UNDERSTANDING CULINARY TOURIST MOTIVATION, EXPERIENCE, SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY USING A STRUCTURAL APPROACH

ELIZABETH AGYEIWAAH, FELIX ELVIS OTOO, WANTANEE SUNTIKUL

AND WEI-JUE HUANG

ELIZABETH AGYEIWAAH

Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Macau University of Science and Technology

Avenida Wai Long / Taipa / Macau

Email: agyeiwaahelizabeth@yahoo.com/ eagyeiwaah@must.edu.mo

FELIX ELVIS OTOO

PhD Student, School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

17 Science Museum Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Hong Kong

Email: felix.e.otoo@connect.polyu.hk

WANTANEE SUNTIKUL

Assistant Professor, School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong

Polytechnic University

17 Science Museum Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Hong Kong

Email: w.suntikul@polyu.edu.hk

WEI-JUE HUANG

Assistant Professor, School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong

Polytechnic University

17 Science Museum Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Hong Kong

Email: sabrina.huang@polyu.edu.hk

Abstract

Research on culinary tourism lacks empirical examination of the relationship between motivation, experience, satisfaction and loyalty. Drawing on the extant literature, this paper examines the relationships between antecedents and outcomes of culinary tourist participation in cooking classes using a structural equation modelling approach. Based on a convenience sample of 300 international tourists at cooking schools in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the structural model confirmed direct and indirect interrelationships among four main constructs of the study. It was found that culinary tourists' motivation positively influences both the culinary experience and satisfaction; and that the culinary tourist experience is positively associated with both culinary tourist satisfaction and loyalty, suggesting that the more tourists are motivated to participate in cooking classes, the more experiential value and satisfaction are perceived. Moreover, the more experiences encountered at the cooking class, the more satisfied and loyal the tourists become. Understanding the key motivators and elements of satisfaction in cooking classes can contribute to the achieving of sustainable destination loyalty. The findings are relevant to Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) as part of developing sustainable strategies that are in line with specific culinary needs and experiences of cooking class participants, in order to promote satisfaction and loyalty to food tourism destinations.

Keywords: Culinary tourists; motivation; experience; satisfaction; loyalty; cooking class; structural approach, Chiang Mai; Thailand; Destination Management Organisations

Introduction

The broader tourism literature has been replete with discussions and questions of which factors are meaningful in influencing leisure travel decision making and post-experience evaluations (Agyeiwaah, 2013; Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Fodness, 1994; Guttentag, Smith, Potwarka, & Havitz, 2017). One of the growing considerations for tourists in destination decision is food (Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007).

Food serves both as a biological necessity and an experiential aspect of destinations' cultural appeal. The food tourism or culinary tourism product, as variously referred, can become an attraction and an impediment to travel (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009; Torres, 2002). Accordingly, food bridges tourism and destinations as a matter of necessity (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen,

2016, 2017; Nelson, 2016; Okumus,et al., 2007; Richards, 2012, 2015; Santich, 2004).

Scholars have proposed that various aspects of culinary tourism can engineer a positive destination experience and consequently, a more positive overall destination image (Duarte Alonso, 2010; Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Pestek & Nikolic, 2011; Quan & Wang, 2004, Suntikul, 2017). Specifically, the art of cooking is in itself becoming a common tourist attraction across the Western world (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Jiménez Beltrán, López-Guzmán, & Santa-Cruz, 2016; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Santich, 2004). Some Asian upmarket resorts and hotels as well as small local restaurants are also engaged in this market (Bell, 2015). Thus, the current study focuses on cooking classes as a unique niche under food tourism or culinary tourism.

Cookery schools provide a hands-on experience for tourists seeking novel and exotic destination experiences (Long, 2004; Kivela, & Crotts, 2006). They also offer tourists a participatory experience with the opportunity to purchase local ingredients, utensils, and other food processing equipment (Hjalager, 2002; Walter, 2017). It can be contended that not all culinary tourists are motivated by the desire to consume food alone. For some participants, it is more meaningful to engage in the preparation of food, as opposed to simply the consumption. Such meaning emerges because cooking classes offer opportunities to interact with various stakeholders in the local community including residents, retailers, farmers, and service providers (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Pearson, Henryks, Trott, Jones, Parker, Dumaresq, & Dyball, 2011).

While the potential addition of culinary tourism to destination marketing promotion has been articulated in literature, there remain significant research gaps in this area. First, only few studies have generated theoretical and empirical support for cookery schools as a part of culinary tourism promotion and marketing (Bell, 2015; Wijaya, King, Morrison, & Nguyen, 2017). Okumus et al. (2007) for example argued that empirical evidence on the extent to which food is marketed by destination is still scarce. As a consequence, there has been a dearth of knowledge among academia and industry on tourists' food-related travel decisions and how these translate into actual travel and destination loyalty.

Second, although theoretical connectedness exists for tourists' motivation, satisfaction, and future intentions (Agyeiwaah, Adongo, Dimache, & Wondirad, 2016; Caber & Albayrak, 2016; Crompton, 1979; Hasegawa, 2010; Hui et al., 2007; Heung & Quf, 2000; Jang & Feng, 2007; Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2017; Song, Li, van der Veen, & Chen, 2011; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010), no study has empirically identified the relationship between motivation, experience, satisfaction and loyalty among tourists participating in cooking classes, nor generally culinary food tourists.

Emerging studies have nonetheless argued for an understanding of the complex interrelations in tourists' food experiences (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Andersson, Mossberg, & Therkelsen, 2017; Suntikul, 2017). Knowledge of this relationship is important because the extent of customer satisfaction is a function of perceived overall experience of the destination, beginning from motivation (Buhalis, 2000; Jang, & Feng, 2007; Hasegawa, 2010). Meanwhile, it remains unclear whether the experience of a destination's culinary offerings can be classified as a peak touristic experience that generates destination loyalty.

Consequently, culinary tourism researchers have only investigated tangential aspects of culinary tourists' experience, image, satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty; or at best between two constructs. For example, Kim, Suh, and Eves (2010) investigated the influence of food-related personality traits on satisfaction and loyalty; Namkung and Jang (2007) asked whether food quality satisfaction impacted behavioural intentions; and Seo et al. (2017) considered food image and intention to eat. The absence of a thorough connection linking motivation to on-site experiences and post-experience evaluation, including satisfaction and loyalty is a valuable lead for this study. Altogether, this aspect of culinary tourism, and its interrelation with other constructs, has rarely been the focus of researchers.

Furthermore, culinary tourism research has been dominated by a wide Western bias with the few existing empirical pieces of evidence emerging from Australia, France, and the USA (Duarte Alonso, 2010; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Santich, 2004). Yet Asia is an important tourism region whose culinary uniqueness warrants further research examination. Thailand, for instance, has distinguished itself as a culinary leader due to massive government promotion of Thai food internationally (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2013, Suntikul & Tang, 2014) but current research examining the Thai culinary strength in the international market is still limited.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of the present study is to investigate decision making processes of culinary tourists within the context of cooking classes in Thailand. Specifically, the study addresses five research objectives: (1) to examine the motivations of culinary tourists for participating in Thai cooking classes; (2) to examine the effect of motivation on culinary tourists' experience, satisfaction and loyalty; (3) to investigate the influence of culinary tourists' experiences on satisfaction and loyalty; (4) to examine the effect of tourists' satisfaction on loyalty to Thailand as a destination; and (5) to examine the indirect relationships between motivation, experience, satisfaction and loyalty.

Literature review

Interest and growth in the culinary niche

Food has a manifest presence on the tourist itinerary even where no overt intentions

exist. Aside from the obvious importance of food as a means of physiological sustenance, increasing research point to visitors' culinary interest as enhancing their larger destination experiences (Kim et al., 2009). Richards (2012) believes that hospitality can be achieved through the offering of cuisine traditional to the destination visited. Thoughts like Richards' are found among erstwhile researchers who have investigated among other things the influence of food as a destination choice determinant (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall & Sharples, 2003), destination image and expectation (Karim & Chi, 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004; Seo et al., 2017; Smith & Costello, 2009) and cultural lure (Allen, 2017; Fields, 2002; Hegarty & O'Mahony, 2001; Long, 2004). But in order to understand the culture of a particular country, it is important to experience the country's food (O'Halloran & Deale, 2004; Suntikul, 2017).

Culinary tourism has evolved both in interest and typology. Smith and Xiao (2008, p. 289) have argued for a demand sided definition of culinary tourism based on "activities of persons rather than as a set of products". The International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA) however adopts a more inclusive conceptualization of the term as "the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences" (Wolf, 2006) with the notion that food is indispensable for life. Arguing against the broad scope of the definition by ICTA, Smith and Xiao (2008) proposed a mid-point definition between demand and supply, suggesting that such an understanding "recognizes cuisine as part of a tourism experience and as reflective of the locale visited, but without a prerequisite of the exotic or foreign" (Smith & Xiao, 2008, p. 289). While distinctions exist between the terms "culinary" and "gastronomy", with the former (.i.e. culinary) emphasizing the 'styles' and the latter (i.e. gastronomy) pertaining to consumption of food and beverage generally (Horng, & Tsai, 2010, p. 75), both point to aspects of culinary tourism and are used interchangeably; often without distinction.

A review of past studies reveal three broad categories of food tourists; the experiential/consumption-driven food tourist (Fields, 2002; Jolliffe, 2003), the observational/'wow-factor' food tourist (Mitchel & Hall, 2003; Quan & Wang, 2004; Park, Reisinger, & Kang, 2008) and the participatory/'hands-in' food tourist (Richards, 2002; Santich, 2004; Walter, 2017). We depict the above discussion diagrammatically in Figure 1. Experiential food tourists travel to experience or consume the cuisine of destinations.
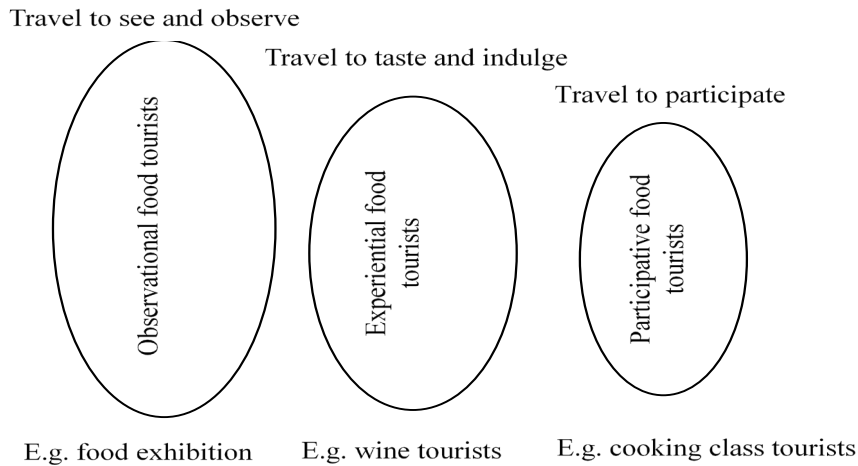
Travel to see and observe

Travel to taste and indulge

Travel to participate

Observational food tourists

Experiential food tourists

Participative food tourists

E.g. food exhibition   E.g. wine tourists   E.g. cooking class tourists

Figure 1. Types of food tourists

These consumers are driven by accidental or intentional interests for destination cuisine (Jolliffe, 2003). Observational food tourists are driven by a 'wow-factor'; the desire to be amazed, and are more purposeful towards a specific event, object or place. A particular place, restaurant, and cooking skill of an expert are the main pull factors for such travels (Mitchel & Hall, 2003). More recently, a growing sub-group of food tourists who travel for cooking lessons are emerging (Suntikul, Ng, Ho, Luo, Lam, & Chan, 2015). This third group, the participatory culinary tourists, are motivated to learn by participating in indigenous cooking styles and ingredients used. Walter (2017, p. 366) writes that in Thailand cooking school "tourists do not just eat food, but also learn to identify and shop for raw ingredients in open air markets, to master techniques of preparation and cooking, and to understand many of the cultural beliefs behind Thai foodways". The latter participatory culinary tourist group is of particular interest as it is rarely the focus of previous research.

Motivation for culinary tourism

The question of what motivates tourists to travel is a fundamental first step to generating an understanding of travel phenomenon, albeit only a few empirical studies have critically surfaced in culinary tourism. Supporting such claims, Kim and Eves (2012, p. 1458) argue that "despite an awareness of the need for tourist motivation theories regarding local food experiences, they have not been developed to empirically evaluate tourist motivations to taste local food."

The importance of culinary art as a motivation for tourism is evident in many regions. In Hong Kong for example, Enright and Newton (2004, p. 784) note that apart from safety, gastronomy is the second most attractive aspect of visitation (28%);

above nightlife, visual appeal, and climate. In many other destinations; Canada, Australia, South Africa, France and so on, the desire for gastronomy is considered more important than visitations to tourists' attractions (Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Santich, 2004). Such strong motivations are also exhibited among people with a strong commitment to food and travel. Even here, not every trip to an eatery constitutes culinary tourism. Echoing the words of Mitchel and Hall (2003, p. 10), "the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region or even to taste the dishes of a particular chef must be the major motivation for such travel". While general motives for travellers' interest in food exists, research interests on specific aspects and activities are yet to be developed. There are those tourists with latent interests in specific culinary activities and vice versa. About the former, Jolliffe (2003) avers the insufficiency of information.

While many perspectives of travel motivations exist (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991), motivations are broadly grouped into behavioural or cognitive constructs (McCabe, 2000). The current study address behavioural motivations- which relate to the drive to learn, know, join, or actively partake in the culinary art (Alant & Bruwer, 2004; Fodness, 1994; Kim & Eves, 2012). Cooking classes as a sub-domain of culinary tourism essentially requires participation. Therefore, any motivation to this form of tourism should be examined in the light of tourists' desire to engage in the culinary behaviour.

Experience as a function of motivation
While a previous study of Yoon and Usyal (2005) provides valuable information on the linkages from motivation to loyalty, it appears silent on the experiential aspect of travel to and within destinations. Meanwhile, motivation, ipso facto, has a more direct influence on experience. This important connection has however eluded tourism researchers; yielding few substantive studies. As with the works of Huang and Hsu (2009), experience has been operationalized as the past or previous experience other than actual experience. While previous experience may influence expectations, Arnould and Price (1993) cited in Buhalis (2000) have argued that the most satisfactory experiences are not constructed on expectations. Rightly, Huang and Hsu (2009) acknowledge the blur and arguable scope within which experience is operationalized. As stated by Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2016), the distinctiveness of tourists' food experiences is related to the fact that these are context driven. In essence, researchers often fail to investigate an actual experience.

Nonetheless, a few studies provide bases for the theoretical hypothesis. Prebensen, Woo, Chen, and Uysal (2013), for instance, found that not only does motivation affect tourists' experience, it relates to their level of involvement or

engagement. The authors upon such insight recommended an industry recognition of motivation (and involvement) as indispensable to the value chain of tourist memorable experiences. Mitchell and Hall (2003) reiterate the research by Environmental Planning Group of Canada (EPGC) in 2001 that visitors who are highly interested in wine and cuisine-based holidays had pursued experiences related to this interest. We hypothesize that experience is a direct outcome of motivation. Thus, this study posits that:

H_1= Culinary tourist motivation of cooking class is positively associated with cooking class experience.

Experience and satisfaction

Research indicates that the outcome of lived experience may result in either positive or negative perceptions (Dubé & Le Bel, 2003; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014). Visitors' experiences at destinations have largely been used to assess satisfaction with destination encounters via post-purchase constructs (Truong, & Foster, 2006; Bramwell, 1998; Buhalis, 2000). By definition, satisfaction sums up pre-travel expectations or motivation and experience (Truong, & Foster, 2006; Pizam, Neumann, & Reichel, 1978).

It is axiomatic, even fanciful, to conclude that tourists' positive experience with destination attractions (at least in the traditional sense of a tangible natural or manmade resource) connotes an overall level of satisfaction. There is however evidence to suggest that certain aspects of on-site experiences such as ease and comfort are not in themselves forecasters of optimum satisfaction albeit their absence may result in displeasure (Ryan, 1994). In concurrence with this, Quan and Wang (2004) illustrate that despite an overall positive tourist experience at attractions, satisfaction of consumers may be ruined should there be negative ancillary consumer experiences. As discussed earlier, food is a major component of destination experience. It therefore stands to reason that displeasure with food experience can adversely affect overall satisfaction with the destination.

There are scholarly bases pointing to a direct and positive relationship between tourists' experience with food and their disposition towards satisfaction. For example, Chi, Chua, Othman, and Karim (2013) found that in Malaysia, tourists' satisfaction with food experience directly and positively influences perceived quality of their culinary experience and behavioural intentions. Using regression model, Namkung and Jang (2007) also found taste and presentation to be the largest determinants of customer satisfaction and consequently behavioural intentions. Similar findings have been noted in different food settings (Kim et al., 2012; Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour,

2015). Tying these researches together, we anticipate a direct positive influence of experience on satisfaction. Hence, this study posits that:

H_2 = Culinary tourist experience of cooking class is positively associated with satisfaction of cooking class.

Influence of motivation on satisfaction

The hypothesized causal relationships between tourist motivation and satisfaction is examined in tourism literature. Individuals perceive a travel activity as a potential satisfier of an intrinsic need (Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991). Therefore, an examination of satisfaction should reveal the accomplishment of a tourist's initial set goals (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Some researchers have looked at how satisfaction with tourism consumption has been informed by motivations. Applying the expectation-disconfirmation model, Oliver (1980) is of the persuasion that consumers' develop expectations as a reflection of intrinsic needs prior to consumption of a product. Where such expectations are achieved, consumers achieve satisfaction. However, dissatisfaction comes into play as a result of disconfirmation with actual experience. Meanwhile, Yoon and Uysal (2005) found that different dimensions of motivations have varying effects on satisfaction with pull motivations negatively influencing satisfaction. In a recent study by Battour, Ismail, Battor, and Awais (2017), different dimensions of motivations were found to positively influence satisfaction. Nonetheless, mediating factors between motivation and satisfaction are rarely examined within the food context (e.g. Kim, Kim, & Goh, 2011). Given that mediation is relevant to understanding how causal changes in variable relations are transmitted through one or more intervening variables, resulting in direct and indirect effects on an outcome variable (Little, 2013; Pearl, 2014), examination of mediation is pertinent. Building theoretically from the expectation-disconfirmation theory, satisfaction can only be achieved upon experiencing the reality of the tourism product (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001). This view stems from the basic definition of satisfaction, which states that satisfaction is a function of the degree of congruence between aspirations and perceived reality of experiences (Howard & Sheth, 1969, as cited in Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001). Thus, because experience translates motivation into actual consumption, it is reasonable to postulate that cooking class experience will positively mediate motivation and satisfaction. To investigate these varying conclusions within the culinary tourists' cooking class experience, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H_3 = Culinary tourist motivation of cooking class is positively associated with satisfaction of cooking class.

H_4 = Culinary tourist experience positively mediates cooking class motivation and satisfaction.

Effect role of motivation on loyalty

Loyalty has been defined as deep commitment or intention of consumers to repeat their purchase or experience of a product's brand, service or brand-set regardless of situational or marketing influence (Oliver, 1999). Although loyalty has broad phases of cognitive, affective, conative and action in the broader consumer behaviour literature (Oliver, 1999), the concept is often measured by specific conations to repeat visit, repeat purchase, repeat sale and recommendation within the tourism and hospitality literature (Agyeiwaah et al., 2016; Adongo et al., 2015).

The value of motivational elements to researchers, industry and destinations are logically seen in their connection to overall tourism experience, and ultimately, loyalty. In the past, Yoon and Uysal (2005) explored among other constructs, the casual relationship for motivation and destination loyalty. The authors argued that such linkages could help improve and engineer an understanding of the relationships among these constructs, as well as providing a "solid psychological process" for the development of destination loyalty. However, other studies found that the mediating role of satisfaction better predicts the influence of motivation on loyalty (Lee & Hsu, 2013; Yoon & Usyal, 2005). Battour, Battor and Ismail (2012) specifically found that satisfaction plays a mediating role between tourists' motivation and loyalty. Moreover, different dimensions of motivations were found to positively influence satisfaction among Muslim tourists. To examine the relationships between motivation and loyalty, and the mediating role of satisfaction in the cooking class context, we hypothesize that:

H_5 = Culinary tourist motivation of cooking class is positively associated with loyalty of cooking class.

H_6 = Culinary tourist satisfaction positively mediates cooking class motivation and loyalty

Tourist experience and loyalty

As espoused in previous studies on tourism marketing experience, loyalty is an important construct in destination marketing to achieve long-term viability. Among other things, it ensures a sustained flow of visitors and repeat visitors and is a positive indicator of destination image (Adongo et al., 2015; Chen & Chen, 2010; Kim, 2017;

Oppermann, 2000; Prayag et al., 2017). Within the tourism literature, behavioural intentions such as intentions to recommend a destination or an experience frequently represent tourists' loyalty to the tourism product (Chen & Chen, 2010). Kim (2017) explored the effects of tourists' memorable experiences on loyalty behaviours. The author found positive direct associations between tourists' experiences and dimensions of loyalty. Consequently, it is expected that adverse cooking class experience will result in a lack of interest in this culinary tourism product. Yet, a number of studies have noted that the relationship between tourist experience and tourist loyalty is not necessarily direct (Cole & Scott, 2004). Almost intuitively, a positive experience with a destination's tourism product will result in satisfaction and consequently, loyalty to the destination (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016, 2017; Chi et al., 2013; Prayag, et al., 2017; Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013). We also examine the mediating effect of satisfaction on cooking class experience and loyalty. The related hypotheses are stated as:

H_7 = Culinary tourist experience of cooking class is positively associated with loyalty of cooking class

H_8 = Culinary tourist satisfaction positively mediates cooking class experience and loyalty

Satisfaction and loyalty

The literature indicates that positive experiences of tourists' in utilizing destination services and other touristic resources could foster repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendation to friends and relatives (Agyeiwaah et al., 2016; Bramwell, 1998; Kim, et al., 2010; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Oliver, 1999; Song et al., 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Oppermann (2000) in exploring the application and usefulness of destination loyalty identifies a reciprocal relationship between satisfaction and constructs of loyalty such as repeat visitation and intention to recommend the destination to friends and relatives. In some cases, visitors' overall level of satisfaction produces the most important influence on revisit intention. In the accommodation sector, Choi and Chu (2001) observed a direct influence of customer overall satisfaction on the likelihood of rebooking hotels. There are however situations where satisfaction may not corroborate with loyalty. Lam, Shankar, Erramilli, and Murthy (2004), for example, found that satisfied users may alternate to other brands with low switching costs.

Specific to culinary tourism, studies suggest that aspects of gastronomy including tea, wine and restaurant components of destinations have yielded repeat

business and per customer spending (Joliffe, 2003; Dodd, 1997). Indeed, Kim et al. (2009) hypothesized and established that food-related personality trait of neophobia had an inverse effect on satisfaction and loyalty. The authors confirmed a positive relationship between food satisfaction and visitor loyalty. From the preceding established relationships, we hypothesize that:

H_9 = Culinary tourist satisfaction of cooking class is positively associated with loyalty of cooking class.

The six direct paths (H_1, H_2, H_3, H_5, H_7 and H_9) together with three embedded indirect relationships (.i.e. H_4, H_6 and H_8) can be diagrammatically represented as follows (Figure 2):
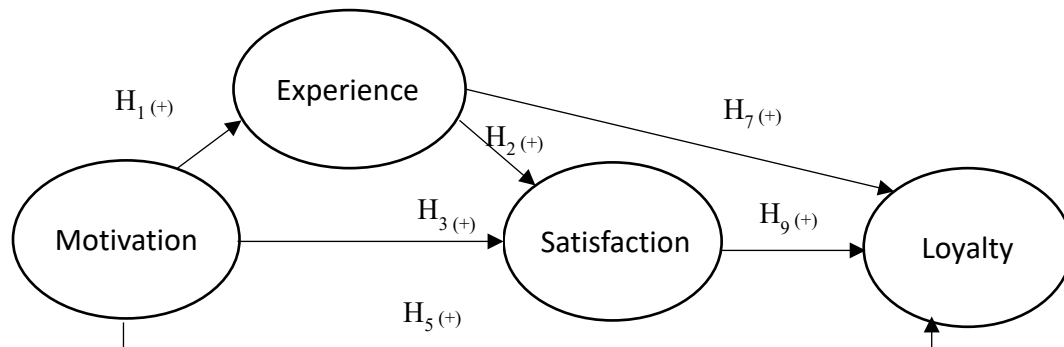

Figure 2: Conceptual model showing hypothesised relationships

Methodology

Study site and target participants

The study presented in this paper was conducted in Chiang Mai, a principal city of northern Thailand, located 700 km from Bangkok. Chiang Mai is endowed with a stunning natural beauty which has won it the accolade "The Rose of the North". Its renowned traditions are among the unique features of the city which attract many tourists. The city boasts of a range of cooking schools for international tourists seeking to know the culinary culture and traditions of the Thai people (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2013). For instance, the country remains an iconic leader in its introduction of the "Thai Kitchen of the World" program which constitutes a concerted and coordinated national governmental initiative to promote Thai food (Chapple-Sokol, 2013; Rockower, 2012, Suntikul & Tang, 2014; Suntikul, 2017).

Specially, Chiang Mai has been noted as one of the popular destinations for Educational Thai culinary tourism such as cooking class in addition to provinces in Thailand such as Bangkok, Chonburi, and Phuket. Chiang Mai is also noted for its

overwhelming number of Thai Kitchen Cookery Centres including *Thai Akha Cooking School, Benny's Home Cooking Chiang Mai, Zabb E Lee Thai Cooking School, and Thai Orchid Cookery School* (TripAdvisor, 2018). These centres are used as medium for spreading Thai culture and way of life to promote creative tourism (Singsomboon, 2014). Consequently, cooking class in Chiang Mai, is a good way to flourish Thai culinary tourism as owners focus on usage of local ingredients, the quality of primary materials, and the preservation of traditional cooking methods and delivering the enjoyment of the end product to tourists (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). Accordingly, it is for the above reasons that Chiang Mai serves as an appropriate study site for examining cooking motivation, experiences, satisfaction and loyalty.

Consequently, the target population of the current study was participants of cooking classes in Chiang Mai, Thailand who were identified individually through 15 cooking schools. Previous studies confirm that participation in cooking classes have gained momentum among international tourists to Thailand (Singsomboon, 2014). For that reason, international tourists were the main target for the current study. In choosing the cooking schools for data collection, criteria for registration with the government was used to facilitate identification and reliability of the food training schools in the region; after which a convenience sampling followed since the approach allows respondents to be selected based on the researcher's convenience (Saunders et al., 2012).

Measures

As part of conducting SEM, it has been suggested that the key concepts in the model should be conceptually and operationally defined which require clear measurement instruments that have a clear meaning to participants (Blunch, 2008). Accordingly, having conceptualized the key constructs in the literature section, multi-measurement items were used for each latent construct (Churchill, 1979; Hinkin, 1998) including motivation, experience, satisfaction and loyalty to help operationalize the issues appropriately using a 5-point Likert Scale (1=Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree).

First of all, it was important to specify motivation measures that focus on cooking class as a behavioural activity which is different from food consumption motivations as found in previous food studies (e.g. Kim & Eves, 2012). Since cooking class is perceived as part of the tourism activity destination, it was important to adopt general travel motivations literature such as Fodness (1994) and Yoon and Uysal (2005).

According to Fodness (1994), knowledge motivation involves the need to

know more about different destinations (e.g. I would like to know more about Thai cuisine); utilitarian reflects the need to join an enjoyable activity by getting away while social-adjustive function reflects the need to learn about the destination through interaction with others. The fourth dimension, value-expressive function reflects the importance of the activity to participants. Given the behavioural-oriented nature of the cooking class, motivation was measured based on four statements using Fodness (1994) functional dimensionality leisure items including knowledge, utilitarian, value-expressive and social-adjustive. These four motivational components reflect the major drive for engaging in cooking classes in Chiang Mai. Nonetheless, as would be explained later in the principal component analysis (PCA) section of the results, one of the motivation on value-expressive item received poor loading and was as a result omitted to focus on three indicators (.i.e. knowledge, utilitarian and social-adjustive functions) of motivations ($\alpha = 0.82$) that were relevant to participants similar to what has been suggested in the cooking class literature. For instance, Singsomboon (2014) asserts that knowledge acquisition is an important part of culinary tourism in Thailand as "Cook Book" with basic explanation is created for tourists to use. In terms of utilitarian, tourists are given the chance to be greeted with Thai smiles amid several social interactions at the destinations. Other activities common among international tourists include shopping with tourists at the fresh market, cooking a variety of Thai foods such as Pad Thai and Gang Kiew Wan (green curry).The unique characteristics of the Thai cooking schools in terms of the content could be well explained by the motivational items chosen.

Given the activity based nature of the cooking class phenomenon, culinary tourist experience was measured based on Pine and Gilmore's (1998) conceptualization of experience into four domains of education, entertainment, escapism and esthetic. While each domain offers a unique experience at a destination, four statements were used to measure experience with each reflecting the four domains of education, entertainment, escapism and esthetic. Yet in the end, only two main domains (i.e. escapism and esthetic) loaded well at the PCA stage ($\alpha = 0.78$) and were used as the key experiential domains among cooking class participants. For example, two statements focusing on experiences that allow individuals to immerse themselves as different characters (e.g. I felt a different character since I was able to immerse myself more meaningfully in Thai culture through this cooking class) and those that are perceived pleasant to participants (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007).

On the other hand, satisfaction in the current study was measured based on three items ($\alpha = 0.80$) adapted from a number of studies that have examined satisfaction including Kim et al. (2010) who measured satisfaction using statements that encapsulate visitors' expectation and overall satisfaction with food and beverage

at a specific festival. Based on such existing statements, a modified statement of cooking class expectation and overall satisfaction was used in the current study (e.g. I am satisfied with joining a "must-do" activity as I expected it to be). The final construct loyalty which has received numerous studies in existing literature was measured by two items ($\alpha = 0.69$) which mostly include repeat activity and recommendation (Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010; Song et al., 2012). Hence, an example of a statement used to measure this construct include "I would like to join more cooking classes in Thailand again."

Data Collection

Prior to the actual data collection, after pilot testing the instrument on a smaller sample of cooking school participants, a screening question was used to select only international tourists given the dearth of study on international tourists participation in cooking classes in Asian destinations such as Thailand (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Indeed, cooking classes are mostly attracted to foreigners to Thailand and they were most appropriate for data collection (Singsomboon, 2014). Each of the tourists surveyed was approached based on a convenient sampling procedure in selected cooking schools in Chiang Mai (TripAdvisor, 2018) after a consent was sought from both owners and tourists of the cooking class. Prior to visiting each school for the actual data collection, it was important to ensure that questionnaires are understandable for tourists. In the current study and given that the cooking class teaching medium is English, the original design of the questionnaire in English was appropriate for all international tourists. Consequently, all respondents from England, Germany, United States of America, China, Asian countries excluding China (e.g. Singapore, Macao, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia) and Australia had a good proficiency in English.

Having sought owner consent with further tourists consent, the survey instrument (i.e. questionnaire) was personally administered with the help of field research assistants who were assigned to each of the identified schools to obtain a representative sample. Within each school, a convenient number of survey instrument was administered personally to tourists. In administering the questionnaire, all 15 schools were listed in accordance with which one would be collected first. Once a particular school respondents are exhausted, the field work assistants move on to the next cooking schools on the list. This procedure followed until all 15 schools were visited. Overall, 336 questionnaires were sent out to respondents participating in cooking classes in Chiang Mai. One advantage of questionnaire administration is that it allows participants to attend to the instruments based on their own convenience (Kozak, 2001) and given the use of research assistants any ambiguity could be easily clarified. The data collection took place over a period of one month within the chosen

sites. Of the 336 questionnaires received from respondents, 300 were useful and hence, coded for analysis. While sample sizes play a major role in estimating SEM results, there is no perfect rule for sample size estimation (Reisinger & Turner, 1999). For that reason, recommendations have been made in the literature for sizes ranging from 100-200 for SEM analysis (Hoyle, 1995). Consequently, the current sample size of 300 was appropriate for SEM analysis (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Data Analysis

The IBM SPSS Amos has been variously used in the implementation of data analysis known as structural equation modelling (SEM). The SEM method "includes, as special cases, many well-known conventional techniques, including the general linear model and common factor analysis" (Arbuckle, 2010; p.1). The application of this has gained momentum in tourism research (Nunkoo, Ramkissoon & Gursoy, 2013) where it has been variously used to measure and test relationships (e.g. Ko & Stewart, 2002; Dedeoğlu et al., 2015; Liu, 2016) as well as develop and fit models (e.g. Dolan, et al., 1999). One advantage of Amos is that it allows testing relationships and fitting of models for two or more groups simultaneously (Bacon & Bacon, 2001).

Prior to hypothesis testing, simple descriptive statistics that sought to analyse the demographic characteristics were computed using the SPSS software (Version 20). It must be emphasized that respondents who participated were tourists who come with either friends or families or alone from diverse countries. While all countries are presented, Asian countries excluding China yielded values that required merging this category as one (.i.e. Asia excluding China). Further principal component analysis was also computed using the SPSS software (Pallant, 2013). The authors analyzed the rest of the data using the IBM SPSS Amos (Version 25) for direct paths (inner and outer models) and indirect path using bootstrapping. While the traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) approach has been used extensively to test mediation, it has been criticized that the use of the Sobel test is low in power in comparison to a bootstrap test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Cheung and Lau (2008, p. 300) reiterate the weakness of Baron and Kenny's approach in the following statements:

> "Although hierarchical regression models have been commonly used for mediational analysis, they are subject to measurement errors. If the variables are measured with errors, then the significance of the mediation effect is likely to be underestimated because the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable without the mediator is likely to be underestimated…"

However, bootstrap "produces a test that is not based on large-sample theory, meaning it can be applied to small samples with more confidence" (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, p. 722). For further justification for the use of bootstrap for this study, a preliminary Baron and Kenny (1986) approach was undertaken (see Table 1).

Table 1: Results of Baron and Kenny Test

Variable	Constant	Beta	t-value	Sig	VIF	R^2	F-test (sig.)
Mediation 1 = H$_4$							
Step 1: Motivation ⟶ Satisfaction	1.874	.468	9.140	.000	1.000	.219	83.500 (.000)
Step 2 Motivation ⟶ Experience	1.747	.529	10.762	.000	1.000	.280	115.821(.000)
Step 3: Motivation Experience ⟶ Satisfaction	1.285	.290	5.07	.000			63.800 (.000)
		.337	5.89	.000	1.389	.301	
Sobel test	5.167; *P*=0.000						
Mediation 2 = H$_6$							
Step 1: Motivation ⟶ Loyalty	2.226	.394	7.408	.000	1.000	.156	54.879 (.000)
Step 2: Motivation ⟶ Satisfaction	1.874	.468	9.140	.000	1.000	.219	83.547 (.000)
Step 3: Motivation Satisfaction ⟶ Loyalty	1.500	.208	3.729	.000			57.651 (.000)
		.399	7.154	.000	1.280	.280	
Sobel test	5.634; *P*= 0.000						
Mediation 3 = H$_8$							
Step 1: Experience ⟶ Loyalty	1.978	.477	9.372	.000	1.000	.228	87.837 (.000)
Step 2: Experience ⟶ Satisfaction	1.870	.490	9.701	.000	1.000	.240	94.115 (.000)
Step 3: Experience Satisfaction ⟶ Loyalty	1.351	.308	5.606	.000	1.316	.318	69.269 (.000)
		.345	6.276	.000			
Sobel test	5.269; *P*=0.000						

According to Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach in testing mediation, there are three steps to follow:

Step 1: Computing a simple regression analysis between the dependent variable and the independent variable and confirming that the independent variable affects the dependent variable. In case, there is no effect, then mediation is impossible.

Step 2: Computing a simple regression analysis between the mediator and the independent variable. For this step, the independent variable must affect the mediator.

Step 3: Computing a multiple regression analysis between the dependent variable, independent variable and the mediator. In this case, the mediator must influence the dependent variable.

Step 4: It is then expected that if all conditions are met, "the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable must be less in the third step than in the first step"

(Usakli & Baloglu, 2011, p. 124). In instances where the inclusion of the mediator in the model nullifies step 1, there is full mediation. If not, mediation is partial or perhaps absent.

This approach was applied with confirmation that mediation existed, but partially, for all three hypotheses since the effect value of the independent variable on the dependent variable decreases but remains significant when the mediator is included in the model (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham 2005). For instance, a quick glance at Table 1 shows that both beta and t-test values reduce for all multiple regression analyses coupled with significant Sobel test results. In model one for instance, beta values drop from step 1 (β=.468), to step 2 (β=.529) to step 3 (β =.290 & .337). Moreover, R^2 improves from .219 to .280 to .301 providing further support for the existence of indirect relationships hypothesized in the current paper.

However, the bootstrap approach revealed that one of the mediation effects was not partial but full since the direct path remained insignificant when the model is run together (see Table 8). Thus, while two out of the three mediation models were congruent with those of Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach, one was not (H_6). Three explanations are given. The first is the fact that SPSS regression uses Generalized Least Square (GLS) (Reis, Stedinger, & Martins, 2005) whereas AMOS employs a Maximum Likelihood Estimator (MLE) (Arbuckle, 2010). Second, AMOS software runs all models together unlike regression analysis (Arbuckle, 2010). Third, simple regression uses composite variables as against latent variables in AMOS (Blunch, 2008; Cheung & Lau, 2008). It is argued that the effect when using latent variables is bigger than composite variables since such latent variables exclude errors associated with the measure. For these reasons, it is argued that the MLE is much more reliable and efficient than GLS and for that reason bootstrap using AMOS is chosen for the current study (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

In addition to the above, the variance inflation factor (VIF) test was undertaken using regression analysis as a diagnostic test of multi-collinearity recognizing the high correlation of some of the constructs (Table 1). However, the results proved successful with VIF less than 10 indicating no multicollinearity among the variables. According to Pallant (2013), VIF values above 10 raise concerns of multicollinearity. Other validity tests such as discriminant validity were obtained by finding if the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than maximum shared squared variance (MSV). The summary of the results are subsequently presented in tables.

Given the purpose of the current study that sought to examine and clarify the relationships between antecedents and outcomes of culinary tourist participation in cooking classes using a structural equation modelling approach, only four main

variables were of interest (i.e. motivation, experience, satisfaction and loyalty). As a result, there were no control variables as found in previous food tourism literature. For instance, previous studies such as those of Kim, Kim, and Goh (2011), Mason and Paggiaro (2012), Seo, Yun & Kim (2017), and Tsai and Wang (2017) that examined food tourists' behaviour with seemingly related variables argue for the need to understand factors that attract food tourists as well as maintain those tourists across all age, gender, education and country of origin. For example, based on a modified theory of reasoned action, Kim, Kim, and Goh (2011), examined the effect of food tourists' behavior using perceived value and satisfaction on their intention to revisit among a sample of visitors of a food event in the southwestern part of United States with the results that food tourists' intention to revisit could be explained and predicted by the perceived value and satisfaction. While their study had no control variables, the outcomes clarify the factors that explain food tourists' behaviour. The current study follows such similar approaches with no control variables.

Results

Respondents' profile

The study respondents' profile analysis revealed that more than half (53.30%) of the respondents were females who felt the need to be part of a participatory food activity found common among female visitors (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). Respondents were well educated obtaining in most cases a bachelor's degree (45.30%) with the majority (59.20%) found between 20-39 age group (Table 2). Given the dominant bachelor degree and vocational level of education, it is perhaps seen that cooking schools are used as skill development centers for those in the food and catering sub-sector of the hospitality industry. Moreover, respondents were predominantly single (40.70%) and are perceived to have ample leisure time to travel around independently than their opposite counterparts (Gronau, 1976). First time visitors were in majority (62.70%) as against repeat visitors (37.30%). The countries of origin for respondents were varied including those from Asian countries excluding China such as Singapore, Macao, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia who were in majority (27.30%). Other countries included England (20.30%), USA (14.0%), China (7.30%), Canada (7.00%), Germany (5.00%) and Australia (4.80%). Other respondents chose not to specify their country of origin (14.3%). Further presentation of the principal component analysis of the latent constructs is subsequently explained.

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents (N=300)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		

Male	140	46.70
Female	160	53.30
Age		
15-19	35	11.70
20-29	102	34.00
30-39	76	25.20
40-49	53	17.70
50-59	20	6.70
60 or above	14	4.70
Educational level		
Below High School	12	4.00
High School	45	15.00
Vocational or Associate degree	84	28.00
Bachelor's degree	136	45.30
Masters or Doctorate	23	7.70
Marital status		
Single	122	40.70
Cohabiting	81	27.00
Married	90	30.00
Divorced	7	2.30
Country of origin		
Asia (excluding China)	82	27.30
England	61	20.30
Non-specify	43	14.30
USA	42	14.00
China	22	7.30
Canada	21	7.00
Germany	15	5.00
Australia	14	4.80
How many time have you been to Thailand (including this visit)?		
First time	188	62.70
Two times	67	22.30
Three times	28	9.40
Four times	9	3.00
Five or above times	8	2.60

Factor Analysis, validity and reliability of variables in proposed model

Relevant to the current study is the identification of dimensionality in the data set using principal component analysis (PCA) where manifest items are transformed into respective new variables that represent a useful dimension within the data set using principal component analysis (PCA) (Blunch, 2008). Adhering to this procedure, the result of the principal component analysis with varimax rotation identified four dimensions after testing the suitability of the data with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value of 0.857 which was significant for factoring ($p<0.000$). Initially, 13 items for all four constructs were subjected to PCA (four motivation statements; four experience statements; three satisfaction statements; and two loyalty statements), but three were eliminated (one motivation statement and two experience statements) remaining 10 statements since the inclusion of the three reduces the

variance explained and dimension identification. The four identified factors were made of 10 items that together explained about 75.85% variance considered acceptable (Pallant, 2013). Specifically, using a cut-off point that yielded usable values for Eigen values, commonalities and factor loadings (Hair et al., 2005), motivation items represented close to 50% percent of the variance (46.150%), satisfaction followed with 12.557% variance explanation, with about 9.396% for experience and 7.745% for loyalty (see Table 3). Moreover, all rotated items in the data exceeded the minimum cut-off recommended value of 0.40 (Blunch, 2008).

On the other hand, the descriptive statistics based on a 5-point Likert scale revealed a considerable mean agreement to the manifest variables as item values ranged from 3.6-4.00 with a standard deviation ranging from 0.80-1.0 among item loadings. Based on the conceptual model presented in earlier sections of this paper, motivation represented the exogenous variable, while experience, satisfaction and loyalty represented endogenous variables which were subjected to further analysis using Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Table 3: Results of principal component analysis with descriptive statistics of model constructs (N=300)

Variables	Factor 1:Motivation	Factor 2:Experience	Factor 3 :Satisfaction	Factor 4: Loyalty	Communalities	Mean	SD
Mot_1: I would like to join an enjoyable activity.	.82				.76	3.87	.94
Mot_2: I would like to learn something new through interaction.	.81				.78	3.90	.88
Mot_3: I would like to know more about Thai cuisine.	.79				.66	3.79	.87
Exp_2: I felt a different character since I was able to immerse myself more meaningfully in Thai culture through this cooking class.		.86			.79	3.82	.91
Exp_1: Participating in this cooking class was pleasant to the senses.		.78			.85	4.00	.89
Sat_2: I am satisfied with sharing an experience with friends/family.			.87		.74	3.80	.96
Sat_1: I am satisfied with joining a "must-do" activity as I expected it to be.			.76		.80	3.65	1.03
Sat_3: I am satisfied with the possibility to eat what I cook.			.70		.67	3.91	.91
Loy_1: After taking this cooking class, I am likely to recommend Thai restaurants in my country more often.				.83	.75	3.78	.89
Loy_1: I would like to join more				.80	.78	3.81	.93

cooking classes in Thailand again.				
Eigenvalues	46.15	9.40	12.56	7.75
Cronbach's Alpha	0.82	0.78	0.80	0.69

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy**:**.86

Approx. Chi-Square**:** 1242.21

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity**:** df **=** 45**;** Sig.: 0.000

Note: Mot=Motivation; Exp= Experience; Sat =Satisfaction; Loy = Loyalty; and factor order is based on conceptual model

Confirmatory factor analysis results

Following the PCA, CFA was used to confirm the measurements of 10 manifest variables representing four main latent constructs (Table 4). The standardized factor loadings revealed a strong loading beyond the recommended 0.6 cut-off point. Again all factor loadings were significant (Table 4) and were supported by the goodness of fit indices including comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and incremental fit index (IFI) for both CFA and SEM estimations (Blunch, 2008) confirming that both proposed model and measurements fit the data well (Table 5).

Further reliability and validity test (see Table 6) also support the results as the Composite Reliability value was higher than the recommended value of 0.7 except for loyalty which was very close to the mark and hence acceptable (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). Convergent validity cut off was also met by the measures used as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). Again, discriminant validity test was confirmed (see Table 6) as the values of AVE is greater than both Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) and squared correlation (Fornell & Larker, 1981). Thus, both validity and reliability test of the measures revealed an acceptable level of the constructs used for modelling.

Table 4: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Manifest variables	Standardised Factor Loading	Unstandardized Factor Loading	SE	t-value
Mot_1	0.81	1.38	0.12	11.18
Mot_2	0.88	1.40	0.12	11.45
Mot_3	0.64	1.00	N/A	N/A
Exp_1	0.84	1.00	N/A	N/A
Exp_2	0.76	0.87	0.08	11.56
Sat_1	0.81	1.11	0.09	12.41
Sat_2	0.68	1.00	0.09	10.85
Sat_3	0.76	1.00	N/A	N/A
Loy_1	0.74	1.01	0.12	8.70
Loy_2	0.70	1.00	N/A	N/A

Note: SE = standard error for unstandardized coefficient; Reported factor loadings are significant at p<0.005. Parameters are fixed at 1.0 for the maximum-likelihood estimation and *t* values were not obtained (NA) for those fixed at 1 for identification purposes.

Table 5: Goodness-of-fit measures (N=300)

Stage	Chi-square (*df*)	P-value	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	PCLOSE	AGFI	CFI	IFI	RFI
CFA	53.4 (29)	.004	.05	.03	.97	.39	.94	.98	.98	.93
SEM	53.36(29)	.004	.05	.03	.97	.39	.94	.98	.98	.93

Note: RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation), SRMR (standardized RMR), GFI (goodness-of-fit index), AGFI (adjusted GFI), CFI (comparative fit index), IFI (incremental fit index), and RFI (relative fit index).

Table 6: Composite reliability, convergent and discriminant validity (N=300)

	CR	AVE	MSV	Mean	SD	Motivation	Experience	Satisfaction	Loyalty
Motivation	0.83	0.62	0.42	3.86	.77	1.00	.		
Experience	0.78	0.64	0.42	3.91	.81	.53**(0.28)	1.00		
Satisfaction	0.80	0.57	0.44	3.79	.81	.47**(0.22)	.49**(0.24)	1.00	
Loyalty	0.69	0.52	0.44	3.79	.79	.39**(0.16)	.48**(0.23)	.50**(0.25)	1.00

Note: Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE); **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (squared correlation).

1.4.4 Hypothesis testing of direct paths using Structural Equation Models

As shown in both Table 7 and Figure 3, further path analysis was used to evaluate the proposed relationship in the model among variables. The results revealed a significant relationship between latent constructs in the model having passed the model fit test reported earlier (see Table 5). Essentially, five out of six direct hypothesized relationships were significant based on the coefficients that confirmed that motivation of participants was a strong predictor and antecedent of experience (H_1) in cooking class (β=.65; p=0.000). Supporting H_2, experience was also found to influence satisfaction of participants of cooking class (β=.44; p=0.000) with H_3 confirming the hypothesis that motivation is a predictor of satisfaction (β=.32; p=0.000).

Table 7: Path Coefficients of the Structural Equation Model

Latent Variables			SRW	S.E.	t-value	P
H_1: Experience	←	Motivation	.65	.11	8.32	.000***
H_2: Satisfaction	←	Experience	.44	.09	4.58	.000***
H_3: Satisfaction	←	Motivation	.32	.11	3.55	.000***
H_5: Loyalty	←	Motivation	.05	.12	0.51	.614
H_7: Loyalty	←	Experience	.36	.10	3.10	.002**
H_9: Loyalty	←	Satisfaction	.40	.10	3.76	.000***

Note: Standard regression weights (SRW); SE = standard error for unstandardized coefficient;

***Significant at significant at p<0.001; ** Significant at significant at p<0.01

Table 8: Indirect and direct effect analysis

	Mediation	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Results
H_4	Motivation → Experience → Satisfaction	.32*	.36***	Partial mediation
H_6	Motivation → Satisfaction → Loyalty	.05 (ns)	.56***	Full mediation
H_8	Experience → Satisfaction → Loyalty	.36*	.15***	Partial mediation

Note:*Sig= p<0.05; ***p<0.001; ns= non-significant

In addition, three indirect paths were supported both fully and partially as experience was found to partially mediate the relationship between motivation and satisfaction (H_4) as both direct and indirect effects were significant (β=.36; p=.001). Implying that conceptually motivation explains some variance in satisfaction that is not explained by experience even though experience explains a lot of the variance that motivation explains in satisfaction. This implies that for a given motivation within the cooking class adventure, satisfaction is in part determined through the nature of experience. The direct relationship between motivation and loyalty (H_5) was found to be insignificant (β=.05; p=.614) even though the indirect relationship (H_6) between motivation and loyalty was significant (β=.56; p=.001) providing support for the full mediation role of satisfaction. Conceptually, the entire amount of variance that

motivation explains in loyalty is actually explained through satisfaction and as a result the ability for motivation to yield loyalty could be explained through satisfaction. In the context of cooking class participation, the results imply that being motivated alone to participate in cooking classes does not in itself lead to loyalty unless respondents are satisfied with the cooking class activity. In support of H7, experience was found to influence loyalty (β=.36; p=.002) in addition to a partial mediation (H8) of this relationship by satisfaction (β=.15; p=.001). Finally, the positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty (H9) was also confirmed (β=.40; p=.000).

These confirmed relationships provide evidence that experience engages individuals in a personal way (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Bigne & Andreu, 2004) such that each individual evaluate their experience based on their motivations for travelling and for that matter the outcome of positive or negative experience is based on the need of the visitor which when met can translate into satisfied respondents. Significantly, satisfaction emanates from visitor assessment of how the service rendered meets expectation and also the overall satisfaction of the experience (Kim et al., 2010; Agyeiwaah et al., 2016) such that when there is a positive assessment individually by participants, the intentions to repeat the activity and recommend to other visitors is highly activated through satisfied assessment (Song et al., 2012). This important connection among variables when known and understood appropriately can enable destination management organizations to convert needs to experience, experience into satisfaction and subsequent repeat visits that can contribute significantly to the economic contribution of tourism to destinations.
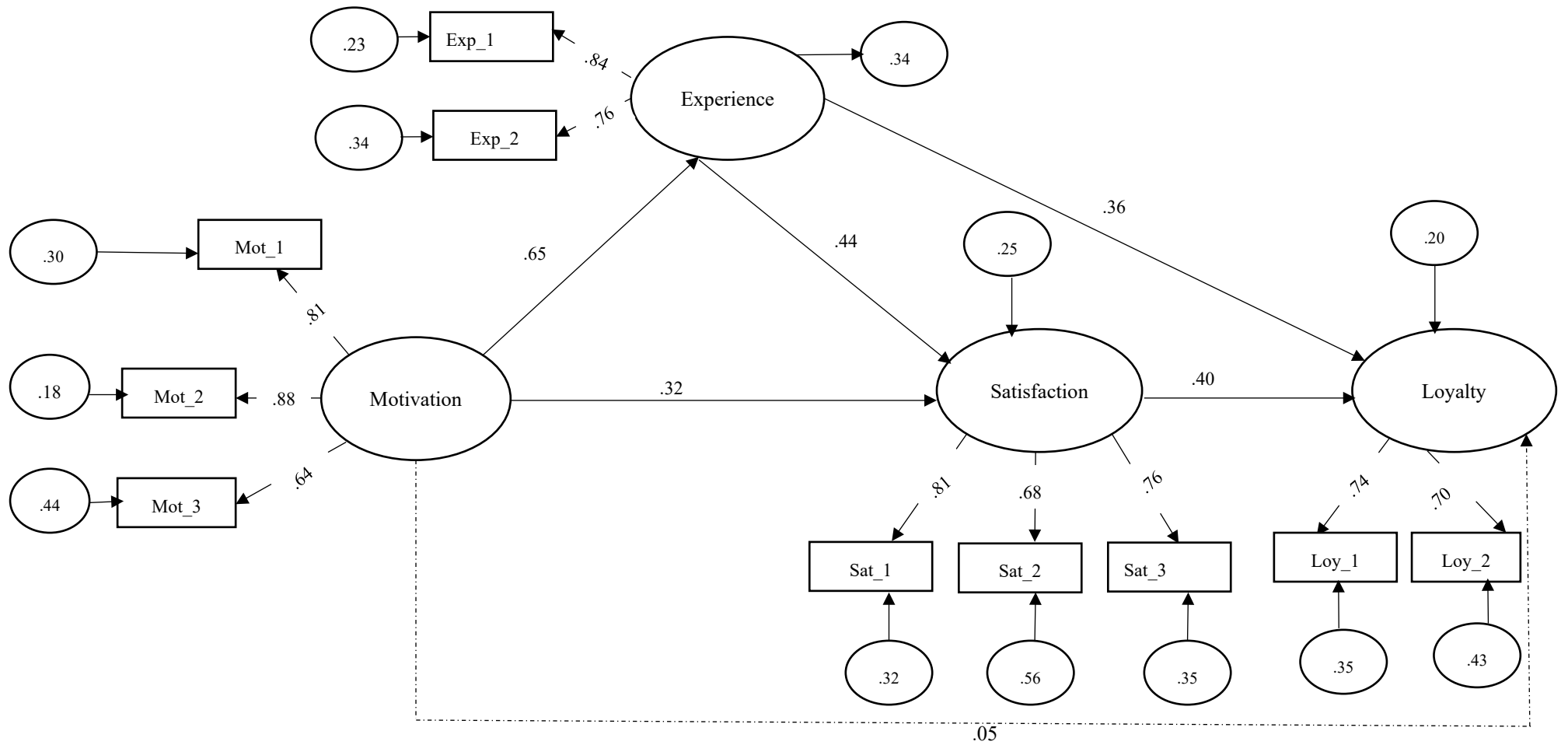
Figure 3: A Structural Equation Model of Culinary tourists at cooking classes (significant ⟶ ; and non-significant ⇢)

Discussion and conclusion

Applying previous works on motivation, experiences, satisfaction and loyalty, this study has tested the relationships among the above constructs within the cooking class context where a lacuna of research has been noted (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Richards, 2012). Specifically, the current study contributes to the under-researched topic of international cooking class tourists as part of understanding the complex relationships between their motivations, experiences, satisfaction and loyalty. The study results provide empirical evidence to support eight out of nine of the study's hypotheses, offering significant points for discussion.

First, culinary tourists' cooking class motivation was noted to influence both experience (H_1) and satisfaction (H_3) of culinary cooking class tourists. This finding not only enriches the perspectives of previous literature (Battour, et al., 2017; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Prebensen, et al., 2013), but shows that the more motivated tourists are to engage in cooking classes, the greater their experiences and subsequent satisfaction. Particularly, because motivation for this type of tourism requires behavioural enactment rather than merely cognitive desires (McCabe, 2000), the active and participatory destination engagement by this set of patrons provides experimental learning and knowledge for participants. Consequently, the outcome of the mediating influence of experience on the relationship between motivation and satisfaction (H_4) could only partially be accounted for by the structural model. From these findings, the current study suggests that given that the drive to join cooking classes revolves around the desire to engage in an enjoyable activity, learn and know the destination culture, DMOs and cooking schools seeking to attract more tourists should design and market cooking class products with significant content not only on just learning but also on Thai traditional culture with significant inclusion of extra fun ancillary activities related to the cooking activities. For instance, marketing content emphasizing that, as part of learning how to cook, extra activities such as visiting Thai farms and markets to interact with farmers as well as to have a practical feel of the food ingredients and how they could be properly selected for a particular cuisine can draw such experience-motivated tourists to Thai cooking classes. Moreover, DMOs can develop a chain of attractions by combining cooking schools with other cultural attractions (such as temples and museums) that highlight the roots of Thai food culture.

In addition to the above findings, motivation was not found to directly influence loyalty (H_5), meaning that the ability of DMOs to package a product with learning, culture and enjoyable-based activity to induce travel does not ultimately warrant repurchase intentions unless the actual marketed content of cooking classes is delivered in a manner that meets the tourists' expectations. Certainly, satisfaction

becomes a potent mediator (H_6) for repeat engagement in the cooking class activity. Battour et al. (2012) similarly found that the overall satisfaction among Muslim tourists fully mediated the relationship between tourist motivation and destination loyalty. This result suggests that DMOs must ensure that attention is given to high-quality cooking class service delivery by cooking school owners to meet customer expectations for the viability of this activity. For the most part, we observe that satisfaction plays a necessary role in achieving loyalty to a destination (H_9). Similarly, cooking class tourists' experience was found to positively associate with loyalty (H_7) indicating the significant role of positive experience in repeat engagement. Yet only a partial association was recorded for satisfaction as a mediator of experience and loyalty (H_8) (Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014; Quan & Wang, 2004). There is a good argument to be made for the marketing and promotion of cooking classes as an aspect of culinary tourism in Thailand. Unlike the observational and experiential culinary tourists who emphasize the "wow-factor" of food destinations and the consumption of food (Jolliffe, 2003; Mitchel & Hall, 2003), cooking class culinary tourists are in search of practical skills and experience of local cuisine. While it is usual for culinary tourists to desire the consumption of local cuisine (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Jolliffe, 2003; Karim & Chi, 2010), knowledge, learning by interaction, and joining Thai cooking classes seems more meaningful to cooking class patrons than merely consuming. Certainly, the attractiveness of food tourism destinations transcends consumption alone; the experience and satisfaction of which reinforces destination loyalty. The study thus suggests the need for cooking school owners to market the non-consumption aspect of cooking classes. In addition, the core attainable cooking skills could be promoted by DMOs to prospective tourists since such skill information is currently scarce. In addition, by participating in cooking class activities, certification could be issued as a memorable experience product of this activity by the cooking class owners.

Many of the exciting experiences surrounding the culinary tourism movement in Asia arise from the fact that such tourism often provides some access to authentic local culture (Horng & Tsai, 2010; Suntikul & Tang, 2014). Therefore, the inclusion of this niche for promotion of culinary tourism in the Asian region should provide deeper meaning for tourists since understanding a destination's culture, in part, involves the experience of the country's food (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; O'Halloran & Deale, 2004; Suntikul, 2017; Walter, 2017)

Depending on the level of satisfaction, there are positive outcomes of repeating cooking class participation either at the destination or in tourists' country of origin. Unlike other tourism products where loyalty is all about returning to the previous product, cooking class culinary tourists could be counted as loyal in a different way

when they practice and share the cooking techniques learned in the cooking schools with family and friend in their countries. By repeating such techniques at home, they contribute to the marketing of food products in their own country to those who may not necessarily visit the country of origin of the cuisine. This internal loyalty plays a key role in creating a positive image of the destination in the minds of prospective travelers. Since satisfaction involves assessment of expectation/perception as against performance, projecting an appropriate image is critically linked with a degree of satisfaction, and cooking class products have the potential of being used to show a realistic image of the destination, its food, people and culture (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Allen, 2017). Yet this process could only be initiated among culinary tourists who possess the desire for food-related adventures. Thus, the whole cooking class activity follows a continuous process that begins with the desire to participate and leads to the repetition of those activities.

Ultimately, the study findings also suggest implications for tourism stakeholders, notable among which are governments, DMOs, private organizations and academics. For governments and DMOs, the promotion of cooking classes to tourists adds to its destination tourism inventory. Particularly for Thailand, where culinary tourism is an effective lure for tourists, this inclusion may correspond to greater length of stay and increased tourist spending (Joliffe, 2003; Dodd, 1997; Suntikul, et al., 2015). For private organizations such as food enterprises, the prospects of additional income through the organization of cooking classes cannot be overemphasized. Yet for all these institutions, culinary cooking class tourists' motivation, experience, satisfaction, and loyalty are crucial. Given the rather scant existing research, this is an area worthy of further research exploration.

Some limitations of this study are worth highlighting. Firstly, additional constructs could have been included during the questionnaire development stage to offer a more sophisticated model, but for the sake of focus and clarity, constructs were limited to concentrate on issues of critical importance to the central goal of the research, to examine the key constructs in travel decision-making among culinary tourists in cooking classes. Given that experience engages individuals in a personal way, future studies can use open-ended question to qualitatively explore participants' experiences. It is also suggested that the moderation effects on the explored variables be examined in future studies of culinary tourists. Finally, other variables could be controlled to illuminate additional relationships not explored in the current paper.

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