Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

Understanding the relationship between gastronomic experience, satisfaction, and revisit intention

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Article Info

Abstract

Gastronomic tourism has risen to prominence as a major tourism trend in recent years. The creative city of gastronomy, in particular, now exerts significant influence over tourists' decisions to visit the destination in search of an extraordinary tourism experience. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of gastronomic experience on revisit intention and the moderating effect of satisfaction. Through a questionnaire, quantitative data were collected from 525 domestic visitors using convenience sampling. The findings revealed that although the Entertainment — escapism experience had no effect on revisit intention, the Education — esthetics experience did. Additionally, satisfaction was discovered to serve as a perfect mediator between Entertainment — escapist experience and the intention to revisit. Furthermore, it also acted as a partial mediator in the relationship between Education — esthetic experience, and the intention to revisit. Not only do the study's findings benefit academia by elucidating the effect of prior experiences on future behavior in the context of gastronomic city tourism, but they may also serve as a guideline for destination marketers interested in promoting and developing gastronomic tourism.

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Introduction

Food has received greater attention in recent years as an integral component of travel experiences. Destinations worldwide are promoting their unique experiences as a marketing attraction and as a must-visit site for authentic local cuisine (Derinalp et al., 2020; Gupta & Duggal, 2021).

Even when visitors travel for non-gourmet reasons, such as business or to visit relatives or friends, they seek gastronomic experiences in addition to their other objectives. A tourist's favorable impression of a destination is shaped by their experience with local cuisine, which may influence their travel behavior. Destinations leverage food as a tourism resource to provide tourists with unique experiences, therefore increasing their likelihood of returning (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Seyfi et al., 2020).

There is a growing body of research on tourism that focuses on gastronomy. Previous studies explored a range of topics, including local food consumption behaviour (Hsu et al., 2018), local food diversity (Derinalp et al., 2020),

and food experience (Hernandez-Mogollon et al., 2020; Hsu & Scott, 2020). These studies highlight the value of gastronomy in a destination as a tourist experience and a tourist resource (Leong et al., 2017; Seyitoglu, 2020). Furthermore, previous research has shown that positive travel outcomes, i.e., satisfaction and tourist behavior, are influenced by gastronomic experiences. As a consequence of their gastronomic experience, tourists have a greater understanding of food consumption in the destination. According to a recent study conducted by Suntikul et al. (2020b) and Widjaja et al. (2020), tourists who have had a pleasant culinary experience are more likely to return and recommend the destination to others. While studies have revealed that tourists are more inclined to return to a destination following a culinary experience, greater research into the underlying causes of this behavior is still required (Lai, 2020; Widjaja et al., 2020).

A tourist's favorable perception of a destination is formed by their interactions with local cuisine, which may influence their travel decisions. Destinations may promote indigenous cuisine as a significant tourist resource, offering a one-of-a-kind experience while also increasing visitor satisfaction (Piramanayagam et al., 2020). However, the majority of research on local culinary experiences has focused on Western countries and international visitors (Sthapit et al., 2019). Due to the distinct characteristics of the domestic and international markets, this study concentrated on the domestic market, more specifically on domestic visitors' social-cultural familiarity with local food and their relationship to culinary regions (Kim et al., 2019). Additionally, little study has been conducted to explain why domestic visitors enjoy consuming local food (Williamson & Hassanli, 2020). This research gap has significant implications for tourism stakeholders (Williamson & Hassanli, 2020); as a result, it is crucial to examine domestic tourists' gastronomic experiences when visiting a tourist destination (Zhang et al., 2018).

Phuket, southern Thailand has been selected for this current investigation. This is an island renowned for its tourism and recognized as a creative city of gastronomy on December 11th, 2015, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its diversity of multicultural cuisine and indigenous identity (UNESCO, 2016). Due to Phuket's multiculturalism, there are several cuisines to choose from, including Thai, fusion, and international. It is vital to understand tourist culinary experiences since they can influence a visitor's decision to visit a certain destination and assist destination marketers in establishing an efficient marketing plan. As a result, the current study intends to examine the effect of gastronomic experience on revisiting intention in a gastronomically creative city. The goal of this study is to ascertain the effect of gastronomic experience on revisit intention and to evaluate satisfaction as a mediator between gastronomic experience and revisit intention.

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of tourist behavior in the context of a gastronomy city by providing understanding and meaningful evidence on the role of education, entertainment, and experience and their relationship with tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit, which will be directly applicable to the development of Phuket as a UNESCO-designated creative gastronomy destination.

Literature Review

Gastronomic Experience

The terms *"gastronomic experience," "food experience," "local food experience," "culinary experience," "meal experience,"* and *"dining experience"* are used to characterize people's food-related experiences (Şahin & Kılıçlar, 2022). Experience pertains to the different characteristics that influence visitor behavior and are associated with the multifaceted components of tourism business consumption (Bukharov & Berezka, 2018; Kastenholz et al., 2018). In the context of destinations, the relationship between gastronomic experience and tourism is investigated in a variety of ways. Consequently, the visitor's experience has been enhanced by destination management.

As an emerging paradigm in experience research, Pine and Gilmore (1998) proposed the experience economy conceptual model. The customer purchases an experience in order to *"spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages... to engage himself in an inherently personal way"* (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p. 3). For instance, hospitality and lodging (Mody et al., 2017), cultural tourism (Lee & Smith, 2015), sports tourism (Hwang & Lyu, 2015), and culinary tourism (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013).

The experience economy categorizes experiences as esthetic, educational, entertaining, or escapist. In tourism experience research, this notion has been applied to gastronomic tourism. When these four aspects are integrated, four distinct realms of experience emerge: education, entertainment, esthetic, and escapism, which are all mutually compatible domains that provide the foundation for a memorable experience (Kastenholz et al., 2018; Luoh et al., 2020). Several tourism researchers

examined visitors' reactions to a variety of tourism products using this experience economy model (Lai et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Piramanayagam et al., 2020).

In particular, Suntikul et al. (2020a) define the first element, termed *"Ent-escapist"*, as a synthesis of entertainment and escapist experience. Food tourism participants must possess the ability to escape and be entertained. According to tourists, gastronomic tourism enables them to participate in activities that they would not be able to perform in their daily lives. The second aspect is what is referred to as *"Est-education,"* a term that refers to a synthesis of esthetic and educational experiences. The esthetic and educational components are vital for tourists to, for instance, learn more about Thai culture and experience the splendor of Thai cuisine while on holiday.

This literature demonstrates the critical nature of such educational and sensory experiences provided by culinary tourism. Additionally, in this study, both the Ent-escapist and the Est-education components had a substantial effect on future intention. The identified combination of the esthetic and educational dimensions, as well as the entertainment and escapist dimensions, can be used to describe the desire of tourists for new experiences that allow them to directly contribute to the local knowledge of how to achieve aesthetically satisfying experiences. Further research into the gastronomic experience is recommended as a consequence of the study conducted by Suntikul et al. (2020a).

Revisit Intention

In the tourism industry, *"revisit intention"* is defined as the intention to return to a certain destination and is measured by referrals. Because repeat tourists are more likely to stay longer, revisit intention is a vital component of the destination's marketing strategy (Agapito et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2016). Repeat visitors who recommend others to destinations can also assist destinations in generating an increasing amount of regular revenue (Chiu et al., 2016).

The gastronomic experience can be a key predictor of tourist loyalty and, as a result, an important component of a destination's success. According to several studies, the gastronomic experience has an impact on destination loyalty (Lai et al., 2021). The gastronomic experience, according to Folgado-Fernandez et al. (2017), promotes destination loyalty. Furthermore, tourists who are satisfied with the cuisine offered at a destination spread positive word about the destination and revisit (Ji et al., 2016). Alderighi et al. (2016) believe that exceptional dining experiences influence the likelihood of revisiting a destination. Recent satisfaction research has attempted to explain how attachment to a place promotes behavioral intentions.

The effect of satisfaction on a number of future behaviors, including revisit intention, has been supported by empirical research (Kock et al., 2016; Tan & Wu, 2016). Previous research has revealed that gastronomic experience and satisfaction are predictors of revisit intention. As a result, the following hypotheses are proposed in this research study:

H1: Entertainment - escapist experience influences directly on revisit intention.

H2: Education - esthetic experience influences directly on revisit intention.

Mediator testing

In the tourist industry, a comparison of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences can be used to ascertain trip satisfaction with a destination (Liao et al., 2021). The relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention has been established in the tourism industry, and it has been empirically demonstrated that satisfaction has a significant effect on visitors' formation of positive revisit intentions (Hasan et al., 2021; Suh et al., 2021). Abbasi et al. (2021) examined tourists' intentions to revisit a tourist destination and discovered that tourist satisfaction has a favorable effect on their revisit intention. Additionally, Liao et al. (2021) showed that trip satisfaction had a positive effect on return intention. The tourism literature has investigated the hypothesized causal relationships between tourist experience, satisfaction, and the intention to revisit. Agyeiwaah et al. (2019) discovered that the mediating role of satisfaction is more effective in predicting the influence of experience on loyalty. Satisfaction serves as a mediator between the tourist's experience and their loyalty. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that a variety of experience features contribute to the satisfaction of gastronomy tourists. However, tourism research is primarily concerned with the postulated causal relationships between tourist experience, satisfaction, and the tendency to return. Agyeiwaah et al. (2019) discovered that satisfaction plays a more effective mediating function in predicting the effects of experience on loyalty. Satisfaction serves as a bridge between the tourist's experience and their loyalty. Additionally, various aspects of experience have been proven to enhance gastronomic visitors' satisfaction. Additionally, a positive experience with a destination almost always results in satisfaction and, hence, destination loyalty (Bjork & Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2017; Prayag et al., 2017). To summarize, this study examined satisfaction as a moderator of the relationship between gastronomic experiences and the intention to revisit. As a result, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3: The relationship between entertainment - escapist experience and revisit intention is mediated by satisfaction.

H4: The relationship between education - esthetic experience and revisit intention is mediated by satisfaction.

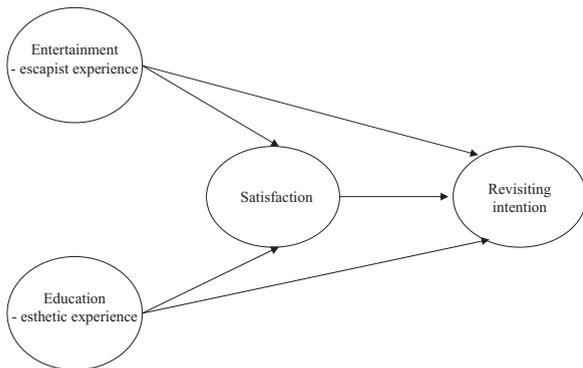Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

Figure 1   Conceptual framework

Methodology

The sample for this study consisted of domestic visitors to Phuket. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed at tourist attractions, hotels, and restaurants, and respondents were requested to participate voluntarily. Due to the inability to obtain a complete sampling frame of all visitors, data were collected using a convenience sample approach. The data collection period was October 2021 through January 2022. Although 550 visitors completed questionnaires, only 525 were eligible for data analysis. The responses to these 525 surveys were considered acceptable because they satisfied the sample size criteria for variance estimation through structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2018). Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents.

Prior to data collection, the questions were validated by three academicians to ensure their validity and logical structure. Additionally, because the measures were derived from English-language literature, a back-translation process was used to ensure that the questionnaires retained their intended meaning. Measurement items were adapted from a variety of sources for this study. The gastronomic experience scales were adapted from Kastenholz et al. (2018) and Soonsan and Somkai (2023). The satisfaction scales were adapted from Agyeiwaah et al. (2019). The revisited intention construct was derived from Gupta and Duggal (2021). This study employed a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Prior to data collection, the instrument was piloted on 30 tourists. The reliability test using Cronbach's

alpha coefficient revealed that all constructs had a high degree of internal consistency, with 0.87 for entertainment — escapist experience, 0.87 for education — esthetic experience, 0.91 for satisfaction, and 0.83 for revisit intention.

Results

Measurement Model

To analyze the quantitative data, the evaluation of the measurement model is required before conducting the path analysis. A first-order, the result revealed that the model displayed $\chi^2 = 548.040$ ($p = .000$), $df = 121$, CFI = 0.935, TLI = 0.918, RMSEA = 0.08, and SRMR = 0.05, respectively. Those values indicate a good fit between the model and the empirical data. The standardized factor loading of all items is greater than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The coefficient of Cronbach's alpha α (0.8–0.90) was above 0.70, which suggested a good validity (Hair et al., 2018). The construct validity (0.86–0.90) was greater than 0.70, which indicated that all questions had a good construct validity (Carmines & Zeller, 1988; Hair et al., 2018). The average variance extracted was between 0.50–0.76, which revealed that the variables utilized for the measurement, had good convergent validity, too. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 2).

Table 1   Demographic

Demographic Variable	($n = 525$)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	305	58.1
Female	220	41.9
Age (years)		
18–25	135	25.7
26–35	184	35.0
36–45	100	19.0
46–55	73	13.9
>55	32	6.2
Missing	1	0.2
Occupation		
Government	95	18.2
Business owner	171	32.5
Employee	193	36.7
Other	66	12.6
Education		
High School and Below	84	16.0
Bachelor	208	39.7
Master	196	37.3
Ph.D.	37	7.0
Marital Status		
Single	181	34.5
Married	310	59.0
Others	34	6.5

Table 2 Confirm factor analysis

Factor	Standard loading	$\bar{X}$	SD	α	CR	AVE
Entertainment – escapist experience		5.28	1.05	0.89	0.87	0.54
1. I had a good time at Phuket's gastronomic city.	0.682					
2. I found Phuket's gastronomic city amusing.	0.726					
3. I enjoyed myself at Phuket's gastronomic city.	0.786					
4. I had the impression that I was portraying a different gastronomic city character.	0.736					
5. I totally fell into another time when I visited Phuket's gastronomic city.	0.709					
6. I was able to envision myself in a different situation because of the gastronomic experience I had here.	0.752					
Education – esthetic experience		5.21	0.99	0.86	0.86	0.50
1. I felt stimulated curiosity regarding the gastronomic experience in Phuket.	0.752					
2. I learned an authentic gastronomic experience from Phuket.	0.759					
3. I got more knowledgeable about the gastronomic experience from Phuket.	0.708					
4. I felt that the environment of Phuket's gastronomic city was extremely delightful.	0.777					
5. I felt a true feeling of place in Phuket's gastronomic city.	0.587					
6. I found environs of the Phuket's gastronomic city to be really appealing.	0.646					
Satisfaction		5.49	1.18	0.90	0.90	0.76
1. I was glad to share an experience with friends or family.	0.879					
2. As expected, I was pleased with my decision to participate in a "must-do" activity.	0.894					
3. I was satisfied overall from Phuket 's gastronomic city.	0.836					
Revisit intention		5.19	1.23	0.84	0.87	0.69
1. I was attracted to return to Phuket because of its gastronomic city.	0.833					
2. When I thought of a gastronomic city, Phuket was the first place that came to mind.	0.865					
3. I would definitely come to Phuket more often because of its gastronomic city.	0.798					

Hypotheses Testing

This study used structural equation modeling to investigate the proposed interactions. The model certainly is a good fit for the data $\chi^2 = 548.040$ ($p = .000$), $df = 121$, CFI = 0.935, TLI = 0.918, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.05. Table 3 and Figure 2 presents the results of the proposed relationships. H1 claimed that entertainment — escapist experience influences directly on revisit intention. H1 was not supported because of recent study a significant effect ($\beta = -0.118$, $p > .05$). H2 indicated that education — esthetics experience had a direct impact on revisit intention. H2 was confirmed by the data, which reveal a significant effect ($\beta = 0.497$, $p < .001$). H3 and H4 implied using satisfaction as a mediator between gastronomic experience and revisit intention. H3 supported that the relationship between entertainment — escapist experience and revisit intention was fully mediated by satisfaction. Moreover, H4 confirmed that relationship

between education — esthetic experience and revisit intention was partially mediated by satisfaction. Although H1 was rejected, H2-H4 were supported.
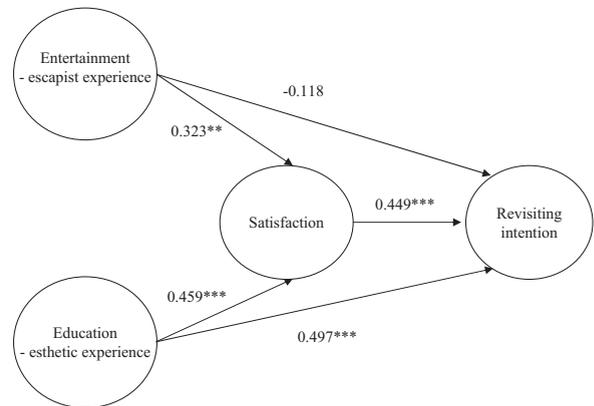

Figure 2 Structural model

Table 3 Results of the structural model

Factor	Satisfaction			Revisit intention		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
1. Entertainment – escapist experience	0.323 (z = 3.434**)	-	0.323 (z = 3.434**)	-0.118 (z = -1.218)	0.145 (z = 2.939**)	0.027 (z = 0.257)
2. Education – esthetics experience	0.459 (z = 4.943***)	-	0.459 (z = 4.943***)	0.497 (z = 4.982***)	0.206 (z = 4.579***)	0.703 (z = 6.991***)
3. Satisfaction				0.449 (z = 7.830***)	-	0.449 (z = 7.830***)

Note: R^2 Satisfaction = 61.5, R^2 Revisit intention = 56.5.

Discussion

The role of gastronomic experiences in future tourist behavior intentions was examined. Based on the findings, the present study confirmed the relationship between experience effects and future behavior intention. The result analysis theoretically confirmed that tourists who had positive experiences are more inclined to return to the destination. Additionally, this study established that satisfaction was a mediator variable influencing revisit intention for gastronomic experiences. The conclusion of the study presented an empirical finding and explained the model's relationship using hypotheses testing.

Gastronomic tourism in the creative city of gastronomy provides a range of experiences for visitors. According to the study's findings, visitors who had a positive trip experience had a direct effect on their future behavior intentions to revisit Phuket's gastronomic attractions. This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that gastronomic experiences associated with entertainment – escapist – and education – esthetics stimulate tourist revisitation (Suntikul et al., 2020a). The travel experience is a predictor of customer satisfaction. The study's findings established clearly that tourists with extensive experience in gastronomic tourism were more satisfied with their visit to that destination. On the other hand, tourists with less experience in gastronomy tourism were quite dissatisfied with the destination. This conclusion reinforces prior research demonstrating that gastronomic experiences help tourists develop a stronger connection to their destination. When tourists are exposed to indigenous cuisine, they develop a closer connection to the place (Hsu & Scott, 2020; Tsai, 2016). For instance, by providing activities, services, high-quality products, an aesthetically compelling environment, entertainment, and educational programs, such can generate greater interest in the destination among visitors on winery excursions (Cardinale et al., 2016).

The study's findings indicated that satisfaction influenced revisit intention and functioned as a mediator between gastronomic experience and revisit intention (Li et al., 2021; Man Cheng et al., 2022). If tourists are satisfied with their visit to a destination, high-experienced tourists will behave favorably by revisiting. The findings also substantiated Agyeiwaah et al.'s (2019) research, which revealed that the mediating role of satisfaction can have an effect on the association between gastronomic experience and the intention to revisit. Furthermore, a positive gastronomic experience almost always leads to greater pleasure and loyalty to the destination (Bjork & Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2017; Prayag et al., 2017). To summarize, this study investigated satisfaction as a mediator between gastronomic experiences and the intention to return in the context of gastronomic tourism.

Practical Implications

The findings have a wide range of practical applications. To be a gastronomic city, it must develop additional culinary education resources that aid in the provision of educational experiences for gastronomic tourists. This includes educational programs on raw materials, both principal and seasoning ingredients, cooking processes, unique food decoration incorporating elements of local art and culture, and the enhancement of Phuket's local museums, including the Phuket Thai Hua museum, the Mining museum, the Phuket Peranakan museum, and the Thalang national museum, through the organization of activities showcasing Phuket's gastronomic resources, as well as its culture and historical development. Phuket cuisine should be exhibited in many different ways, including traditional cuisine, fusion cuisine, and seafood, through continuous communication channels that enhance the education-esthetics experience. Meanwhile, zoning of food establishments is necessary.

Furthermore, food-related events such as vegetarian festivals, Chinese festivals, and seafood festivals must be organized to highlight the city's gastronomy and encourage tourism in order to attract more tourists and enhance the entertainment – escapist experience. Tourism and hospitality-related organizations such as the Phuket Tourist Association, the Phuket Hotel Association, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (Phuket office), among others, can contribute to the city's overall atmosphere, reflecting its image as a culinary city by creating engaging narratives about Phuket's culinary heritage. Furthermore, it can enrich visitors' esthetic experience by encouraging lodging establishments to offer a distinctive menu commensurate with the city's gastronomic culture, thereby making gastronomic experiences more accessible to tourists.

Additionally, developing tourist satisfaction can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including offering online information relevant to food and the Phuket way of life in order to increase awareness of the culinary culture, which in turn helps tourists develop a stronger attachment to Phuket. Additionally, strengthening tourist guides and local food entrepreneurs' knowledge of gastronomic tourism will enable them to be more competent and capable of providing useful information to tourists, thus improving their experience and pleasure with Phuket. Additionally, Phuket should establish a cooking curriculum that is centered on the city's gastronomic identity and expose students to locations where they may

absorb the local way of life and develop ties with each area. Meanwhile, Phuket must establish guidelines for marketing indigenous cuisines, which include the processing of seafood, coconut products, and traditional sweets as souvenirs. This can help Phuket build a strong brand and image for its culinary city among visitors, which can help build bonds and encourage more visits in the future.

Limitation and Recommendation for Future Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of a gastronomic experience on revisiting intention in a gastronomically creative city, with a particular emphasis on domestic tourists. As a result, it is necessary to consider the applicability of research findings. Additionally, the current study on gastronomic experiences focused on the analysis of travelers who have already visited Phuket. Thus, future research should place a greater emphasis on the features of the destination that entice international gastronomy visitors, particularly in the area of unique regional cuisine, which can help the destination become more competitive. Due to the fact that this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, data were collected from gastronomy tourists who visited Phuket in one cross-sectional way. As travel experiences continue to manifest themselves after a visit, the next study should collect longitudinal data in order to acquire information that can be used for better destination planning of gastronomic tourism.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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