

CULINARY TOURISM AS A DESTINATION
ATTRACTION: AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF
THE DESTINATION'S FOOD IMAGE AND
INFORMATION SOURCES

By

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CULINARY TOURISM AS A DESTINATION
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THE ROLE OF THE DESTINATION'S FOOD IMAGE
AND INFORMATION SOURCES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	1
The Relationship between Food and Tourism	2
Information Search and Information Sources	5
Statement of the Problem	6
Objective of the Study	7
Research Question	7
Research Hypotheses	9
Significance of the Study	11
Definition of Terms	12
Organization of the Study	13
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	14
Introduction	14
The Historical Development of Gastronomy	14
The History of Eating Out	16
Foodways (Food Habits)	17
Food Identities	19
Food as a Motivating Factor	23
Food and Tourism	25
Previous Research on Food and Tourism	29
Destination Image	34
Previous Research on Destination Image	40
Information Search and Information Sources	42
Theoretical Development of Information Search Behavior	43
Previous Research on Information Search and Travelers	48
Demographic Characteristics	52
Summary	54

III. METHODOLOGY.....	56
Research Design.....	56
The Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses	60
Target Population.....	61
Sampling Technique	61
Survey Procedure	62
Research Instrument.....	63
Validity and Reliability.....	65
Data Analysis	66
IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	68
Introduction.....	68
Response Rate.....	68
Focus Group Results.....	71
Analysis of the Research Questions and Hypotheses	76
Research Question One.....	77
Factor Analysis	77
Regression Analysis.....	79
Additional Comparison across Countries	81
Descriptive Statistics	81
France.....	81
Italy	83
Thailand	85
The Potential of Visit to France, Italy and Thailand.....	86
Overall Destination Profiles.....	87
Factor Analysis	89
France.....	89
Italy	90
Thailand	92
Overall Comparison across the Countries.....	94
Regression Analysis.....	95
France.....	95
Italy	97
Thailand	100
Overall Comparison across the Countries.....	101
Research Question Two	102
Factor Analysis	102
Regression Analysis.....	103
Additional Comparison Across Countries	106
Descriptive Statistics.....	106

France.....	106
Italy	107
Thailand	108
The Importance of Information Sources across Countries	110
Overall Comparison across the Countries.....	111
Factor Analysis	112
France.....	112
Italy	113
Thailand	114
Overall Comparison across the Countries.....	115
Regression Analysis.....	116
France.....	116
Italy	119
Thailand	120
Overall Comparison across the Countries.....	123
Research Question Three	124
Research Question Four.....	126
Summary of the Hypotheses Analysis	129
V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	134
Introduction.....	134
Summary of the Study	134
Discussion of the Hypotheses	136
Implications of the Research.....	142
Limitations of the Research	144
Implications for Future Research.....	146
Conclusion	147
REFERENCES	148
APPENDIX A: Focus Group Questions	167
APPENDIX B: Survey Questionnaire	169
APPENDIX C: IRB for Survey Research.....	172
APPENDIX D: IRB for Focus Group.....	174
APPENDIX D: Sample Groups	176

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Previous Research on Food and Wine Tourism.....	32
Table 2. Selected Definition of Destination Image.....	36
Table 3. Overall Response Rate.....	69
Table 4. Demographic Portfolio of Respondents.....	70
Table 5. Factors of Destinations' Food Image.....	78
Table 6. Model 1 - Summary of Destinations' Food Image	80
Table 7. Means Rating of France	83
Table 8. Means Rating of Italy	84
Table 9. Means Rating of Thailand.....	86
Table 10. Descriptive Statistics of Potential Visits.....	87
Table 11. Descriptive Analysis across the Countries.....	88
Table 12. Factors of France's Food Image	89
Table 13. Factors of Italy's Food Image.....	91
Table 14. Factors of Thailand's Food Image	92
Table 15. Overall Factors Comparison across the Countries.....	94
Table 16. Model 1 – Summary for France.....	95
Table 17. Model 2 – Summary for France.....	96
Table 18. Model 1 – Summary for Italy	98
Table 19. Model 2 – Summary for Italy	99

Table 20. Model 1 – Summary for Thailand.....	100
Table 21. Factors of Information Sources.....	102
Table 22. Model 1 – Summary for Information Sources	104
Table 23. Model 2 – Summary for Information Sources	105
Table 24. Mean Ratings for France Information Sources.....	107
Table 25. Mean Ratings for Italy Information Sources	108
Table 26. Mean Ratings for Thailand Information Sources	109
Table 27. Mean Rating for the Importance of Information Sources across the Countries	110
Table 28. Overall Comparison of Means Rating across the Countries.....	111
Table 29. Factors of France Information Sources.....	112
Table 30. Factors of Italy Information Sources	113
Table 31. Factors of Thailand Information Sources	114
Table 32. Factors of Information Sources Comparison across the Countries.....	115
Table 33. Model 1- Summary for France.....	117
Table 34. Model 2 - Summary for France.....	118
Table 35. Model 1 – Summary for Italy	119
Table 36. Model 1 – Summary for Thailand.....	121
Table 37. Model 2 – Summary for Thailand.....	122
Table 38. Regression Analysis of Gender, the Importance of Information Sources (Factor 1) on Intention to Visit	127
Table 39. Regression Analysis of Education, the Importance of Information Sources	

(Factor 1) on Intention to Visit	127
Table 40. Regression Analysis of Education, the Importance of Information Source (Factor 2) on the Intention to Visit	128
Table 41. Regression Analysis of Gender, the Importance of Information Sources (Factor 2) on the Intention to Visit	128

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study	8
Figure 2. Hypothetical Model of the Study	9
Figure 3. Three waves of Food Change in the Industrial Society.....	22
Figure 4. Supply Components of Wine and Culinary Tourism System	26
Figure 5. Relating Consumption and Production in Gastronomy Tourism Experience	28
Figure 6. The Most Common Attributes Used in Image Studies.....	37
Figure 7. Model of Information Processing.....	45
Figure 8. Research Framework	59
Figure 9. Conceptual Framework	60

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The tourism industry in the United States currently shares between four to six percent of the gross domestic product and is one of the most significant economic resources to the country (Wilkerson, 2003). According to Travel Industry of America (TIA), the tourism industry is also the third largest private employer and one of the largest retail/service segments in the nation (TIA, 2004). Leisure travel accounted for more than 70 percent of the overall tourism revenue. In 2000 and 2001, TIA reported that travel expenditures were \$591 billion and \$551 billion respectively (Wilkerson, 2003). In 2003, the total expenditure increased to \$554.5 billion as a result of an increase in domestic tourism (TIA, 2004). As the United States economy improved, TIA forecasted that travel expenditures would increase by five percent in 2005.

Tourism destinations across the United States are competing to attract more tourists and to increase their tourism arrivals. In order to entice more tourists, destinations are using various promotional tools and marketing strategies that will effectively raise the number of visitors. Not surprising, some destinations attract more visitors than others. As reported by TIA (2004), California, Florida, and Texas are the

top three destinations in the United States. Destinations that can offer attractive and highly desirable products draw more tourists.

The Relationship between Food and Tourism

Recent research has shown that tourists spend almost 40% of their budget on food when traveling (Boyne, Williams, & Hall, 2002). The 2004 Restaurant & Foodservice Market Research Handbook states that 50% of restaurants' revenue was generated by travelers (Graziani, 2003). It shows that there is a symbiotic relationship between food and the tourism industry. More importantly, food has been recognized as an effective promotional and positioning tool of a destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Similarly, with increasing interest in local cuisine, more destinations are focusing on food as their core tourism product. For example, France, Italy, and Thailand have been known for their cuisine.

Even though it is becoming a crucial segment of the tourism industry, culinary tourism is an area that has not been studied by many researchers (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). The term "culinary tourism" was developed by Lucy Long in 1998 (Wolf, 2002). Long (2004) defined culinary tourism as experiencing and participating in the foodways of other people which include but are not limited to consumption, preparation, and presentation of food items. Long (2004) emphasized that savoring the food of others is the way which one can really experience and accept different culture without reluctance.

The importance of the connection between food and tourism cannot be ignored. Each destination has different levels of attractiveness that can draw tourists from different

countries (Au & Law, 2002). Authentic and interesting food can attract visitors to a destination. Using Getz and Brown's (2006) application and definition of wine tourism, we can say that culinary tourism can be associated with travelers' interest in the food of a destination. On the other hand, the destination will use food as the main attraction and will develop marketing strategies that will focus on the food. It is important for marketers of a culinary destination to know the image currently held by its targeted customers and how to affect their intention to visit through effective marketing strategies. Frochot (2003) recommended food images can be utilized to exhibit the cultural aspects of a country. As such, destinations can use food to represent its "cultural experience, status, cultural identity, and communicating" (p.82).

Further, Hobsbawn & Ranger (1983) argued that cuisines that are highly known for their taste and quality can be developed into tourist products. For example, Italian cuisine and wine has boosted the Italian tourism industry (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). According to Riley (2000), the association of national cuisine and tourism depends on the role of the cuisine in the social culture that creates the national identity. Thus, a destination can use its cuisine as a marketing strategy.

Jones and Jenkins (2002) recommended that food is not only a basic need for tourists, but also a cultural element that can positively present a destination. Given that food can be used to project the identity and culture of a destination, food consumption can be used in the development of a destination image (Quan & Wang, 2004). In addition, food consumption also contributes to the economy of a destination, and provides tourists with a local experience. Hong Kong tourist arrivals were increasing because of the growing number of restaurants that offer many varieties of cuisines (Au &

Law, 2002). A major reason people travel to Hong Kong is to experience and taste the food.

Culinary or gastronomical activities of a destination also are categorized as part of cultural tourism. Richards (1996) claimed that cultural tourism may include experiencing the cultural attractions as well as sampling the local food. Kim (1998) stated that cultural determinants are important aspects of demand for tourism worldwide. Cultural tourists are generally interested in the products and culture of a particular destination as well as experiencing and learning about the culture (Richards, 1996).

It is well known that food plays a key role in attracting tourists to a certain destination because of its reflection of a region's culture and lifestyle. Food and wine tourism is steadily growing and highly demanded in today's marketplace (Corigliano, 2002). Many researchers have shown that cuisine has a great impact on travelers' decisions when choosing their vacation destination. Moreover, it has been reported that the cuisine of a country can showcase its cultural or national identity (Rand, Heath, & Alberts, 2003). For example, the image of France has always been associated with its food and wine (Frochot, 2003). Likewise, the strength of people's desire to visit Italy is largely due to its cuisine (Boyne, Williams, & Hall, 2002). Corigliano (2002) argued the success of Italian gastronomy is predominantly attributed to the assimilation of its gastronomy into its national identity. Food is blended in the Italian culture and connected to the lifestyle of its people, and these have confirmed the importance of linking food and tourism.

Quan and Wang (2004) noted that food can convey unique experience and enjoyment to travelers. Specifically, food may totally enhance tourists' experience and

can be the most memorable part of the trip. Thus, the food of a destination can be used to represent the image and distinctiveness of the destination. Therefore, identifying and positioning a specific product for the market is highly desirable in developing a potential image. Culinary tourism is not only appealing to tourists, but also contributes to the social, economic and environmental development of a destination (Corigliano, 2002).

Furthermore, the author stated those regions that can offer and take advantage of their food and wine and position them as a premier tourism product will benefit highly as the value of their destinations increase. Although food continues to be a highly significant aspect of the tourism industry, the industry has not been able to attract many researchers in this field (Tefler & Wall, 1996).

Information Search and Information Sources

The next intention of this study seeks to explore the effects of information sources on travelers' intentions to visit culinary destinations. In today's competitive global environment, knowing customers' behavior on the importance of different types of information sources might be significant for marketers and policy makers (Srinivas, 1990; Wilkie & Dickson, 1985). In addition, if marketers want to market their product effectively, they should know how, what and where to communicate the message they want to convey. In this regard, the types of information sources chosen by customers will be an important strategy that should be used by marketers. Wilkie and Dickson (1985) stated that "Information search represents the primary stage at which marketing can provide information and influence customers' decisions" (p.85). In summary,

understanding how customers search and use the information may significantly impact marketers in today's information age.

Statement of Problem

In general, the tourism industry has many facets such as, ecotourism, ethnic, cultural, tourism, sports, sex, health, and others. All these types of tourism produce different kinds of experiences (Long, 2004).

One of the central functions of the tourism industry is to provide food experiences. Culinary tourism, food tourism or gastronomy tourism are related to food and eating experiences that occur when people travel. Additionally, during a trip or vacation, some travelers might look for types of food similar to those that they eat at home. In contrast, there will be travelers who might be passionate to try foods of other cultures or those who are curious about different foods. What are the underlying factors that can draw travelers who are interested to taste different foods?

The relationship between food and tourism seems paradoxical. There are many different perceptions on food. For example, food can act in many different roles, from satisfying basic needs (Maslow, 1954), social and cultural needs (Long, 2004), social status needs (Richards, 2002), aesthetic experience (Long, 2004), and other roles. In general, there are numerous experiences that can be associated with eating.

Long (2004) argued that very few studies have been written in relation to food and the activities associated with food, that might affect travelers' experience and the ways in which tourism might influence the foodways of a particular culture, community,

or individuals. In addition, there is no research that has examined the role of food in tourism in regard to destinations' image and information sources.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of destinations' food image, information sources, and demographic profiles on the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination.

Objectives of the Study

There were three objectives of the study:

1. Explain the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.
2. Examine the influence that sources of information have on travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination.
3. Identify the moderating effect of demographic characteristics on: a) the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit, b) the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

Research Questions

In this study, four research questions were investigated.

1. What is the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit?

2. What sources of information are perceived most important to travelers interested in visiting a culinary destination?
3. What is the moderating effect of demographic characteristics on the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit?
4. What is the moderating effect of demographic characteristics on the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit?

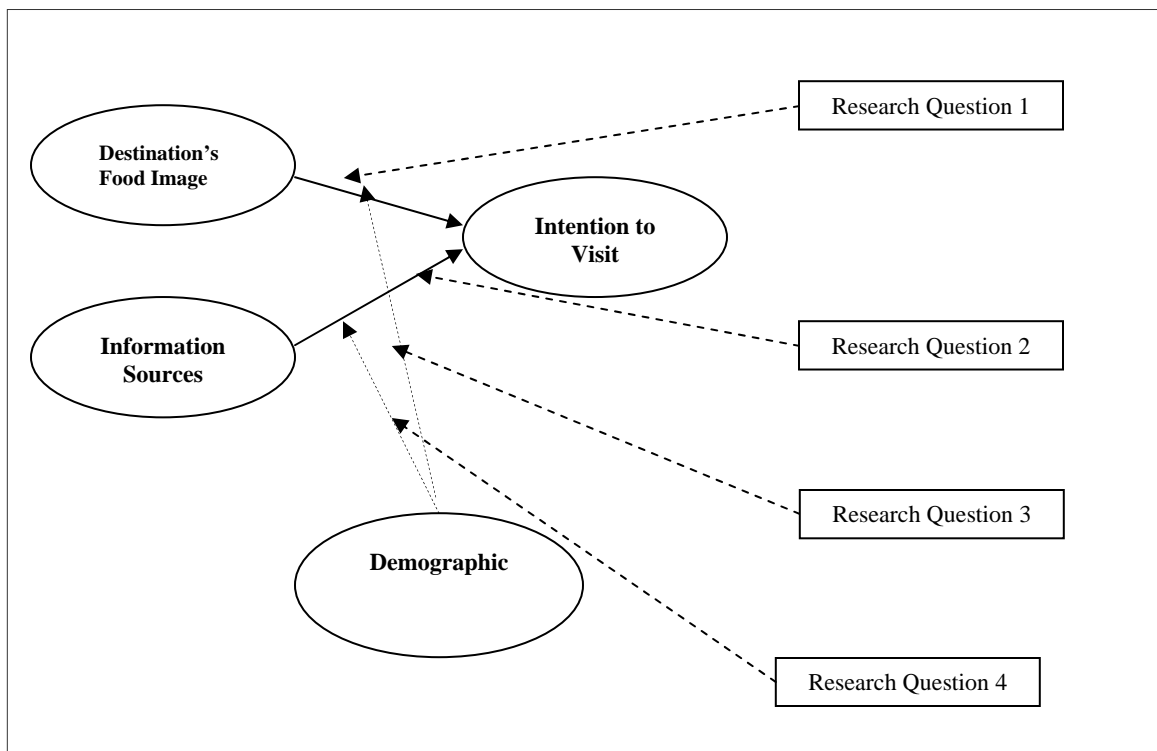


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

Research Hypothesis

Figure 2 depicts the hypothetical model that examined the relationship among the constructs in the study. Each construct in the model was selected based on a comprehensive literature review. The theoretical concept of this model was discussed in the literature review section.

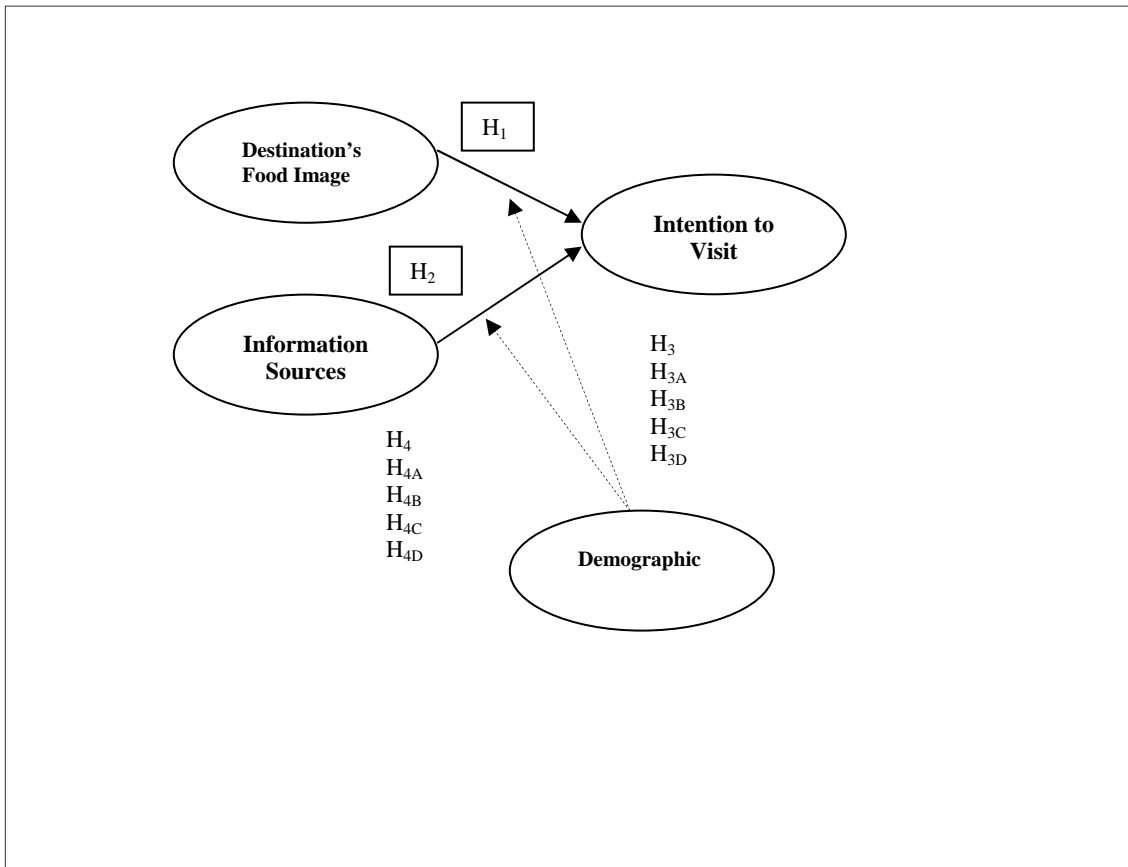


Figure 2. Hypothetical Model of the Study

Study hypotheses are as follows:

H₁ : The destination's food image has a significant effect on the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination.

H₂: The type of information source has a significant effect toward the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination.

The literature revealed that demographic characteristics have a moderating effect on travelers' perception on the destination's food image and information sources. Therefore we would like to test the moderating effect in this study:

H₃: Travelers' demographic characteristics will significantly moderate the relationship between a destination's food image and intention to visit.

H_{3A}: Gender has a significant effect on the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.

H_{3B}: Age has a significant effect on the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.

H_{3C}: Educational background has a significant effect on the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.

H_{3D}: Income has a significant effect on the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.

H₄: Travelers' demographic characteristics will significantly moderate the relationship between information sources and intention to visit.

H_{4A}: Gender has a significant effect on the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

H_{4B}: Age has a significant effect on the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

H_{4C}: Educational background has a significant effect on the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

H_{4D}: Income has a significant effect on the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

Significance of the Study

The study focused on analyzing travelers' interest in culinary tourism and those factors which influenced their choice of a food/culinary destination. Since very few studies have been reported in this particular area, this research made two major contributions to the hospitality and tourism literature. First, the theoretical contribution of this study enriched the body of knowledge in culinary tourism. As such, this study sought to characterize the profile of travelers interested in culinary tourism and add to the existing knowledge by improving the understanding of travelers' behavior which includes sources of information, destination image, and demographic profiles associated with culinary tourism. Second, the managerial contribution of the study supports and assists the hospitality and tourism managers in planning a comprehensive strategic marketing plan focused on targeting the culinary tourism market. In addition, this study provides invaluable information that assists managers in planning and utilizing tourism resources more efficiently.

Definition of Terms

Culinary Tourism: The intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an other – participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered to a culinary system not one's own (Long, 2004).

Foodways: The network of behaviors, traditions, and beliefs concerning food, and involves all the activities surrounding a food item and its consumption, including the procurement, preservation, preparation, presentation, and performance of the food (Yoder, 1972).

Destination Image: Is the sum of one's beliefs, ideas, and impressions of a destination (Crompton, 1979).

Tourist: A temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change (MacCannell, 1976).

Information search: The motivation activation of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition of information from the environment (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 presented a general introduction of the study and included background information of the study. The statement of problem, objectives of the study, research questions, conceptual model, and hypothesis were discussed in this section. In Chapter 2, an evaluation of the literature review was conducted based on the conceptual model of the study. Chapter 3 summarized the research designed, methodology, and analysis that were used in this paper. In addition, the population, sampling technique, survey procedure, research instrument, and validity and reliability were presented. Chapter 4 discussed the results of the data analysis and hypotheses testing. Demographic profiles of the participants and descriptive statistics were illustrated. Chapter 5 presented a summary and discussion of the findings. The theoretical and managerial contributions of the findings were discussed. In addition, the limitations of the study were illustrated in this section. The chapter concluded with comments and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter focused on the review of related literature in food and tourism with a particular emphasis on the development related to foodservice, food, culinary and tourists' behavior in the travel and tourism industry. In addition, each of the theoretical constructs used in the model of the study was reviewed for further clarification and understanding. Those constructs were destination image, information sources, and demographics.

The Historical Development of Gastronomy (Culinary)

The review of literature might not be adequate without covering the evolution and history of gastronomy. Scarpato (2002) stated that the word "gastronomy" first emerged in a poem published by Jacques Berchoux, a Frenchman in 1804. In the poem, Berchoux described gastronomy as enjoying food and drink at the very best. Before then, the word "gastronomy" had been ubiquitous and had been extremely difficult to define, because it encompassed an extensive association with everything related to food, eat, and drink. Finally, in 1835, the word gastronomy was included and defined in a French dictionary as

“the art of good eating.” However, Santich (1996), defined gastronomy as, “reflective eating, which, however, it expands to reflective cooking and food preparation as well, maintaining the association with excellence and/or fancy food and drink” (p. 115).

According to Scarpato (2002), after two centuries discovering of the word gastronomy, Athenee, a Greek writer, began writing extensively about food and drink and the lifestyles of past historians, poets and philosophers. Athenee wrote at length about how food and drink were celebrated in those days. Also, many other authors from the Greek and Roman Empire were writing just about cookery in general, but not focusing on gastronomy itself.

Similarly, the Italians in the Middle-Ages explored and incorporated gastronomy in all facets of life, from medicine to agriculture. Food was incorporated in the study of medicine which relates to healthy living and good eating behaviors. Additionally, Scarpato(2002) stressed that those people who were involved in food and drinks in ancient days, did not have any particular skills or professions that were directly related to food and drinks, it was more about their involvement and enjoyment of food and drinks. Basically, food was part of their lifestyle rather than a profession. Later, a French man, Alexander Balthasar Laurent (1758-1837), who was a *barrister* and writer, associated gastronomy with the bourgeois lifestyles. By 1920, the first gourmet literature was published in France as a guideline to local foods for travelers, which function to promote regional gastronomy tourism. In 1930, more information about gastronomy was included in the “*Guide Bleu Bords de Loire et Sud*” (Csergo, 1996).

Today, food carries on its multiple functions in social settings and has made its way into the lifestyles and the cultures of people from every corner of the world.

Mennell, Murcott, and Van Otterloo, (1992), p.115 quoted that, “sharing food is held to signify “togetherness,” an equivalence among a group that defines and reaffirms insiders as socially similar.” Food related events comprise a wide array of eating and drinking activities that bring people together for the enjoyment and sharing of food.

The History of Eating Out

Eating out is a social activity which involves the preparation of food by someone else in a social establishment and it involves a social environment (Warde & Martens, 2000). The development of eating out began when people started traveling, engaged in economic activities and military purposes. Most importantly, especially when people were away from home, eating out was a crucial part of the journey and this contributed to the development of commercial eating establishments.

In the fifteenth century, commercial establishments that offered food and lodging began to flourish in England. According to Heal (1972), England became known for hospitality businesses that catered to travelers. However, these commercial services were made available only to people who were in transit. But by the end of eighteenth century, an increase in the number of business activities had a major impact, furthering the development of commercial food establishments. More cafes, hotels, and boarding houses were developed in response to increase economic activities.

Warde and Martens (2000) stated that in the nineteenth century, hotels started serving meals; however, these meals were served in people’s rooms and not in public spaces. By the end of nineteenth century, eating out became more public, where anyone

who could afford to dine in public places was allowed to do so. In the twentieth century, eating out had established itself as entertainment and pleasure, and became part of the social lifestyle (Burnett, 1989).

Foodways (Food Habits)

Yoder (1972) defined foodways as “the network of behaviors, traditions, and beliefs concerning food, and involves all the activities surrounding a food item and its consumption, including the procurement, preservation, preparation, and performance of that food” (p.8).

In other words, we also can associate foodways with food habits of a particular society or individuals. Parsha & Khan (1992) suggested that socio-economic and cultural factors might influence individuals toward liking a particular type of food. However, Wenkman (1969) argued that food habits can be linked to individuals’ nutritional intake. Individuals tend to seek food based on their needs and wants. Kittler & Sucher (1989) commented that today’s food habits are not just selecting nutrient intake, but are more complex. According to him, it comprised of the following: (1) culture, (2) religion, (3) ethnicity, and (4) geographical area. McIntosh (1995) recommended that food habits, originating from one’s culture, is normally governed by environmental factors and influenced by their social, cultural and religious background.

The relationship between food habits and religion has been documented by many researchers (Kilara & Iya, 1992; Kittler & Sucher, 1989; Tannahill, 1988). Most religious beliefs have their own interpretation or guidelines when it comes to food. For

example, persons of Muslim and Jewish faiths do not eat pork. This might affect their food habits when they travel. These groups of travelers will choose restaurants that are free from pork or other food items that are prohibited in their religion. Similarly, the cultural values of certain groups of people influence the tourism activities of a destination. For example, the food of a destination could be a major reason for travelers to visit that area.

As such, the application of tourism could be the best way to further enhance the role of food to market a destination. Reynolds (1993) hypothesized that the food and drink of a group of people might be used to understand the social and economic lifestyle of a destination or a country. He further stressed that food is the most inexpensive source of “authentic” products that can be consumed by travelers in comparison to other forms of “authentic” products such as artifacts or paintings which could be more expensive to consume. In particular, travelers have always been in search for something that is authentic. For example, lobster in Maine has been well known for its popularity and has become a regional icon. Other destinations, like Louisiana and Michigan have their unique food that can be used as a marketing tool to attract people to visit. As more and more people in the United States and around the world are involved in traveling, people become more familiar with others’ culture and disregard their differences (Lowenburg, Todhunter, Wilson, Savage & Lubawski, 1979). Furthermore, the authors mentioned that people’s cultural background not only influenced their food habits, but also the number of meals per day, and the table manners of a society.

Food Identities

Beardsworth and Keil (1997) argued that nutrient intake was not the only function of eating, but it also included the experience of tasting food and the significance of interacting with other people during a meal, especially when the foods represent a symbolic meaning in an event. For example, the usage of food in special occasions and festivals might represent a cultural and spiritual identity of a particular culture. The role of food also could be associated with status and social class of individuals. Food like “*caviar beluga*” is typically associated with high taste and high society. In contrast, foods like beans and nuts are considered as the poor man’s diet.

Lowenberg (1970) applied Maslow’s theory into food consumption behavior which can be classified as satisfying one’s basic needs to self actualization needs. The application is explained as follows:

1. *Physical needs for survival*: the basic elements of food intake related to bodily needs.
2. *Social needs for security*: when basic needs are fulfilled, future requirements will be determined which are directly related to storage of food for security purposes.
3. *Belongingness*: the relationship of eating and social settings, using food as a medium for interaction and signifying cultural identity. For example, different cultures have different types of cuisine that represent the uniqueness of the culture.

4. *Status*: where, what and with whom you eat also can determine the status of an individual. For example, eating caviar has always been associated as a luxury food that is fit for the upper class or the rich and famous.
5. *Self- realization*: it occurs when other levels have been achieved and an individual might be motivated to experience other food from other culture.

Basically, food serves multiple functions in satisfying human needs. These functions motivate our eating behavior. In the United States, people are not just eating to satisfy their basic psychological needs, but are also eating foods that appeal to them (Lowenberg, Todhunter, Wilson, Savage, & Lubawski, 1979). Similarly, Hall and Mitchell (2000) found that food is not only for the purpose of eating, but has other complex meaning such as personal identity, traditions, production, consumption, and sustainability. Not only that, food has been recognized as an important tool in the tourism industry and has been used in commercials to showcase products of restaurant, hotels and destinations.

Ryan (1997) and Smith (1991) proved that food had an impact on the travelers' level of satisfaction with the trip. A study by Rimmington and Yuskel (1998) found that the major reason travelers revisited Turkey was for its cuisine. In addition, the authors found that food was the fourth factor that would contribute to travelers overall satisfaction. Hu and Ritchie (1993) stressed that food was the fourth factor or the reason to visit after weather, accommodation, and scenery. In general, it seemed that food significantly contributed to the travelers' overall impression of and satisfaction with a destination.

Further, Hall & Mitchell (2000) stated three major waves in the development of food and cuisines (see Figure 3). The first wave started in the 1400's and made its way to the 1800's. The food in that period was brought from Asia and the new world (Americas) to be traded in Europe. In contrast, in the second wave which took place from the 17th century to the 20th century, there was a lot of movement of people from Europe to the Americas. As part of the relocation process, people brought food and their culture to the new world. Finally, the third wave, as we progressed along the information superhighway and as the world has become a global village, has changed how information about food is shared with people from around the world which somehow alters peoples' behavior toward food. In short, the globalization of food has affected people's eating behavior, for example "McDonalds" has been a common phenomenon in every country and city worldwide (Hall & Mitchell, 2000).

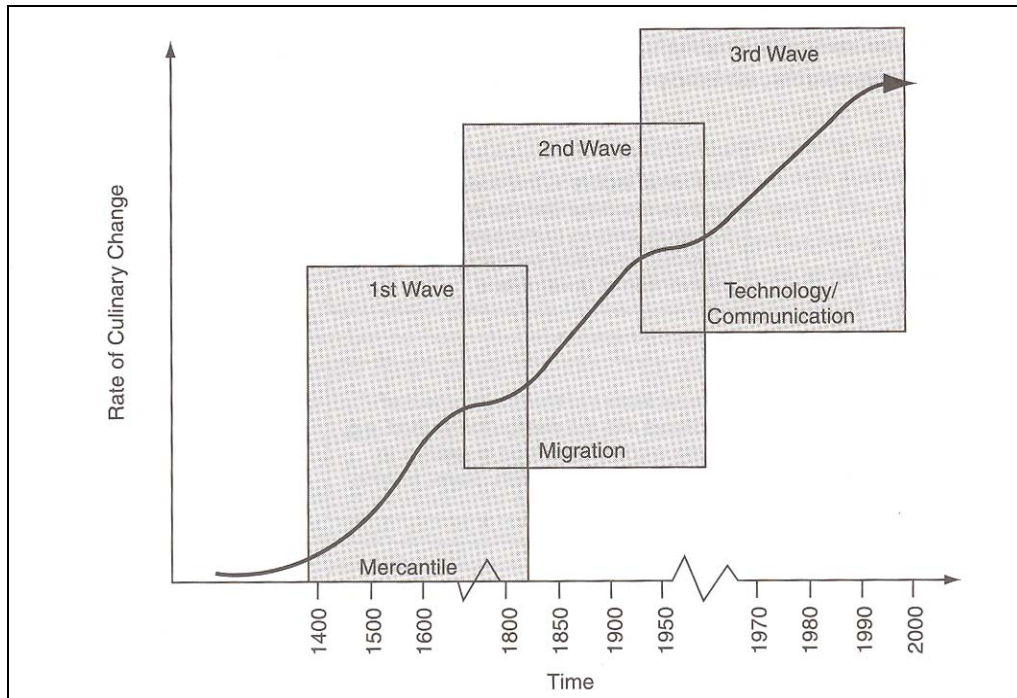


Figure 3. Three waves of food change in the Industrial society.

Source: Hall and Mitchell; 2002, p.74

However, for the tourism industry to further develop and grow destinations should offer something different such as national foods and cultures which could be the corner stone for the globalization of their food. As different types of foods are consumed and connected to a particular location, they in turn make their way to the promotion and marketing of destinations. In addition, the globalization of today's food was influence by the technological wave that has not really altered the demand for local food (Kearns & Philo, 1993). Consequently, this would be the best position for the tourism industry to publicize the food and culture of a geographical location.

Food as a Motivating Factor

Fields (2002) argued that people travel for many reasons. For the purpose of explaining traveling for food motivations, the author adopted a motivation typology developed by McIntosh (1995). There were four main categories in this typology: (1) physical motivators, (2) cultural motivators, (3) interpersonal motivators, and (4) status and prestige motivators.

Physical motivators were related to tourists' real experiences during the trip. For example, tourists experienced the cuisine through sampling of the food, looking at attractive food presentation and smelling the aroma of the food. These phenomena would provide a new experience to the tourist that cannot be encountered in a typical day-to-day life. In general, the tourists were able to experience a unique and novel type of opportunity. Similarly, tourists might also be motivated by health reasons, such as visiting countries that offer healthy diet; for example the food of Greece and Italy or "the Mediterranean Diet." This cuisine emphasizes healthy eating that might attract those who want to lose weight.

In terms of cultural motivators, there seemed to be a strong relationship between food and culture (Reynolds, 1993). Tourists may be interested in learning about new cultures and lifestyles of the people at the destination. The easiest way to experience another culture is through its food. Some tourists travel to a destination just to savor the traditional or authentic cuisine that might not be available in other places. Another example might be tourists looking for special food ingredients. All these could be important satisfaction factors when traveling.

Food and tourism can also be interpersonal motivators. As such, eating a meal during a vacation might be an important factor for a tourist. For example, this would be the best time for them to socialize with other members of the family if they were on a family vacation. It can help to increase one's relations with someone who had been away from the family. Hjalager (2002) stressed that the surrounding atmosphere and socializing with group members were an important part of the overall dining experience. During the vacation, one would have more leisure time and could possibly spend more time together with family and friends and could help build good relationships. Some hotels used food as a way for their guests to meet other people in the hotels (Fields, 2002).

Finally, status and prestige had always been the main motivations for people to travel to a destination. For example, destinations such as Tuscany and Provencal offer impeccable cuisines which might be reasons for people to visit. Having dinner in an up-scale restaurant would be an important factor that could be associated with one's status and lifestyle (Fields, 2002).

Food and Tourism

Definition and Conceptualization

At present there is a growing demand in food and wine tourism and it is becoming a crucial sector of the travel and tourism industry (Santich, 2004). Nevertheless, the popularity of food and wine tourism has been recognized for a few decades. According to Pomero (2005), in Australia and Canada, culinary tourism generated \$1 billion annually and may generate \$7.2 billion by 2010. In addition, more and more countries are starting to recognize the potential of culinary tourism. For example, Scarpato (2002) stated that in Singapore, the government developed a “New Asia-Singapore Cuisine” marketing effort in order to attract visitors to savor its cuisine which attempted to combine the flavor of east and west cuisines. In addition, Singapore started to organize its first Singapore Food Festival and the World Gourmet Summit in 1997, and it is being organized bi-annually. Singapore is working hard to develop its food and wine image and is becoming a premier food destination in Asia.

Food and wine tourism can be called gastronomic tourism or culinary tourism interchangeably. Hall and Mitchell (2001) defined food tourism as, “visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food and tasting and/ or experiencing the attributes of a specialist food production region are the primary motivating factors for travel” (p. 308). Henderson (2004) emphasized that marketers have been using food by itself or food and drink as a promotional tool and argued that food and destination have been the prominent products for travelers in shaping their overall experience.

Corigliano (2002) stated that culinary tourism can be categorized as cultural tourism, because of its connection to the preservation of agriculture product. For example, Italy is famous for its wine and olive oil regions. In essence, culinary tourism involved gourmet tours which include touring farms and wineries as well as tasting food products. Additionally, culinary tourism also could provide travelers with unique experience where they could experience the culture of a particular destination and associate it with the past history. The author also established a framework of culinary tourism as depicted in Figure 4.

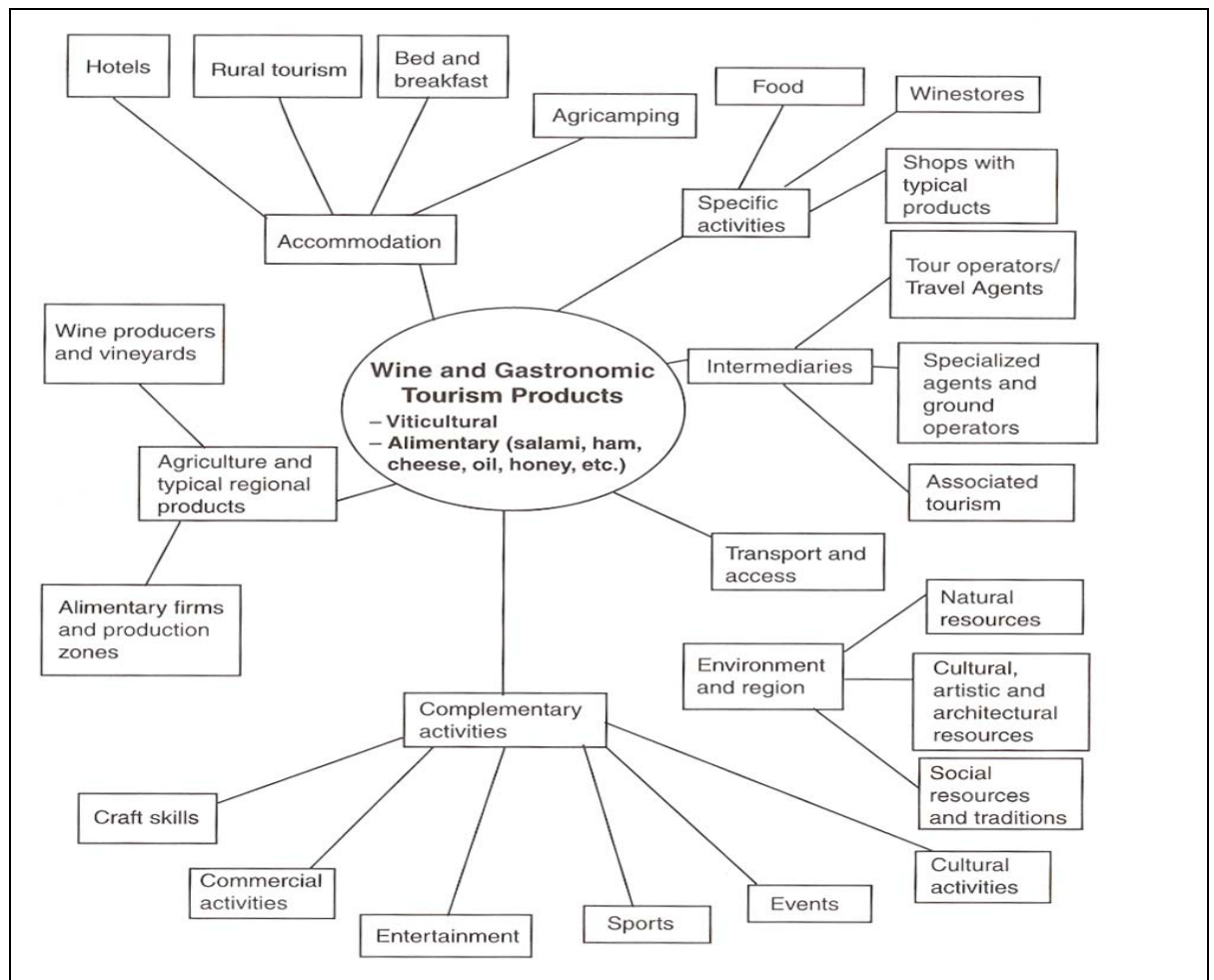


Figure 4. Supply components of wine and culinary tourism system.

Source: Magda Antonioli Corigliano; 2002, p.169

Moreover, according to Hall and Mitchell (2001) in general, food can be divided into four major categories: (1) a component of the local culture that can be offered for tourism, (2) a tourism promotional tool, (3) development of local produce as income generator or economic impact, and (4) food affected by the local consumption patterns and ways its preferred by travelers.

Henderson (2004) discussed that food functions were not limited to the fulfillment of one's biological and hedonic needs, but also to other psychological and social interactions. Moreover, travelers away from home might be in search of local delicacies upon their return which could boost their esteem and prestige. On the other hand, Hegarty and O'Mahony (1999) described food as a form of cultural expression.

Gastronomy or culinary tourism refers to a visit or travel that is motivated by an interest in food and drinks. Thus, the main motivations for people to travel are to experience and taste the food and drinks that can provide a lasting memory in their lifetime (Wolf, 2002). According to Wolf, in general, travelers would spend more money when they are away from home. However, for culinary travelers, they would look for a unique and different experience during their trip (Richards, 2002). Likewise, as the culinary tourism grows, more food related products such as food and wine routes, literature on food and travel, and travel packages related to food will emerge as it becomes an essential experience for travelers (Wolf, 2002). Additionally, culinary tourism is not only associated with eating and drinking, but also events ranging from food festivals to farm visits (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2002).

Finally, Richards (2002) designed a model of culinary tourism as shown in Figure 5. This model depicted the links in culinary tourism, starting with the production of food,

consumption, and experiences. In summary, the figure represents a network of culinary tourism which begins at the farm or vineyard and ends at the restaurants that might determine the “quality of experience.”

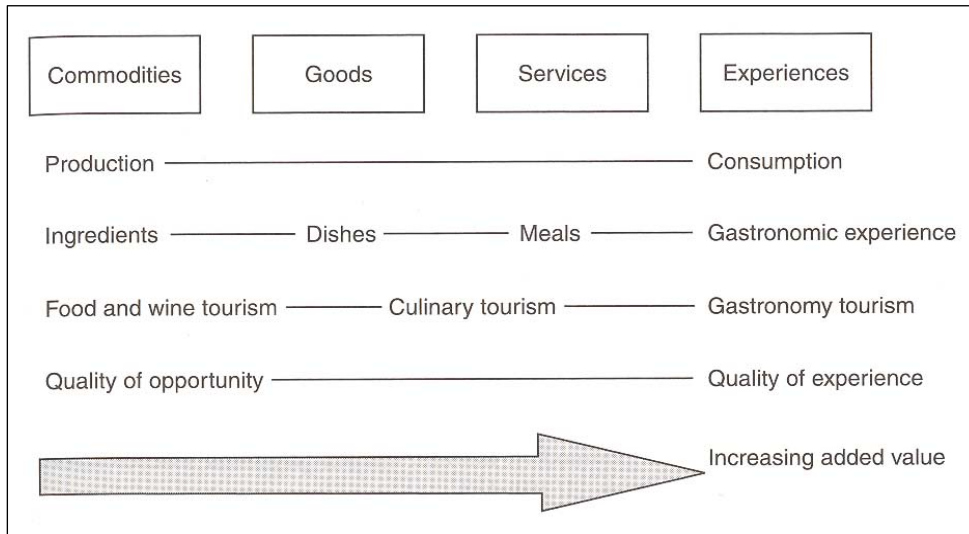


Figure 5. Relating consumption and production in gastronomy tourism experience.

Source: Greg Richards; 2002, p19.

Previous Research on Food and Tourism

Nield, Kozak, and LeGrays (2000) examined the role of foodservice and tourist satisfaction in Romania. Travelers from eastern and western Europe and Romania were selected as the sample of the research. The study revealed that there were differences in tourists' perceptions on the attributes of foods such as: price, quality of food and service, variety of dishes, food presentation, and the speed of service. However, the most important attributes that were found to affect tourists' satisfaction were food quality, value for money, varieties of dishes, atmosphere, and food presentation. The findings also indicated that different tourist groups had different perceptions of satisfaction. The needs and wants of international travelers were totally different and restaurant marketers have to consider this implication when offering foodservice products.

Quan and Wang (2004) examined tourist food experience by analyzing their food consumption. Specifically, the focus was to develop a conceptual model by integrating the experience into the food consumption patterns of travelers. Hence, the main objective was to determine the relationship between food consumption and tourist experience. According to the authors, food consumption could generate tourists' peak experience, which might be used to promote a destination. Four recommendations were provided in order to develop food as a destination attraction. First, rural areas could be promoted by projecting the gastronomy of the areas. Second, destinations with plenty of food products could be turned into major tourist attractions. Third, the food of a destination can be part of a larger tourism event. Fourth, food or culinary tourism can be used to enhance destination attractiveness.

Cohen and Avieli (2004) examined the perception of food as a key destination attraction. The main focus of the study was to analyze the difference between attraction and impediment. In particular, the authors were looking at two perspectives: first how food could be an attractive product for a destination and second analyzing the barriers to producing acceptable food products for tourists. This purpose was to evaluate how to resolve these problems and the ways in which they affect the travelers' food choice. For example, some destinations faced problems in producing hygienic and nutritious food for visitors.

Bessiere (1998) conducted a study on the relationships between rural tourism and cultural heritage in France. According to the author, gastronomy had currently moved eating to a different level that can influence peoples' lifestyle. Furthermore, the eating process can bring people to the yesteryear, enabling them to experience the lifestyles of the past. In particular, gastronomy is the most important aspect of travel and tourism. On the other hand, food can also be characterized as follows Bessiere (1998): "a symbol, a sign of communion, a class marker, and as an emblem." In general, food can be associated with one's culture and can also alter one's normal habits. As an example, people in the city tend to find new ways to satisfy their normal dietary need and tend to look for "traditional food" or "back to nature" type of food. Similarly, traditional cuisine is becoming the trend these days. In France, regional cuisines and country food are found in up-scale restaurants. Bessiere (1998) re-emphasized that food is an essential factor in developing tourism products, assimilation of the culture, and social activities of the France's rural tourist market.

Josiam, Mattson, and Sullivan (2004) investigated restaurants as historic attractions and made a comparison with a traditional restaurant. Mickey's dining car was chosen as the main subject of the study. In today's marketplace, a restaurant's main function is not only serving food, but also providing tourists with a unique experience. These modifications seemed to be very important for the success of restaurants due to the competitiveness of the restaurant industry. Without offering a unique atmosphere, customers might choose restaurants that can provide a new eating experience. Similarly, because of its uniqueness, Mickey's Dining Car has successfully attracted a larger consumer market, from day trippers to first time visitors. Additionally, Mickey's not only depends on its historical value, but also emphasizes on the quality of food, which may affect the overall success of the restaurant, especially in the tourist market. It is also recommended that tourism marketers draw attention to the ways in which restaurants can contribute to the tourists' experience when they travel.

Henderson (2000) discussed hawkers food and tourism in Singapore and its reputation. Food prepared by food hawkers was popular in most South East Asian and Middle Eastern countries, not only to locals but also to visitors. In Singapore, hawkers' food was chosen as the most popular types of cuisine besides upscale restaurants. Moreover, hawkers' food was found to boost the experience of travelers who visited Singapore. In general, hawkers' food has been essential to the economic and cultural lifestyle of most Singaporeans.

Henderson (2004) observed that Singapore and food were synonymous. In a survey by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB, 2004) most Singaporean believed that food was the number one attraction that enticed visitors to Singapore. Further, the STB

had been projecting Singapore’s food as the main promotional strategy of their marketing plan. Singapore also has been hosting many annual food events as a main tool to lure travelers to visit Singapore. The Singapore Food Festival and The World Gourmet Summit were among the top festivals that showcased Singapore’s food and cultural lifestyle which had gained international recognition (STB, 2002). The government also is working very hard to increase the level of food hygiene and food preparation to ensure that the food served is safe and fit for consumption by locals and international travelers (STB, 2003). Not only that, Singapore also prepared a guide for Muslim dining that would be important for Muslim’s travelers. In particular, Singapore is seriously making food tourism one of their major products and a key reason for travelers to visit.

TABLE 1
PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON FOOD AND WINE TOURISM

Authors	Purpose	Results
Alant & Bruwer (2004)	To develop the characteristics of wine tourist motivations and to construct a motivational framework specifically for wine tourist.	Knowing the behavior and motivation of wine tourist could improve the understanding of the wine tourist needs and wants.
Au & Law (2002)	To examine the potential of using rough set theory into mixed data relationship modeling in the Hong Kong dining market.	Using the rough set theory, a model of dining information technology was developed and important information on travelers spending patterns was constructed.
Belisle (1983)	To determine the relationship between tourism and local food production and its effect on the local economy.	The interaction between tourism and food production was critically analyzed and suggestions were given on how to improve current gaps.
Bessiere (1998)	To explore France’s rural areas’ potential in terms of tourism and gastronomy.	The importance of maintaining and preserving of culinary heritage in order to maintain a regional identity and develop a new social entity.

Charters & Ali-Knight (2000)	To explore the relationship between the growth in wine tourism and the increasing levels of wine education.	In general tourists were satisfied with their educational experience offered at the wineries. Tourist also realized the benefits of the knowledge on wine.
Charters & Ali-Knight (2002)	To categorize the behavior and characteristics of wine tourist.	A model was developed to analyze the activities associated with wine tourism.
Cohen & Avieli (2004)	To define the function of local food as a destination attraction. Another purpose was to investigate the impediment of producing local food and making it acceptable for the tourist market.	A sociological approach was used to explain the relationship of food and tourism. It discussed how the restaurants mediate the relationship of tourist experience and local cuisine.
Hjalager & Corigliano (2000)	To compare Denmark and Italy core elements in food cultures and images of food.	Denmark and Italy had different policies in promoting food to the tourist. Italy was found to be highly successful in developing cultural role of gastronomy. Food tourism has been an important sector that contributed to the country's economic and social development.
Josiam, Mattson, & Sullivan (2004)	To compare the function of historic restaurants and normal restaurants in attracting travelers.	There were differences between historic restaurant and normal restaurant customers. Most historic restaurants customers were interested in experiencing new food.
Macionis & Cambourne (2002)	To explore and analyze the relationships between wine, restaurant, and tourism sectors in the Canberra Region.	Canberra had successfully paired its wine and culinary tourism. Strong promotional strategies are required in order to establish destination's culinary image.
Marris (1986)	To analyze the food behavior among British, Germans, and Swiss travelers. Main focus was to analyze the importance of food.	Germans were found to have the highest interest in food, Swiss travelers had moderate interest in food and British had the least interest in food when they traveled.
Quan & Wang (2004)	To evaluate different components of a traveler experience and using a traveler food experience as a sample to investigate into this problem.	A structural model was developed in respect to different aspects of travelers' food experience.
Reynolds (1993)	To analyze how 'authentic' food preservation can have an impact to sustainable tourism effort. A case study of Balinese cuisine.	Balinese food had been commercialized and no longer perceived as authentic. Suggestions were provided on how to maintain 'authentic' food in the future.

Sheldon & Fox (1988)	To investigate the relationship between foodservice and tourism. The main purpose is to find out how people from different cultures decide on destination choice and types of food while on vacation.	Identified the importance of foodservice in destination choice of Americans, Japanese, and Canadians. Japanese were found to be totally different than American and Canadian travelers. Foodservice had a stronger influence in Japanese travelers' destination choice.
Telfer & Wall (1996)	To explore the relationship between the tourism industry and local food-producing sectors in developing a country. A case study of Lombok Island, Indonesia.	The authors found that the tourism industry and local food-producing sectors were working very closely and special programs were developed in order to provide training and employ local people. The project was very successful.
Torres (2003)	To evaluate the linkages between tourism demand for food and local food production in Mexico.	Found that tourism and local food production failed to merge. In other words, there were no efforts to integrate local food production and tourism.
Williams (2001)	To examine the promotional literature of wine regions destination image used by wine producers and independent writers. In general the authors were looking at how wine regions position its product in the marketplace.	There were changes in the perceptions of wine region. In the past, more focus was given to the wine production process, but today the focus was more on the recreational and tourist experience at the wine region. Basically, in order to promote wine regions, destinations have to emphasize on tourism products.

Destination Image

Definition and Conceptualization

The importance of understanding visitors' attitudes and interests is instrumental to the success of destination image management (Laws, Scott, & Nick, 2002). Guthrie and Gale (1991) stated that destination image acts as a major source of credibility in travelers'

perceptions in comparison to other products offered at a particular destination. In essence, destination image is the most reliable source influencing travelers' decision making process (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Destination image, as defined by Crompton (1979, p.18) is "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination." On the other hand, Lawson and Bond-Bovy (1977) defined destination image as "the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular destination." This definition confirmed that we can develop a unique characteristic for a market segment of a specific destination that may attract individuals or a group of tourists. As such, the strategy of using destination image is important in promoting a destination (Ryan, 1991; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Baloglu (1996) further stated that identifying which destination image to focus on is critical because it will help to market and promote the destination to a specific segment of the market.

Knowing tourists' perceptions toward a destination image is crucial because it influences customers' decision making processes (Crompton, 1979; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Mayo, 1973). In addition, marketers have long been aware of the association between destination image and consumer behavior (Jenkins, 1999). According to Laws et al.(2002), the type of image will depend on the following two factors: a) the destination's uniqueness or specialty and b) how to attract visitors to the destination. Table 2 presents some selected definitions of destination image to demonstrate its various dimensions.

TABLE 2**SELECTED DEFINITIONS OF PRODUCT/PLACE/DESTINATION IMAGE**

Author (s)	Definitions
Hunt (1971)	“Impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside.”
Markin (1974)	“Our own personalized, internalized and conceptualized understanding of what we know.”
Lawson & Bond-Bovy (1977)	“An expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations and emotional thoughts an individual has of a specific object or place.”
Crompton (1979)	“The sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination.”
Dichter (1985)	“The concept of image describes not individual traits or qualities but the total impression and entity makes on the minds of others.”
Reynolds (1985)	“The mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. It comes into being through a creative process in which selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered.”
Embacher & Buttle (1989)	“Comprised of the ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation; may comprise both cognitive and evaluative components.”
Fakeye & Crompton (1991)	“The mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions.”
Kotler, Haider, & Rein (1994)	“The sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a place.”
Gartner (1993, 1996)	“Consist of three hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective, and conative.”
Santos Arrebola (1994)	“A mental representation of attributes and benefits sought of a product.”
Parenteau (1995)	“A favorable or unfavorable prejudice that the audience and distributors have of the product or destination.”

Source: Gallarza, Gil Saura and Calderón Garcia; 2002, p. 60.

Previous researchers also had recognized that culinary or gastronomy was an important attribute and used it as one of the top attributes among other important attributes in a destination is image. In total, 15 studies had used gastronomy as one of the attributes in the questionnaire. Figure 6 depicted all attributes employed by various researchers.

Authors	Attributes Studied																			
	Various activities	Landscape, surroundings	Nature	Cultural attractions	Nightlife and entertainment	Shopping facilities	Information available	Sport facilities	Transportation	Accommodation	Gastronomy	Price, value, cost	Climate	Relaxation vs Massific	Accessibility	Safety	Social interaction	Resident's receptiveness	Originality	Service Quality
	Functional										Psychological									
1. Crompton (1979)										x		x	x	x		x				x
2. Goodrich (1982)		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x						x
3. Sternquist (1985)		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x						x
4. Haahti (1986)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x	x					x
5. Gartner and Hunt (1987)		x	x					x	x				x							x
6. Calantone and al. (1989)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x		x				x
7. Gartner (1989)		x	x	x	x		x													x
8. Embacher and Buttle (1989)		x	x		x						x	x	x	x	x					x
9. Guthrie and Gale (1991)		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x
10. Ahmed (1991)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x							x
11. Chon (1991)		x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x				x	x				x
12. Fakeye and Crompton (1991)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x
13. Crompton et al. (1992)		x	x		x							x	x	x	x				x	x
14. Carmichael (1992)		x										x			x					x
15. Chon (1992)		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x					x
16. Echtner and Ritchie (1993)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
17. Driscoll and al. (1994)		x	x	x	x	x						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
18. Dadgostar and Isotalo (1995)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x						x
19. Muller (1995)		x		x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
20. Eizaguirre and Laka (1996)						x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
21. Schroeder (1996)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x
22. Ahmed (1996)		x	x	x	x	x														x
23. Oppermann (1996a,1996b)		x	x	x						x	x	x	x	x		x				x
24. Baloglu (1997)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x				x
25. Baloglu and McCleary (1999)		x	x	x	x					x	x	x	x			x				x
Total		8	19	12	18	17	15	3	16	8	14	15	16	12	12	10	7	20	7	4

Figure 6. The most common attributes used in destination image studies.

Source: Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia ; 2001, p. 63

Additionally, Mayo (1975) stated that the image of a destination is an important factor when making decisions on a destination for vacation. Similarly, proper positioning of a destination to a specific target market may distinguish a particular destination from others (Ahmed, 1997). Destination image is becoming an important factor in understanding and modeling travel behavior, as well as formulating competitive

marketing strategies that will support destinations in competing in a marketplace (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

Baloglu (1997) reported that many researchers from different fields of study agreed that destination image could be shaped from two major causes: stimulus factors and personal factors. Stimulus was found to be linked to the external environment and previous experience. In contrast, personal factors were associated with an individual personality in terms of social and psychological behavior.

Guthrie and Gale (1991) stated that the importance of images is higher than a product's tangibility and perceptions because they motivate customers to make decisions. People make decisions based on the image of a destination. If a destination has a positive image, it is more likely that people will visit. According to Kotler, Bowens, & Makens (2002), developing a more favorable image is important for competitive advantage. Therefore, the more highly positive a destination's image is, the more likely it is to attract travelers and successfully compete with its competitors. Baloglu and Mangalolu (2001) identified that travelers' perceptions and image of a destination would be affected by the types of information sources availability. In particular, information provided by travel agents or travel related companies were considered the most important sources for international travels.

Jenkins (1999) commented that marketers are fascinated by the concept of tourist destination images because of their association with customers' decision-making processes. However, in order to differentiate a destination image, a destination or a particular market has to go through a process of segmentation (Kotler, Bowens, & Makens, 2002). This process includes developing and positioning strategies for a product

or services. Positioning can be defined as “creating the appropriate image of a product in the minds of customers in the target markets” (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993, p.3). In this sense, position is very important because of the way it affects self-congruity on travel behavior. Self-congruity is related to a tourist’s self concept, which is matched to the *destination visitor image* (Sirgy and Su, 2000). The destination visitor image is different from a destination’s image. Visitor image refers to the person’s perception of the destination’s image and the expectation to visit a particular destination. This helps promoters of a destination to personalize the destination’s image and eventually support the strategy it expects to achieve. For example, New Orleans or Louisiana (pre-hurricane Katrina) was positioned to be a food or culinary destination. The food image would form in the tourists’ mind and would influence their decisions to visit the destination.

Since destination image is very complex, it is reasonable to create images for different segments of the market and develop various positioning strategies. Diverse positioning efforts of a destination help to attract different types of visitors. Sirgy and Su (2000) stated when a visitor’s self concept and their destination image matched; it is more likely that they will visit. Goodall (1988) claimed that knowing the factors that influence image would help identify target markets and decide which image should be positioned to which segment of the market. According to Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993), destinations have to be managed strategically using a brand image as the major role in the positioning process.

Previous Research on Destination Image

A study by Schnider and Sonmez (1999) on tourist images of Jordan, analyzed the perceptions of tourists visiting Jordan. Specifically, the study was conducted at the Jerash Festival in Jordan, which was an annual Festival of Culture and Arts. The 18-day festival includes various forms of cultural attractions from music to native arts and crafts. It was found that, most visitors developed a negative image of Jordan because of its location, which is close to the West Bank where there is much violent and political instability. The mass media published unfavorable images of Jordan and influenced visitors in developing undesirable images about the country. The study recommended that Jordan should capitalize on other sources, for example its culture and history, that can help to distinguish itself from other countries in the Middle East.

A study on India by Chaudhary (2000) investigated tourists' expectation and satisfaction levels in association with India's destination image. The main theme of the study was to analyze the gaps between expectation and satisfaction levels. It was found that India's rich cultural heritage helped in the formation of more positive images. However, it is tourists' lack of safety and lack of infrastructure, which completely damaged India's reputation as an attractive destination. India has to effectively solve these problems and focus its marketing strategy on tourists' safety and infrastructure.

Rittichainuwat, Qu and Brown's (2001) study on Thailand's current image sought to identify its strengths and weaknesses as one of the major travel destinations in the world. The purpose of the study was to change Thailand's negative image and emphasize its positive ones. In the past, the Thai Authority of Tourism had been successful in its

marketing efforts to promote Thailand as a safe and friendly destination that offers multiple tourist products from cultural, natural, and historical to shopping attractions. However today, Thailand is also widely known for its pollutions, traffic jams, prostitution and an AIDS epidemic. Hence, in order to maintain its position as an international tourist destination, Thailand has to strengthen its positive images in order to increase its tourists' arrival. Rittichainuwat, Qu and Brown (2001) analyzed the importance of the number of visits and how travelers' demographic profiles influenced their perceptions of a destination.

Lee, O'Leary, and Hong (2002) investigated German travelers' perceptions of the image of the United States. The main purpose of the study was to analyze the overall impression and image, socio-demographic characteristics, and past visits to the United States. The study divided travelers into groups of high and low propensity. The high propensity group was found to have more favorable image and positive perceptions of the United States than the low propensity group. In contrast, past experience was not found to significantly affect both groups of German travelers.

Williams (2001) investigated the image of wine tourism destinations. Using a qualitative method, he conducted a content analysis of literature on wine tourism regions. Specifically, he analyzed the promotional literature and suggested several attributes related to wine tourism images. The attributes were divided into 2 categories, first the images of promotional materials reviewed between 1990 and 1994 and second, the images of promotional material reviewed between 1995 and 1999. In the early 1990's, the images that were important are listed as follows: (1) climatic and environmental, (2) landscape emphasis, (3) facility development, (4) production focus, (5) sense of place,

and (6) leisure focus and atmosphere. However, in the late 1990's the images were found to be different. These were found to be closely related to tourism issues and listed as follows: (1) experiential, (2) multi-dimensional experiences, (3) leisure focused, and (4) linkages to cuisine. The author concluded that the images of the wine region changed from an industrial based to a more leisure and vacation approach.

Information Search and Information Sources

Definition and Conceptualization

In the present information age, customers may be overloaded with information from multiple media sources (Lurie, 2004). Information search can be defined as, “the motivated activation of knowledge stored in memory or acquisition of information from the environment” (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995, p. 494). Based on the definition, information search behavior is comprised of internal and external sources (Beatty & Smith, 1987). Specifically, internal information can be linked to individual, personal and previous experience. On the other hand, external information search can be related to information from other outside sources, for example information in the print and electronic media, word of mouth, and marketing intermediaries (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Engle, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995).

It was believed that when sufficient internal information had been acquired, consumers would not care to find information from other sources (Beatty & Smith, 1987). This showed that previous experience and information about a destination could be a significant source for travelers' decision making process. In contrast, if there was a

lack of internal information, individuals would seek for more external sources that might help them to supplement their knowledge.

Theoretical Development of Information Search Behavior

Past researchers have discovered three major theories that were associated with information search literature (Schmidt & Spreng, 1996; Srinivas, 1990). The first theory was related to individual motivation and product type (Dunchan & Olshavsky, 1982). The second theory utilized an economic approach by combining a cost-benefit function with the ways in which information search were significant to customers (Avery, 1996). Finally, the third theory was linked to information processing, which focuses on individual memory and cognition (Coupey, Irwin, & Payne, 1998).

The individual motivation approach could be linked to the push and pull concept (Cha, McCleary, & Uysal, 1995). Specifically, individuals were pushed by internal and pulled by external forces. Through these forces, individuals were attracted to visit destinations (Gitelson, & Kerstetter, 1990). Additionally, there were two individual characteristics that could influence the type of information search. First, demographic characteristics could influence the information search behavior. For example, an individual's age or income would determine the type of information sources used (Bonn, Furr, & Hausman, 2001). The second factor was related to the individual's travel characteristics, such as the time spent on vacation, previous experience, and travel group characteristics. All these will determine the level of information search effort and the type of information sources that would be employed.

Maser (1996) stated that travelers' information search and the level of information utilization depended on the potential cost and benefits of the information sources. Similarly, Murray (1991) and Lutz and Reilly (1973), proposed that perceived risk and information sources are positively correlated. For example, when purchasing an intangible product, individuals would increase the information search strategy, which in turn would reduce the perceived risk of buying the product. On the other hand, if individuals perceived that the information search is associated with perceived costs, it would likely decrease the level of an individuals' information search (Lee & Cunningham, 2001; Porter 1985). In summary, we can say that customers' level of information search activities would be highly dependent on the perceived risk and cost associated with particular products.

In respect to the process approach, it emphasized more on the process of information search, but not on the act of information seeking. In general, it refers to how the information is processed and later be used in decision making. Asseal (1984) developed a model of information processing (see Figure 7) which comprised of five levels. At the first level, three main factors were important such as customers' background, environment, and the product marketing strategies. The second level emphasized the information search behavior. The third level focused on information processing whereby customers will analyze the information acquired. The fourth level, customers' might evaluate the brand that can be associated with a particular product. Finally, at the fifth level customers make their final decision. In general, after going through these activities customers' make their product choices.

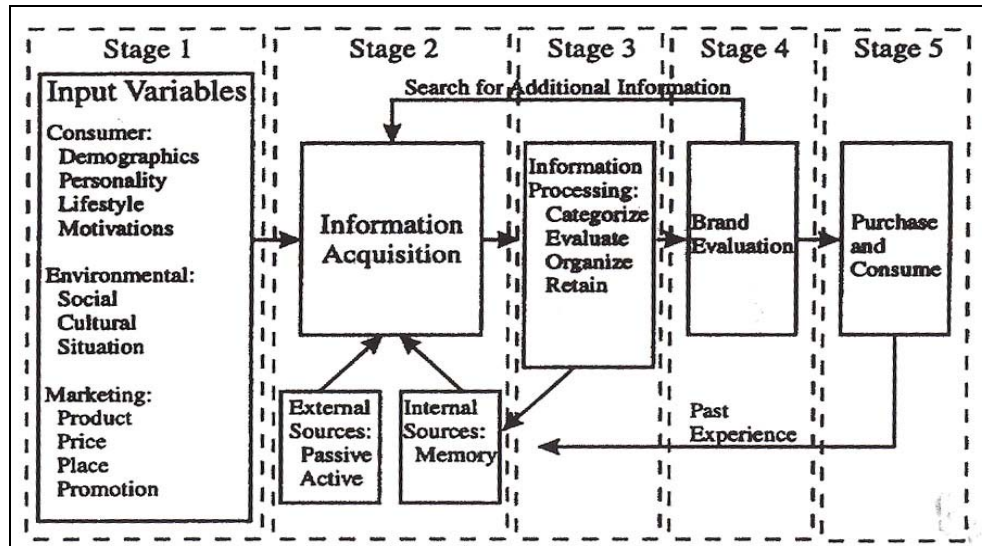


Figure 7. Model of Information Processing Model

Source. Vogt and Fesenmaier; 1998, p 552.

From the consumers' behavior perspective, three major dimensions were found to be important: (1) spatial, (2) temporal, and (3) operational (Fodness & Murray, 1998). In essence, the spatial dimension was related to internal and external information search behavior. Internal search behavior can be associated with one's past experience. For example, if one experienced a particular product, one would have some knowledge or memory about the product. This would help an individual to examine their past and evaluate those experiences. If internal experiences were not sufficient, customers would turn to external search of information.

Individuals' external information search would be motivated by need to fulfill the gap (Kotler & Armstrong, 1994; Murray, 1991). In particular, external search would be desired when more information is needed. As such, individuals would employ other sources of information in order to satisfy themselves (Fodness & Murray, 1998). Other sources of information could include information from friends and families or other

formal information sources. Newman (1977) suggested six factors that might influence customers' information search behavior as follows: (1) cost; (2) potential payoff : price, style, perceived difference, perceived risk, knowledge, experience, education, and income; (3) buying strategies; brand and store preference, satisfying versus optimizing, strategy of information acquisition; (4) situational variables: urgency, financial pressure, special buying opportunities, location of residence; (5) personality variables; and (6) other variables: household role, party of major influence, social class, occupation, age, stage of life cycle (p.79-94).

The temporal dimension search strategy takes place during the time of the initial information search behavior, whether it was an ongoing information search or a search to increase one's knowledge base. In other words, the information search at this level depends on the need recognition (Bloch, Sherrell, & Ridgway, 1986). If customers were planning to buy products not familiar to them, they would be searching for more information. However, if they had previous experience with the product, they might also look for more information that might help them to make better decisions in terms of the cost and quality of the product (Punj & Staelin, 1983). Furthermore, the information search might be used for buying product in the future. On the other hand, if customers were familiar with the product, they might not search for any additional information (Moorthy, Rachford, & Talukdar, 1997).

Finally, the operational dimension information search is used when a particular source of information has been chosen. The type of information used might affect customers' decision making process (Fodness & Murray, 1998). These sources of information can be categorized as: (1) personal sources of information from families and

friends, (2) commercial sources of information which are related to any type of marketing efforts, such as salespeople and marketing communications, (3) public sources, print media such as magazines and newspapers, and (4) personal information sources from observation and product testing (Kotler & Armstrong, 1994). It was found that the effectiveness of each source of information depended on the demographic characteristics of customers (Fodness & Murray, 1998).

Additional types of information process models or theories were also developed by other researchers. For example, Correia (2002) developed a model of information process which was divided into three main levels: (1) information search before making decisions, (2) making decisions based on the information search (dependent on the information found), and (3) information search after making decision. However, in another study by Van Raaij and Francken (1984) the researchers found that travelers have to go through five processes in acquiring information: (1) generic decision, (2) information acquisition, (3) decision making, (4) vacation activities, and (5) satisfaction and complaints. Moutinho (1987) came up with three main categories when people travel. The recommended levels were: urge or need for a vacation, information search, and choosing the best destinations.

Previous Research on Information Search and Travelers

Before making any decisions, travelers had to search for information about the potential destination of their vacation. The amount of information search would heavily depend on the type of products intended to be purchased. A product of a higher value would require more intense or in-depth information search behavior, such as when traveling to international destinations (Beatty & Smith, 1987). Likewise, customers who are responsible in decision-making will generally search for more information in order to rationalize their decision (Money & Crofts, 2003)

Searching for information has been one of the most important aspects for travelers when making decision for vacation or any tourism activities (Fondness & Murray, 1998; Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Snepenger, Meged, Snelling & Worrall, 1990). Moreover, with the current information-rich environment, knowing customers' information search behavior is ultimately crucial for effective marketing campaigns and promotions (Srinivas, 1990; Wilkie & Dickson; 1985). Nevertheless, meaningful information may lead and help customers in decision making (Schmidt & Spreng, 1996). The success of tourism products can be highly dependent on the type of information available for the customers (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1990).

Today's customers have to engage themselves with a plethora of information sources that can be examined before making purchase decisions (Pingol & Miyazaki, 2005). Mathieson and Wall (1982) argued that, most potential travelers would require some type of information and extensively seek the information they need. How they responded to the information depends on the type and credibility of information sources.

In general, travelers used varieties of information sources in order to develop a certain image of a destination (Walmsley & Lewis, 1984). Additionally, customers search widely if they are buying expensive products or expecting higher risks on certain products (Beatty & Smith, 1987; Capon & Burke, 1980; Cunningham, 1967)

Information about a destination or place can be presented to us by various sources. The sources of information can be divided into two types: formal and informal (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Informal information sources are related to word of mouth, especially from families and friends or other travelers who had past experiences. This type of information is not really well organized; however, its credibility depends on the informant's communication skills in delivering the message. Nevertheless, Katz and Lazarfeld (1955) argued that word of mouth information was as effective as any other media such as electronic or print. Price and Feick (1984) confirmed that almost 91% of the respondents in their study used an informal source of information before making final decisions.

On the other hand, formal information sources included commercials from print to electronic media. Each of these formal sources of information would have a particular objective in order to convey their message to groups of individuals (Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

Past researchers also stated that the type of information sources used depends on various factors. Brucks (1985) recommended that highly knowledgeable individuals would search for more information than others. Schmidt and Spreng (1996) found that customers would do an extensive search when buying expensive food products. In terms of educational background, individuals who were highly educated were found to search

extensively for multiple sources of information. For example, these individuals might use both print and electronic media (Claxton, Fly, & Portis, 1974; Schmidt & Spreng, 1996).

Money and Crotts (2003) proposed that, in general, everyone has a different level of engagement regarding type of information search. For example, some consumers will engage in finding external information, while others will depend on internal information. It depends on who the customers are, the type of products that are available to them, and their level of product knowledge (Brucks, 1985; Mazursky & Hirschman, 1987). Similarly, Gursoy and Chen (2000) suggested that the types of tourism products and travel objectives will determine the information required and the information channel used. Another study by Snepenger, Meged, Snelling and Worrall (1990) identified that information search behavior also depended on specific characteristics such as: the type of travel groups and the company of extended family and friends, prior visits to the destination and the level of familiarity with the destination. Furthermore, they mentioned that some travelers are prone to use both internal and external sources (Money & Crotts, 2003). There are also different levels of information search between senior and non-senior travelers. Seniors are less likely to do extensive information searches than non-seniors.

Fodness and Murray (1997) stressed that consumer information search behavior can also be segmented into different market. It depends on the thoroughness or depth of information being searched. For example, customers who find more information before making a decision for a trip, helps to boost the quality of the trip (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1990). As a result, customers who have more information will be more

satisfied with the trip. In general, customers can be classified based on the level of information search and the type of information sources used (Snepenger et al, 1990).

In a study of cross-national information search behavior, Uysal, McDonald, & Reid (1990) discovered that German, French, British, and Japanese travelers who travel to the United States had various methods of information search. British travelers were found to rely more on travel agents as their primary source and word of mouth as the secondary source. In contrast, the German and French travelers in turn were found to prefer recommendations from family and friends, meaning word of mouth was the most important source of information. In analyzing the Japanese visitors, they found that most Japanese travelers favored using printed materials before consulting other sources like travel agents and word of mouth.

In summary, information search behavior depends on individual demographic characteristics. As such, Woodside and Rokainen (1980) found that higher income groups would utilize travel agents more as a vital source of information. In addition, some customers might heavily depend on external sources, but others might focus on internal information. On the other hand, some travelers might use a combination of internal and external sources on hand, which could differ according to travelers' demographic characteristics. For example, seniors utilize fewer external sources than non-seniors. Likewise, most seniors were found to purchase pre-package tours than non-seniors (Javalagi, Edward, & Roa, 1992). Similarly, Gitelson and Crompton (1983) noted that seniors were prone to use travel agents as their major source of information. However, highly educated individuals chose literature from specific destinations of

interest. In conclusion, demographic characteristics play an important role in determining individuals' choice of information sources.

Demographic Characteristics

Travelers' socio-demographic characteristics play a major role in determining the perception of a destination image (Goodrich, 1980; Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Socio-demographic variables such as age, occupation, and income could impact travelers' perceptions of the destination image and travel experience (Goodall & Ashworth, 1988). Similarly, Jefferson and Lickorish (1988) agreed with the importance of those variables, but added family size, nationality and social level to the present literature. However, Baloglu & McCleary (1999) stated that only age and education were the two variables that significantly affect destination image. In an earlier study of West German tourist traveling to the United States, Baloglu (1997) regarded age as the only significance variable. In contrast, the findings of Lee, O'Leary and Hong (2002) suggested that socio-demographic characteristics were not significant factors among German visitors who were planning to visit the United States.

A study of cultural tourists (McHone & Rungeling, 1999) who attended a cultural exhibition in Orlando, observed that the demographic characteristics of cultural tourists and casual tourist were found varied. In particular, cultural tourists had higher average income, were highly educated, and were older in comparison to the casual traveler. Also they found that cultural tourists preferred to stay with friends and relatives where they

can take the advantage of knowing the local area. However, the casual tourists would choose to stay at lodging properties.

Jefferson and Lickorish (1988) reported that socio-demographic variables were widely used as an important tool in segmenting the tourist market. Further it was discovered that the segmentation would help in forecasting future trends (Waters, 1988). In addition, in South Africa, demographic profile was the theme of a study of wine tourism in order to determine the characteristics of the wine tourist (Tassiopoulos, Nuntsu, & Haydam, 2004). The results indicated that the typical wine tourist's age ranged from 25 to 45 years old, visitors were professional and highly educated female who had no children. The authors also found the demographic results were similar with earlier studies conducted in Tasmania, Australia. The only main difference was that the age of wine tourists in Australia ranged from 40 to 60 years old.

Kim & Geistfeld (2003) investigated the demographic factors affecting consumer choice of selecting restaurants for dinner. The study recommended that restaurants customers' demographic characteristics can be associated to the type of restaurant chosen. For example, higher-income customers were likely to dine in a full-service restaurant. On the other hand, the lower income group was found to choose a quick-service restaurant. Besides that, age, household size, and household composition (number of young children) also significantly affected the types of restaurant chosen for dinner in the evening.

Juaneda & Sastre (1999) examined the demographic profiles of German and British travelers who visited Majorca, Balearic Island. The main purpose of the study was to characterize the differences between those two groups of travelers. The finding

indicated that German and British travelers were totally different. In essence, German tourists were found to be older and wealthier. However, British travelers were slightly younger and in the lower income groups. German travelers were attracted to typical tourist attractions, whereas British travelers were interested in experiencing outdoor activities.

Zhang, Qu, and Tang (2004) investigated the behavior of outbound visitors from Hong Kong. One of the objectives was to identify the connection between Hong Kong travelers' demographic characteristics and their traveling behavior. The researchers discovered that gender, age, marital status, education, income level and a few of the destination dimensions were found to be highly significant. In sum, it was found that demographic differences affected Hong Kong's travelers' destination choice and certain destination attributes were also found to influence their decision to visit.

The literature review reveals that the majority of the studies confirmed that destination images played a major role in travelers' destination choice.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on the historical development of gastronomy, culinary tourism, destination image, previous research in destination image, sources of information, previous research on information search behavior and demographic characteristics. In the first section, the history and development of food and eating out were presented and followed by an analysis of food as a motivating factor when people travel. Also, a lengthy definition and conceptualization of the relationships between food

and tourism were explained in this section. Previous researches were also presented in order to find out the current status of study in food and tourism. However, most of the studies were not directly associated, but they provided some background information for this research.

The second part of the chapter provided an insight to the area of destination image study. Past researchers in destination image were discussed in this section. The definition of destination was given by using examples provided by previous researchers in destination image. The third part of the chapter touched on the theoretical development of information search behavior. A number of issues was discussed which directly related to information sources. An information processing model was illustrated and the function of each of the elements in the information processing model was discussed. The type of information sources were also presented in this section. In addition, previous researchers in information sources were included in this section. Most of the studies showed comparable results. For example, researchers found out that everyone has a different level of using information sources, depending on the familiarity with a product.

Finally, the last section of this chapter was devoted to demographic characteristics and their influence on the tourism industry. Specifically, the effect of gender, age, education, and income were discussed by using examples from previous researchers. In the subsequent chapter, the model of study will be illustrated and discussion of research design and methodology will be presented.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative and quantitative approach was used in this study to determine the importance of a destination's food image and information sources when choosing a culinary travel destination. The research was conducted in the spring of 2006. In order to understand and gain more insight in developing the questionnaire, a focus group was conducted. Additionally, the focus group was conducted to provide the researcher with in depth knowledge on the relationship between food and tourism.

An e-mail invitation was sent to 20 potential participants for the focus group. The participants were asked to provide some information on destinations and countries that they had visited in the past. Nine participants responded to the email and expressed an interest in participating in the focus group discussion. The focus group consisted of four male and five female participants who had traveled extensively in the past.

The age of the participants ranged between 23 to 65 years old. Eight of the participants had master's degrees, and one participant was still working on an undergraduate degree. Specifically, the participants were one undergraduate student, two

master's students, a program coordinator, a historian, a military officer, a retired professor and two academicians. Most of the participants had traveled to destinations in the United States and overseas. In general most of their trips were for leisure purposes; however one participant traveled on an official business trip. Some of the destinations mentioned by the participants were: (1) United States: Portland, Vermont, Maine, Michigan, Iowa, California, Philadelphia, California, and Hawaii; (2) international destinations: Central America, Europe, Canada, Caribbean, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Nepal, Iran, Jordan, Spain, and Turkey. In general, the participants had traveled extensively in the past. Their past experiences were vital for the purpose of the focus group.

The discussion was led by the researcher who attempted to gain a broad understanding on the importance of food when selecting a destination and the importance of various types of information sources used by the participants. The data gathered from the focus group was used in formulating the questionnaire. The focus group instrument consisted of nine open ended questions. The focus group questions were developed prior to the study. It was developed as part of a qualitative research methodology class assignment and three personal interviews were conducted to test the questionnaires. Further modifications to the instruments were made based on the interview results and recommendations from the course instructor. In addition, an extensive literature review was also conducted in order to develop reliable questions for the focus group.

The online survey was designed specifically to find out the travelers' opinion on the food's image and information sources of France, Italy and Thailand, using a 7-point Likert scale. These destinations were selected based on the popularity of their cuisine.

These countries were mentioned numerous times during the focus group session.

Furthermore, it is a well known fact that France, Italy and Thailand are the world's most popular cuisine. A descriptive cross-sectional sample research was conducted for this study. An online survey method was used for data collection.

Figure 8 depicted the framework of the study. The questionnaire was designed to answer the three objectives of this study. First, the questionnaire measured the main constructs of the study: a destination's food image, information sources and intention to visit. Second, the instrument also examined the respondents' demographic characteristics and how it moderates the traveler's intention to visit and the importance of information sources. In particular, the survey was meant to provide a better understanding of travelers' perspective about a destination's food image and information sources when making decisions for a vacation.

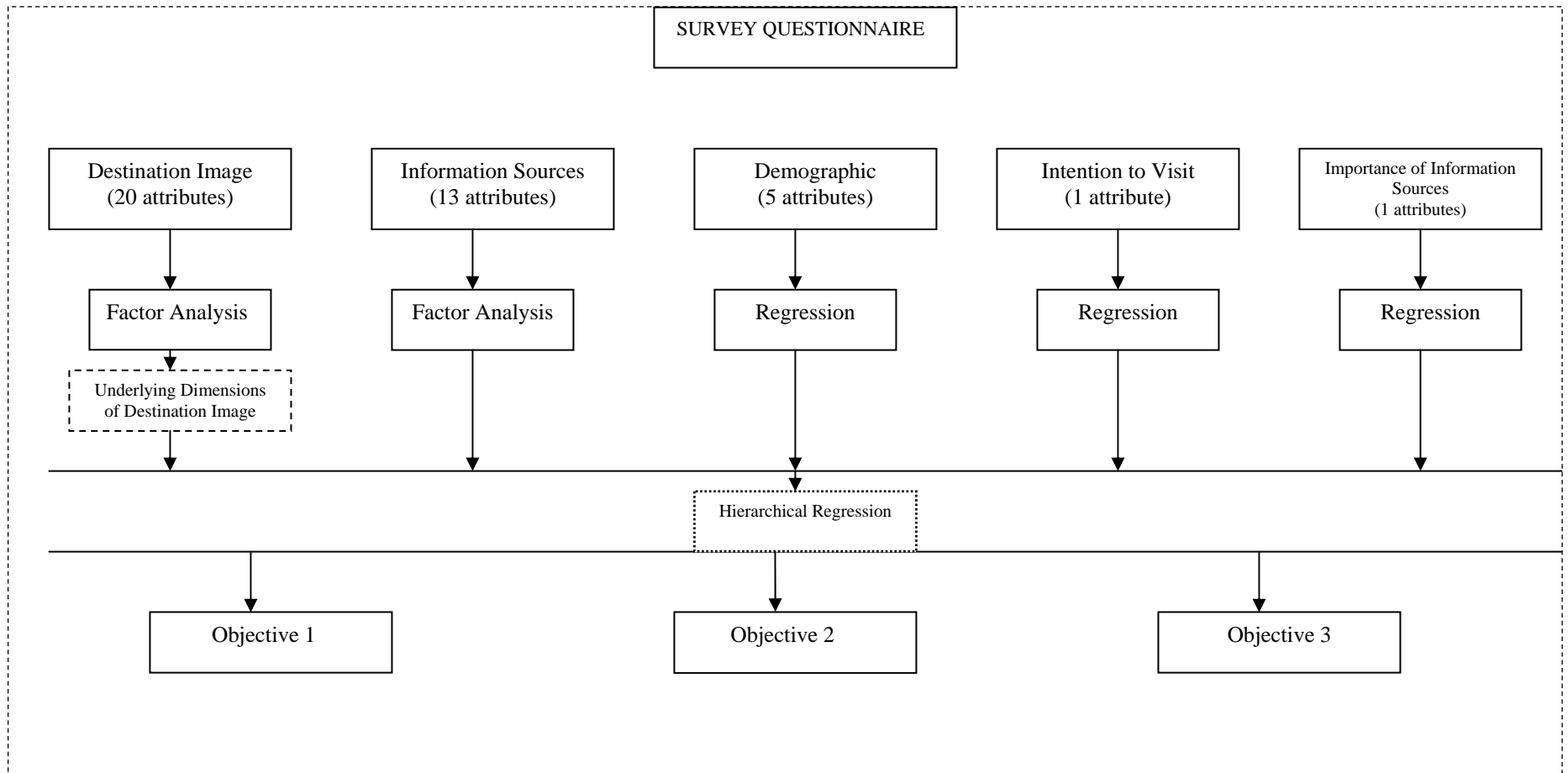


Figure 8. Research Framework of Culinary Tourism as A Destination Attraction: An Empirical Examination of the Role the Destination’s Food Image and Information Sources

The Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Figure 9 depicts the main construct and the hypotheses tested in this study. The theoretical model was the basis for generating the research hypotheses to be empirically tested by this study. The model showed the following: (1) a direct relationship between destination food's image and the intention to visit, (2) a direct relationship between information sources and intention to visit, and (3) the moderating effect of demographic characteristics has on a destination's food image and information sources toward the intention to visit a culinary destination.

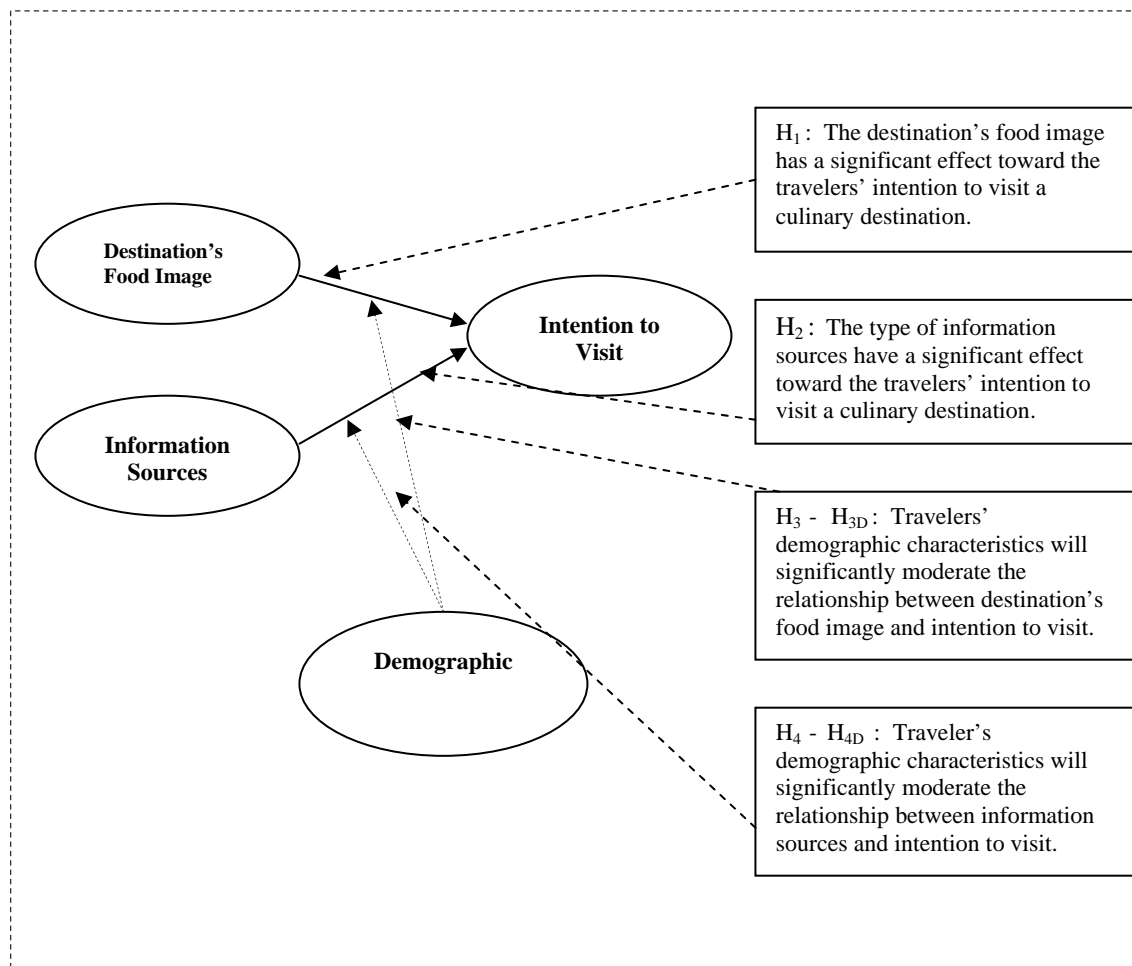


Figure 9. The Conceptual Framework of Culinary Tourism as A Destination Attraction: An Empirical Examination of the Role the Destination's Food Image and Information Sources

Survey Population

The target population for this study was all adults who were members of online travel communities or travel groups. Preece (2000) defined an online community as “a group of people who came together for a purpose online, and who are governed by norm and policies”. The sample population for this study was chosen from Yahoo and MSN which was assumed as a sample of the target population. The groups selected for the study was comprised of members who belong to various food, travel, and tourism groups. These groups were selected based on the descriptions provided on the group homepage. The groups were chosen because their main interest was related to food and travel. A list of the group names is listed in the appendix section.

Sampling Technique

Due to the nature of the study, all members of the prospective group were asked to participate in the study. As such, a census and convenience sampling procedure were employed. The survey was conducted from March 6, 2000 to April 14, 2006.

With regard to the sample size, it is normally based on the statistical requirements of the researcher. For example, Hair (2005) recommended a sample size should be at least five times larger than the number of variables for factor analysis. The researcher had to determine the effect size, alpha value and sample size of the population. As a rule,

larger sample sizes are highly preferred. A sample size between 200 and 400 is normally recommended and accepted as a critical sample size (Hair, 2005).

For the calculation of sample size, Burns & Bush (1995) recommended that researchers have to consider 3 factors: (1) the variability in the population, (2) the accuracy required, and (3) the level of confidence. The formula for calculating sample size is: $N = Z^2 (pq)/e^2$, where,

N = the sample size

Z = standard error associated with chosen level of confidence (95%)

P = estimate variability in the population 50/50

Q = (100 – P)

E = acceptable error $\pm 5\%$

Based on this formula, in order to achieve $\pm 5\%$ accuracy at 95% confidence interval, the sample size will be $N = Z^2 (pq)/e^2 = 1.96^2 (50 \times 50)/5^2 = 384$. Assuming a response rate of 5%, 7680 (385/.05) participants were expected to be surveyed in order to achieve the targeted sample size. In anticipation of a low response rate from the online survey, the researcher surveyed 8067 samples for this study. The total sample size was obtained by adding together all members of 35 online groups.

Survey Procedure

Prior to the collection of data, the principal investigator wrote an invitation e-mail to all group members explaining the purpose of the study. A link to the online survey and a consent form were attached with the e-mail. The responses were automatically stored

in an electronic database created for the study. The participants had the liberty to respond to the survey questions. However, a monetary incentive was provided for the study in order to increase the response rate. There were four USD \$50 prizes (in a form of International Money Order/ Cashiers Check) awarded in a random drawing. Participants who wanted to be included in the drawing were asked to enclose their e-mail address at the end of the survey. The participants were guaranteed that their e-mail address would not be used for any other purposes. The survey took between five and ten minutes to complete. A reminder e-mail was sent to all members of the group after one week from the date of the invitation to participate in the survey.

Research Instrument

A self-administrated questionnaire was used for the study. The questionnaire consisted of five sections and included categories of questions on the following: destination's food image, intention to visit a culinary destination, different types of information sources, the importance of information sources, and the travelers' demographic characteristics.

All of the questions were generated from the focus group and past research. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. Section one investigated the food images of France, Italy, and Thailand from the travelers' point of view. The questions were adopted from the focus group and a study on New Orleans by Dimance and Moody (1998). Most of the attributes used in this section have been used in many image studies in the past. A seven-point Likert scale

was used in this section. Respondents were asked to rate the level of agreement that ranged from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”.

Section two asked the travelers how likely they would be to visit those destinations. In particular, respondents were asked how the food and dining experiences would influence their intention to visit the destinations. Respondents were asked to rate the level of their intention based on a five point Likert scale, that ranged from 1 = “most unlikely” to 5 = “most likely”.

Section three analyzed the importance of different types of information sources used by travelers when planning their vacation. In particular, the respondents had to rate France, Italy, and Thailand sources of information. The attributes in this section were derived from the focus group and Fondness (1994) study on tourist motivation and information sources used. There were 13 attributes that were developed to measure the types of information sources used before deciding on a vacation trip. The attributes were rated on a seven-point Likert scale, that ranged from 1 = “very unimportant” to 7 = “very important”.

Section four measured overall importance of information sources toward travelers’ decision making process for all three destinations. This question was developed in order to find out travelers perspective on the importance of information sources.

Section five analyzed the travelers’ demographic characteristics. This section also was adapted from a previous study. Most items were measured using nominal scale and interval scales.

Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the degree to which the instruments can quantify the differences between individuals on the construct one seeks to measure (Churchill, 2001). In this study, content validity was determined by in-depth literature review and the usage of validated survey instruments from previous research. Besides that, an in-depth literature review was conducted to guarantee that the instruments covered the concepts intended for this study. Next, the instruments were examined by a panel of experts (academician) to ensure the content and face validity. Six professors were asked to edit and improve the questions to enhance their clarity, readability and content validity. They were also asked to identify any of the scale items that were not necessary and to offer suggestions for improving the proposed scale. Based on their comments, changes were made to the questionnaires.

Further, a pilot study was conducted to further examine the reliability of the instrument. The pilot test was conducted with a convenience sample of professors and students. A reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) was also performed to test the reliability and consistency of all of the dimensions, which will be obtained from an exploratory factor analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha was above .80 for most of the test conducted. It showed that the instrument used was reliable. A result of .70 and above was accepted as a cut off point (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The result of the pilot test provided helpful information on the questionnaire design, wording, and measurement scales. The questionnaire was modified based on the findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was divided into three sections using descriptive and inferential statistics. The data was coded into and analyzed with The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) by Einspruch (2005). The first section of the data analysis used descriptive statistics to explain the destinations' food image, the importance of type of information sources, demographics characteristics, and travelers' intention to visit. A frequency and percentage data analysis was conducted in this section.

In the second section, factor analysis was used to identify the underlying factors of the destinations' food image attributes and also the importance of information sources. Factor analysis is an interdependent technique in which all variables are concurrently evaluated and grouped into different categories. These categories are used to explain each variable set, not to predict a dependent variable (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

Finally, in the third section, multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Multiple regression analysis allows the introduction of several independent variables, so that the equation constructed reflects the values of several rather than one predictor variable (Churchill, 2001).

A hierarchical regression was conducted in order to analyze the moderating effect of the demographic variables. This method was used to analyze the relationship among variables. Anderson (1986) suggested that the main objective of hierarchical regression was to reduce the independent and moderator variables and increase the significance of a

theory based regression model. An F test had to be conducted, in order to analyze if there was any significant change in the model R^2 with the addition of the interaction terms (independent variable \times moderator). If the interaction terms were significant, it showed there was an effect of a moderating factor.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

In this section, data analysis was performed using SPSS.12. This chapter was organized based on the research questions. There were four main research questions that were analyzed in this study. In addition, 12 hypotheses were developed for the study. Data analysis began with profiling the respondents' demographic characteristics which included gender, age group, marital status, education, and income. Frequency analysis was used to observe the distribution of the data. The subsequent stages of data analysis were descriptive statistics, factor analysis and multiple-regression. Specific analysis related to the hypothesis was also performed in order to determine the significance of the hypotheses.

Response Rate

The participants of this study were selected from online travel and food groups in MSN and Yahoo The study was conducted from March 6, 2006 to April 14 , 2006. A

total of 35 travel groups were chosen to participate in the study. The overall population surveyed was 8,067. A total of 294 respondents completed the survey which accounted for 3.6 % of the population. Of these, 10 of the surveys were discarded because they were partially completed and 284 questionnaires were used for further data analysis. The total usable response rate was 3.5 %. Kraut, Olson, Banaji, Bruckman, Cohen, and Couper (2004) stated that online survey response rate was usually lower than mail or telephone surveys. In the following section, the frequency and mean of gender, age, marital status, education, and income are presented.

TABLE 3
OVERALL RESPONSE RATE

<i>Response Rate</i>		
	Number	Percent (%)
Total Survey Population	8067	100.00%
Total responses	294	3.64
Less Unusable	10	.001
<i>Total Usable Responses</i>	284	3.52

The response rate in this study was very low due to several uncontrollable factors or bias of an online survey. First of all, it was not known as to how many different groups each individual was a member. In other words, an individual might be a member of multiple groups selected for this study. Second, inactive group members of the selected group were not known. There could be a huge number of people who became members of an online group, but had never participated in any of the activities. They would become a member of a particular group, but would never visit the site. Third, members

might have not visited the sites during the survey period. Fourth, members have not visited any of the destinations which would prevent them from participating in the study. For these reasons, the total population of the study could have been lower, not as reflected by the number of the present members in each group. The response rate could have been higher, if the number of active members were known.

TABLE 4
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Demographic Characteristics	N = 284	Percentage (%)
1. Gender		
Male		51
Female		49
2. Age Group		
Less than 20		3
20 -29		54
30- 39		22
40- 49		11
50- 59		6
60 and older		4
3. Marital status		
Married		36
Never Married		58
Divorced/Widowed/Separated		6
4. Highest Education		
Some high school		1
High school graduate		16
College/university graduate		37
Graduate/post graduate		46
5. Income		
Under 25,000		46
25,000 -39,999		14
35,000 – 49,000		10
50,000 – 74,999		11
75,000 – 99,000		6
100,000 or more		13

Demographic profiles of respondents are depicted in Table 4. Gender of the respondents was almost equally distributed with 51% male and 49 % female. Most of the respondents' age was between 20 to 29 years (54%), followed by 30-39 years (22%), and 40-49 years (11%). Few respondents were 50 years and older (10 %). More than half of the respondents were never married (58%). Most of the respondents had college degrees, 46% had a graduate/post graduate degree and another 37% had a college/university degree. However, 46 % of the respondents reported a yearly income of under \$25,000. The next income group was \$25,000 – 39,999 (14%). More than 30% of the respondents reported a yearly income of \$50,000 and above.

Focus Group Results

The focus group session began with the moderator asking the main motive for travel. One of the most important reasons for people to travel was to experience different cultures. Participants believed that culture was the most important reason for them to travel. Some participants mentioned entertainment as the next reason for them to travel. Two out of nine participants said that nature and relaxation were the main reasons for travel.

The next question asked the participants to imagine that they were planning on taking a vacation to a particular destination and what would be the most important decision they had to make when selecting a destination. Most participants agreed that accommodations were the most important factor for them. They had to find out where to

stay before deciding on other things. Next, the participants mentioned seeking for a different experience. They would like to visit places that they had not visited in the past. For example, one participant mentioned “new experience.” When choosing a destination, it is important for her to experience new things. Another participant suggested that her reason for choosing a vacation destination was associated to her emotional feeling. For example, if they were in a mood for camping, they would choose places that were isolated. However, in the winter she would choose a ski resort area. Some participants felt that they choose a destination because of its proximity to water, such as a beach resort. Also, the participants stressed that the destination should be easily accessible. This was an important factor for them to consider the destination.

In general, when they are at the destination, most participants agreed that they started to think about the food. Participants said that they would look around and sample some local foods. A participant finally mentioned that he knew someone who traveled solely for food. That person went to Portugal because he loved the fish there and that was the only reason for him to visit. Overall, the participants agreed that they would think about the food when they reached the destination and started thinking where to find the local food.

Next, the group was presented with a question on the type of information sources that they would use in order to learn more about the destination. In terms of the types of information sources being used, most participants agreed that the internet was the most preferable source of information that was utilized. Other sources such as television, travel magazines, recommendations from friends and relatives were also quoted as significance sources of information. A participant also indicated that a travel agent

would be important for her to find out more about a destination. Some participants re-emphasized the importance of word of mouth and mentioned places such as Mexico and Italy. If someone recommended and told them about their experience in those countries, they would consider planning a visit.

The session continued with the next question that asked what specific attraction they would be interested in experiencing during their trip. While on the trip, most participants re-emphasized 'culture.' Specifically, they would like to experience the cultures of different people at the destination. One of the participants said that, when she was in Malaysia, she tried different types of food such as Malay, Chinese, and Indian. However, when she visited Yellowstone, she would like to experience nature. In general, she believed that each destination had its own uniqueness.

Subsequently, in order to extract more information on the food, a probing question was presented to find out more details about the participants' interest in food at the destinations. It was important to probe this question, so that the participants could generate more in depth opinions related to food. A few participants mentioned that countries such as France, Italy and Thailand were known for their food; these countries were mentioned numerous times during the session. For these countries, food would be the main motivation to visit. Conversely, food would not be the main reason to visit other countries. However, if the food during the trip was bad, it would totally ruin the vacation experience. In addition, the food would also be considered as a tool to develop relationships with the local people. For example, one of the participants mentioned that she was in Turkey to visit her in laws. Whenever she walked on the street, the local

people would offer her sweets and invited her into their homes. She was very pleased with that experience and enjoyed her entire trip.

The participants agreed that trying “hawker” or “street food” would be an important experience during the trip. All participants agreed that good food was critical to the overall satisfaction of a trip. They also mentioned that the experience they had on the trip would determine a future revisit to the destination. Another participant said that when she was in Spain, she was offered free drinks and got attracted to the culture. In general she was amazed because the people treated her very well and she believed that the personality and the attitude of the people made her want to revisit in the future.

The focus group continued by exploring more on the relationship between food and tourism. The main intention was to find out more about food tourism. This would be the most important section of the focus group because it assessed the participants understanding of the topic being discussed. The participants had some idea about culinary tourism. One of them mentioned Napa Valley in California offers food and wine tourism. The main reason for people to go there was for the wine tasting that is paired with food. Also, previously someone in the group mentioned that he went to Mexico to try its local food. Specifically, the participants agreed that food tourism could be associated with exploring the local cuisine and making food the main reason to visit a destination.

Another example that came up was the food and tourism in Jamaica. Some of the hotels in Jamaica do offer cooking classes. Chefs from various hotels and resorts demonstrate local cooking techniques on the beach and that attracted travelers who were interested in food to participate; this is a form of culinary tourism. A participant

mentioned chuck wagon food in the United States. People would go on a tour on the chuck wagon and experience the food served during their trip. Overall, most participants agreed strongly that there is a relationship between food and tourism. However, the motivation to visit a destination solely based on the food would depend on the level of interest of an individual. It could be the most important reason or it could also be the least important reason to visit a destination.

Another probing question was presented to the participants. This question was asked to find out the importance of food when traveling. Most participants recommended that food was an important factor that would determine their overall vacation experience. Again, the participants mentioned for the second time, if the food was really bad, it would ruin the vacation experience. However, if the food was good, it would satisfy them and that would be the main reason for them to revisit the destination in the future. Another participant said that he and his brother traveled to a destination just to get of a bowl of green chili with beans and hamburger. A few other examples were given that associated food and a particular destination. Another important point that was mentioned several times was religion. A participant mentioned how her religion would effect her decision to visit a destination. As a Muslim, she is prohibited from eating pork. When she thought of China, she was likely to think about restaurants that served pork there. In addition, she said that she would not visit China for its food, but would visit for the Great Wall of China and the Forbidden City. Her view was agreed upon by other participants in the group.

Finally, a question was asked on the features or attributes of the food and service that would be important for them when they traveled. The participants agreed that taste

and presentation of the food would be the most important. When the food is nicely presented, it might attract people to try it. In addition, the participants suggested that if the food was fresh and of a high quality, they would be willing to pay the price.

Analysis of the Research Questions and Hypotheses

The respondents in this study were asked to respond to questions on the destinations' food image, the importance information sources, and intention to visit. The same questions were used to analyze their perceptions on three destinations: France, Italy and Thailand. In other words, the respondents in this study had to answer questions on three different countries. However, the research questions and hypotheses of the study were more general rather than a destination specific. For this reason, the data was combined (pooled data), in spite of the destinations. By pooling the data of three destinations, the data increased to 852 (284×3), resulting in a larger sample size.

Data analysis was divided into two sections. First, data analysis was conducted to respond specifically to the hypotheses of the study. Second, additional data analysis was performed to make comparisons among the destinations. In this part of the analysis, data from each of the countries (284) were separately analyzed. The purpose was to examine if there were any similarities or differences that might characterize the destinations' food image and the importance of information sources of a particular destination.

Research Questions One

Research question one stated that, “What is the relationship between a destination’s food image and the travelers’ intention to visit.” Factor analysis and regression analysis were conducted to test this hypothesis. In the next section the results were illustrated and explained.

Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was carried out on the destinations food image. Factor analysis was performed on the data. Principal components and varimax rotation procedures were used to identify the orthogonal factor dimensions. The benefits of using this method is that it allows minimizing the number of variables that have high loadings on the factor, which help to improve the interpretability of the factors and maintains the factors as uncorrelated with each other. The latent root criterion of 1.0 was used for factor extraction and factor loadings of .40 were significant and used for interpretation of the results (Hair et al., 2005). Total variance accounted for by a factor is expressed in Eigen value. Factors with a variance of less than one (<1) are considered no better than a single variable. Thus, factors with an Eigen value of less than one (<1) were excluded in the analysis.

TABLE 5**FACTORS OF DESTINATIONS' FOOD IMAGE FOR ALL THREE COUNTRIES**

	Loadings	eigenvalue	% of Variance Explain
1. Destination's Food Image			
...offers unique street food vendors	.836		
...offers opportunity to visit street market	.805		
...offers exotic cooking methods	.703		
...offers unique cultural experience	.687	4.25	38.67
...offers easy access to restaurants	.642		
...offers varieties of specialty restaurants	.551		
...offers restaurants menus in English	.460		
2. Destination's Unique Image			
... offers package tours related to food and wine	.866		
... offers food and wine regions	.859	2.00	18.25
...offers much literature on food	.752		
...offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits	.677		
Total variance explained			56.92

Table 5 illustrated the results of factor analysis. Two main factors were extracted from the results. The first factor was labeled, “Destination’s Food Image.” The second factor was named, “Destination’s Unique Image.” The names of the factors were chosen arbitrarily, however they could be highly associated with the food image of a culinary destination. For example, Factor 1, Destination’s Food Image could be the core image of a culinary destination. Factor 2, could be associated with a destination’s unique image. Specifically, these two factors are linked to the concept of culinary tourism.

One of the variables in Factor 2 would be suitable for France and Italy, because they are known for their food and wine regions; an important destinations’ food image for

these two countries. However, Thailand's could be known for its exotic cuisine rather than for its food and wine regions. In general, these two factors explained 56.92% of the total variance.

After conducting factor analysis, the variables in each of the factors were computed. Two new variables were created in SPSS. These variables were regressed on the intention to visit a culinary destination. The following table depicted the results of regression analysis.

Regression Analysis

The multiples regression results are depicted as follows. The two factors were regressed on the intention to visit. The R square was .091, which means 9% of the total variance in the dependent variable could be explained by the independent variables in the model. The F-ration was 42.089, significant at $p < 0.001$, indicated that the model was reliable. No further analysis was conducted in this section.

TABLE 6

MODEL 1 - SUMMARY OF DESTINATIONS' FOOD IMAGE

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.302(a)	.091	.089	1.248

a Predictors: (Constant), Factor 1, Factor 2

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	131.048	2	65.524	42.089	.000(a)
	Residual	1307.699	840	1.557		
	Total	1438.747	842			

a Predictors: (Constant), Factor 1, Factor 2

b Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.480	.247		5.986	.000
	Factor 1	.166	.048	.122	3.458	.001
	Factor 2	.245	.037	.236	6.693	.000

a Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 1.480 + 0.166XF_1 + 0.245XF_2 \quad \text{where,}$$

Y = intention to visit

F₁ = (offers unique street food vendors; offers opportunity to visit street market, exotic cooking methods; offers unique cultural experience; offers easy access to restaurants; offers varieties of specialty restaurants; offers restaurants menus in English).

F₂ = (offers package tours related to food and wine; offers food and wine regions; offers much literature on food; offers various food activities, cooking classes, and farm visits).

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 2 resulted in .245 unit increase in the dependent variable (intention to visit), while keeping other variables constant. However, when using Beta to interpret the results, Factor 2 (Beta = .236) had the greatest influence on “intention to visit.” In general, Factor 2 could be a core factor for a culinary destination or a destination inspired to develop its culinary tourism products.

Additional Analysis - Comparison across Countries

Descriptive Statistics

In this study, food images attributes were divided into three countries; France, Italy, and Thailand. These countries were selected based on the popularity of their cuisines. As mentioned in the other section, the countries were specifically chosen because they were mentioned several times during the focus group. The attributes were measured using a Likert scale. The mean ratings showed the most popular attributes for each country. In this part of the chapter, the discussion will be based on each country.

France

The mean ratings of France are displayed in Table 7. The mean scores range from 3.97 to 5.85, and therefore we can conclude that all of the attributes were perceived positively by the respondents. There were 12 attributes that were in the high end.

Among the highest mean scores (<5.50) were “France offers food and wine region” (5.85), “France offers attractive food presentation” (5.73), “France offers unique cultural experience” (5.51). In general, more than 50 % of the means scores were higher than 5.0. Attributes with the lower mean scores (< 4.50) were “France offers the most popular cuisines” (4.23), “France offers friendly service personnel” (4.17), “France offers restaurant menus in English” (3.97), “France offers reasonable price for dining out” (3.76).

The attributes with the highest variation in scores was, “France offers friendly service personnel” (1.572), closely followed by “France offers the most popular cuisines”. The lowest standard deviation (1.288) was “France offers attractive food presentation.”

TABLE 7**MEAN RATINGS OF FRANCE**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
France offers food and wine regions	284	5.85	1.338
France offers attractive food presentation	284	5.73	1.288
France offers unique cultural experience	282	5.51	1.345
France offers delicious food	282	5.50	1.377
France offers good quality of food	281	5.47	1.355
France offers regionally produced food products	284	5.42	1.373
France offers many attractive restaurants	283	5.37	1.307
France offers package tours related to food and wine	282	5.24	1.362
France offers much literature on food	282	5.19	1.319
France offers easy access to restaurants	284	5.06	1.371
France offers opportunity to visit street market	284	5.04	1.487
France offers variety of foods	284	4.95	1.327
France offers exotic cooking methods	281	4.87	1.444
France offers varieties of specialty restaurants	283	4.83	1.382
France offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits	280	4.70	1.315
France unique street food vendors	281	4.61	1.428
France offers the most popular cuisines	283	4.23	1.544
France offers friendly service personnel	281	4.17	1.572
France offers restaurants menus in English	284	3.97	1.489
France offers reasonable price for dining out	284	3.76	1.450

Scale : 1= Strongly Disagree

7= Strongly Agree

Italy

Surprisingly, the mean scores for Italy were the highest among the three countries showed in Table 8. It could be said that Italian food has overtaken the popularity of that French food had in the past. Highest mean scores (>.5.5) attributes were, “Italy offers delicious food” (5.96), “Italy offers good quality food” (5.75), “Italy offers unique cultural experience” (5.72), “Italy offers food and wine region” (5.67), “Italy offers regionally produced food products” (5.54). More than 75 % of the attributes scored equal

to or higher than 5.0. Attributes with relatively lower scores were, “Italy offers reasonable price for dining out” (4.72) and “Italy offers restaurants menus in English” (4.41). Most, respondents believed that restaurant menus were in Italian.

For Italy, the attributes with the highest variations in scores were, “Italy offers the most popular cuisines” (1.463), closely followed by “Italy offers food and wine regions” (1.402). The lowest standard deviation was (1.230), “Italy offers good quality of food.”

TABLE 8
MEANS RATING OF ITALY

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Italy offers delicious food	282	5.96	1.335
Italy offers good quality of food	283	5.75	1.230
Italy offers unique cultural experience	283	5.72	1.241
Italy offers food and wine regions	284	5.67	1.402
Italy offers regionally produced food products	283	5.54	1.369
Italy offers attractive food presentation	284	5.48	1.245
Italy offers package tours related to food and wine	283	5.39	1.346
Italy offers many attractive restaurants	282	5.39	1.244
Italy offers the most popular cuisines	284	5.30	1.463
Italy offers friendly service personnel	282	5.30	1.367
Italy offers much literature on food	281	5.30	1.385
Italy offers variety of foods	284	5.27	1.325
Italy offers easy access to restaurants	283	5.27	1.269
Italy offers opportunity to visit street market	284	5.19	1.307
Italy offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits	283	4.97	1.343
Italy offers varieties of specialty restaurants	283	4.88	1.285
Italy unique street food vendors	278	4.82	1.345
Italy offers exotic cooking methods	283	4.75	1.399

Italy offers reasonable price for dining out	282	4.72	1.357
Italy offers restaurants menus in English	281	4.41	1.342

Scale : 1= Strongly Disagree
7= Strongly Agree

Thailand

Thailand also had high mean scores as depicted in Table 9. The highest mean scores (>.5.50) attributes were “Thailand offers unique cultural experience” (5.91), “Thailand offers delicious food” (5.64), “Thailand offers exotic cooking methods” (5.63), “Thailand offers opportunity to visit street market” (5.56) and “Thailand offers unique street food vendors” (5.53) . Overall, more than 65% of the mean scores were more than 5.0. Attributes with lower mean scores were, “Thailand offers package tours related to food and wine” (3.75), and “Thailand offers food and wine region” (3.30). This notation would be true because Thailand is not known for its wine region, but it is known for its culture and food. However, presently Thailand is developing its wine region in the northern part of the country.

For Thailand, the attributes with the highest variations in scores were, “Thailand offers the most popular cuisines” (1.525), closely followed by “Thailand offers restaurant menus in English” (1.490) which was comparable to Italy. The lowest standard deviation (1.297) was, “Thailand offers unique cultural experience.”

TABLE 9
MEANS RATING OF THAILAND

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Thailand offers unique cultural experience	281	5.91	1.297
Thailand offers delicious food	279	5.64	1.404
Thailand offers exotic cooking methods	281	5.63	1.398
Thailand offers opportunity to visit street market	281	5.56	1.364
Thailand offers unique street food vendors	280	5.53	1.429
Thailand offers reasonable price for dining out	280	5.48	1.368
Thailand offers regionally produced food products	281	5.34	1.319
Thailand offers easy access to restaurants	280	5.22	1.245
Thailand offers friendly service personnel	279	5.09	1.425
Thailand offers attractive food presentation	279	5.09	1.360
Thailand offers good quality of food	281	5.06	1.317
Thailand offers many attractive restaurants	281	5.03	1.287
Thailand offers variety of foods	278	5.00	1.471
Thailand offers varieties of specialty restaurants	280	4.85	1.383
Thailand offers restaurants menus in English	281	4.54	1.490
Thailand offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits	278	4.33	1.423
Thailand offers much literature on food	282	4.33	1.384
Thailand offers the most popular cuisines	282	4.11	1.525
Thailand offers package tours related to food and wine	280	3.75	1.454
Thailand offers food and wine regions	282	3.30	1.449

Scale : 1= Strongly Disagree
7= Strongly Agree

The potential of visit to France, Italy, and Thailand

The respondents were asked of the likelihood of visiting France, Italy and Thailand. The results, Table 10 showed that Italy had the highest means scores of 3.83,

while France had mean scores of 3.54, and followed by Thailand with mean scores of 3.12. In general, it stated that all countries scored high means (>3.0). Overall, the results showed that most respondents perceived Italian food image as the most popular and chose it as the most favorable destinations to visit.

TABLE 10
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF POTENTIAL VISIT

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How likely will you visit Italy for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?	281	3.83	1.216
How likely will you visit France for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?	282	3.54	1.274
How likely will you visit Thailand for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?	282	3.12	1.347

Scale : 1= Strongly Disagree
7= Strongly Agree

Overall Destination Profiles

The overall mean rating on destination food images for each country is presented in Table 11. In general the perception of Italy’s food images was the strongest among the destinations. Italian food was chosen as the most popular cuisine in this study. 45% of Italy attributes had the highest means. Next, it was followed by Thailand which had almost 35% of the highest means. France had “France offers food and wine regions” that was chosen as the only highest mean value. This would be an appropriate image for France.

TABLE 11**DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS ACROSS THE COUNTRIES**

Food Image Dimensions	France	Italy	Thailand
...offers the most popular cuisines	4.23	5.30	4.11
...offers food and wine regions	5.85	5.67	3.30
... offers variety of foods	4.95	5.27	5.00
...offers good quality of food	5.47	5.75	5.06
...offers package tours related to food and wine	5.24	5.39	3.75
...offers reasonable price for dining out	3.76	4.72	5.48
...offers many attractive restaurants	5.37	5.39	5.03
...offers unique cultural experience	5.51	5.72	5.91
...offers easy access to restaurants	5.06	5.27	5.22
... offers varieties of specialty restaurants	4.83	4.88	4.85
...offers regionally produced food products	5.42	5.54	5.56
...offers friendly service personnel	4.17	5.30	5.53
... offers restaurants menus in English	3.97	4.41	4.33
...offers opportunity to visit street market	5.04	5.19	4.33
...unique street food vendors	4.61	4.82	5.09
...offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits	4.70	4.97	5.63
...offers much literature on food	5.19	5.30	5.64
...offers attractive food presentation	5.73	5.48	4.54
... offers exotic cooking methods	4.87	4.75	5.34
... offers delicious food	5.50	5.96	5.09
How likely will you visit for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?	3.54	3.83	3.12

Scale : 1= Strongly Disagree
7= Strongly Agree

Factor Analysis

France

Three destination's food image factors were extracted from the factor analysis of 20 food images variables. These three factors explained 59.03% of the total variance.

The name or label created for each factor was depended on the common characteristics of the variables listed in the factors.

TABLE 12
FACTORS OF FRANCE'S FOOD IMAGE

Factors	Loadings	eigenvalue	% of Variance Explained
1. <i>France's Food Image</i>			
France offers good quality food	.839		
France offers food and wine region	.788		
France offers delicious food	.767		
France offers many attractive restaurants	.758		
France offers variety of foods	.727	4.28	30.57
France offers package tours related to food and wine	.660		
France offers easy access to restaurants	.577		
France offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits	.456		
2. <i>France's Unique Image</i>			
France offers unique street food vendors	.818		
France offers opportunity to visit street market	.704	2.07	14.77
France offers exotic cooking methods	.616		
3. <i>France's Restaurants Image</i>			
France offers friendly service personnel	.828		
France offers reasonable price for dining out	.658	1.92	13.69
France offers restaurants menus in English	.653		
Total variance explained			59.03

The first factor was labeled "France's Food Image" comprised of eight variables:

France offers good quality food; France offers food and wine region; France offers

delicious food; France offers many attractive restaurants; France offers variety of foods; France offers package tours related to food and wine; France offers easy access to restaurants; and France offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits; with Eigen value of 4.28, this factor explained 30.57% of the total variance.

The second factor was named “France Unique Culinary Image” consisted of three variables: France offers unique street food vendors; France offers opportunity to visit street market; and France offers exotic cooking methods. This factor had an eigenvalue of 2.07 and total variance of 14.77%.

The third factor was labeled “France’s Restaurant Image” contained three variables: France offers friendly service personnel, France offers reasonable price for dining out, and France offers restaurant menus in English. This factor had an eigenvalue of 1.92 and total variance of 13.69%.

Italy

Two destinations’ food image factors were extracted from the factor analysis of 20 food image variables. These two factors explained 57.51% of the total variance. Each factor was labeled based on the common characteristics of the variables listed in the factors.

TABLE 13
FACTORS OF ITALY’S FOOD IMAGE

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>eigenvalue</i>	<i>% of Variance Explained</i>
1. Italy’s Food Image			
Italy offers good quality of food	.850		
Italy offers delicious food	.831		
Italy offers food and wine regions	.814		
Italy offers regionally produced food products	.813		
Italy offers package tours related to food and wine	.786		
Italy offers unique cultural experience	.721		
Italy offers various food activities, cooking classes, and farm visits	.699	6.58	43.83
Italy offers much literature on food	.691		
Italy offers attractive food presentation	.688		
Italy offers variety of foods	.659		
Italy offers the most popular cuisine	.636		
Italy offers reasonable price for dining out	.488		
2. Italy’s Unique Image			
Italy offers restaurants menus in English	.720		
Italy offers exotic cooking methods	.674	2.05	13.68
Italy offers varieties of specialty restaurants	.657		
Total variance explained			57.51

Factor one “Italy’s Food Image” had a total of 12 items which included: Italy offers good quality of food; Italy offers delicious food; Italy offers food and wine regions; Italy offers regionally produced food products; Italy offers package tours related to food and wine Italy offers unique cultural experience; Italy offers various food activities, cooking classes, and farm visits; Italy offers much literature on food; Italy offers attractive food presentation Italy offers variety of foods; Italy offers the most popular cuisine; and Italy offers reasonable price for dining out. The total variance explained was 43.83% and Eigen value was 6.58.

The next factor was, “Italy’s Restaurant Image” consisted only three items: Italy offers restaurant menus in English; Italy offers exotic cooking methods; and Italy offers

varieties of specialty restaurants. Total variance explained was 13.68% and Eigen value was 2.05.

Thailand

Two destination's food image factors were extracted from the factor analysis of 20 food images variables. These two factors explained 56.97% of the total variance. Each factor was labeled based on the common characteristics of the variables listed in the factors.

TABLE 14
FACTORS OF THAILAND'S FOOD IMAGE

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Loadings</i>	<i>eigenvalue</i>	<i>% of Variance Explained</i>
1. Thailand's Food Image			
Thailand offers unique street food vendors	.828		
Thailand offers opportunity to visit street market	.807		
Thailand offers unique cultural experience	.793		
Thailand offers friendly service personnel	.774		
Thailand offers reasonable price for dining out	.767		
Thailand offers regionally produced food products	.757	5.94	39.60
Thailand offers exotic cooking methods	.727		
Thailand offers easy access to restaurants	.721		
Thailand offers delicious food	.716		
Thailand offers many attractive restaurants	.657		
2. Thailand's Unique Image			
Thailand offers package tours related to food and wine	.806		
Thailand offers food and wine regions	.784		
Thailand offers various food activities, cooking classes, and farm visits	.687	2.60	17.37
Thailand offers the most popular cuisine	.673		
Total variance explained			56.97

The first factor was labeled “Thailand’s Food Image” comprised of ten variables: Thailand offers unique street food vendors; Thailand offers opportunity to visit street market; Thailand offers unique cultural experience; Thailand offers friendly service personnel; Thailand offers reasonable price for dining out; Thailand offers regionally produced food products; Thailand offers exotic cooking methods; Thailand offers easy access to restaurants; Thailand offers delicious food; and Thailand offers many attractive restaurants. The total variance explained was 39.60% and the Eigen value was 5.94.

The second factor for Thailand was “Thailand’s Unique Image” comprised of four items: Thailand offers package tours related to food and wine; Thailand offers food and wine regions; Thailand offers various food activities, cooking classes, and farm visits; and Thailand offers the most popular cuisine. This total variance accounted for by this factor was 17.37% and the eigenvalue was 2.60.

TABLE 15
OVERALL FACTOR COMPARISON ACROSS COUNTRIES

France, Italy and Thailand offer...	FRANCE	ITALY	THAILAND
the most popular cuisine in the world.		F1	F2
food and wine regions.	F1	F1	F2
variety of foods.	F1	F1	
good quality of food.	F1	F1	
package tours related to food and wine.	F1	F1	F2
reasonable price for dining-out.		F3	F1
many attractive restaurants.	F1		F1
unique cultural experiences.		F1	F1
easy access to restaurants.	F1		F1
varieties of specialty restaurants.			F2
regionally produced food products.		F1	F1
friendly service personnel.		F3	F1
restaurant menus in English.		F3	
opportunity to visit street markets.			F1
unique street food vendors.	F2		F1
various food activities, e.g. cooking classes, farm visits.	F1	F1	F2
much literature on food and tourism.		F1	
attractive food presentation.		F1	
exotic cooking methods.		F2	F1
delicious food.	F1	F1	F1

Overall Comparison across Countries.

In Table 15, we could see that very few items were loaded into different factors.

The only item that was loaded into the same factors across the three countries was “delicious food”. Some items were loaded into two countries, for example “food and wine region” was loaded into Factor 1 for France and Italy, but was loaded into Factor 2 for Thailand.

In summary, we could conclude that each country had its own image and perceived differently by the participants. An item could be a main factor France but not an important factor for Italy. For example, “unique cultural experience” was one of the factors for Italy but was not a factor for France. Some of the items were specific for a particular country. Most items were loaded at least into one of the factors.

Regression Analysis

France

The results of the multiple-regression analysis are shown in Table 16. The regression model depicted that an adjusted R^2 of .12, which means that 12% of the total variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The F-ratio of 13.016 was significant ($p < 0.001$) and indicated that the result of the equation model was reliable. All of the t values for the factors were significant, except for Factor 2 which was not significant. A stepwise regression was conducted in order not to include Factor 2 in the model. There was no change on the R^2 . It showed that Factor 2 was not significant predictors. No further analysis was conducted.

Statistics for the equation

TABLE 16

MODEL 1 - SUMMARY FOR FRANCE

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.351	.123	.114	1.199

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	56.170	3	18.723	13.016	.000(a)
	Residual	399.901	278	1.438		
	Total	456.071	281			

Variables in the Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.109	.412		2.693	.008
	FacFr1	.325	.089	.254	3.660	.000
	FacFr2	-.019	.079	-.017	-.247	.805
	FacFr3	.204	.070	.182	2.934	.004

a Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit France for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

Statistics for the equation

TABLE 17

MODEL 2 – SUMMARY FOR FRANCE

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.331	.123	.117	1.197

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.082	2	28.041	19.559	.000(a)
	Residual	399.988	279	1.434		
	Total	456.071	281			

a. Predictors: (Constant), FacFr3, FacFr1

b. Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit France for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

Variables in Equation

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.091	.404		2.697	.007
F1	FacFr1	.314	.077	.245	4.092	.000
F3	FacFr3	.200	.067	.178	2.975	.003

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 1.091 + 0.314XF_1 + 0.200XF_3 \quad \text{where,}$$

Y = Intention to visit

FI = (France offers good quality food; France offers food and wine region; France offers delicious food; France offers many attractive restaurants; France offers variety of foods; France offers package tours related to food and wine; France offers easy access to restaurants; and France offers various food activities, cooking classes and farm visits)
F3 = (France offers friendly service personnel; France offers reasonable price for dining out; and France offers restaurants menus in English)

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 1 resulted in .314 unit increase in the dependent variable (intention to visit) while keeping other variables constant. However, when using Beta to interpret the results, Factor 1 (Beta = .245) had the greatest influence on “intention to visit” and Factor 2 (Beta = .178) had the second strongest influence on “intention to visit”.

Italy

The results for Italy are shown as follows. The regression model depicted R^2 of .067, which means that only 6% of the total variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The F-ratio of 10.028, was significant at $p < 0.001$ and indicated that the results of the equation model was reliable. The t value for Factor 2 was not significant and was dropped in the next regression. A second regression was performed. This model was regressed using only Factor 1 on the dependent variable. There was no change on the R^2 . Factor 2 was not a significant predictor for Italy. The F- ratio was increased to 20.117 and it was significant at $p < 0.001$. No further analysis was conducted in this section.

Statistics for the equation.

TABLE 18
MODEL 1 – SUMMARY FOR ITALY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.259(a)	.067	.061	1.178

a Predictors: (Constant), FacIt2, FacIt1

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.844	2	13.922	10.028	.000(a)
	Residual	385.956	278	1.388		
	Total	413.801	280			

a Predictors: (Constant), FacIt2, FacIt1

b Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit Italy for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.134	.417		5.113	.000
	FacIt1	.304	.081	.256	3.741	.000
	FacIt2	.009	.086	.007	.101	.919

a Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit Italy for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

TABLE 19

MODEL 2 – SUMMARY FOR ITALY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.259(a)	.067	.064	1.176

a Predictors: (Constant), FacIt1

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.830	1	27.830	20.117	.000(a)
	Residual	385.970	279	1.383		
	Total	413.801	280			

a Predictors: (Constant), FacIt1

b Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit Italy for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.151	.381		5.652	.000
	FacIt1	.309	.069	.259	4.485	.000

a Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit Italy for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 2.151 + 0.309XF_1 \quad \text{where,}$$

Y = intention to visit

F₁ = (Italy offers good quality of food; Italy offers delicious food; Italy offers food and wine regions; Italy offers regionally produced food products; Italy offers package tours related to food and wine; Italy offers unique cultural experience; Italy offers various food activities, cooking classes, and farm visits; Italy offers much literature on food; Italy offers attractive food presentation; Italy offers variety of foods; Italy offers the most popular cuisine; and Italy offers reasonable price for dining out)

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 1 resulted in .309 unit increase in the dependent variable (intention to visit), while keeping other variables constant. However, when using Beta to interpret the results, Factor 1 (Beta = .259) had the greatest influence on “intention to visit”.

Thailand

The multiple-regression results for Thailand are depicted as follows. The two factors of Thailand were regressed only once. It had R square of .115, which means 12% of the total variance in the dependent variable could be explained by the independent variables in the model. The F-ratio was 17.981, significant at $p < 0.001$, indicated that the model was reliable. No further analysis was conducted.

Statistics for the equation.

TABLE 20
MODEL 1 – SUMMARY FOR THAILAND

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.339(a)	.115	.109	1.265

a Predictors: (Constant), FacTh2, FacTh1

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	57.550	2	28.775	17.981	.000(a)
	Residual	443.293	277	1.600		
	Total	500.843	279			

a Predictors: (Constant), FacTh2, FacTh1

b Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit Thailand for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.566	.436		1.297	.000
	FacTh1	.336	.076	.261	4.435	.000
	FacTh2	.192	.072	.157	2.672	.000

a Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit Thailand for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = .566 + .336XF_1 + .192XF_2 \quad \text{where,}$$

Y = intention to visit

$F_1 =$ (Thailand offers unique street food vendors; Thailand offers opportunity to visit street market; Thailand offers unique cultural experience; Thailand offers friendly service personnel; Thailand offers reasonable price for dining out; Thailand offers regionally produced food products; Thailand offers exotic cooking methods; Thailand offers easy access to restaurants; Thailand offers delicious food; and Thailand offers many attractive restaurants)

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 1 resulted .336 unit increase in the dependent variable (intention to visit) while keeping other variables constant. However, when using Beta to interpret the results, Factor 1 (Beta = .261) had the greatest influence, followed by Factor 2 (Beta = .157) on “the intention to visit.”

Overall Comparison across the Countries

It is concluded that France had two factors that were significant: Factor 1 and Factor 3. Italy only had one factor that was significant, Factor 1 and Thailand had two

Factors which were significant: Factor 1 and Factor 2. In general, France and Thailand had R^2 of more than 10%, however Italy had an R^2 of only 5%.

Research Question Two

This section analyzed the importance of information sources when choosing a food/culinary destination. The respondents had to rate the importance of 13 types of information sources. The following table depicted the results of factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

TABLE 21
FACTORS OF INFORMATION SOURCES

Factors	Loadings	Eigenvalue	% of variance explained
1. Traditional Sources			
Highway Welcome Center	.872	4.85	40.53
Local/National Tourism Offices	.754		
Automobile Club	.734		
Direct Mail from Destination	.720		
Newspaper	.688		
2. Commercial Sources			
Travel Book	.838	1.60	13.34
Travel Magazine	.789		
Brochures/Travel Guides	.759		
Internet Website	.615		
TV/Movies/Travel Chanel	.574		
3. Personal Sources			
Friends and family members	.845	1.23	10.25
Past experience	.742		
Total variance explained			64.12

In this section, the results indicated that three factors were extracted from the analysis of 13 sources of information. The named was labeled arbitrarily, however it was closely associated with the variables in the factor. The first factor was labeled,

“Traditional Sources”, and was comprised of five variables: highway welcome center, local/national tourism offices, automobile club, direct mail from destination and newspaper. The eigenvalue was 4.85 and this factor explained 40.53% of the total variance.

The second factor was named, “Commercial Sources” and was comprised of five items: travel book, travel magazine, brochures/travel guides, internet website, V/Movies/Travel Chanel. This factor had eigenvalue of 1.60 and explained 13.34% of the total variance.

Lastly, the third factor, “Personal Sources”, had only 2 items: friends and family members and past experience. “Travel Agency/Company” was not loaded into any of the factors. In summary, these factors were importance to travelers before making decision to visit a culinary destination. The exclusion of travel agents showed that current travelers are not relying on travel agents; which could probably due to the internet explosion in the past decade.

Regression Analysis

This analysis was conducted in order to determine how much the factors could predict the intention to visit. Multiple- regression is a statistical technique that can be used to examine the relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables (Hair et al., 2005).

A regression equation model can be represented as follows:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1 V_1 + b_1 V_2 + \dots + b_n V_n + E$$

The regression model for information sources results are illustrated as follows. The R square value was .24, which means that 24% of the total variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in Model 1. The F- ratio was 89.17 was significant at $p < .000$ which indicated that the results were significant. Factor 1 and Factor 2 were significant, but not Factor 3. Another regression model was conducted in order to observe the change of R square. In Model 2, only Factor 1 and Factor 2 were regressed on intention to visit a destination. In this model, the R squared was similar to Model 1. The exclusion of Factor 2, did not change the R square of the entire model. The F-ratio for Model 2 was 133.75, was significant at $p < .0001$ which indicated the results were reliable. Both Factor 1 and Factor 2 were significant.

TABLE 22
MODEL 1 – SUMMARY OF INFORMATION SOURCES

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.493(a)	.243	.240	1.506

a Predictors: (Constant), Factor 1, Factor 2

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	606.615	3	202.205	89.165	.000(a)
	Residual	1893.583	835	2.268		
	Total	2500.198	838			

a Predictors: (Constant), Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 3

b Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit.....?

Variables in Equation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	1.584	.266		5.963	.000
	Factor 1	.209	.041	.182	5.113	.000
	Factor 2	.519	.052	.366	9.922	.000
	Factor 3	.018	.038	.015	.480	.631

a Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit?

TABLE 23

MODEL 2 – SUMMARY OF INFORMATION SOURCES

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.492(a)	.242	.241	1.505

a Predictors: (Constant), Factor 1, Factor 2

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	606.092	2	303.046	133.755	.000(a)
	Residual	1894.106	836	2.266		
	Total	2500.198	838			

a Predictors: (Constant), Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 3

b Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit.....?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.643	.235		6.981	.000
	Factor 1	.210	.041	.183	5.154	.000
	Factor 2	.526	.050	.370	10.425	.000

a Dependent Variable: How likely will you visit for its food and dining experiences for the next five years?

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 1.643 + .210XF_1 + .526XF_2 \quad \text{where,}$$

Y = intention to visit

F₁ = (highway welcome center; local/national tourism offices; automobile club;

direct mail from destination; newspaper).

F_2 = (travel book; travel magazine; brochures/travel guides; internet website; TV/movies/travel channel).

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 1 and Factor 2 resulted in .210 and .526 unit increase in the dependent variable (intention to visit) respectively, while keeping other variables constant. However, when using Beta to interpret the results, Factor 2 (Beta = .379) had the greatest influence on “intention to visit”. In general, Factor 2 could be a core factor of information sources than can be utilized to promote and market a culinary destination.

Additional Analysis - Comparison across Countries

France

The mean ratings for France are illustrated in Table 24 . In general, five mean ratings were higher than five (> 5). The highest mean rating was “internet/website” (5.84), second was “past experience” (5.55), and followed by “friends and family members”. The other three mean ratings higher than five were “travel book” (5.47), “brochures/travel guides” (5.24) and “travel magazine”. Four mean ratings were on the medium range, (> 4). Those variables were, “tv, movies/travel channel” (4.98), “travel agency/company” (4.73), “local and tourism offices” (4.67), and “newspaper” (4.02).

Three mean ratings were found to be lower than four (<4), “direct mail from destinations” (3.95), “highway welcome center” (3.68), and “automobile shop” (3.38) being the lowest scores.

The attributes with the highest deviation in scores was, “automobile club” (2.015), followed by “highway welcome center” (1.965). The lowest standard deviation was

“internet/websites” (1.475). Generally we can say that most respondents agreed that the “internet/websites” are the most important source of information.

TABLE 24
MEAN RATINGS FOR FRANCE INFORMATION SOURCES

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
France, internet/websites	280	5.84	1.475
France, past experience	283	5.55	1.726
France, friends and family members	282	5.49	1.639
France, travel book	283	5.47	1.521
France, brochures/travel guides	283	5.24	1.734
France travel magazine	281	5.09	1.648
France, TV/movies/travel channel	281	4.98	1.697
France, travel agency/company	282	4.73	1.789
France, local/national tourism offices	282	4.67	1.831
France, newspaper	282	4.02	1.748
France, direct mail from destination	283	3.95	1.932
France, highway welcome center	280	3.68	1.965
Rate the importance of the sources when choosing France, Automobile Club	283	3.38	2.015

Scale :1= Very Un-Important
7= Very Important

Italy

Similarly, Italy had the “internet/websites” as the highest mean ratings (5.87), followed by “friends and family members” (5.62). The third highest mean was “past

experience” (5.54). All together, five mean ratings were higher than five (>5). There were four medium range means; three items were similar to France. They were “travel agency/company” (4.66), “local and tourism offices” (4.67), and “newspaper” (4.08). Among the lowest mean ratings were, “direct mail” (3.95), “highway welcome center”, and “automobile club” (3.38). Two of the lowest mean ratings were also comparable to those associated with France.

In terms of the spread of the scores, the highest variation was, (2.05) “automobile club” followed by “highway welcome center.” The lowest standard deviation was, “Internet/website” (1.42) which was similar to Italy. Most respondents agreed that the internet was an important source of information.

TABLE 25
MEAN RATINGS OF ITALY INFORMATION SOURCES

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Italy, internet/websites	280	5.87	1.424
Italy, friends and family members	283	5.62	1.651
Italy, past experience	283	5.54	1.668
Italy, travel book	283	5.51	1.450
Italy, brochures/travel guides	284	5.24	1.722
Italy, travel magazine	283	5.19	1.591
Italy, TV/movies/travel channel	283	5.10	1.614
Italy, local/national tourism offices	282	4.67	1.790
Italy, travel agency/company	282	4.66	1.799
Italy, direct mail from destination	282	4.14	1.922
Italy, newspaper	283	4.08	1.744
Italy, highway welcome center	280	3.68	1.968

Rate the importance of the sources when choosing Italy, Automobile Club	284	3.42	2.055
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Scale :1= Very Un-Important
7= Very Important

Thailand

For Thailand, the highest mean ratings (5.75), “internet/websites” was comparable to France and Italy. The next highest mean rating was “friends and family” (5.50), followed by “travel book” (5.46) and “travel magazine” (5.16) consecutively. Three other means that were (> 5): “brochures/travel guides” (5.13), “past experience” (5.10), and “tv/movies/travel channel” (5.06). Three mean ratings were higher than 4 (>4) included “local/national tourism offices” (4.62), “travel agency/company” (4.61), and “direct mail from destination” (4.04). Among the lowest means were, “newspaper” (3.93), “highway welcome center” (3.54), and “automobile club” (3.23).

TABLE 26
MEAN RATINGS FOR THAILAND INFORMATION SOURCES

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Thailand, internet/websites	277	5.75	1.489
Thailand, friends and family members	279	5.50	1.746
Thailand, travel book	281	5.46	1.509
Thailand, travel magazine	282	5.16	1.641
Thailand, brochures/travel guides	282	5.13	1.795
Thailand, past experience	281	5.10	1.982
Thailand, TV/movies/travel channel	280	5.06	1.626
Thailand, local/national tourism offices	281	4.62	1.913

Thailand, travel agency/company	282	4.61	1.843
Thailand, direct mail from destination	281	4.04	1.955
Thailand, newspaper	281	3.93	1.841
Thailand, highway welcome center	280	3.54	2.080
Rate the importance of the sources when choosing Thailand, Automobile Club	281	3.23	2.063

Scale: 1= Very Un-Important
7= Very Important

The importance of Information Sources

The following table illustrates the importance of information sources when making a decision to visit the destinations. All destinations had mean ratings higher than five (>5). Thailand had the highest mean ratings of 5.46.

TABLE 27
MEAN RATINGS FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES ACROSS THE COUNTRIES

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How important are the information sources when making decision to visit France?	281	5.15	1.800
How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Italy?	281	5.27	1.745
How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Thailand?	280	5.46	1.617

Scale: 1= Very Un-Important
7= Very Important

Overall Comparison across the Countries

The overall mean ratings on destination food images for each country are presented in Table 28; Italy had the highest mean ratings. The highest mean ratings for information sources when deciding on a destination were “internet/website” for all three countries, followed by “friends and family members, and “past experience” for France and Italy but not for Thailand. The lowest means ratings were “automobile club” and “highway welcome center” which were consistent for all three countries.

TABLE 28
OVERALL COMPARISON OF MEANS RATING
ACROSS COUNTRIES

	France	Italy	Thailand
Rate the importance of the sources when choosing France, Automobile Club	3.38	3.42	3.23
France, brochures/travel guides	5.24	5.24	5.13
France, travel book	5.47	5.51	5.46
France travel magazine	5.09	5.19	5.16
France. friends and family members	5.49	5.62	5.50
France, highway welcome center	3.68	3.68	3.54
France, local/national tourism offices	4.67	4.67	4.62
France, newspaper	4.02	4.08	3.93
France, past experience	5.55	5.54	5.10
France, direct mail from destination	3.95	4.14	4.04
France, travel agency/company	4.73	4.66	4.61
France, TV/movies/travel channel	4.98	5.10	5.06
France, internet/websites	5.84	5.87	5.75
How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Thailand?	5.15	5.27	5.46

Scale : 1= Very Un-Important
7= Very Important

Factor Analysis

France.

In this section, factor analysis was performed in order to find the underlying factors for each country. Next, country to country comparison will be discussed to determine if there were any differences found in the factor for each country. Three information source factors were extracted from the factor analysis of the 13 information source items. These three factors explained 63.89% of the total variance. Each factor was labeled based on the common characteristics of the items listed in the factor.

TABLE 29
FACTORS OF FRANCE INFORMATION SOURCES

Factors	Loadings	Eigenvalue	% of variance explained
1. Traditional Sources			
Automobile club	.747		
Highway way welcome center	.867		
Local/national tourism offices	.761	4.31	39.19
Newspaper	.708		
Direct mail from destination	.740		
2. Commercial Sources			
Travel Book	.794		
Travel Magazine	.750		
TV/movies/travel channel	.579	1.71	15.52
Internet/Websites	.745		
3. Personal Sources			
Friends and family members	.705	1.00	9.17
Past experience	.891		
Total variance explained			63.89

The first Factor was labeled “Traditional Sources” and was comprised of five variables: Automobile Club, Highway Welcome Center, Local/National Tourism

Offices, Newspaper, and Direct Mail from destination. The eigenvalue was 4.31. This factor explained 39.19% of the total variance

The second factor was named “Commercial Sources” and was comprised of four items: Travel Book, Travel Magazine, TV/movies/travel channel, and Internet/Websites. This factor had an eigenvalue of 1.71 and explained 15.52% of the total variance.

Finally the third factor, “Personal Sources”, had only 2 items: friends and family members and past experience. The eigenvalue was 1.00 and it explained 9.17% of the total variance.

Italy

For Italy, only two factors were extracted from the factor analysis of 13 information source items. These two factors explained 56.27% of the total variance. The factors were labeled using the same name as the previous factors of France due to its consistency of the items in the factor.

TABLE 30
FACTORS OF ITALY INFORMATION SOURCES

Factors	Loadings	eigenvalue	% of variance explained
1. Traditional Sources			
Automobile club	.746		
Highway way welcome center	.867		
Local/national tourism offices	.787		
Newspaper	.644	4.69	42.68
Direct mail from destination	.756		
Travel agency/company	.593		
2. Commercial Sources			
Travel Book	.782		
Travel Magazine	.771	1.49	13.59
TV/movies/travel channel	.743		
Internet/Websites	.696		
Total variance explained			56.27

The first factor, “Traditional Sources”, comprised of five items: Automobile club, Highway Welcome Center, Local/national tourism offices, Newspaper, Direct mail from destination, and Travel agency/company. This factor had an eigenvalue of 4.69 and explained 42.68% of the total variance.

The second factor was labeled, “Commercial Sources” which includes Travel Book, Travel Magazine, TV/movies/travel channel, and Internet/Websites. This factor had an eigenvalue of 1.49 and explained 13.59% of the total variance.

Thailand

Three main factors were extracted for Thailand, which was similar to France. The three factors explained 65.63% of the total variance.

TABLE 31
FACTORS OF THAILAND INFORMATION SOURCES

Factors	Loadings	eigenvalue	% of variance explained
1. Traditional Sources			
Automobile club	.724		
Highway way welcome center	.885		
Local/national tourism offices	.724	4.35	39.58
Newspaper	.694		
Direct mail from destination	.699		
2. Commercial Sources			
Brochures / travel guide	.769		
Travel Book	.847	1.51	13.74
Travel Magazine	.781		
Internet/Websites	.614		
3. Personal Sources			
Friends and family members	.802		
Past experience	.846	1.35	12.31
Total variance explained			65.63

The first factor, “Traditional Sources” had five items. These items were similar to France and Italy. This factor had an eigenvalue of 4.35 and explained 39.58% of the total variance.

The second factor, “Commercial Sources” had four items. The items were: Brochures / travel guide, Travel Book, Travel Magazine, and Internet/Websites. This factor had an eigenvalue of 1.51 and explained 13.47% of the total variance.

The third factor, “Personal Sources” was similar to France. This factor had an eigenvalue of 1.35 and explained 12.31% of the total variance.

TABLE 32
FACTORS COMPARISON ACROSS COUNTRIES

Factors	France	Italy	Thailand
1. Traditional Sources			
Automobile club	X	X	X
Highway way welcome center	X	X	X
Local/national tourism offices	X	X	X
Newspaper	X	X	X
Direct mail from destination	X	X	X
Travel agency/company		X	
2. Commercial Sources			
Travel Book	X	X	X
Travel Magazine	X	X	X
Internet/Websites	X	X	X
TV/movies/travel channel	X	X	
Brochures/ travel guide			X
3. Personal Sources			
Friends and family members	X		X
Past experience	X		X

Overall Comparison across the Countries

Most of the items were loaded on the same factors. The only difference was in Factor 1, where Italy had one extra item, “Travel agency/company.” In Factor 2, the only

difference was that Thailand had one item that was loaded into its factor, “Brochures/travel guide” but was not loaded into France and Italy. All other items in the factor were similar. In Factor 3, Italy and Thailand countries had the same item loaded into their factor. It can be said that, in general most items were loaded in the same factors for each of the three countries.

Regression Analysis

France

The regression model results for France are illustrated as follows. The R^2 value of .270 stated that 27% of the total variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The F-ratio of 34.047 was significant at $p < .0001$ which indicated that the results were reliable. However, Factor 3 was not significant ($p > .05$). Another regression model was performed in order to check if there were any changes in the R square of the model. At this time, only Factor 1 and Factor 2 were regressed on the dependent variable. In this model, the R squared was similar to the first model. The F-ratio increased to 51.101, was significant at $p < .0001$ which indicated that the results were reliable. Both Factor 1 and Factor 2 were significant.

Statistics for the equation

TABLE 33

MODEL 1 – SUMMARY FOR FRANCE

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.520(a)	.270	.262	1.549

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforfr3, factorinfoforfr1, factorinfoforfr2

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	244.993	3	81.664	34.047	.000(a)
	Residual	662.003	276	2.399		
	Total	906.996	279			

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforfr3, factorinfoforfr1, factorinfoforfr2

b Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit France?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.043	.490		2.129	.034
	factorinfoforfr1	.315	.072	.259	4.391	.000
	factorinfoforfr2	.497	.094	.331	5.299	.000
	factorinfoforfr3	.034	.071	.026	.475	.635

a Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit France?

TABLE 34**MODEL 2 – SUMMARY FOR FRANCE**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.519(a)	.270	.264	1.547

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforfr2, factorinfoforfr1

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	244.452	2	122.226	51.101	.000(a)
	Residual	662.545	277	2.392		
	Total	906.996	279			

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforfr2, factorinfoforfr1

b Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit France?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.156	.427		20707	.007
	factorinfoforfr1	.313	.071	.258	4.383	.000
	factorinfoforfr2	.512	.088	.341	5.781	.000

a Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit France?

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 1.156 + .313XF_1 + .512XF_2 \quad \text{where,}$$

Y = intention to visit

F₁ = (Automobile club; Highway way welcome center; Local/national tourism offices; Newspaper; Direct mail from destination; Travel agency/company)

F₂ = (Travel Book, Travel Magazine, TV/movies/travel channel, internet/Websites)

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 1 – “Traditional Information Sources”, resulted in .313 unit increase in the dependent variable, “intention to visit”, while keeping other variables constant. However, when using Beta to interpret the results, Factor 2 (Beta = .341) was the most important factor of intention to visit followed by Factor 1 (Beta = .258).

Italy

The total R^2 for Italy was .244 which means that 24% of the total variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. The F Ratio of 44.788 was significant at $p < .0001$ which indicated that the results were reliable. Both of the factors were significant. No further analysis was performed.

Statistics for the equation

TABLE 35

MODEL 1 – SUMMARY FOR ITALY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.494(a)	.244	.238	1.523

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforItaly2, factorinfoforItaly1

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	207.866	2	103.933	44.788	.000(a)
	Residual	645.116	278	2.321		
	Total	852.982	280			

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforItaly2, factorinfoforItaly1

b Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Italy?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.602	.427		3.748	.000
	factorinfoforItaly1	.344	.073	.285	4.710	.000
	factorinfoforItaly2	.414	.088	.283	4.681	.000

a Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Italy?

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 1.602 + .344XF_1 + .414XF_2 \quad \text{where,}$$

Y = intention to visit

F₁ = (Automobile club; Highway way welcome center; Local/national tourism offices; Newspaper; Direct mail from destination,;and Travel agency/company)

F₂ = (Travel Book; Travel Magazine; TV/movies/travel channel; Internet/Websites)

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 1 – “Traditional Information Sources”, will result in .344 unit increase in the dependent variable, “intention to visit” while keeping other variables constant.

However, when using Beta to interpret the results, Factor 1 (Beta = .285) was the most important source of information that might influence intention to visit.

Thailand

A regression model was regressed on Thailand. Factor 1, Factor 2 and Factor 3 were regressed on the dependent variable. The R square was .21, which indicated that 21% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. Factor 1 and 3 was not significant. The F ratio was significant at 24.374, $p < .0001$. Factor 2 was regressed for the second time on the intention to visit. The R

square changed to 20%. The F ratio was significant at 67.026, $p < .0001$. This indicated that the model was reliable. No further analysis was conducted.

Statistics for the equation

TABLE 36

MODEL 1 – SUMMARY FOR THAILAND

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.459(a)	.211	.202	1.447

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinforforThai3, factorinforforThai2, factorinfoforThai1

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	153.120	3	51.040	24.374	.000(a)
	Residual	573.772	274	2.094		
	Total	726.892	277			

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinforforThai3, factorinforforThai2, factorinfoforThai1

b Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Thailand?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.094	.426		4.910	.000
	factorinfoforThai1	.112	.066	.106	1.691	.092
	factorinforforThai2	.474	.080	.371	5.954	.000
	factorinforforThai3	.070	.057	.069	1.219	.224

a Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Thailand?

Statistics for the equation

TABLE 37
MODEL 2 – SUMMARY FOR THAILAND

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.442(a)	.195	.192	1.456

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforThai3, factorinfoforThai2, factorinfoforThai1

Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	142.032	1	142.032	67.026	.000(a)
	Residual	584.860	276	2.119		
	Total	726.892	277			

a Predictors: (Constant), factorinfoforThai2

b Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Thailand?

Variables in Equation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.412	.382		6.320	.000
	factorinfoforThai2	.564	.069	.442	8.187	.000

a Dependent Variable: How important are the information sources when making decision to visit Thailand?

The final regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = 2.412 + .564XF_2 \text{ where,}$$

$$Y = \text{intention to visit}$$

$$F_2 = (\text{Brochures / travel guide; Travel book; Travel magazine; and Internet/Websites})$$

By using the unstandardized coefficients, for every one unit increase in the independent variable of Factor 2 – “Commercial Sources”, will result in .564 unit

increase in the dependent variable, “intention to visit” while keeping other variables constant. Beta was at .442 for Factor 2.

Overall Comparison across the Countries

It is concluded that Factor 1 and Factor 2 were the most significant predictors for France and Italy. There were some similarities between these two countries. However, Thailand had only Factor 2 (Commercial Sources) that was significant. In conclusion, it could be summarized that travelers’ in this study had different perceptions of the importance of information sources and intention to visit.

Research Question Three

This question assessed the moderating effects that the demographic characteristics had on the relationship between a destination food image and intention to visit. The destinations' food image Factor 1 and 2 were regressed on the dependent variable. A series of 8 multiple regressions were performed to test the effect of moderators on the relationship between destination's food image and intention to visit. A two-way interaction was conducted to test the hypothesis of the moderators (Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan, 1990). Specifically, there were four moderators in this study: gender, age, education, and income. These moderators were centered, where it was recoded in deviation score forms so that the mean was zero. This procedure could help in reducing multicollinearity in the predictors and help in the interpretation of the final regression model (Aiken & West, 1991). The factors were also centered, by taking the grand mean of each factors and subtracting the mean from each case in the factor so the mean would be zero. After centering the moderators and Factors 1 and 2, the interaction terms were computed by multiplying (Factor 1 \times Gender) and were repeated for other moderators. Same procedures were conducted for Factor 2 and the moderators.

Hierarchical regressions were conducted after completing the centering procedure. For illustration, (Step 1/Model 1) centered Factor 1 and centered gender was regressed on the intention to visit (main effects). Next, (Step 2/Model 2) the interaction effect of Factor 1 (Factor 1 \times gender) were also regressed on the intention to visit. If the interaction effect was significant, it showed that the moderators had an effect on the

relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. The same procedures were conducted for all of the significant factors and moderators.

After conducting the analysis, none of the moderators showed a significant effect on the relationship between destinations' food image and intention to visit. These findings were comparable to previous study on destination image. Further explanation will be performed in the discussion of the hypotheses.

Research Question Four

This question assessed the moderating effects that the demographic characteristics had on the relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit. Similar procedures that were conducted for research question three were repeated as well to answer research question four. A series of eight multiple regressions were conducted in order to assess the moderating effects of gender, age, education, and income. A twoway interaction was conducted to test the hypothesis for the moderators (Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan, 1990). Each of the moderators (gender, age, education and income) was centered in previous question. Both Factor 1 and 2 were centered by taking the grand mean of each factors and subtracting the mean from each case in the factor so the mean would be zero. The interaction terms between the factors and moderators were calculated.

Consequently, hierarchical regressions were conducted in this section. For example, (Step 1/Model 1) gender and the first factor were regressed on the intention to visit. Next, (Step 2/Model 2) the interaction effects of the first factor and gender (Factor 1 \times gender) was regressed on the intention to visit. If the interaction effect was significant, it would show that the moderators had an effect on the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. The steps were conducted for all the factors and moderators separately.

The following tables illustrated only the significant results for this section. Out of the eight analyses that were performed, four of the results were significant. These findings confirmed that some of the moderators had a significant effect on the

relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit. Further explanation of the results will be discussed in the hypotheses section.

TABLE 38

REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF GENDER, THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES (FACTOR 1) ON INTENTION TO VISIT

Model	df	Sum of Squares	Means of Squares	F	P Value
<u>Gender</u>					
Regression	2	384.487	192.244	75.390	.000**
Factor 1 * Gender	1	23.552	23.552	9.329	.002*
Residual	826	2085.287	2.525		
Total	829	2493.327			

*Significant < 0.01

** Significant < 0.0001

TABLE 39

REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION, THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES (FACTOR 1) ON INTENTION TO VISIT

Model	df	Sum of Squares	Means of Squares	F	P Value
<u>Education</u>					
Regression	2	311.764	155.882	59.883	.000*
Factor 1 * Educ	1	29.121	29.121	11.396	.004**
Residual	555	1418.206	2.555		
Total	558	1759.091			

*Significant < 0.0001

** Significant < 0.05

TABLE 40**REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION, THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES (FACTOR 2) ON INTENTION TO VISIT**

Model	df	Sum of Squares	Means of Squares	F	P Value
<u>Education</u>					
Regression	2	346.565	173.282	75.228	.000*
Factor 2 * Educ	1	11.048	11.048	4.834	.028**
Residual	497	1136.051	2.286		
Total	500	1493.665			

*Significant < 0.0001

** Significant < 0.05

TABLE 41**REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF GENDER, THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES (FACTOR 2) ON INTENTION TO VISIT**

Model	df	Sum of Squares	Means of Squares	F	P Value
<u>Gender</u>					
Regression	2	548.201	274.101	116.538	.000**
Factor 2 * Gender	1	19.934	19.934	8.552	.002*
Residual	826	1925.192	2.331		
Total	829	2493.327			

*Significant < 0.01

** Significant < 0.0001

Summary Analysis of the Hypothesis Testing

This chapter discussed the profile of the respondents and then statistically tested the hypotheses as well as presented the relationships among the variables in the study. Additionally, this chapter also presented the results of the focus group and additional analysis on each of the destinations in the study. However, the discussion was focused on the hypotheses developed for the research. In the following section the results of hypotheses testing were discussed.

Hypothesis 1

Hypotheses one stated that the destination's food image has a significant effect toward the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination. Two factors were extracted from the factor analysis. Factor 1 was labeled Destination's Food Image and Factor 2 was labeled Destination's Unique Image. As stated in this section, the named was arbitrarily chosen for each of the factors. However, the variables in each factor seemed to be associated with the name of the factors. Both of the factors extracted 56.92% of the total variance explained. The two factors could be used to explain important characteristics of a culinary tourism destination. Next, regression analysis was conducted. The findings indicated that intention to visit had a significant impact on the destinations' food image at $p < .0001$ level and explained 9% of the variability of dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. Although the variance was small, it showed that those

factors were important to travelers who had the intention to visit. Therefore, these findings supported hypothesis one.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis two stated that the importance of information sources has a significant effect toward the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination. Three factors were extracted from the factor analysis. These factors were name: Factor 1 – Traditional Sources; Factor 2 – Commercial Sources; and Factor 3 - Personal Sources. Overall, these three factors contributed almost 64.12 % of the total variance explained. Factor 1 and Factor 2 were found significant, but not Factor 3. Next step, regression analysis was performed and it indicated that intention to visit had a significant impact on the importance of various information sources at $p < .0001$ level and contributed 24% of the variability of intention to visit can be explained by the independent. These results supported hypothesis two in this study.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three stated that the demographic characteristics will significantly moderate the relationship between the destination's food image and intention to visit.

H_{3A}: Gender has a significant effect on the relationship between the destination's food image and intention to visit. This hypothesis was not supported in this study.

There was no interaction effect on the relationship among gender and the destination's food image and intention to visit. In general there were no differences between male and female respondents.

H_{3B}: Age has a significant effect on the relationship between the destination's food image and intention to visit. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no interaction effect on the relationship among different age levels and the destination's food image and the intention to visit for all countries.

H_{3C}: Educational background has a significant effect on the relationship between the destination's food image and intention to visit. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no interaction effect among different educational background and the destination's food image and intention to visit for all countries.

H_{3D}: Income has a significant effect on the relationship between the destination's food image and intention to visit. This hypothesis was not supported. There was no interaction effect among different income groups.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that the demographic characteristics will significantly moderate the relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit.

H_{4A} : Gender has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit. This hypothesis was supported for Factor 1 and 2. There was an interaction effect on the relationship between gender and the importance of information sources and intention to visit. In Factor 1, it was found that male travelers were highly associated with the importance of information sources and intention to visit (slope = .5519; $p < .001$); for female traveler it was slightly lower (slope = .3282; $p < .01$). In Factor 2, male was found to have higher perceptions on the importance of information sources and intention to visit: the slopes were; male (slope = .7715; $p < .001$); female (slope = .5134; $p < .001$). The results indicated that gender was positively and significantly moderated the relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit. In addition, both of the factors regressed in this study had similar results. It shows the results were comparable across the factors. In general, there was a difference between male and female respondents.

H_{4B}: Age has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit. This hypothesis was not supported for any of the age groups.

H_{4C}: Educational background has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit. This hypothesis was supported. The results indicated that educational background was positively and significantly associated with higher perceptions of the importance of

information sources and intention to visit at all levels for Factor 2: high school and below; high school graduate; university graduate and post-graduate degree (slopes = .4997; 6056; .8176; 9235, $p < .001$, respectively). For Factor 1, only two levels were found to be significant: university graduate and post-graduate degree (slope = .2512, $p < .05$; .4223, $p < .001$, respectively). In summary, the results indicated that individuals' level of education had a major influence on the importance of information sources and the intention to visit.

H_{4D} : *Income has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit.* This hypothesis was not supported for all of the countries. There was no interaction effect on the relationship among different levels of income and the importance of information sources and the intention to visit.

The following chapter will present a discussion of the findings with respect to the hypothesis testing.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In the previous chapter the results of the findings were tabulated on the data collected for this study. In the first part of this chapter, the summary of the study was discussed. The findings were discussed in regards to the theoretical relationship on which this study was conceptualized, and the implication for theory and marketing was exhaustively explained.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of a destination's food image, to analyze the importance of information sources, and to test the moderating effects of demographic profiles on the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination. There were three main objectives of this study: (1) explain the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit; (2) examine the influence

that sources of information have on travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination; and (3) identify the moderating effect of demographic characteristics on: a) the relationship between destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit and b) the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

The population of the study was selected from two online websites. A total of 35 food and travel groups were selected from Yahoo and Msn. A questionnaire was e-mailed to the members of each of the group. A total of 8067 e-mail was sent to the members of the groups. Unfortunately, only a total of 294 responded to the survey. After deleting ten partially completed surveys, only 284 were deemed usable for final data analysis.

The destination's food image questions were formulated based on previous research (Dimance & Moody, 1998) and a focus group was conducted earlier in the study. There were 20 items in section A of the instrument and a seven-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the food image. Respondents were asked how likely it would be if they were to visit each of the destinations. The importance of information sources were measured by using 13 attributes that were adapted from Fondness (1994) study on tourist motivation and information sources. These attributes were rated on a seven-point Likert scale as described previously. Following these questions, respondents had to rate the overall importance of information source before making decisions to visit the three the destinations under the current study. The last section of the questionnaire measured the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

A total of ten hypotheses were tested by using factor analysis, multiple, and hierarchical regression. In particular, the moderating effects were analyzed using hierarchical regression; when the interaction effects between the factors (independent variables) and one of the demographic variables was found significant, the slope was calculated in order to find out the level of relationship or interaction.

Discussion of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: *The destination's food image has a significant effect on the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination.*

This hypothesis was supported by factor and regression analysis. Factor 1 and 2 accounted for more than 50% of the total variance explained. The results of factor analysis showed that the respondents in this study perceived that destinations' food image had a major role in their decision to visit a culinary destination. The factors also characterized the type of destinations' food image that might be crucial for an established culinary destination such as France and Italy. On the other hand, for those destinations inspired to expand their culinary tourism, might want to start developing their products based on the findings of this study.

In terms of the regression analysis, the R square was only 9%, which means that only 9% of the variability of the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. The R square represented a small percentage of how much the destination's food image can predict the intention to visit. Previous studies by Hunt

(1975) and Scott, Schewe, and Frederick (1978) confirmed that people would have a better image of the destination if it was closer to their residence. In this study, the survey was conducted online, and most of the respondents were from the United States. They might have limited information about the destination's food image of the countries being studied that could have resulted in a rather low percentage of the variance in the intention to visit which could be explained by the independent variables.

Hypothesis 2: The type of information sources has a significant effect on the travelers' intention to visit a culinary destination.

This hypothesis was supported by factor and regression analysis. The results of factor analysis indicated that 64.12% of the total variance explained. The findings showed strong association between the importance of information sources and intention to visit. Different types of information sources were important to today's travelers. For example, internet had the highest mean in comparison to other sources; however, "Traditional Sources" were still preferred by most travelers. This finding was similar to previous studies, which stated that travelers use multiple source of information before making decisions to visit (Fodness and Murray, 1998).

Regression analysis results showed that the R square was .24, which means 24 % of the variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. A study by Beerli and Martin (2004) found that there was no significant relationship between secondary information sources and destination image. However, the researchers stated that travel agents played a pivotal role in portraying a destination's

image in the customers' minds. In addition, travel agents were found to be a highly significant source of information for travelers. In this study, travel agency/company was not chosen as one of the information sources. This could be due to the majority of the population in the study, which was in the 20 - 29 years of age group. In addition, today's internet users might not reflect the population at large.

Hypothesis 3: *Travelers' demographic characteristics will significantly moderate the relationship between the destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.*

H_{3A} – Gender has a significant effect on the relationship between the destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.

This hypothesis was not supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. This study did not find any differences between men's and women's perceptions on the relationship between destinations' food image and intention to visit. The hypothesis would have been significant if the study had been conducted at the destination site. Beerli and Martin's (2004) performed research on the island of Lanzarote, Spain, found a significant relationship between men and women as first-time visitors to the island. Furthermore, Gunn (1972) stated that image formulation by different groups of visitors would be totally different. For example, those who visited a destination would have a clearer understanding of the images of the destination than those who had never been to the destination. In this study, it was assumed that most of the participants had never been

to the destination; therefore, they would not have a clear understanding of the destination's food image.

H_{3B} – Age has a significant effect on the relationship between destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.

This hypothesis was not supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. The respondents' age did not influence the relationship between destination's food image and intention to visit. This finding was in congruency with the finding of Baloglu and McCleary (1999), who stated that there was no relationship between tourists' age and the perception of a destination. However, earlier studies by Baloglu (1997) stated that age was significant demographic variable (Baloglu, 1997). In this study, more than 50% of the respondents were between the ages of 20 – 29 years; therefore, we can say that the sample was a homogeneous group that might have the same perceptions of the destinations' food image and intention to visit. Obviously, this particular age group was overrepresented in the current data set.

H_{3C} – Educational background has a significant effect on the relationship between the destination's food image and the traveler's intention to visit.

Also, this hypothesis was not supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. In terms of educational levels, more than 80% of the respondents were college graduates. The educational levels did not influence the relationship between destination's food image and the traveler's intention to visit. Our findings were augmented by the

findings of Baloglu and McCleary (1999), who found no significant relationship between education and evaluation of a destination's image.

H_{3D} – Income has a significant effect on the relationship between the destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit.

This hypothesis was not supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. Goodall and Ashworth (1988) confirmed that traveler's income might influence their perceptions of a destination. As stated in the other section of this study, it was not known how many percentages of the respondents had visited the destinations. Their responses were based subjectively on their "unknown" perceptions of the destinations' food image. In general, it could be said that there was a bias of not knowing the actual food image of the countries in this study.

Hypothesis 4: Travelers' demographic characteristics will significantly moderate the relationship between the importance of information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

H_{4A}: Gender has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

This hypothesis was supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. Male respondents were found to have a higher perception on the importance of information sources and intention to visit. In this study, the ratio of male to female was almost 1 : 1.

The result was consistent with the findings of previous research conducted by Schumacher & Morahan-Martin, (2001). Male and female differed in their information search behavior. Men were found to be highly motivated by technology. Additionally, men were also found to make quick decision based on their own opinions; however, women would carefully choose the type of information that they utilized (Meyers-Levy, 1988).

H_{4B}: Age has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

This hypothesis was not supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. Previous research stated that sociodemographic characteristics did not have any influence on travelers' information source behavior (Bieger & Laesser, 2004). However, the information source behavior was based on the characteristics of the trips. For example, the level of familiarity with a destination, accommodation and the types of activities related to the trips.

H_{4C}: Educational background has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

This hypothesis was supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. Individuals with higher education had the highest perception on the importance of information sources and intention to visit. This finding was similar to Eby, Molnar, and Cai (1999), who stated that information sources behavior differed based on an

individuals' educational level. In general, people who are highly educated would search for more information before making a decision.

H_{4D}: Income has a significant effect on the relationship between the importance of information sources and the travelers' intention to visit.

This hypothesis was not supported by factor and hierarchical regression analysis. This study was similar to Fodness and Murray (1997) who found no difference between higher income and lower income groups' information search behavior. However, the authors noted that lower income groups had lesser tendency to search for information than as compared to the higher income.

Implications of the Research

This study has shed some lights on culinary tourism with major emphasis on two major contributions: theoretical and managerial implications. In terms of the theoretical contributions, the study enriched the body of literature in culinary tourism and was one of the first studies to document destinations food image and intention to visit. The results of this study could provide a foundation for future research in this topic. In addition, the countries that were selected for this study were well known for their cuisines. As such, the main factors that contributed to their popularity might be used for other countries to develop their own culinary tourism products. So far, this is the pioneer study that had complete analysis on destinations' food image, information sources, and demographic

characteristics. Previous studies had focused on: food choice behavior (Marris, 1986); authentic food and sustainable tourism (Reynolds, 1993); foodservice and tourism (Sheldon and Fox, 1988); and tourism and local food industries (Telfer & Wall, 1996).

The results of this study outlined that there were two main factors that characterize a culinary destination. Specifically, the factors were: destination's food image and destination's unique image. The variables in each of the factor comprised of vital culinary tourism products. For example, France and Italy are well known for their wine producing regions and the popularity of their cuisines. Similarly, Australia which is a new emerging market in wine production, is also aggressively promoting culinary tourism as one of its core products. Obviously, there is an association between wine regions and culinary tourism.

In addition, the types of information sources chosen by the respondents were comparable from one country to another. Specifically, there were three main factors that were consistent across the countries mentioned in the study: (1) traditional sources, (2) commercial sources, and (3) personal sources. These findings showed the importance of information sources and the type information sought by travelers. The results of this study showed that internet was the most popular source of information; however, other types of information sources were important as well.

From the managerial marketing perspective, this study could assist those destinations in promoting their local food segments. The findings of this study could also help destinations to formulate the type of food image they want to establish. In addition, by using the appropriate marketing channel for their products, destinations could further

enhance their culinary tourism. For example, by implementing marketing program that focuses toward a specific group and using a communication channel that could be effective for that particular group. Marketers can also use a combination of information sources for different market segments. The results of this study revealed information sources were divided into three main categories. Managers could use multiple sources in order to maximize the benefit from marketing efforts.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the possible limitations of this study were as follows:

1. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the whole population because of the convenience sampling procedure or non-probability sample. Also, using internet as the only source for data collection made it difficult to determine whether the respondents were a true representation of the group targeted by the researcher and the population was limited to users of the internet. In addition, the respondents of this study were in the younger age brackets, which could be overrepresented in the data set. If the sample was larger, more differences in the groups could have been observed.
2. The study was only conducted online. If an intercept survey or mail survey was conducted, we might have a larger sample population, which would provide a better facet for comparison. Also, the results would be more realistic, if this study was conducted at the destination site itself. It is

predicted that the travelers would respond differently because they might have already experienced the tourism products of the destination.

3. It was quite obvious that the respondents had not visited all the countries in the study. Therefore, if a question about previous visit has been included in the questionnaire, the study could compare the difference between previous visitors and non-visitors.
4. The findings were limited to only three destinations: France, Italy, and Thailand. Future studies should include other culinary destinations such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Singapore.
5. The variables used in this study were limited to the objectives of the study. If more variables were added, additional findings could have been discovered. However, more variables contribute to a lengthy survey that would deter and maybe discourage the respondents to participate in the study.
6. The respondents' degree of familiarity with the countries was questionable. It is predicted that the findings of this study would be totally different if respondents had previously visited the countries in this study.

Implications for Future Research and Recommendations

Future research should be conducted in order to understand how destinations can effectively use the factors suggested in this study and apply them in their destinations' marketing strategy. In addition, future studies should be performed at the designated destinations to have better findings. As was stated earlier, first timers or repeat visitors might have a different image of a destination. As such, future researchers can compare the image of first time visitors versus repeat visitors of a particular destination.

It is also recommended that future studies should compare travelers from different countries. Marris (1986) proved that food was important to the Germans travelers in comparison to the British and the Swiss travelers. Morris found that the Germans were more selective in terms of their food choices. This present study can be replicated to assess the perceptions of travelers from different countries on destination's food image.

In this study, only one focus group was conducted to evaluate travelers' perception on food and tourism. It is suggested that future research should conduct at least four focus group sessions so that a comparison can be made from one group to another. More focus groups could provide more insight into the relationship between food and tourism and would help to strengthen the design and consequently its results.

Conclusion

Since this investigation was exploratory in nature, future research should focus on how to refine the methods employed in their study. Nevertheless, the results of the study somehow confirmed that there was a significant correlation between destinations' food image and the travelers' intention to visit. Also, it was proven that the type of information sources were important in determining travelers' intention to visit a particular destination. As we are living in a technological global village, most travelers' preferred to use the internet as the most important source of information.

Understanding the influence of a destination's food image could further enhance the location's overall image. Not only the "general" image of a destination is known, but a specific food image can be developed that would contribute and create the destination's potential niche market. Obviously, potential culinary destinations might use some of the factors in this study in order to improve their destination's food image. Undoubtedly, strong relationship between the importance of information sources and intention to visit, countries could apply various channels of information sources recommended in this study in their marketing program.

By actively seeking the appropriate destination's food image and focusing on various sources of information, countries rich in culinary heritage can develop a powerful marketing tool that can greatly boost their economic and tourism industry.

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APPENDIX A
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Questions

I am conducting this focus group session to learn more about how people make decisions when planning for a vacation. In general, I will be investigating the relationship between a destination and the food/cuisine of that destination. Specifically, I would like to find out more about how a destination is selected and the nature of food/cuisine experience that will be important during your trip.

1. What is your main motive for travel? Are there any other motives?

2. Please imagine that you plan on taking a vacation to a particular destination. What is the most important decision that you will make when selecting a destination?

3. What type of information sources will be used in order to learn more about the destination?

4. Does your personality play a major role when selecting the destination? How does it affect your selection of a destination?

5. What specific attraction(s) would you be interested in experiencing during your trip?

6. Do you think that there is a relationship between a destination and the attractiveness of the food/cuisine it offers?

7. Are you familiar with culinary tourism or traveling for the purpose of enjoying food and cuisine?

_____Yes _____No _____Don't Know

8. Does the food/cuisine of a particular destination influence your decision to travel? Why and why not?

9. What features of the food/cuisines/restaurants are particularly important to you when you travel?

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A. Please imagine that you are thinking of taking different summer vacation trips to **France, Italy and Thailand** to experience the food and dining. Listed below are some attributes that describe the images related to food and dining. *For each country*, please rate each attribute as a factor that might influence your desire to visit the destination. Please use the following scale, where “1” means “Strongly Disagree”, “2” means “Disagree”, “3” means “Somewhat Disagree”, “4” means “Neutral”, “5” means “Somewhat Agree”, “6” means “Agree”, and “7” “Strongly Agree”.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

France, Italy and Thailand offer...	FRANCE	ITALY	THAILAND
the most popular cuisine in the world.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
food and wine regions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
variety of foods.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
good quality of food.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
package tours related to food and wine.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
reasonable price for dining-out.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
many attractive restaurants.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
unique cultural experiences.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
easy access to restaurants.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
varieties of specialty restaurants.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
regionally produced food products.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
friendly service personnel.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
restaurant menus in English.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
opportunity to visit street markets.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
unique street food vendors.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
various food activities, e.g. cooking classes, farm visits.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
much literature on food and tourism.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
attractive food presentation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
exotic cooking methods.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
delicious food.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

A1. Intention to Visit.

How likely will you visit the following tourist destinations for its food and dining experiences in the next five years? Please check the appropriate box for each destination.

Country	Most Unlikely 1	Unlikely 2	Not Sure 3	Likely 4	Most Likely 5
France					
Italy					
Thailand					

Section B. Information sources. Please rate the importance of the following information sources when choosing a food/culinary vacation destination.

1 – Very Un-Important 2 – Un-Important 3 – Somewhat Un-Important 4 – Neutral
5 – Somewhat Important 6 – Important 7 – Very Important

Sources of Information	FRANCE	ITALY	THAILAND
Automobile clubs/ AAA	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Brochures /Travel Guides	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Travel Book	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Travel Magazines	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Friends/ Family Members	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Highway Welcome Center	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Local/National Tourism Offices	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Newspapers	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Past Experience	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Direct Mail from Destination	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Travel Agency/Company	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Television/Movies/Travel Channel	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Internet/Website	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

B1. Overall, how important are information sources in terms of influencing your decision to visit the destination?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Country	Very Un-Important	Un-Important	Somewhat Un-Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
France							
Italy							
Thailand							

Section C. About yourself. Please check the appropriate box.

1. Your gender Male Female
2. Your age group
 - Less than 20 years old 20-29 years old
 - 30-39 years old 40-49 years old
 - 50 – 59 years old 60 years and older
3. Your marital status Married Never Married Divorced / Widowed / Separated
4. Your highest level of education. (Check one only)
 - Some high school or less High school Graduate
 - College/University graduate Graduate/Postgraduate
5. What is your approximate household income before taxes? (optional)
 - under \$25,000 \$25,000 - \$34,999 \$35,000 – \$49,999
 - \$50,000-\$74,999 \$75,000 to \$99,999 \$100,000 or more.

Thank you very much for your time.

If you want to be included in a drawing, please write your e-mail address in the following space. It will not be used for any other purposes.

E-mail address: _____

Prizes:

Four US\$50.00 International Money Orders/Bankers Check will be offered to winners. The drawing will be performed in May or June 2006. Winners will be notified by the researcher.

APPENDIX C
IRB FOR SURVEY RESEARCH

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, March 06, 2006
IRB Application No HE0645
Proposal Title: Culinary Tourism as a Destination Attraction: An Empirical Examination of the Role of the Destination's Food Image and Information Sources
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 3/5/2007

Principal Investigator(s)

Shahrim Abkarim
700 West Scott Ave, Apt.
Stillwater, OK 74075

Jerrold K. Leong
210 HESW
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

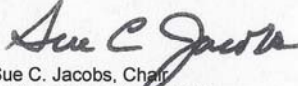
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX D

IRB FOR FOCUS GROUP

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, December 06, 2005
IRB Application No HE0627
Proposal Title: Culinary Tourism as a Destination Attraction: An Empirical Examination of the Role of Food in Tourists' Destination Choice
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 12/5/2006

Principal Investigator(s)

Shahrim Abkarim 700 West Scott Ave, Apt. Stillwater, OK 74075
Jerrold K. Leong 210 HESW Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX E

SELECTED GROUPS ON YAHOO & MSN

MSN	# of members	Yahoo	# of members
1. Club Med	506	1. Ecotravellers	274
2. Vegans	314	2. Greentravel	128
3. Calling Europe	688	3. Royal Caribbean	216
4. Veggie Chat 2	285	4. Travelpricewanted	233
5. Vegan Lifestyle	584	5. Infotec Travel	125
6. Raw Foodists	425	6. Green Tour	212
7. Good Cooking and More	147	7. Tourism_Travel	184
8. Catering Business	386	8. Travel In	72
9. The Web Kitchen	278	9. Sports-Tourism	77
10. Tea Central	166	10. Photo-Travel	123
11. Virtual Chef	59	11. The Tulsa Room	105
12. Food and Wine Events	101	12. SS Norway	54
13. Chef Andrew	98	13. Malaysian Chef Club	48
14. Lee's Café	44	14. Cake Recipe	73
15. Foodiest Corner	604	15. Chef Rocco	85
16. World Walkers	171	16. Rachel Ray	142
17. Bordeaux Central	556	17. Tyler Florence	254
18. Travel Europe	250		
Total	5662	Total	2405

VITA

Muhammad Shahrin AbKarim

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: CULINARY TOURISM AS A DESTINATION ATTRACTION: AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF THE DESTINATION'S FOOD IMAGE AND INFORMATION SOURCES

Major Field: Human Environmental Sciences

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Malacca, Malaysia, Son of AbKarim Salim and Sharipah Yusop.

Education: Graduated from the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, University Technology of Mara, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia with a Associate Degree in Culinary Arts in October 1990; received a Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management from the Department of Food Management at the School of Education, New York University in May 1994; Received Master's in Business Administration from the School of Business Administration, University Technology of Mara, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree specialization in Hospitality Administration at Oklahoma State University in July 2006.

Experience: Employed by Carlton Hotel Singapore as *Garde Manger Chef* from 1990 to 1991; employed by Raffles Hotel Singapore as *Garde Manger Chef* from 1991 to 1992; employed by Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, New York office as special assistant to the Vice President from 1993 to 1997; employed by Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers, New York as guest service manager from 1994 to 1997; employed by University Putra Malaysia as assistant professor from 1999 to 2002; employed by Oklahoma State University as teaching instructor from 2003 to 2006.

Professional Memberships: the National Honor Society of Kappa Omicron Nu; the International Council of Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Education (I-CHRIE)

Name: Muhammad Shahrim Ab Karim

Date of Degree: July, 2006

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: CULINARY TOURISM AS A DESTINATION ATTRACTION: AN
EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF THE
DESTINATION'S FOOD IMAGE AND INFORMATION SOURCES

Pages in Study: 188

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Human Environmental Sciences

Scope and Method of Study: The objectives of the study were to: 1) explain the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers intention to visit; 2) examine the influence that sources of information have on travelers' intention to visit a destination; and 3) identify the moderating effect of demographic characteristics on: a) the relationship between a destination's food image and the travelers' intention to visit; b) the relationship between information sources and the travelers' intention to visit. A cross-sectional sample survey was conducted. The population of the study was all members of online travel and food groups in Yahoo and MSN. A convenience sampling procedure was employed in this study. Descriptive Statistics, Factor Analysis, Multiple Regression and Hierarchical Regression were performed for the data analysis.

Findings and Conclusions: There were two major findings in this study: theoretical and managerial implications. First, from a theoretical perspective, the study enriched the body of literature in culinary tourism. The results indicated that each destination has its own unique images that characterize the destination. Second, in terms of the managerial implications of the study, it was expected that this study would be used as a foundation in developing culinary tourism strategies for destination rich countries with culinary heritage. Specifically, the findings of this study could help destinations to formulate the type of food image they want to establish. Managers could also use the different sources of information recommended in this study to maximize their marketing efforts. By projecting suitable destinations' food image and utilizing an appropriate marketing strategy, culinary tourism could be a crucial segment of the tourism industry.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Jerrold Leong
