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TOURISTS' MOTIVATIONS, EMOTIONS, AND MEMORABLE LOCAL FOOD EXPERIENCES

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This study aimed to explore tourists' general local food preferences, whether tasting local food was one of their major motivations for undertaking a recent trip, the emotions they associated with the experience, and what constituted a memorable local food experience. Data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire. Based on the survey responses of 210 tourists, almost all the respondents were Indian nationals. The majority of the respondents could be categorized as food neophiliacs, since they exhibited a tendency to seek new food tastes while traveling. For more than half the respondents, tasting local food was one of the main motivations for taking particular trips and was considered a primary activity. Experiencing novelty and local culture were the main motivations for tasting local food. In connecting local food consumption memories with emotions, respondents experienced the positive emotions of joy and love. This article proposes a new conceptual framework for memorable local food experiences, which comprises several components: taste, socializing with friends and family members, novelty, authenticity, ambience, affordable price, and interacting with locals. The findings provided little evidence of special occasions, hospitality, or food souvenirs contributing to a memorable food experience, as claimed by previous studies, suggesting that such factors are not inevitable components of all tourist food experiences.

Key words: Food preference; Local food; Motivation; Emotions; Memorable local food experience

Introduction

In today's experiential marketplace, many people travel in order to taste novel and authentic cuisines (Sthapit et al., 2019). Regarding supply, destinations have integrated local food into their tourism products with the aim of attracting more tourists (Robinson & Getz, 2014) and increasing local prosperity (Stone et al., 2019). Regarding demand, tasting local cuisine has become a must-do

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activity for many tourists and serves as both a cultural activity and entertainment (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2019); however, only a limited number of articles have tended to center on food and gastronomy themes (Okumus et al., 2018).

Nowadays, gastronomy is considered to be a major tourist motivation (S. Kim et al., 2019), but relatively little attention has been paid to examining tourists' motivations for tasting local food at tourist destinations (Sthapit, 2018). In addition, tourists' motivations concerning food choice have been addressed using only a limited theoretical and methodological approach (S. Kim et al., 2019), based on a positivist ontological and epistemological premise (Wu et al., 2018). Similarly, some studies have claimed that applying quantitative approaches (Sparks, 2007), using closed-ended questions, deprives respondents of the opportunity to express their motivations (Y. G. Kim et al., 2009). Consequently, a holistic understanding of food tourists' motivations is lacking, given that most studies have been conducted using primarily quantitative methods and been rooted in popular theoretical models of motivation (S. Kim et al., 2019). Others have argued that a qualitative approach would be more appropriate for gaining deeper insight into actual food tourists' motivations (Chang et al., 2010; Y. G. Kim et al., 2009).

Local food experiences may generate both positive and negative emotional reactions, such as anger, disappointment, happiness, joy, pleasure, and excitement (Mak et al., 2012), which are elicited by consumption (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). Previous research on emotions related to tourists' food experiences has been linked to backpackers (Falconer, 2013), festivals (Organ et al., 2015), rural settings (Sthapit, 2017), ethnic restaurants (Jang & Ha, 2015), negative emotions (Jin et al., 2020), family/home meal contexts (Wiggins, 2013), controlled environments (Edwards et al., 2013), and specific destinations (Sthapit, 2017). Other studies of tourist food consumption have considered the foodscape (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2019) and its impact on other constructs, for example, experiencescape, satisfaction, behavioral intention (Piramanayagam et al., 2020). Consumer-centric studies regarding the emotional dimensions of local food experiences are insufficient (Sthapit, 2019).

Tourists' food consumption is not simply a routine daily practice, but constitutes a significant aspect of holiday experiences (Okumus et al., 2007). These experiences are connected with memory (Holtzman, 2006), because they often involve all the senses (Sutton, 2010). In a similar vein, some studies have indicated that this unique form of eating (Cohen & Avieli, 2004) makes traveling more memorable (Adongo et al., 2015; Sthapit, 2018); for example, Sthapit's (2018) study showed that the majority of respondents had pleasant local food experiences, which contributed to the memorability of their trips. Nevertheless, mainly supply research has addressed food consumption in the context of hospitality and tourism, despite its importance (Presenza & Del Chiappa, 2013; Robinson & Getz, 2014); consequently, tourists' food experiences have remained relatively scarce (Sthapit et al., 2017).

An important concept, *memorable tourism experience* (MTE) (J.-H. Kim et al., 2012), has received great attention in recent years. However, the present research found only a handful of studies that focused on this phenomenon within the context of food, overlooking local food experiences as a driver of MTEs (Piramanayagam et al., 2020). Although general antecedents of MTEs have been studied previously, little research has examined their components in the context of food. In particular, tourists' local food experiences (Stone et al., 2018) were selected as the focus of this study, due to the lack of knowledge about the different components of a local food experience that contribute to its positive or negative memorability. This paucity of research suggested that memorable local food experiences constituted a relevant research topic. To bridge the gaps in the extant literature, the purpose of this study was fourfold:

1. to explore tourists' general local food preferences;
2. to examine their motivations for tasting local food during their recent trips;
3. to explore the positive and negative emotions that tourists associated with their recent local food experiences;
4. to build on the existing MTE and food experience research by examining the memorable positive and negative elements that tourists recalled from their recent local food experiences (in the postholiday stage).

This study defined "local food" as food prepared using the traditional methods of a particular area (albeit without local ingredients), as well as local food specialties at a particular destination. The justification for exploring the key components contributing to tourists' memories of local food experiences was that food functions as a trigger for destination choices, can help tourists to shape their overall impression of a destination (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2019), and contributes to their well-being (Sthapit et al., 2019). In addition, food-related memories can encourage tourists' emotional attachment to a destination, enhancing their level of involvement with it (Sthapit et al., 2017) and influencing their revisit intentions (Sthapit, 2019). On one hand, this study's findings will add to the existing literature on MTEs and food experiences by proposing a conceptual framework for positive memorable local food experiences instead of replicating J.-H. Kim et al.'s (2012) (MTE) scale in the context of local food consumption. On the other hand, the findings can provide tourist destinations with the means to enhance tourists' memories of positive local food experiences while at their destinations, constituting a competitive advantage for those destinations.

Literature Review

Food Tourism and Local Food Experiences

Food tourism can be broadly defined as the participation of tourists in food-related activities during their trips, such as purchasing local foods and consuming local cuisine (Hall & Mitchell, 2001). This may be either a primary or secondary motivation for traveling. Enjoying delicious food, eating special meals, and experiencing food-related cultural traditions are experiences that are often sought by modern tourists (Horng & Tsai, 2012). Food tourism differs from normal food consumption, because it offers many opportunities to develop food- and beverage-related narratives concerning important dimensions of a local culture, including its history and local attractions (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). Through food tourism, tourists often have authentic experiences (Sims, 2009). Unlike general tourism, food tourism involves tourists obtaining memorable and unique cultural experiences through food experiences (Chen & Huang, 2018).

Tourist food experiences frequently focus on local, original, and authentic foods that represent the local food culture (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2019). Local food has been found to be a major contributor to the tourism experience (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2019), as part of the cultural heritage of the geographical areas visited by tourists (Berbel-Pinedaa et al., 2019). Local food enhances tourism experiences by connecting visitors to a region through authentic cuisine that symbolizes the culture of that destination (Chang et al., 2010).

Motivations for Tasting Local Food

The tourism motivation literature has evolved within a *push–pull motivational framework*. The "push factors" refer to people's internal desire to travel, whereas the "pull factors" involve external factors that may convince tourists to travel, such as price, destination-based activities, and the environment (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). According to Fields (2002), consumption of food in a tourist destination can be theoretically conceptualized according to four categories of motivators: physical, cultural, interpersonal, and status and prestige motivators. Physical motivators are closely connected with the opportunity to taste new and exotic foods and they facilitate the refreshment of a person's mind and body (McIntosh et al., 1995). Cultural motivators are linked to the need to not only experience different cultural elements, such as lifestyle, music, food, and dance, but to gain knowledge about other countries through their cultural activities. Interpersonal motivators relate to a desire to meet new people, spend time with family and friends, and/or escape from routine (McIntosh et al., 1995). Lastly, status and prestige motivators are associated with self-esteem, recognition, and the desire to attract attention from others (McIntosh et al., 1995). Another study, by Y. G. Kim et al. (2009), identified numerous motivation factors influencing the consumption of local food at destinations, including exciting experiences, escape from routine, health concerns, knowledge acquisition, authentic experiences, togetherness, prestige, sensory appeal, and the physical environment. In addition, a recent study by S. Kim et al. (2019) identified media exposure, enhanced awareness, reminiscence and memories, imagined sensory appeal, textural seduction, heritage, authenticity

of cooking methods and foodways, and escapism, prestige, and self-enhancement as the key motives for Japanese food tourists to travel to the Mizusawa Udon village.

Positive and Negative Emotions, Memories, and Memorable Tourism Experience

In the field of tourism, emotions refer to a person's emotional state during a tourist experience (Wirtz et al., 2003). When travelers taste local cuisine, they are introduced to the destination's culture, and emotional ties might result from these flavorful encounters (Stone et al., 2018). Local food experiences are perceived as a pleasurable vacation activity (Henderson, 2014) and arouse certain emotional responses, including enjoyment, sensory stimulation, and fulfilment (Mak et al., 2012; Vignolles & Paul-Emmanuel, 2014). In addition, tourists consume food for both energy and emotional pleasure. In particular, when they choose to consume local food, which is probably different from their ordinary diet, they often expect to obtain positive emotional benefits (Choe & Kim, 2018).

Studies conducted on tourism experiences have indicated that emotional reactions positively affect postexperience behavioral intentions (memorability) (Tung & Ritchie, 2011) and the emotions engendered during a stay at a certain destination have a long life in a tourist's memory (Pestana et al., 2020). In addition, emotions can affect both memory encoding and retrieval processes (Dolcos et al., 2017).

On the one hand, positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, and contentment) have been defined as transient mental states that feel subjectively pleasant (Fredrickson, 1998). Some studies have identified positive feelings, such as excitement, happiness, pleasure, interest, and relaxation, as tourism-related emotions (D. Kim et al., 2016). Positive emotions arising from a holiday experience enhance the memorability of a trip (Sthapit et al., 2017). Tourists generally remember their vacations in a positive manner, which is associated with their positive emotional experiences during the vacation (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). On the other hand, travel can be stressful and associated with negative emotional outcomes (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013). Negative emotions relate to a lack of satisfaction

and tourists may perceive a negative experience in either the tourist destination or in the quality of the service provided (Li et al., 2015). If these emotions are sufficiently intense, they can create negative memorable experiences (Sthapit et al., 2020). For health reasons, bad food may be much more memorable than good food (Holtzman, 2010). Therefore, emotion is an important indicator for traveler experience management (Sthapit et al., 2017).

Memory is "an alliance of systems that work together, allowing us to learn from the past and predict the future" (Baddeley, 1999, p. 1). After the completion of a journey, memory inflects the perception of the tourist experience in both the short and long term. In fact, experience is recognized as a highly complex concept, closely related to memory (Erll, 2011). Tourist experiences are routinely positioned as generators of memories (Marschall, 2015) and collecting memories is widely understood to be the very purpose of holidays (Edensor, 1998). In addition, food memories often relate to particular moments (Sutton, 2001)—that is, episodic memories, which include individuals' long-term storing of factual recollections concerning personal experiences (Schwartz, 2011). Episodic memories are the type of long-term memories thought to be the most interesting to study in relation to tourist experiences (Larsen, 2007), considering that "lived experiences gather significance as we reflect on and give memory to them" (Curtin, 2005, p. 3). These memories focus on events and permit tourists to "travel back in time" in order to subjectively reexperience previous events (Matlin, 2005). Moreover, MTE is defined as a tourism experience remembered and recalled after the event has occurred (J.-H. Kim et al., 2012), leading to the supposition that MTEs are meaningful only when individuals successfully remember past experiences in the postexperience retrieval stage; however, memory researchers believe that negative experiences may be more influential than positive experiences in producing strong memories (Kensigner & Schacter, 2006).

Methodology

Population Sample and Data Collection

This study utilized a qualitative approach to expand on both food tourism research and the role

of memory in tourism by investigating what makes a local food experience memorable. An empirical study was conducted using a self-administered open-ended questionnaire. The target population was tourists who had tasted local food in the past 3 years. Data were collected using the authors' personal networks (convenience sampling). The key advantage of this sampling technique are that it is cheap, efficient and simple to implement, while it is difficult to generalize the findings to the target population (Link, 2017). An email containing a link to the questionnaire was sent to 300 people in May 2020 and the survey questionnaire link was active for 4 weeks.

The first section included an introductory question with a "yes" or "no" option (Did you taste local food during your recent trip?) followed by questions relating to demographic variables (age, gender, marital status, and nationality). Respondents who replied "no" to the introductory question were not included in the data analysis. The second section included questions about food preferences in general (e.g., Are you generally interested in eating local food and cuisine? When you think about eating, how would you rate yourself? How important are food related experiences for you while traveling?). The third section contained questions relating to travel characteristics (e.g., date of the trip, destination visited). Respondents were then asked to recollect their latest memorable local food experience and the last section related to that on-site local food experience [e.g., local food(s) tasted, setting of the experience, who participated in it, motivation for tasting local food, emotions linked to this experience, overall food experience, and what made this local food experience most memorable]. Twenty-one questions were included in the survey.

Data Analysis

This study's key findings were based on qualitative responses to survey questions considering activities, emotions, and memories. The collected data were analyzed using a grounded theory research design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory facilitates the development of concepts, theories, or models through continuous data collection and analysis and allows theoretical concepts to emerge from the data without being influenced by predefined frames of previously existing theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In other words, grounded theory is an inductive research approach that intends to inform and develop concepts, theories or models that are grounded in participants' data (Charmaz, 2004) without prior theoretical assumptions from the data collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A three-stage procedure of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding was adopted to analyze the collected data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

First, open coding mainly involves breaking down the data into distinct units of meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and comparing incidents to each other in the data (Glaser, 1998). Charmaz (2006) recommended selecting the most suitable analytical codes. At this stage, every line of each completed questionnaire was carefully read and separately analyzed to identify emerging ideas and views that repeatedly appeared and extract the participants' views (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2016). This coding process forces the researcher to verify and saturate categories, minimize missing an important category and ensures relevance by generating codes with emergent fit to the substantive area under study (Holton, 2007). In addition, the constant comparative process continued through open coding and involved three types of comparison. The purpose here was theoretical elaboration, saturation, and densification of themes. Finally, emergent themes were compared to each other to establish the best fit between potential themes (Holton, 2007).

Second, following intensive open coding, axial coding is the act of linking categories to their subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions to form a more precise and complete explanation of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). At this stage, the researcher tries to understand answers to questions such as "How?" and "Why?" by locating the phenomenon in its conditional context and denoting response action/interaction over time to certain problems and issues (Shojaeia & Haeri, 2019). In practice, the emergence of patterns during the open coding marked the beginning of the selective coding. At this stage, open coding was ceased and delimited coding to only those variables related to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways (Holton, 2007). This process involved continually relating

subcategories to a category, comparing categories with the collected data, detailing the properties of the categories, and exploring the variations in the phenomenon (Brown et al., 2002). This process continued until the researcher elaborated and integrated the core variable and its connection to other relevant categories. This core variable/category unites all the stands to explain the behavior under study (Goulding, 1999).

Third, selective coding involves the integration of the categories that have been developed to form the initial theoretical framework. This involves "selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). In addition, the concepts and relationships that emerge from the coding processes are compared with the extant literature (Daengbuppha et al., 2006). At this stage during the analysis, no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The axial coding principle employed was to explicate a story by identifying a core category and linking the other categories around the core category. However, identifying and committing to a storyline is not an easy task, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) observed, "one is so steeped in the data that everything seems important, or more than a single phenomenon seems salient" (p. 119). Table 1 illustrates how the coding was conducted in practice.

Findings and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Of the total 210 respondents, a high proportion were male (131). The largest nationality group was

Table 1

An Example of the Coding Process in Practice (Main Themes: Taste, Spending Time/Socializing With Friends and Family Members, Novelty, Authenticity, Ambience, Affordable Price, and Interacting With Locals)

Open Coding (Line-by-Line Coding)	Subthemes (Axial Coding)	Main Theme (Selective Coding)
The taste, taste, taste of the food, local flavors, its taste, it was very tasty, fabulous taste, different taste, taste of course, divine taste, rich taste, new taste, taste does not resemble any other region of the state and country, special taste, spiciness, tasty food, magical taste, delicious, unique taste, good taste, flavor of the dish, new taste, unique taste	Taste, local flavors, spiciness	Taste, spending time/socializing with friends and family members, novelty, authenticity, ambience, affordable price, and interacting with locals contributed to a memorable local food experience
To experience the food with friends, just fun with friends, being with my friends, being with family, experiencing the food with friends, enjoying local food in the company of friends, sitting with family members while enjoying the local food, company of friends, friends, having fun and enjoyment with friends, traveling with my family, family members	Traveling/spending time/ socializing with friends and family members, being with friends, being with family	
New cuisines, trying something unheard of before, new variety of food consumed, variety of new cuisines, something outside normal experience, not a usual cuisine, quite a new experience	Novelty, new cuisine, new food, new experience	
Authenticity of the foods, the authenticity, local authenticity, authentic taste, taste of authenticity, authentic flavor, authentic	Authenticity, local	
Ambience, ambiance of the place, vibe of the place, the setting of the place, the environment, superb surroundings, local lights and environment, the setting	Ambience, setting, surroundings, environment	
Price, affordable price, affordable cost, affordable prices	Affordable price, cost	
Local people interaction, eating with locals, local people, eating and talking with local people	Interacting with locals. eating with local people, talking with local people	

Indian (99%), with ages ranging from 19 to 63 years. The largest age group was aged between 19 and 29 (62%). The respondents' household structures varied: the majority of the participants were single (106), followed by married (100).

Food Preferences

In response to the question: Are you generally interested in eating local food and cuisine?' almost all the respondents answered "yes" (202) and only 8 reported "no." Regarding the question: When you think about eating, how would you rate yourself? there were 80 who agreed "I am willing to taste something new," followed by "I am very willing to taste something new" (70), "I somewhat prefer familiar foods" (24), "I very much prefer familiar foods" (20), and "I prefer familiar foods" (16). On one hand, the majority of the respondents could be categorized as *food neophiliacs* (148), since they exhibited a tendency to seek new food to taste. Food neophiliacs' behaviors can be a function of reasoned influences (e.g., attitude) and unreasoned influences (i.e., habits) (Aarts et al., 1997). Unreasoned behaviors, as habits, are governed by automatic responses to specific cues and involve less complex information processing (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003). This means that, when a goal that is associated with a habit is activated, responses that are connected to specific situations or cues become more accessible; these cues then automatically trigger the habitual response (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000). Habits are developed by extensive repetition and become so well learned that they do not require conscious effort (Verplanken & Orbell, 2003): habits are formed when using the same behavior frequently and consistently in a similar context for the same purpose (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999). This can also relate to tourists' role orientation; tourists who generally prefer novelty to familiarity when traveling are somewhat more food neophiliac and less neophobic than tourists who seek familiarity on their travels (Wolff & Larsen, 2019).

On the other hand, others preferred familiar foods (59) and exhibited behavior characteristics of *food neophobia*: a personality trait involving a relative preference for familiar foods over novel foods (Pliner & Salvy, 2006). This finding supported studies indicating that not everybody is a "voyeuring gourmand" (Wolff & Larsen, 2019). In other words, the two groups of respondents could be described as either novelty or familiarity seekers. In response to the question: How important are food experiences for you while traveling?, the majority reported it be very important (128), followed by important (73), and not important (9). This finding indicated the significance of food in respondents' travel experiences.

Profile of Travel Behaviors

Respondents' most recent trips took place between May 2018 and March 2020. Although the travel destinations ranged from San Francisco to Dubai, the majority of the trips were domestic and within India (168). The duration of stay ranged from 1 to 180 days, while the majority reported spending 2 days (29), 4 days (54), and more than 4 days (101) at the destination. The number of people in the travel party ranged from 1 to 200, while many of the respondents traveled in groups of two (46) or more than two people (133). About 90% traveled for leisure, with the rest traveling for business. Although some studies have indicated that sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, and marital status are important variables for explaining variations in food consumption in different contexts (Furst et al., 1996; Khan, 1981), and Khan (1981) contended that, owing to diminished taste and olfactory sensitivity, older people tend to display different food preferences to younger people, there was very little evidence to support this claim in the present study.

Local Food Experiences and Motivation to Travel

In response to the question: 'Was tasting local food one of the major motivations for you to undertake this particular trip?', more than half the respondents stated "yes" (109) and the others stated "no" (101). In other words, for many, tasting local food functioned as a primary motive and was considered to be very important, or a "push factor" in planning their trip, while for others it was a secondary reason for visiting the tourism destination. A potential justification for tasting local food as a primary motive can be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents were traveling within India

and that India has a unique blend of culturally and climatically diverse regional cuisines. In addition, India is known for its diverse cuisine for centuries and the farming techniques in different regions have their influence on the regional Indian cuisine and food culture. There is an abundant variation in the regional cuisine of India due to its cultural and physical diversity (Sen, 2015). This finding proved that many tourists are motivated by local food experiences in their decisions to undertake particular trips and they can be considered culinary tourists (Sthapit, 2019), whose the principal aim is to enjoy a destination's culinary offerings; others can be defined as non-culinary tourists (McKercher et al., 2008). This finding supported studies indicating that leisure travelers with an interest in food may primarily base their travel destination decisions on the food of the region and are most likely to participate in a wide variety of food experiences once they have arrived (Birch & Memery, 2020). This finding suggested that food travel is more than a 'niche' activity (Stone et al., 2018).

These local food experiences took place in restaurants (96), street food shops (59), hotels (44), family and friends' homes (7), houseboats (1), resorts (1), camps (1), and tents (1). This finding showed that local food experiences are not limited to traditional and typical restaurant settings, as indicated in recent studies (Sthapit, 2019; Stone et al., 2018). In response to the question: Who participated in this local food experience with you?, many respondents mentioned family members (98), friends (89), other travelers (13), colleagues (1), and alone (7). This finding supported studies indicating the significance of "interaction value" or "togetherness" in tourists' food experiences (Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017; Sthapit, 2017); for example, Goolaup and Mossberg (2017) explained that an important holiday experience for tourists is socializing with friends and relatives while enjoying food. This finding could also be linked to the concept of *commensality*—that is, the practice of eating together (Sobal & Nelson, 2003) and promoting communal solidarity, sociability, and socialization that reflect the social organization of societies (Danesi, 2012). Such bonding is also connected with social capital, in that social relations integrate people (Putnam, 2000). Studies have indicated that the commensality of food experiences

offers opportunities for conversations, storytelling, family activities, and positive memory creation. Such experiences in a different setting from home can take on special significance and become the main highlight when recalling the travel experience (Schänzel & Lynch, 2016).

Regarding the question: What was your motivation for tasting local food during this trip?, some mentioned experiencing something new (57), while others stated experiencing the local culture through food (54), thus reinforcing previous research suggesting that local food experiences can be viewed as a chance to learn about local culture (Y. G. Kim et al., 2009) and experience new flavors at destinations (Sparks, 2007). Others mentioned hunger (17), as an authentic experience (11), as suggested by friends (9), curiosity (7), recommendations by food blogs (2), and family members (1). Based on the pull–push motivation framework (Dann, 1977), for many respondents the motivation to taste local food was a push or intrinsic factor; in other words, tourists were pushed by their own internal drives to meet their personal needs. In addition, for some respondents, local food was a cultural motivator that extended beyond satisfying their hunger, and they tasted local cuisine to experience a new culture (Mak et al., 2012). This finding supported studies indicating that food helps tourists to "appreciate an abstract culture via tangible means," which may create a connection with the culture (Lin & Mao, 2015). This finding could also be linked to Y. G. Kim and Eves' (2012) three underlying motivations for consuming local food at a tourist destination (cultural experience, excitement, and sensory appeal) and the four key dimensions of motivation underlying tourist food consumption (symbolic, contrast, extension, and pleasure) identified by Mak et al. (2012).

Emotions Linked to Local Food Experiences and Their Sources

In response to the question: Which positive or negative emotions did you strongly feel during your local food experience?, most respondents mentioned "joy" (129), while others reported "love" (40), "excitement" (8), "anger" (7), "fear" (1), or "no strong feelings" (3). This finding suggested that tourists predominantly experience positive

emotions while consuming local food at a tourism destination. Although studies have indicated that negative emotions are evoked when recalling past food experiences (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), in the context of this study the findings offered little evidence of negative emotions in tourists' recollections of their local food experiences. By contrast, the negative emotion of anger was uncommon in the recollections, since tourist activities mainly encouraged them to relax and engage in social experiences (Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016).

In response to the questions: Was your local food experience on this trip mainly positive or negative? and Which experience was the most memorable and the one you told more people about?, the majority of the respondents mentioned positive emotions (190), while 9 mentioned negative ones, and 8 reported mixed and 2 neutral feelings. This was highlighted by the following keywords: "positive," "mainly positive," "overall positive," "was very good," and "very definitely positive." This was further emphasized by the answers of two respondents: one said: "Definitely positive. We shared the experience with our entire family" (44, male, American, visiting Madurai) and another said: "Positive. I tasted silkworm and bamboo cooked fish. That's something very different from all the other food. I told a lot of people about this" (23, male, Indian, visiting Meghalaya).

The respondents' recollections of mainly positive local food experiences could be attributed to the "rosy view phenomenon." This phenomenon mitigates negative emotional responses and magnifies positive emotional responses in people's retrospective assessments of their emotional experiences (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Memorable Components

In response to the question: What made this local food experience the most memorable?, different elements created a memorable local food experience besides the food served. Specifically, many of the respondents replied "taste" (93); thus, this finding indicated that tourists' past experiences with food contributed to the development of "food memories," which were linked to the sensory attributes of the food (taste), supporting the studies indicating that people tend to look for particular

attributes in a food that engage one or more of their senses (Prescott et al., 2002). In addition, sensory pleasure derived from food and eating is important in fulfilling the experiential component of the tourist experience (Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

The significance of taste in respondents' local food experiences was highlighted by keywords and phrases such as "each item tasted was delectable," "the taste," "taste of food," "fabulous taste," "different taste," "taste of course," "divine taste," "rich taste," and "new taste." This was further emphasized by the responses of three respondents. One said:

> To eat the local food of a particular place has always been a major part of any of my trips. The best eating experience I had was near a Buddhist monastery. It was a dish I had researched while packing my bags to head for Nepal. . . . The taste experience was quite shocking, but in a positive manner. (23, male, Indian, visiting Nepal)

Another stated: "The different taste compared to the foods of my state" (45, male, Indian, visiting Bhubaneswar). The third said: "It was much more satisfying because the taste did not resemble any other region of the state or country" (25, male, Indian, visiting Madikeri). This finding supported studies indicating the significance of sensory stimulation (in this context, taste) for the memorability of a trip experience (Sthapit, 2017; Vignolles & Paul-Emmanuel, 2014), and also supported studies indicating that food experiences are important for memory, because they often involve all five senses (Sutton, 2010); in other words, they are multisensory in nature, with taste being intimately tied to memories (Sthapit, 2019).

Another key component that contributed to respondents' memorable local food experiences was spending time/socializing with friends and family members (23). This finding showed that social pleasure had an impact on tourists' memories of local food experiences. Respondents mentioned that enjoying a local food experience with family and friends contributed to their food memories; in fact, friends and family members were prominent companions. This was highlighted by the responses of three respondents. One claimed: "Experiencing the food with friends made it memorable" (male, 27, Indian, visiting Tirupati). Another said: "Enjoying local food in the company of friends gave me

immense pleasure and was a memorable experience" (female, 24, Indian, female, visiting Chennai). A third stated: "Sitting with family members while enjoying the local food was memorable and made me happy" (54, female, Indian, visiting Coimbatore). Studies have indicated that the social origin of pleasurable and memorable experiences connects especially to engagement with friends and family (Dube & LeBel, 2003). Similarly, Chandralal et al.'s (2015) study indicated that social connections and human interactions influence MTEs; for example, deeper MTEs may result from the development of stronger connections with loved ones through shared travel experiences, which seems to apply to local food experiences also. In addition, recalled food experiences typically relate to shared eating (Sthapit, 2017) and social interactions with family members (Williams et al., 2015).

Other respondents mentioned novelty (14), authenticity (13), ambience (9), affordable price (4), and interacting with locals (4). In other words, experiencing new and authentic food, the *servicescape*, and the interaction with locals were considered to be particularly memorable. The novel food experiences reported by the respondents included new foods such as Vada pav, Neer dosa, Calamari, Misal pav, and Mangalore chicken curry, while Kadhi pakora, Shawarma, chat, and Machboos were considered to be authentic.

In some cases, no single factor led to a memorable local food experience, but a combination of different factors contributed to such an experience (13); for example, the type of food and/or its attributes (e.g., local, authentic, or novel) could be combined with other factors, such as the presence of travel companions. This was highlighted by the responses of three respondents. One said: "The experience of trying some of the local cuisine of Rajasthan, in itself, was memorable. Also, being with family members made it more fun, because it was new to everyone" (female, 23, Indian, visiting Jodhpur). Another said:

> You get to know a lot about a culture and people from their food: the interactions while eating new local dishes, sitting next to the people in their kitchen and listening to their childhood stories or myths. The food, warmth, and welcoming nature of people, everything combined, made this experience memorable. (female, 25, Indian, visiting Mysore)

Others stated: "The authenticity of the foods, and the hospitality and service received, made it memorable. The foods helped to explain a lot about the place and its history" (24, female, Indian, Indian, visiting Jaipur) and "The chaos; the people over there rushing to experience the cuisine and the taste of the food" (24, male, Indian, visiting Bangalore). This provided evidence that both single and multiple factors could combine to create a memorable local food experience.

None of the respondents recalled negative local food experiences and their sources. The term "memorable" usually has positive connotations and, although some travelers may have recalled less positive food experiences, this was not evident in this particular study, in contrast to studies claiming that tourists' reminiscences about adverse local food experiences, just like their ones about positive experiences, strongly affected their memories (Adongo et al., 2015). The identified dimensions also contrasted with Stone et al.'s (2018) study, which alleged that, without special occasions or celebrations such as honeymoons, anniversaries, and birthdays, food experiences would not occur, and that food is included in memories linked to such occasions; however, there was very little mention in respondents' narratives of such occasions contributing to memorable local food experiences. The findings also differed from Sthapit's (2017) memorable food experience component of hospitality. Very few respondents referred to warm hospitality and interaction with service personnel, mainly recalling socializing and interacting with friends and family members as making their local food experiences memorable. These bonding occasions between travel parties also helped to explain the "joy" and "love" they experienced in relation to the local food.

The findings are suggestive of a possible link between push motivations, emotions and memorability. According to the arousal theory of motivation, people are driven to perform actions in order to maintain an optimum level of emotional arousal (Berlyne, 1960), and this may explain activities such as local food consumption. Emotional arousal includes positive states such as joy, interest, happiness and love (Oxendine, 1970). In addition, emotions are elicited by different appraisals (Nyer, 1997), of which goal congruence (motive

consistency) is based on an assessment of the degree to which a situation is or is not conducive to goal fulfillment (Roseman et al., 1990). Goal congruent situations elicit positive emotions and goal incongruent situations elicit negative emotions. Thus, positive and negative emotions can be inferred from different motivations (Nyer, 1997). In the same vein, recent studies indicate the generated emotions depend on the type of push factors involved (Pestana et al., 2020). In other words, for many tourists it appears to show that reasons for tasting local food relate to their internal desires, particularly experiencing something new and the local culture through food, which might have contributed to their positive emotions of joy and love. These emotions shape tourists memories of local food experience. However, given that some respondents experienced excitement, anger, fear, and no strong feelings besides joy and love, it is important to note that the levels of emotional arousal brought about by the food experience in terms of intensity will not be at the same level for each tourist. For this reason, in order to create positive emotional arousal that then feeds memories, tasting local food as a primary motive or "push factor" while visiting a tourism destination might play an important role. Therefore, push motivations become an essential dimension in these interrelations. In addition, the findings support studies indicating that visitors who are intrinsically motivated (push motivation) experience more intense positive emotions and less intense negative feelings (Cini et al., 2013). Moreover, the finding also suggest that tourists' motives for consuming local food are both multifaceted and multidimensional, as some studies have shown (J.-H. Kim et al., 2012; Y. G. Kim et al., 2009), demonstrating that the desire to taste local food while at a tourism destination arise from different push factors and is not one dimensional.

Conclusions

This study considered general food preferences, motivations, emotions, and memories of recent local food experiences. Reflecting on respondents' general food preferences and motivations for tasting local food while they were at tourism destinations helped the researchers to understand the findings. Four main conclusions can be drawn from

this research. Firstly, almost all the respondents were generally interested in eating local food and cuisine. In addition, more than half the respondents considered themselves food neophiliacs and were willing to taste new foods while traveling, while the others preferred familiar foods.

Secondly, more than half of the respondents reported that tasting local food was one of the major motivations for them to undertake their particular trips and many participated in a wide variety of food experiences while at the destination. Not surprisingly, novelty and experiencing local culture were the main motivations for tasting local food while at a tourism destination. Other motivations included sensory stimulation, authentic experience, recommendations by friends, and curiosity. These findings supported studies indicating that sensory appeal (in this context, taste) is a basic determinant of tourists' searches for new food experiences (Y. G. Kim et al., 2009) and one of the most important extrinsic motivators for food choice (Prescott et al., 2002); however, there was little indication of interpersonal relationships (socialization, family togetherness, and self-expression to others; Hu et al., 2013), health concerns (Y. G. Kim & Eves, 2012), or prestige (Y. G. Kim et al., 2009) as the main motivation for tasting local food. Interpersonal relationships and health concerns may not always be the main motivation for tasting local food and should not be considered axiomatic. Thirdly, emotions elicited by local food experiences focused on "joy" and "love." Some studies have conceptualized such favorable feelings relating to tourists' food consumption as having emotional value (Choe & Kim, 2018) and constituting an important benefit that tourists obtain by experiencing local foods (Choe & Kim, 2019). This finding supported studies claiming that guests predominantly experience positive emotions while consuming local food (Sthapit, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2017) and that positive emotions, such as happiness, are more common than negative emotions during a tourism experience. In addition, the negative emotion of anger was uncommon in respondents' recollections, since tourist activities mainly encouraged them to relax and engage in social experiences (Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016).

Fourthly, this study adds to the existing literature on MTEs and food experiences by proposing

a conceptual framework for positive memorable local food experiences, which comprises several components: taste, socializing with friends and family members, novelty, authenticity, ambience, affordable price, and local interactions. Tourists' memories of local food experiences are influenced by the food (taste, novelty, and authenticity), people (interacting with family members, friends, and locals), and the setting (ambience/servicescape).

Managerial Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

This study has managerial implications for destination managers and food service providers. Firstly, given that novelty and experiencing local culture were the main motivations for tasting local food while at a tourism destination, local food service providers should be more traditional in their choice of ingredients for food preparation in order to maintain the novelty and distinctive flavor of the local dishes served to tourists. In addition, local restaurants should provide better descriptions of what makes their food local and unique to a particular setting, region, or destination, including information about the origin of the local food, recipes, and methods of cooking in the menus. This might help to promote local cuisines at local restaurants and encourage visitors to specifically order local food. In addition, it is important to take into consideration that while many tourists might be attracted by the local food some destinations offer, others may be deterred by it; therefore, food service providers should offer familiar or "safe" dishes for those tourists who are not interested in, or are scared of, unfamiliar food and they should not assume that all tourists are food neophiliacs.

Second, the findings underscore the significance of taste, socializing with friends and family members, novelty, authenticity, ambience, affordable price, and local interactions as key elements contributing to tourists' positive memorable local food experiences. Therefore, local food service providers should recommend suitable local cuisines from a selection to best satisfy tourists' individual tastes. In addition, the servicescape should be spacious to serve both small and large customer groups, allowing them to spend time and socialize with their friends and family members. Moreover, local restaurants should decorate their physical settings with stunning and unique cultural elements (e.g., cultural artefacts and background music) to wow tourists and make them feel more immersed in the environment. Further, service personnel should actively interact with customers to inform them about the local delicacies and food culture, which may represent the novelty and authenticity elements as well as encourage interaction with locals within the service setting based on each tourist's individual level of engagement. Local food service providers offering local cuisines for an affordable price may have a competitive advantage over those food outlets charging high prices.

Despite its contributions, this study had some limitations. As with many research studies, the number of participants was limited and uses convenience sampling technique for data collection; thus, the generalizability of the results is limited. Studying a larger sample would address this issue. In addition, the present study collected data using an open-ended survey questionnaire. Adopting a wider range of research methods might overcome this research limitation. The study participants were also mainly Indian. Given that food and attitudes towards food are culturally bound, future studies would benefit from cross-cultural sample bases. The data were collected during the postvisit stage to assess travelers' local food experiences and relied on variable periods of memory. This may have affected the respondents' ability to accurately recall their consumption behavior. Studies have shown that recalled tourism experiences are significantly different from the on-site experiences that tourists have had. People will reconstruct their tourism experiences by forgetting disappointment (Mitchell et al., 1997); therefore, to avoid this incongruence between remembered experiences and on-site experiences, future studies should interview tourists immediately after their visit.

Furthermore, researchers could extend the current discussion of memorable local food experiences by exploring a possible spillover between away and at-home experiences, including the impact of local food experiences on tourists' well-being while at home. This could augment the findings of the present study and provide a broader understanding of the linkages between the different concepts of spillover, memorability, and well-being.

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