the different techniques. Meanwhile, the need to compare techniques has been highlighted by Azzopardi and Nash (2013) who contend that there is a lack of significant effort to empirically contrast and validate the traditional IPA with other alternative techniques in order to determine the most accurate and sound approach to evaluating consumer preferences. This study contributes to this empirical gap by comparing the traditional IPA and the other two related techniques. The current research follows Mikulić and Prebežac (2008) who developed two related analyses to IPA which recognizes the three-factor customer satisfaction theory outlined below. This type of analysis has been implemented previously to good effect in a tourism and hospitality context (see Back & Lee, 2015). The impact range performance analysis (IRPA) and the impact asymmetry analysis (IAA) take-into-account the asymmetric nature of service quality attributes based on the three-factor customer satisfaction theory.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Three-factor Customer Satisfaction Theory

Both researchers and practitioners are constantly searching for models to identify quality attributes of products and services that affect customer satisfaction for reliable decision making (Velikova et al., 2017). One important asymmetrical model for identifying service and product attribute-performance relationship with customer satisfaction is the three-factor theory rooted in the Kano model (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998) which is an extension of Herzberg's two factor "motivation-hygiene theory" (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Tietjen & Myers, 1998). The basic premise of the Kano model is that there are five distinct categories of service or product quality requirements that influence customer satisfaction differently (Kano, 1984; Kuo et al., 2012; Lee & Min, 2013). They include "must-be", "one-dimensional", "attractive", "indifferent", and

"reverse" (Kano, 1984). Importantly, the need to prioritize the first three quality attributes in service or product quality offerings has necessitated further modification of the model into what has been touted as the three-factor theory (Velikova et al, 2017).

The three-factor theory of customer satisfaction grew out of the realization that attributes of service quality influence customer satisfaction in different ways. An attribute's effect on overall customer satisfaction may not be accurately represented through a self-reported importance rating. What individuals claim is important may not really determine the impact on overall satisfaction. This is the difference between stated importance and revealed importance. Neslin (1981) provides statistical support for the use of statistically-revealed importance weights over self-stated importance, finding that "the statistical linkages produce predictions that correlate more closely with actual perceptions" (Neslin, 1981, p. 84). Matzler, Sauerwein, and Heischmidt (2003) suggest that service quality attributes can be categorized in three ways: basic factors (dissatisfiers), performance factors (hybrid factors), and excitement factors (satisfiers) and that their importance depends on the level of performance (Brandt, 1988; Johnston, 1995; Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998). Attributes that can be classified as dissatisfiers are more important at lower levels of performance than at higher levels of performance. Conversely, excitement factors have a stronger influence on performance at high levels than at low levels. Matzler and Sauerwein (2002) recognize this importance hierarchy.

Basic factors are attributes of service quality where dissatisfaction may occur if the minimum level of performance is not met. Once this level of performance has been met, any higher level of performance will not result in increased satisfaction (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002). If an individual is asked directly what is important, they are more likely to mention 'basic factors', sometimes called 'hygiene factors', as being very important, rather than those attributes that actually satisfy or drive satisfaction. But if an individual is directly asked about this attribute, they may say that attribute is the most important. Examples include the attributes of safety and cleanliness (Back & Lee, 2015). Excitement factors (satisfiers) are those service quality attributes that are not necessarily expected in the service experience so their presence and high performance will delight the individual and result in a higher level of overall satisfaction. However, their absence or non-delivery will not decrease satisfaction, if they are not delivered. These factors surprise the individual. Service providers are recommended to highlight and perform well on these attributes (Matzler et al., 2003). Performance factors (hybrid factors) have a linear and symmetrical

relationship with overall satisfaction. These attributes increase satisfaction when the performance level is high and decrease satisfaction when their performance is low. This contrasts with basic factors and excitement factors, which have a nonlinear and asymmetric relationship between overall satisfaction and service quality attributes (Matzler, Bailom, Hinterhuber, Renzl, & Pichler, 2004).

Oliver (1997) provides a similar classification of satisfaction into bivalent satisfiers, monovalent satisfiers and monovalent dissatisfiers. Monovalent dissatisfiers represent basic attributes capable of causing dissatisfaction and the absence of which can frustrate customers. Monovalent satisfiers represent the "extras" or attractive requirements suggested by Kano (1984) that are not expected and the presence of which delights customers. Bivalent satisfiers, on the other hand, are hybrid factors whose presence engenders satisfaction and the absence of which can cause dissatisfaction. Subsequent studies by Mikulić and Prebežac, (2008) provide five subcategories of the three-factor theory that articulate different zones of tolerance and degrees of asymmetry to customer satisfaction. Delighters inspire a high level of satisfaction through their presence; satisfiers trigger satisfaction if they are present but their absence does not lead to dissatisfaction; hybrids generate satisfaction proportional to the degree to which they are present; dissatisfiers are basic requirements that lead to dissatisfaction when absent; and frustrators represent factors whose presence engenders extreme levels of dissatisfaction (Lee & Min, 2013).

There is a dearth of recent studies applying such classifications to analyze the impact of cooking class experience attributes on overall satisfaction, leading to a gap in knowledge that could inform cooking class owners and destination management organizations of the relevant priorities when developing such products.

Nonetheless, the increasing motivation to engage in cooking classes gives evidence that cooking class products have certain experience attributes that are required for satisfaction to be achieved. For instance, Agyeiwaah, Otoo, Suntikul, and Huang (2019) found three motivational factors of the need to join an enjoyable activity, learning something new through interaction and learning about the destination cuisine as the driving attributes for participating in a cooking class. The authors further identify experiential attributes of immersion into the local culture and enjoying experiences that are pleasant to the senses. Other studies in the culinary literature identify some important food attributes that influence customer satisfaction. For instance, Smith and Costello (2009) identified 27 pull attributes including food tasting, convenient parking, food and beverage

prices, outdoor activities and cooking techniques as part of assessing the satisfaction of a culinary event using IPA. Harrington et al. (2015) criticize the lack of research on the influence of culinary and hospitality service attributes on return visits and further identify four attributes - namely traditional dishes in a region, regional wines, authentic food products and authentic food products on menus - which were found to determine return visits. Kim and Eves (2012, p. 1462) have validated 26 modified food motivation measurement items that highlight major attributes of food tourism experiences but the study does not determine which food attributes influence satisfaction and should be prioritized. The preceding studies suggest that there are many elements that combine into a food tourism experience (Richards, 2015). Many of these elements are third generation experiences (Boswijk et al., 2007). Ascertaining which elements are delighters, satisfiers, dissatisfiers, hybrids and frustrators is important for food tourism businesses and destination marketers. This has implications, not only for Thailand but also in other popular Asian food tourism destinations such as South Korea (Ko et al., 2018), Singapore and Malaysia (Scarpato, 2002). Hence, this research contributes to this knowledge by adapting attributes and elements from previous studies by Agyeiwaah et al. (2019), Harrington et al. (2015) and Kim and Eves (2012) with further assessment of attributes based on the five sub-categories suggested in previous studies by Mikulić and Prebežac (2008), Back and Lee (2015) and Lee and Min (2013), described above.

Methods

Sampling and Data collection

The current study was undertaken in Chiang Mai, Thailand: a popular city known for its numerous cooking schools such as *Thai Akha Cooking School, Zabb E Lee Thai Cooking School* and *Thai Orchid Cookery School* (TripAdvisor, 2018). Many of these schools are used to spread Thai culture and traditions to international tourists. Consequently, the city provides various learning platforms for tourism experiences leading to its choice as a study site. International tourists participating in cooking class activities were the main target for this study. Hence, purposive sampling of a list of 15 cooking schools was initially undertaken after which international tourists within each school were sampled conveniently for the data collection to begin. Convenience sampling is appropriate because the target population would be relatively difficult to sample if sampling was completed via random sampling outside of cooking school. As such, we sampled the cooking school participants while they were at the cooking schools. Prior to data collection, the survey instrument was designed following the approach suggested by Dolnicar (2013).

The survey instrument was designed in English and consists of three main parts. Part I comprises a standard set of demographic questions capturing gender, age, educational attainment, marital status, employment status and monthly income, to which respondents could answer in the currency of their choice. Part II captures the specifics of the tourist's visit to Thailand. Questions in this section include number of times a tourist has been to Thailand, length of stay in Chiang Mai, party that joined the cooking class (Alone; With friends or family; Tour group; Others) and source of information about the cooking class (Friends / relatives; Website; Magazine; Guidebook; Trip-advisor; Travel blog; Hotel / guesthouse; Other). Other questions in this section related to 'Motivation for joining a cooking class'. Eleven statements were asked on a 5-point Agreement Likert scale where '1' signified 'Totally disagree' and '5' signified 'Totally Agree'. Respondents were also given an option to choose 'No idea'. The eleven statements were derived from previous literature, namely Kim and Eves (2012).

As this research is concerned with the experiential aspects of tourists' cooking class participation, a series of ten attributes were developed based on the four realms of experience identified by Pine and Gilmore (1999) in their seminal work on the Experience Economy, namely Entertainment, Esthetic, Education, and Escapism. Two sets of ten statements each were then asked to capture tourists' responses on how important they perceived each of the attributes and how satisfied they were with the cooking classes' performance on these ten attributes. The importance rating was captured on a 5-point Likert scale where '1' is 'Not important' and '5' is 'Very important'. The performance (satisfaction) item responses were also recorded on a 5-point Likert scale where '1' is 'Poor' and '5' is 'Excellent'. For both of these sets of questions, respondents were also given an option to choose 'No idea' for each of the ten statements.

Part III of the survey instrument asked about the experience of the individual in the cooking class. The first question in this section asked about the activities the tourists undertook in the course of the cooking class (Visited a local market to buy cooking products; Visited a local Thai farm; Cooked my favorite dish; Talked with others about my experience in Thailand; Talked with other participants about food; Made new friends; Other). The final question asked about tourists' agreement to a set of statements about the cooking class satisfaction. The response items were again based on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by '1' = 'Totally Disagree' and '5' = 'Totally Agree' with an option of 'No idea' for each of the statements. These statements were aggregated to comprise overall satisfaction.

The data collection process involved an earlier pilot test to validate the items used to measure the importance and performance attributes of the cooking class tourism experience, after which the main data collection took place. Since many of the tourists at cooking schools could speak and understand the English language, the instruments were designed and administered in English. The questionnaires were personally administered by trained research assistants. In the end, a total of 300 completed surveys were returned giving a maximum sampling error of 5.6%.

Data Analysis

Table 2 shows the demographic and travel profile of the survey respondents. The gender split was slightly skewed towards females (53.3%). Almost half of the cooking school participants were aged 15 to 29 years of age. English and American respondents dominated the cooking class respondents but there was a mix of residents from other parts of the world. Approximately two in five respondents (40.7%) were single while a further three in 10 respondents (30.0%) were married. Over half (53.0%) of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree or above as their highest level of education. Almost half (46.1%) reported a monthly income of between $US 2,000 and $US 4,000. The most prevalent responses in terms of length of stay in Chiang Mai were between 1 and 3 days (35.6%), 4 days (25.2%) and five days or more (39.3%). For 62.9% of the sample, it was their first trip to Thailand.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Table 3 shows the means of the importance and performance ratings of the cooking class attributes. 'Number and diversity of learning activities' and 'Ability to "participate" in the place, not just visit' have the highest performance scores while 'Learning about Thai culture' and 'Ability to "participate" in the place, not just visit' have the highest importance ratings. The grand mean scores for importance and performance are 3.84 and 3.96 (on a 5-piint scale) respectively.

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

We perform a traditional IPA, an IRPA and an IAA. One of the purposes of this paper is to compare and contrast the results of these three techniques. We do this to demonstrate how the

traditional IPA findings may be misleading, and to show the contributions that each of the alternative methods may make in alleviating the shortcomings of IPA. The IRPA and IAA methods are better tools to aid food tourism businesses in providing the conditions for the generation of gastronomic experiences. The IPA is relatively straightforward. The decision on where to place the axes is somewhat subjective (Azzopardi & Nash, 2013). The placement of the crosshairs can either be done on an absolute or relative basis. A scale-centred approach involves segmenting the quadrant at an absolute threshold, for example, cutting the quadrants at the midpoint of '4' where attributes are measured on a '7' point scale (Tonge & Moore, 2007). As with many other scholars (Deng, 2007; Levenburg & Magal, 2004), we opt for a data-centred approach, where the mean values of observed importance and performance ratings are used to determine the crosshairs of the matrix. We plot the means of the importance ratings with the corresponding performance ratings for each of the ten attributes. The grand means for the 10 importance ratings and the 10 performance ratings were used on the x-axis and y-axis, respectively. The traditional IPA is shown in Figure 2. To perform the IRPA, we follow the methods outlined by other scholars (Back & Lee, 2015; Brandt, 1988; Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002; Mittal, Ross, & Baldasare, 1998) where we determine the asymmetric impact of each attribute's performance on overall satisfaction. This is done by recoding the performance rating for each attribute into new dummy variables. To assess dissatisfiers, respondents' scores are recoded as '1' if the performance score on the five-point Likert scale was '1' or '2' and recoded as '0' otherwise. This creates 10 new variables capturing low satisfaction variables (dissatisfiers): one for each attribute. To assess satisfiers, respondents' scores are recoded as '1' if the performance score on the five-point Likert scale was '4' or '5' and recoded as '0' otherwise. This creates 10 high satisfaction attribute variables (satisfiers).

Two OLS regression analyses are conducted, one with the 10 low performance dummy variables and one with the 10 high performance dummy variables, in order to estimate the asymmetric impact of attribute-level performance on overall satisfaction (Matzler et al., 2004). With the conceptualization of customer satisfaction as the overall pleasure experienced by cooking class patrons, the dependent variable is a grand mean of four satisfaction related items: 1) entertainment, 2) education, 3) interest, and 4) fun. These four items have a Cronbach alpha of 0.80, suggesting strong internal consistency.

The unstandardized beta coefficients from the low performance regression are named *penalty indices* (PI) and the unstandardized beta coefficients from the high-performance

regressions are termed *reward indices* (RI) as suggested in PRCA. Summing the absolute values of penalty indices and reward indices for each attribute provides each attribute's range of impact on customer satisfaction (RICS). Figure 3 shows the IRPA with the grand mean of the performance attributes as the y-axis crosshairs and the grand mean of RICS as the x-axis crosshairs. Back and Lee (2015) note that the lower performance and the higher RICS are the regions for prioritizing improvement.

The penalty indices (PIs), reward indices (RIs) and Range of Impact on Customer Satisfaction (RICSs) are used to calculate the impact asymmetry (IA) via two intermediary variables, satisfaction-generating potential (SGP) and dissatisfaction-generating potential (DGP). As with Mikulić and Prebežac (2008), the equations are as follows:

$$SGP_i = RI_i / RICS_i \quad (1)$$

$$DGP_i = |PI_i| / RICS_i \quad (2)$$

$$IA_i = SPG_i - DGP_i \quad (3)$$

Figure 4 shows the Impact Asymmetry Analysis (IAA), where RICS is on the x-axis and Impact asymmetry (IA) is on the y-axis. The figure identifies the significant determinants of cooking class satisfaction and dissatisfaction. If the Impact asymmetry (IA) is positive then this attribute contributes more to satisfaction than dissatisfaction (Back & Lee, 2015). This would mean that the attribute is either a satisfier or a delighter. If Impact Asymmetry is negative, the attribute is either a dissatisfier or a frustrator, depending on the magnitude of the Impact Asymmetry score. If the attribute has an Impact Asymmetry score of around 0, this attribute would be classified as a hybrid factor as the attribute is not strongly a satisfier or a dissatisfier. As explained in previous sections of this paper, we follow Back and Lee (2015) and Mikulić and Prebežac (2008) by categorizing attributes in the following way: Frustrators ($IA \leq -0.7$); Dissatisfiers ($-0.7 < IA \leq -0.2$); Hybrids ($-0.2 < IA < 0.2$); Satisfiers ($0.2 \leq IA < 0.7$); and Delighters ($IA \geq 0.7$). The RICS x-axis was also split into three categories - Low, Medium and High - based on distribution, specifically the 1st and 3rd quartiles of the RICS scores (Figure 4).

Results

Figure 2 shows the results of the traditional IPA. Three attributes are in Quadrant I: that is, the high importance, low performance quadrant where management should focus its attention. These attributes are 'Authentic environment of the cooking place', 'Entertainment' and 'Being able to interact with other people'. These are the attributes that Richards (2015) would describe as third generation gastronomic experiences. They describe direct contact between those creating and those consuming the experience. These attributes emphasize the strong link between food, food cultures and landscapes so that there is a strong link to place. The Quadrant IV attributes, that is, where the cooking classes are performing relatively well, as well as being of high importance to cooking class attendees are 'Ability to participate in the place, not just visit', 'Learning about Thai culture' and 'Possibility to eat what I cook'. These attributes are the ones that should be leveraged and marketed as the current areas of high performance in cooking classes, according to the interpretation of the traditional IPA. Two attributes, 'Joining in a "must-do" activity' and 'Sharing an experience with family/friends' are low priorities; although they have relatively low performance, they are also of relatively low importance to cooking class attendees. 'Number and diversity of learning activities' and 'Comfort/ convenience' are attributes that possibly overkill. That is, they are relatively less important but there is a high performance on these attributes.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

However, when derived importance is used rather than stated importance, in line with the three-factor theory of customer satisfaction, the results of the IRPA shown in Figure 3 and Table 4 have very different managerial interpretations from the traditional IPA. The difference between the IPA and the IRPA is that, while performance scores are still on the y-axis, the x-axis is different. Comparing the differences, "Sharing an experience with friends/family" has moved from the Low Priority quadrant to the "Concentrate here" quadrant - a very different finding. However, "Entertainment" and "Authentic environment of the cooking place" remains in the "Concentrate here" quadrant. Further, "Number and diversity of learning activities" and "Comfort/convenience" are attributes that were in the "Possible overkill" quadrant, are now in the "Keep up the good work" quadrant in the IPA. Conversely, "Possibility to eat what I cook" and "Learning about Thai culture" both move from the "Keep up the good work" quadrant to the "Possible overkill" with the decrease in importance, based on the Range of Impact on Customer Satisfaction (RICS) score.

These changes, among other attribute shifts, have very different managerial implications. As recommended by Back and Lee (2015), attributes with low performance and high RICS should be prioritized for improvement. According to Figure 3, the IRPA analysis reveals that there is one standout attribute that meets this criterion: 'Sharing an experience with friends/family. This implies that cooking classes are social activity and that participating in a cooking class is an experience that needs to be shared. Cooking school operators can offer incentives for all in the travel party to undertake the cooking class. The shift of "Possibility to eat what I cook" and "Learning about Thai culture" to the "Possible overkill" quadrant indicates that managers of cooking schools may be advised to de-prioritize the integration of an educational component into the experience, or the dedication of time to the consumption of the prepared food, shifting the use of time and resources instead to the higher-RICS, lower-performing 'Entertainment' attribute, by integrating more show and spectacle into the experience.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

The IAA shown in Figure 4 keeps the RICS scores on the x-axis and replaces the performance scores on the y-axis with the impact of asymmetry scores. Seven of the 10 attributes are dissatisfiers. One attribute, 'Ability to "participate" in the place, not just visit' is a "frustrator". This means that poor performance on these attributes will lead to dissatisfaction but good performance on these attributes will not necessarily lead to higher overall satisfaction. There is an expectation that cooking classes offer these attributes and will perform well on them. Interestingly, none of the attributes fall into the "Hybrid factor" category, where there will be a linear relationship between performance and importance - higher performance will lead to higher overall satisfaction and lower performance will lead to lower overall satisfaction. Two attributes, "Learning about Thai culture" and "Possibility to eat what I cook" are satisfiers. That is, the IAA indicates that performing well on this attribute will lead to higher overall satisfaction and can be a real differentiator, and that this can be seen as an extra benefit that attendees of the cooking class are not expecting so not including elements of this attribute in the cooking class may not weaken the cooking class experience but teaching cooking class participants about the wider

Thai culture and having participants enjoy their own cooking creations will heighten their overall experience.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper assessed the deficiencies of the conventional IPA approach through an applied comparison with alternative approaches (i.e. IRPA and IAA) with further analysis of the importance and performance of cooking class experiences and their impact on performance outcomes based on the three-factor customer satisfaction theory. These alternative approaches are expected to address the shortcomings of IPA (Back & Lee, 2015; Mikulić & Prebežac, 2008).

Figure 2 summarizes the results of IPA which depict relationships between the perceived attribute-importance by customers (on the x-axis) and the perceived attribute-performance of the service provider (on the y-axis). Cooking class attributes namely "Authentic environment of the cooking place", "Entertainment" and "Being able to interact with other people" require management concentration due to their high importance and low performance However, such perceived importance by customers may not necessarily predict the attributes' impact on overall customer satisfaction (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2011).

Subsequent analyses through IRPA (Figure 3) and IAA (Figure 4) alter the results and implications. For instance, of the seven cooking class attributes classified as dissatisfiers, three of them were in the "Quadrant I" of Figure 3. Since cooking classes are an entertaining social activity (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Bell, 2015), the 'ability to "participate" in the place, not just visit' was a major frustrator. Other factors considered as highly 'basic' or "must-be" attributes included "Comfort/convenience" "Sharing an experience with friends/family", and "Number and diversity of learning activities". In this case, such factors were critical to the cooking class experience and are likely to trigger dissatisfaction. These factors all have to do with participants' socio-psychological predispositions and not the performance of the service providers, so this figure can be read as a way of understanding the mindset of participants. What can be learned from this juxtaposition is that, in terms of derived importance, participants are much more concerned with not being disappointed by low performance in areas considered fundamental to the cooking class

experience than they are with high performance in hybrid factors or with the pleasant surprise of being presented with experiences or insights beyond the expected.

Further examination of Figure 4 indicates that there is a marked clustering of the dissatisfiers around the "high" range of importance on the RICS scale. This indicates a high degree of importance attributed to satisfying the foundational expectations of participants for cooking class activities and avoiding the dissatisfaction that can arise from failure to meet these criteria. Fortunately, two out of three "high importance" dissatisfier factors are also the items in the upper right, 'Keep up the good work' quadrant of the IRPA analysis (Figure 3). Interestingly, none of the satisfier elements were assessed as areas of high importance as these factors had a lower range of impact on satisfaction (Figure 3) despite considered a possible dissatisfier by IAA.

In one sense, it is understandable that "dissatisfiers" and "frustrators" are perceived as most important by participants in terms of derived importance (IRPA). If these minimum standards and expectations are not met, there is a high probability that the experience will be seen as sub-par. However, this finding does not reflect the importance of the higher-order ambitions of satisfying or delighting customers that play more of a role in differentiating the offered product from others and providing meaningful and memorable experiences that could be hypothesized to encourage repeat visits, impactful memories, positive reviews and recommending the product to others. Indeed, the correlation of importance/performance relationships and such post-trip tourist behavior would be a rich area for potential future research.

It is particularly remarkable that the two factors of "Possibility to eat what I cook" and "Learning about Thai culture", which are ranked as very important in the IPA (in terms of stated importance) are deemed of low importance by the IRPA (derived importance). These are also identified in Figure 3 as "Possible overkill" items, contradicting the conclusions that might be drawn from the IPA analysis in Figure 2, from which they would be identified as priorities for promotion as high importance, high performance areas. These mixed results from the different analysis techniques support the findings of Matzler et al. (2003) which show that the three-factor theory of customer satisfaction suggests non-linear relationships between attribute performance (satisfaction) and importance.

The findings of this research show that all three approaches, IPA, IPA and IRPA, can reveal quite different, and in some cases contradictory, assessments of the importance of the various measured factors, as noted by Back and Lee (2015) in a different context. The indication is that

the IRPA analysis can provide useful information towards the lower-level goal of avoiding customer dissatisfaction that would arise by virtue of failing to fulfill their basic expectations from a given service, but shows little promise of providing insights into how to delight them with unanticipated and memorable experiences. Because the IPA analysis is based on direct responses rather than unconscious or revealed preferences, IPA analysis can sometimes evoke glib or knee-jerk responses which may direct tourism businesses and policy makers away from underlying driving satisfiers. However, multiple criteria can help businesses better understand their market and assist them in tailoring their services to provide heightened experiences. Table 5 provided a comparison of the results of the three methods. As can be seen, four of the 10 attributes remain in the same quadrant for both IPA and IRPA. Six attribute differ.

[INSERT TABLE 5 HERE]

In terms of marketing implications, the study has affirmed that cooking schools are perceived as performing well in some attributes that may be associated with third generation gastronomic tourism experiences. The IAA, which measures tourists' attitudes, not the performance of the cooking schools per se, indicate that a number of attributes associated with interactive, immersive third generation gastronomic tourist experiences can be classified as dissatisfiers. Attributes such as "Sharing an experience with friends/family" emphasize the holistic nature of food experiences like food (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019). The "Authentic environment of the cooking place" is a dissatisfier, confirming Bell (2015) insight that tourists possess a strong desire to learn new cooking skills from local people. The interactive attribute of the "Being able to interact with other people" is a very good example of how cooking classes have the ability to connect people around shared consumption of products that involve all the senses (Richards, 2015). It would be expected that superior performance on these attributes could be used to market the tourism business, the destination city and the country.

However, the IRPA reveals that high performance in these attributes in the actual case under study does not reliably correlate with high contribution to participants' satisfaction. While the IRPA identifies 'Ability to "participate" in the place, not just visit it' as a high-performing, high-RICS "Keep up the good work" attribute, it also identifies "Learning about Thai culture" as a high-performing but low-RICS attribute, for which performance has little impact on satisfaction. "Third generation" experiential attributes pertaining to social interaction such as "Sharing an experience with friends/family", "Entertainment", and "Authentic environment of the cooking

place" are low in performance but high in RICS, indicating that they have a high significance in the differentiation of these experiences.

These findings indicate a more precise understanding of the nature of the satisfaction dynamics of third generation gastronomic tourism experiences. While higher-order, social and cultural attributes may attract tourists to seek out such experiences, their satisfaction with these products is to a large extent influenced more fundamentally by more basic, functional attributes such as "Number and diversity of learning activities" and "Comfort/convenience".

As with any research, there are limitations to this study, which can indicate avenues for future research. As noted above, the sampling method was completed using convenience sampling. An alternative sampling strategy, conducted at major gateways into and out of Chiang Mai might capture a broader, more representative sample as five cooking schools chose not to participate in this research. Participants in the cooking classes at those schools that did not participate may have different responses from our sample. Secondly, the measure of overall performance used in this study is a combination of willingness to recommend and future intentions to participate. This is a broader view of overall performance than just overall satisfaction, which differentiates this research from much of the previous literature. For this reason, we do not venture any direct comparison with other studies in terms of the finding on this measure. A comparative study of the different results generated by these two approaches would be an opportunity for future research. Another area for future research would entail a comparative study with cooking classes in other destinations in the South-East Asian region in countries such as Indonesia (Bell, 2015), Cambodia and Laos (Jolliffe, 2019). It would be interesting to assess how importance and performance vary in each location and understand which attributes are important across these various cooking class locations. Subsequent studies could also be designed to explore the different perceptions of first-time students in cooking classes and those who have previously participated in other cooking classes.

This study concentrated on a focused number of attributes, which could be expanded in future studies to pursue an increasingly broad and nuanced coverage of the spectrum of attributes relevant to food tourism experiences. Another avenue for future inquiry building on the insights generated by this research would be to examine the nature of the sensory experiences that underlie the evaluations of satisfaction or dissatisfaction identified in the findings. Future studies in this

vein could reveal the micro-scale mechanisms, at the level of the individual's encounter with food, that contribute to the overall impressions of a food tourism experience.

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