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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
School of Hotel and Tourism Management

**An Analysis of the Chinese Group Tourists' Dining-Out
Experiences While Holidaying In Australia and Its Contribution
to Their Visit Satisfaction**

CHANG Ching Yu, Richard

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Tourists have increasingly been interested in savouring gastronomy while travelling. It can be said that foods not only satiate tourists' hunger but also fulfil their experiential needs. However, the contribution of travel dining experience to tourist satisfaction has been overlooked in previous literature. On the other hand, there is a scarcity of research examining the influence of culture on travel eating behaviour, and how tourists with different cultural backgrounds evaluate travel dining experience. In order to close this gap, this study aims to investigate the impact of Chinese food culture on Chinese tourists' eating behaviour, to explore their dining out experience in Australia, and to scrutinise the contribution of travel dining experience towards tourist satisfaction.

By following the phenomenological research philosophy, the inductive approach has been chosen as the research tool because existing theories are inadequate and incomplete, and this study attempts to uncover new theoretical insights into the tourists' dining experiences. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, focus group interviews and participate observation were employed to gather the primary data. The target samples of this study are group tourists from three selected regions, namely, Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, who were travelling to Australia. A computerised tool (NUD.IST) was utilised in order to synthesise data, prepare descriptive accounts, identify key dimensions and map the range and diversity of each phenomenon. Narrative analysis was adopted in contextualising the connections between categories and themes.

Findings revealed that Chinese tourists' food preferences can be conceptualised into three predominate themes, namely, 'Chinese food', 'indigenous food', and 'non-fastidiousness of food'. In addition, healthy eating behaviour and family influence are the two aspects that were found to have significant influence on Chinese tourists' dining behaviour. A number of attributes that would affect Chinese tourists' travel dining experience were also identified, which included food cultural value, contextual factor, variety of food selection, perceptions about destination, intercultural service encounter, and tour guide's performance. Most importantly, findings indicated that dining out experience at a destination would significantly influence visitor satisfaction as tourists have regarded it more as a 'peak touristic experience' than merely as a 'supporting experience'. Furthermore, this study categorises Chinese tourists' eating behaviour into three typologies, namely, observer, browser, and participator. Based on the research findings, twelve propositions are postulated, thereby achieving the research objectives of this study.

This study has contributed new knowledge about the interplay between food and tourism, as well as the characteristics of travel eating behaviour for Chinese tourists. Several suggestions are proposed for further research in extending the knowledge pertaining to the realm of travel dining experience. Recommendations are also suggested for destination marketers in developing their gastronomy products, and for travel agencies in facilitating optimal meal arrangements for group tourists.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Development of gastronomic experience in tourism

Date back to ancient era when people's predominate concerns were with the ways of food handling and usage, food was considered as a sustenance rather than having any features of being a leisure or pleasure activity. During the 18th century, foods were being exchanged extensively in different regions of the world due to industrialisation and colonisation in Europe which facilitated the acculturation between Western and Asian culture (Boniface, 2003). As a result, people's interests in food in other places have grown tremendously; the curiosity in other culture has become a main trigger to the emergence of food tourism. In the present days, food no longer merely performs the purpose as sustenance; but also serves as a catalyst for relaxation and experience. Furthermore, food is capable of representing the identity of a particular social group by its distinctiveness of authenticity.

Gastronomy has long been recognised as an expression of a local culture as each dining opportunity is a chance to get to know local food and people (Richards, 2002). Interests in gastronomy in travel are not reserved to a particular age, sex, or ethnic group. And unlike other travel activities and attractions, gastronomy is available year-round, any time of day and in any weather. Gastronomy is the only art form that speaks to all five human senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch). As an idiosyncratic tourism activity, gastronomy has now

bloomed and grown considerably in magnitude as one of the new niches in tourism marketing (Wolf, 2002). Kivela and Crofts (2006) defined gastronomy as the art of opting for good eating as well as serving and enjoying fine food. As an escalating number of tourists would like to experience a destination's distinctive cuisine, in the context of tourism, gastronomy also needs to include the 'peasant food' regional and local cuisine. In this respect, food in destination can be regarded as an attraction just like a museum or a Ferris wheel.

Alternatively, Long (2004) first introduced the relatively new term 'culinary tourism' to depict a newly defined niche in experiencing other cultures through food. Culinary tourism defines tourists at destination who search for, enjoy and prepare food and drink. According to this definition, culinary tourism implicates only those tourists who visit wineries, farmers' markets, and fine restaurants. This definition implies setting apart the culinary experience as a fragment of tourism activity. However, as eating and drinking have often been taken for granted as part of everyday activities, they are the most overlooked components of the visitor experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). To investigate dining experience without detaching it from other forms of tourism activities, gastronomy appears to be a more appropriate term to use in this research with its implication of gastronomy experience as a holistic part of the tourism activity.

Richards and Hjalager (2002) proposed that dining out at destination is often considered as a pleasurable sensory experience to fulfil an experiential part of tourists' holiday dream. For this reason, tourists are increasingly seeking the

dining out experience to complement or as an alternative to other touristic activities. While gastronomy has been proliferating in the past few years and has a singular dedication to tourism, there is a dearth of study on the relationship between gastronomy and tourism. This study, thus, intends to explore the role of gastronomy in the overall travel experience.

The significance of Chinese tourists market to Australia tourism

The Australian Tourist Commission was one of the destination marketers in the vanguard of gastronomy tourism (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Due to the many cultural influences, Australian cuisine is one of the most diverse cuisines available anywhere. Modern Australian cuisine has been heavily influenced by the country's South East Asian neighbours, and by the many waves of immigrants from there, and all parts of the world. Consequently, cuisine-related tourism is becoming a key component of Australia's marketing strategies in the international market recently (Hall & Mitchell, 2002). For example, The Melbourne Food and Wine Festival have made Melbourne a prime gastronomic tourist destination (Scarpato, 2002). According to a survey from the Bureau of Tourism Research [BTR] (2004), the numbers of inbound travellers from Asia account for 48% in 1997 and 42% in 2002 of the total international market share in Australia. Among this Asian market, tourists arrivals from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan have increased from 17% in 1997 to 21% in 2002. On the other hand, Australia was the first Western country to be granted an approved destination status (ADS) by the Chinese government. ADS means that the Chinese government gives approval to its residents to travel to selected destinations for personal and leisure purposes. It

is believed that ADS provides Australia the opportunity to experience the Chinese tourism market on a larger scale (Wen & Laws, 2001). Data from Chinese National Tourism Administration also shows that Australia is the top fifth tourist destinations in the China's outbound tourism market (CNTA, 2004).

Because Australian cuisine, arguably, is a new global cuisine, it certainly provides new gastronomy opportunities for Chinese tourists to experience new cuisines that are different from their own culture and foods, including 'Chinese' food, which they eat at home. Take into account the abovementioned discussions, the awareness of Chinese tourists' thinking and behaviour thus become vital in the design of marketing programme. Nevertheless, March (1997) suggested that Australian tourism industry is still unprepared for this market and has little knowledge of Chinese tourists' cultural attributes. This implies that Australian tourism providers may not be able to develop responsive marketing strategies to cater for Chinese tourists' taste. The possible consequence of this would be the lessening of Chinese tourists' travel experience, thus might cause some of the Chinese tourists not to re-visit Australia in the future.

Market divergence among Chinese tourists market

The Chinese tourist market in this study refers to tourists from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Since China is a large country with great regional diversity, its food culture has become extremely diverse. Each region has its own characteristics and different cooking style. For example, Hunan and Sichuan are

famous for its hot-flavoured dishes because of the use of large amounts of red pepper. Shanghai dishes are mostly oily, drowning in sauce and brightly coloured. Guangdong and Hong Kong show some similarities as both focus on light, fresh, smooth, sweet and tender dishes. Taiwanese food is influenced by the Dutch and Japanese, in which raw and slightly water-scalded food is widely accepted.

Despite the difference in cooking style, it is still possible to identify certain food cultural value that is commonly shared by the Chinese people no matter where they live. For example, the well-balanced diet concept – *yin* and *yang* equilibrium (Lu, 1986), the medicinal properties of food (Wu, 1995), and the symbolic value of food (Swanson, 1996). These value and attitude toward foods are mostly accepted amongst members of the Chinese society.

Today, with the introduction of Western food culture, Chinese people has embarked to adopt new cultural value systems and have changed their attitude toward Chinese diet tradition. However, the degree of exposure to Western culture varies among the three regions. Both Hong Kong and Taiwan have been exposed to the Western culture for a long period of time, whereas Mainland China has only recently begun to feel the input of Western society since the ‘Open door’ policy in 1978 (Pine, 2002). Since these three regions differ in the extent to which they encounter with Western culture, one should try to ascertain repercussions and impacts of Western culture on these three regions particularly in the realm of food.

According to Australian Tourism Commission (2007), the market differences between these three regions are summarised in Table 1.1. The Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan markets have shown similar yet diverse patterns. For instance, both Mainland China and Taiwan markets ranked “shopping for pleasure” as the top leisure activities whereas eat out at restaurants and or cafes was ranked the top leisure activities of the Hong Kong tourists. The Mainland China market ranked first in the average spending, followed by Hong Kong and Taiwan. Interestingly, tourists from these three regions similarly spend more than 30 per cent on food, drink and accommodation out of the average total spending.

Table 1.1 Market differences between Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in Australia.

	Mainland China	Hong Kong	Taiwan
Visitor arrivals (2005)	284,943	159,571	110,920
Market share	5th largest inbound tourism market	9th largest inbound tourism market	11 th largest inbound tourism market
Duration of stay	41 nights	23 nights	20 nights
Repeat rate	36%	70%	50%
Travel mode	Holidays	Holidays	Holidays
Top Leisure activities	Going shopping for pleasure	Eat out at restaurants and or cafes	Going shopping for pleasure
Average spent	AUD\$5,442	AUD\$3,775	AUD\$3,353
Expenditure on Food, Drink and Accommodation	AUD\$1,040	AUD\$972	AUD\$664

Sources: Australian Tourism Commission, 2007

Over the last decade, both Hong Kong and Taiwan have been identified as the target market for Australia (Reisinger & Turner, 2002). However, statistics from

Bureau of Tourism Research (2004) shown there has been a decline in the Australia-bound Taiwan and Hong Kong market recently. On the contrary, the Mainland China has now emerged as the leading tourist market for the Australian tourism industry. Tourist arrivals from Mainland China have increased significantly from 64,000 in 1997 to 284,943 in 2005 (Australian Tourism Commission, 2007). Because international tourism provides a chance for cross-cultural experience, for both tourists and the tourism suppliers, it is important for the Australian tourism industry to understand the cultural orientation of these three regions along the Straits. Based on aforementioned discussions on similarities and differences with respect to eating behaviour and market divergence among these three regions, marketing strategies need to be tailored to this newly emerging Chinese tourist market.

1.2 Problem identification

Maxwell (1996) indicated that the researcher's own experiential knowledge can shape perspectives and insights into the topic which the researcher proposes to study. According to the researcher's own observation, while working as a part-time tour leader in London, the meals for most of the Chinese tours departing for Western countries are often pre-arranged in Chinese restaurants wherever possible. The local food, on the contrary, would only be arranged when there is a difficulty in allocating Chinese restaurant, or when there is a distinctive cuisine in that country, for example, cheese fondue in Switzerland. According to the

observed phenomenon, the researcher has noted this common practice that tour operators like to accommodate the Chinese tourists in Chinese restaurants rather than Western style restaurants. It could be hypothesized that Chinese tourists prefer Chinese food when they travel away from home, and in turn, the availability of Chinese food during the trip may contribute to tourist satisfaction. However, an empirical research should be undertaken in order to test the proposed hypothesis as well as to identify the role of food in tourist satisfaction.

The influence of food culture on travel eating behaviour

Several attempts have been made to develop integrative views and definitions of culture. For example, Hofstede (1980) defined culture as a collective mental programme that determines a person's behaviour. Goodenough (1971) explained culture as a shared set of characteristics, attitudes, behaviours and values that help groups of people to decide what to do and how to go about doing it. In this context, cultural values can be considered to be the basic motives behind human behaviour (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961).

In terms of eating behaviour, an individual will choose food according to his/her own mental programme. Specifically, this mental programme is constituted based on past experience, food attitudes and personal need. However, people might adapt new value systems and attitudes to face new types of food when they in a different cultural environment. For example, Chinese tourists might modify their food choice during holiday. Currently, the study of eating behaviour in the realm of food culture is limited to the proprietary vision of eating

and dining habit, there are only a few academic studies that provide the foundations about the relationship between gastronomy and tourism (Hanefores, 2002, Hjalager & Richards, 2002). The studies thus far reveal the need to investigate the extent food culture affects tourists' dining out experience while travelling away from home.

Recognise of tourists' needs and wants

The travel and tourism literature repeatedly advocates that the travel experience for the traveller is the composition of different cross-cultural scenarios during holidays. Accordingly, dining out activities at a destination is one of the major conduits for the interaction between the Chinese tourists and Australian hosts. In other words, dining out and gastronomy activities provide a valuable chance for tourists to experience and learn more about the host culture. Lee and Crompton (1992) argued that tourists are often in search of interesting and surprising experiences, which differs from their daily life. In addition, Ondimu (2002) suggested that tourists are often eager to experience the environment and culture, and to gain some knowledge about the destination. This supports Richards's (2002) contention that tourists are increasingly willing to learn and increase their cultural capital by experiencing rather than just consuming the holidays.

People have to eat when travelling away from home; however, tourists' choice for food does not only satisfies their physiological needs, but at the same time

fulfil their desire to sample interesting and exotic food products, and serve as an avenue to explore local food cultures and customs through food. In this respect, food can be considered as an attraction through appreciation of local culture and eating habits. Nevertheless, Richardson (1996) contended that tourists might seek a high degree of familiarity to experience the host culture from user-friendly facilities and services in the tourism industry. This means that the less experienced or less adventurous tourists might prefer to seek comfort in familiar food (Richards, 2002; Hanefors, 2002). For those tourists who are not looking for total authenticity of ethnic food, however, food may become an impediment to their visit satisfaction (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Tourist satisfaction would only be achieved when the perceived attributes of the destination match with tourists' expectations (Ryan, 1997). That is to say tourists' needs and wants must be reflected in the supplier's provision. Yet, the lack of studies in identifying how tourists perceive food as an attraction or an impediment is clearly a shortcoming that has restricted the understanding of the role of food in tourist satisfaction.

Challenge in promoting gastronomy as tourist attraction

Because eating is an important part of everyone's daily life, dining out activities have become a valuable source of new products and activities to attract tourists among destinations' competition (Richards, 2002). In other words, a destination's gastronomy is often used as a strategy for promoting the destination. Recently, gastronomy has been used in marketing campaigns and promotions as an integral part of the tourism product (Sparks, Bowen & Klag, 2003). For example, Sydney is being promoted as a popular gastronomic destination (Apple,

1999). Melbourne and Adelaide have also developed reputations for stylish gastronomy experiences (Faulkner, Oppermann, & Fredline, 1999).

In the context of this study, Australia also faces challenges in understanding and learning about the Chinese food culture, and Chinese tourists' consumption traits, and how to cater for the needs of the Chinese tourists. On the other hand, due to communication gap and the limited knowledge of the Chinese tourists' perceptions and attitudes towards Australian cuisine, there seems to be a great chance of misapprehension between the Chinese tourists and Australian hosts. In order to equally cater for the tourists' desire for novelty and familiarity during holidays, it is important for the Australian tourism industry not only to provide diversified cuisine for tourists to explore, but also to understand the food preferences and food consumption motives of the Chinese tourists to make them feel at home.

The significance of dining experience to tourist satisfaction

Previous studies have identified that customer satisfaction is affected by a range of antecedents, expectation, and performance. From a generic perspective, Oliver (1977) indicated that customer satisfaction is an evaluation between what was received and what was expected. Parker and Mathews (2001) have suggested that customer satisfaction could be studied as an outcome of consumption experience that includes emotion, fulfilment, and state. Kivela and Chou (2001), on the other hand, propounded that the server-customer interaction component of

service delivery is critical when evaluating dining satisfaction. Similarly, Bowen and Clarke (2002) argued that the outcome of the travel experience is decided by the human interaction between service staff and tourists. Indeed, human factor plays an important role in determining tourist satisfaction; and dining activities provide a major source of interaction between tourists and service providers. This suggests that dining experience in destination is a key element in tourist satisfaction.

In a recent study, Wolf (2002) strongly advocated that tourists are increasing become interested in cuisine and are visiting destinations for gastronomy experience. In addition, according to most tourism statistics, for example, the Bureau of Tourism Research (Bureau of Tourism Research,2004), tourists spending on accommodation and dining out average 25% of the total spending. The role of dining experience in achieving tourist satisfaction undeniably warrants an investigation. However, little is known with respect to dining experience in the context of tourism; and even less is known about how dining experience contributes to tourist satisfaction. That is to say, if cuisine or gastronomy is central to the overall tourist experience, the significance of dining out activities at a destination should not be undervalued. Nevertheless, previous studies have only touched lightly on the role of foodservice in destination choice; there is still room for research on the issues of travel dining experience and its influence on tourist satisfaction.

Numerous researchers have applied customer satisfaction theories to foodservice (Almanza, Jaffe, & Lin, 1994; Lee & Hing, 1995; Johns & Tyas, 1996; Kivela, Reece, & Inbakaran, 1999). These studies have indicated that both tangible attributes (i.e. food quality, décor, and furnishing) and intangible attributes (i.e. atmosphere and environment) contribute to dining satisfaction. Despite the relevance of these studies, there is a dearth of investigations on the attributes that might affect tourists' evaluation of their dining experience, particularly when the providers and the consumers do not share a common culture. This is an area that has not been fully addressed in the literature, and is the primary motive leading to this study of investigating how Chinese tourists perceive their dining experiences during their holidays to Australia.

1.3 The significance of the study

Understanding Chinese tourists' eating behaviour

The publications on food in tourism have been proliferating in the past few years. For instance, Hjalager and Richards (2002) had dedicated the book, *Tourism and Gastronomy*, to specific issues and case studies about the relationship between gastronomy and tourism. Kivela and Crotts (2006) identified the way tourists perceive and experience gastronomy while visiting Hong Kong. Cohen and Avieli (2004) articulated the role of food as an attraction or an impediment in tourism development. Nevertheless, these studies are mainly concerned with the visits by Westerners to destinations in East and Southeast Asia,

and also on how Western countries have been promoted as gastronomic destinations. While the existing literature has revealed Western tourists' interest on those different food culture which are remote and mysterious to them as well as adopting a marketing philosophical approach to the implementation of gastronomy tourism development, the researcher has identified a research gap – a lack of understanding of consumer behaviour in the context of food-related tourist experience, particularly from the Chinese perspective. Consequently, this research aims at delineating Chinese tourists' eating behaviour, in particular, scrutinizing their encounter with Western food culture during their visit to Australia.

Advocating travel dining experience

Quan and Wang (2004) noted that tourist experiences are comprised of “peak” experiences which are usually derived from the attractions and “supporting” experiences of food and drink, accommodation, and transportation. While peak experiences constitute an important source of tourist satisfaction, supporting experiences, which have commonly been considered as an extension of daily experience, are often either undervalued or taken for granted. However, tourist satisfaction can not merely depend on wonderful peak experiences but should also be supplemented by pampering supporting experiences.

Previous researches have confirmed that the role of food is significant when evaluating a tourist experience (Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Neild, Kozak, & LeGrys, 2000; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Quan & Wang, 2004). Nevertheless, these studies

are either theoretically grounded or the findings are derived from *post hoc* assessments of tourist experience. As a result, there is a lack of in-depth analysis on tourists' actual dining-out experience at a destination, and to what extent travel dining experience contribute to the tourist satisfaction. To further advance the study of tourist satisfaction, it is necessary to explore the significance of dining out experience which is usually overlooked in the evaluation of tourist satisfaction. From an ethnography approach, this research examines the phenomena observed from the Chinese tourists' dining out experiences in Australia. Empirical evidences are also gathered in order to educe the role of food in the Chinese tourists' travel experience.

Investigating the influence of food culture on travel dining satisfaction

Briley, Morris, and Simonson (2000) suggested that cultural values can help to explain the differences in individuals and their judgement and evaluation of different situations. With respect to tourists' dining experiences, Chinese tourists' evaluation of dining out at destination might be compared with their meal experience at home. This could affect the dining satisfaction consequentially. In providing an attractive argument for the cultural influence on customer satisfaction, Pizam and Ellis (1999) resolved the issue by demonstrating that culture has an influence on perception, problem solving and cognition and that it often leads to differences in satisfaction among different global customers. Yet, Mattila (1999) stated that customer expectations related to satisfaction are likely to vary from culture to culture because there are different perceptions in the service encounter. Pires and Stanton (2000) further argued that due to language

barriers and service providers' difficulty in understanding different cultures, many marketers have failed to fulfil customer's expectation. This has caused negative impacts on global consumers' evaluation and perception of the service. In spite of these studies of cultural differences and customer satisfaction, there is still a scarcity of research examining the influence of culture on service perception (Malhotra, Ugaldó, Agarwal, & Balbaki, 1994), and on how customers from different countries evaluate dining experiences and service encounters (Winsted, 1997). This study attempts to close these gaps by investigating the influence of food culture on dining satisfaction in intercultural service encounters.

1.4 The rationale of selecting Chinese group tourists

This study focuses on studying Chinese tourists originating from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, who participate in all-inclusive package tours to visit Australia. Wen and Laws (2001) indicated that the numbers of fully independent travellers from China is limited at present, and that the all-inclusive package tour is the most common form of travel pattern to Australia. In addition, Chinese tourists from Hong Kong and Taiwan also prefer to travel in groups especially in an unfamiliar environment (Wong & Lau, 2001; Zhang, Qu, & Tang, 2004).

Because most of the meals for tour groups are often pre-arranged by the travel agencies, group tourists are thought to have relatively little contact with the local

culture and people (Cohen, 1972). Sampling indigenous food is considered as a must-do travel activity for many travellers (Hjalager & Richards, 2002), travel agencies would often arrange indigenous food for group tourists. As such, group tourists have indirectly exerted influence over the meal arrangements. However, due to different food preferences, the indigenous food could be an attraction for those tourists who seek novel dining experiences, and yet it could be an impediment to those who are less adventurous. It is, therefore, imperative to investigate the travel eating behaviour of group tourists and to examine the significance of dining experience on their travel satisfaction.

1.5 Research questions and objectives

The aims of this study are to investigate the influence of food culture on Chinese tourists' dining experience and examine its contribution to tourists' satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction. Because the Chinese tourist market is at a propagating stage in Australia (Bureau of Tourism Research, 2004), this study will provide insights into Chinese tourists' behaviour which can assist the Australian tourism industry develop better marketing strategies for this potentially large tourist market. Based on the abovementioned premises, the research questions and objectives for this study are:

- To what extent does the Chinese food culture affect Chinese tourists' eating behaviour when on holiday in Australia? and;

- What attributes may affect Chinese tourists' evaluation on their dining experience while visiting Australia?

Research objectives:

1. To investigate the influence of Chinese food culture on Chinese tourists' eating behaviour when on holiday in Australia;
2. To identify what attributes influence Chinese tourists' evaluation on their dining experience while visiting Australia;
3. To distinguish the differences in travel eating behaviour among Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan tourists;
4. To propound propositions in order to enhance the understanding of tourists' dining experience at a destination and;
5. To develop a model based on data collected and analyzed in order to depict Chinese tourists' eating behaviour while visiting Australia.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter highlights the gaps in the existing food culture and travel eating behaviour literature, justifies the focus of the study and states the objectives of the research. Chapter 2 reviews the extant literature in order to provide a theoretical background for the data analysis. Chapter 3 has been devoted to delineate the research approaches and methods for the study. Chapter 4 presents the empirical findings about Chinese tourists' dining out experience in Australia. In this chapter, research findings are compared and

contrasted with relevant theoretical concepts. Twelve propositions are developed in this chapter based on the discussion from research findings. The final chapter addresses the conclusions of this study as well as the recommendations for both academia and practitioners.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This study investigates the influence of the Chinese food culture on the Chinese tourists' eating behaviour and dining experience in Australia as well as the contribution of gastronomy in tourist satisfaction. In so doing, this chapter seeks to provide an overview of the Chinese food culture and also to scrutinize its implication in relation to the evaluation of Chinese tourists' dining experience and tourist satisfaction in Australia.

The first part of this chapter provides a discussion about the influence of culture on food and dining out behaviour, by means of reviewing different approaches and defining culture. Because culture determines people's attitude and behaviour, the discussion then pulls these concepts together with an emphasis on the relationships between food and culture. The relationship between food and culture is examined with a focus on the following three themes: (1) symbolic meanings of food, (2) food as identity of cultural group, and, (3) socialization process in forming people's eating habits.

Subsequently, the discussion pays attention to food and tourism in order to explore the role of food in the tourism context. Having understood the relationship between food and culture, and food and tourism in particular, a review of the motivational factors that influence dining out behaviour and their respective implications in tourism are also discussed. Particular attention is given to the pull and push factors that determine people's dining out motivation. Additionally,

tourist dining patterns are also analyzed so as to underpin the role of dining experience in tourist satisfaction. The literature review is then devoted to Chinese food culture and the dining out characteristics in order to have a foundation to assess their dining experiences during their visit to Australia.

The above discussion has focused on the relationship between culture and dining out behaviour. The main difference between Chinese and Australian culture is then reviewed according to the dimension of individualism/collectivism and high- versus low-context in order to investigate the role of culture in the service evaluation. Luna and Gupta's (2001) model of the interaction of culture and consumer behaviour is discussed to allow a better understanding of the influence of service providers' marketing communication on tourist behaviour. In the following section, Luna and Gupta's model is integrated into Middleton's (2001) stimulus-response model of buyer behaviour and be applied to the context of tourist dining behaviour. Having understood tourists' dining behaviour, the discussion will examine how tourists' dining-out behaviour leads to dining satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The SERVQUAL and expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm is critically reviewed in the assessment of tourist dining satisfaction. Since tourists' dining experience is often an intercultural service encounter among tourists, service staff, and tour guide, role theory and tour guide's performance are also applied in analyzing tourists' dining satisfaction.

The literature review has been undertaken based on two principles in mind: first, to understand how the Chinese food culture, gastronomy tourism, and

customer satisfaction have been understood and interpreted in the past, and second, to critique existing literature in terms of its guiding assumptions and limitations. In short, the main objective of literature review is to assess what we know and do not know from the literature, and the reasons for this knowledge. Through the presentation of both the contribution and limitations of previous literature, this chapter will facilitate a better inquiry into how Chinese tourists experience gastronomy in Australia.

2.1 Different approaches in defining culture

Scholars have seldom agreed on a simple definition of culture since it is the most abstract construct affecting human behaviour. Though culture is an abstract construct, it has definite characteristics. McCort and Malhotra (1993:93) cited Herskovits's (1948) definition to illustrate the characteristics of culture as: "*the man-made part of the human environment*".

According to this definition, McCort and Malhotra (1993) suggested that culture could be expressed as physical culture and subjective culture. The former means culture represents the material objects and artefacts created by mankind and this could be viewed as the physical illustration of cultural meaning (e.g. art, market system, built environment). The latter indicates that culture is the subjective psychological response of human to experience (e.g. values, attitudes). Subjective culture provides a stable framework of common traditions, values, belief, and practices that defines and decrees acceptable behaviour in a society. It

could be suggested that culture is derived from many interrelated factors including norms, language, education, and socialization, and that it reflects on a society's economic, political, religious and social system.

Since this study aims to explore Chinese tourists' dining behaviour in Australia, the discussions on the definition of culture are therefore focused on the subjective culture. Indeed, most of studies about culture are based on subjective culture, which is a cognitive construct of culture (Triandis, 1972). McCort and Malhotra (1993) proposed that the subjective culture includes both a group level phenomenon and individual level phenomenon. Hence, Usunier (2000) argued that the two level phenomena cannot be examined simultaneously because individual may share different cultures with several groups. The above two notions suggest that culture should be understood at both the individual level and the group level.

On the other hand, Triandis (1972) propounded that subjective culture will influence in an individual's perception, information processing strategies, and personal value systems. Accordingly, the scope of the subjective culture needs to be defined (McCort & Malhotra, 1993) in order to explore the effect of culture on people's perception on both the individual level (as personal food choice) and the group level (as national food culture).

Culture at individual level

As an individual phenomenon, Linton (1945:21) defined culture as:

“A culture is the configuration of learned behaviour and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society”.

This definition suggests that culture is shared and transmitted by individuals in a society. However, Linton (1945) argued that no matter how much individuals have learned from culture they still remains independent in thought, feeling and acting so as to distinguish themselves from others. Indeed, this could be further highlighted by Hofstede’s (1991) definition of culture as mental programming. In his seminal work, *“Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind”*, Hofstede (1991) suggested that culture is a collective mental program, which determines the person’s behaviour. At individual level, this mental program includes a set of values and beliefs that determine an individual’s behaviour, including eating behaviour. It can be said that no two individuals share the same knowledge base, or the same set of experiences. This implies that an individual consuming food is not only a process of bodily nourishment but also an elaborate performance of gender, social class, and most importantly, self-identity (Bourdieu, 1984). In addition, Fieldhouse (1986) argued that the manner of consuming food by individual is affected by several conditioning factors, such as cultural, socio-psychological, and religious reasons, as well as internal factors including values, attitudes, beliefs about food, and food preferences. The cultural behaviour perhaps shape food habits of individuals, but a combination of objective and subjective factors also have a considerable extent on individual’s intellectual decision. However, comforting reason is the major reason for an individual to consume

food and it outweighs other cultural as well as personal factors (Finkelstein, 1989).

Culture at group level

Alternatively, culture has been defined from a group level phenomenon. Goodenough (1971) addressed culture as a shared set of characteristics, attitudes, behaviours and values that help groups of people to decide what to do and how to go about it. Trompenaars and Turner (1998) further suggested that culture is the way in which people solve problems. Eventually, culture offers guidance for behaviours and a group's design for living (Brislin, 2000). In this context, culture is considered to be more related to activities that are shared by a particular group. It correspondingly has an influence on way of life, including eating and dining. In this realm, the human foodways – methods of food preparation, edible or inedible food items, and the etiquette governing the ways of serving one and others, has become a meaningful behaviour in a particular group, and has eventually evolved into an integral part of a coherent cultural pattern.

According to Hofstede (1991), individuals carry several layers of mental programming in response to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time. This is what Hofstede (1991) calls the 'layers of culture'. Under this concept, individuals may concomitantly belong to a national culture, a regional and/or ethnic culture, a gender culture, a generation culture, a social class culture, and organizational culture. In addition, he also argued that the mental programs may not be in harmony at these various levels and that this makes

people difficult to anticipate their behaviour in a new situation. This explains why culture is a learned behaviour because people need to learn new ways in problem solving and adopting new value systems in order to socialize into a new cultural environment.

In the context of eating behaviour, Fieldhouse (1986) proposed that food habits are learned behaviour and likely ongoing and resistant to change once established. Hence, culture involves changes from the socialization process and it is a consequence of learned behaviour in a physical or social environment. The above discussions best explain that tourists might need to learn or socialise to a new eating behaviour when they travel to a new cultural environment. Indeed, this study aims to investigate whether such a claim is valid in the realm of tourist dining behaviour.

So far, it can be said that culture provides guidance in the way we understand individual's behaviour. In terms of food choice, individuals will choose food based on their own personality, past experiences, and cultural background. While the way of individual consuming food can be a matter of personal preference, a demand of identity, or a social capital; it may also be a way to consolidate group belonging, define difference and exhibit distinctiveness from otherness (Long, 2004). However, culture is not static and involves change; a person also has other mental programs that need to be fitted in different group or cultural environment. In this case, people will acquire new value systems and attitudes toward different foods. This is particularly true for tourist since they often have to dine on different

or 'foreign' foods while away from home. Hence, it is important to understand this learning process, that is, how tourists experience dining out.

Culture and the alteration of eating behaviour

This sub-section will introduce theories which explain the alteration of eating behaviour when individual is facing an unfamiliar cultural environment. Socialisation process (Bareham, 1995) is presented in order to explicate the process of learning new behaviour. The introduction of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), on the other hand, elucidate that individual's attitude might be altered in order to maintain consistence with his/her new behaviour.

Socialisation process

Because culture is a collective phenomenon, it could be assumed that cultural value is the device that shape people's beliefs and attitudes and guides their behaviour. An individual's behaviour is the result of that individual's cultural value system for a particular context. For example, eating habits, which is part of the cultural value system, could influence people's food choice. This is supported by England (1978) who indicated that a value system is seen as relatively permanent perceptual framework that influences an individual's behaviour. Yet, people are not born with a set of value systems and culture is learned (McCort & Malhotra, 1993). Individuals' cultural value systems are developed over time as they are socialized into a particular group. It is learned from family, education and other informal sources, e.g., imitating others as well as watching and/or mimicking the behaviour of others. As a result, societal culture as well regional

subculture and familial values all influence the formation of an individuals' cultural value system (Luna & Gupta, 2001).

Similarly, McCracken (1986) also suggested that cultural meaning is transmitted through communication and behaviour to form the individual's meaning system. This process by which people absorb their values and learn behaviour is defined as socialization (Bareham, 1995). This goes on throughout the lifetime, resulting in people acquiring attitudes and behaviour, which in turn affects their value system. Kivela (2003) therefore suggested that culture is passed on from one generation to the next, and culture could not continue on its evolutionary course without socialization process. This implies that learning and teaching are also crucial characteristics of culture, and the way eating habits are formed, taught and reinterpreted is an important component of culture. Hence, different layers of cultural acquisition strongly influence individual's eating habits and socialization process facilitates the learning of new eating behaviours.

Cognitive dissonance theory

Importantly, because the relationship between what is taught and what is learned is not absolute, culture exists in a constant state of change (Geertz, 1973), and it is commonly believed that attitudes form behaviour (Bareham, 1995). For example, a person who has a favourable attitude towards Chinese culture may frequently eat Chinese food. The assumption here is that a positive attitude toward certain culture will lead to related food socialization behaviour. However, this relationship is not always stable; for example, Festinger (1957) argued that

behaviour often influences attitudes. He proposes a cognitive dissonance theory to address when people attempt to maintain consistency amongst various cognitions, such as an attitude, an emotion, a behavior, or a value. Cognitive dissonance occurs when people's beliefs and values do not match their behaviour. Festinger (1957) explained that human beings resolve dissonance by changing their attitude and behaviour if they experience unpleasant psychological tension caused by the dissonance. In the context of consumer food choice, if someone decides one day to try new or different foods that they have never eaten before, then three outcomes might result. Either they will: (a) confirm to themselves they do not like the new food, or (b) they will find that they like it, or (c) they find that they like it but because of their cultural predisposition they will not have it again. The attitude shifts in line with the actual and subsequent behaviour and they are therefore likely to report an attitude, which is consistent with their behaviour in order to create the cognitive consistency predicted by the dissonance theory.

In the realm of tourist dining, Fieldhouse (1986) suggested that the sensory qualities of food are important to the acceptability and degree of preference. Any one of the sensory qualities, for instance food presentation, has influences on the constitution of the acceptability in any given foods or dishes. In this regard, when a particular food match people's mental construct of acceptability, it would be considered edible. On the contrary, if the food concerned is discordant with one's food culture value, it would be abandoned and labelled as inedible. For the Chinese tourists who travel to Australia, they sometimes may refuse to eat unknown or foreign foods because the foods do not 'look right'. This could be

explained by the cognitive dissonance theory that in order to justify the dining out experience in an Australian restaurant, the Chinese tourists have to convince themselves mentally that the food is good in taste or perhaps they just lower their expectations in order to maintain the cognitive consistency.

In summary, culture is a system of meaning and learned behaviour (Geertz, 1973). It is a way of thinking and believing for individuals and which, determines normative regulation of behaviour in a group. Accordingly, culture is expressed through the values, norms and ritual in a society. The process of socialization forms our collective mentality of the culture we live in. It determines attitudes and behaviours of a particular group. On the other hand, cognitive dissonance theory advocates that people will change their attitude and behaviour if they feel uncomfortable. This explains the changing formation of eating habits and dining preferences, particularly when people are facing unfamiliar foods and cultural situations. In this respect, culture might be a basic guideline when choosing foods that we eat and when we travel away from our culture. Due to the nature of this study, the subsequent discussion will explore how culture affects individual's eating habits and attitudes to dining preferences.

2.2 Food and culture

The relationship between food and culture has been studied by different disciplines. For example, Douglas (1997) is known for her seminal anthropological research on food in her article "Deciphering a Meal". Fieldhouse

(1986) encouraged the understanding of food ideology, which focuses on how people think about food and its particular meanings and values. Recently, Beardsworth and Keil (1997) proposed the changing conceptions of diet and health as well as food risk and anxiety from a sociological perspective on food and eating. All in all, it is told that there are many diverse and interesting ways in deciphering the cultural meaning of food. However, the discussion of food culture in this section will start with the symbolic meaning of food so as to reflect on its cultural identity. Besides, attention will be given to changing food habits in order to pursue its implications for tourists dining behaviour.

Deciphering cultural meaning of food

As discussed in the previous section, it is believed that culture includes a system of values and rules that govern the behaviour of members of a society. In terms of food and eating habits, culture is a major determinant of what we eat. Finkelstein (1998) suggested that food is an essential aspect of a society; and therefore, styles of eating are important dimensions to appreciate human culture. In essence, the culture of food reflects peoples' adaptation to ecology, social environment, geography, and the economy. In addition, Makela (2000) suggested that culture defines how nutrition is coded into 'acceptable' food. Therefore, culture also dictates what is edible or inedible in peoples' understanding and categorization of a particular group. Kivela (2003) agreed with this proposition by saying that food is part of peoples' value system and that it helps people when deciding what is 'good' and 'bad' food. However, what is considered as 'good food' to one culture might be considered as 'bad food' to another. For example,

most Western Europeans are of the opinion that internal animal organs are ‘bad food’, whereas Oriental people regard it as ‘good food’ and believe them to be very nutritional and healthy.

Symbolic meaning of food

Food also carries symbolic meaning of tradition and special occasions in a society and food habits are among the most deeply well established forms of human behaviour (Atkins and Bowler, 2001). From the traditional perspective, the idea of a ‘proper meal’ is a reflection of core values and beliefs in a society (Warde & Martens, 2000). For example, after reviewing Murcott’s (1983) study, Warde and Martens (2000) concluded that the ‘proper meal’ in Britain contains one meat and two vegetables, of which one is potato. Atkins and Bowler (2001) corroborated their analysis by suggesting that the components of a meal are usually the core item of animal protein (meat or fish), potato or rice, vegetables, and a dressing or sauce, or gravy.

In contrast, a ‘proper meal’ in Chinese culture is based on *fan* (rice and other starch foods such as noodles as the core item) and *ts’ai* (vegetable, secondary core item), and meat dishes (Chang, 1977). The difference in the content of ‘proper meal’ between Britain and the Chinese duly epitomized various eating habit in a particular culture. Although food habits are likely long lasting and resistant to change once established, little is known if the elements of food behaviour will remain the same or be modified in a new cultural environment. In the context of

tourist dining, a question can be posed, whether or not Chinese tourists will resist different foods while on holidays.

Apart from the traditional view of a proper meal, the symbolic meaning of a food culture will also represent the identity of one social group. Atkins and Bowler (2001) simplified food and eating in culture by referring food as identity of the social group and traditional recipes as representation of the culture. They contended that the origin and persistence of foodways often represent an important expression of identity, both as individuals and in reference to an ethnic, social class or religious grouping. In addition, the distinctive ingredients, the style and skill of cooking may represent a particular food culture. Well-known examples include spaghetti Bolognese (Italian pasta) and sweet and sour pork which is a well-known Chinese dish. Similarly, Kivela (2003) indicated that the cuisine also represents a culture's identity, through style/method of cooking, use of specific ingredients, modes of dining, and social occasions. Therefore, a national cuisine reflects the typical food of a particular country and its culture. For this reason, national cuisine and its food can be stereotyped, for example, English foods are plain and robust whereas French foods are elegant and gastronomically inspired.

Changing conception of food habits

Although culture determines individual's eating and dining habits, and once such habits are established, they are likely to be continuing and persistent.

However, as culture is a learned phenomenon, individual's eating habit could still be changed during learning and socialization process. For example, an infant's desire for food is triggered by physiological needs. An adult's specific desire for milk and cereal or porridge (western culture) or congee (eastern culture) in the morning is a learned response to morning hunger as well as cultural trait. In addition, people's eating habits will reflect on the adaptation to ecology, social environment and changes of the time (Tsui, 2001). Therefore, people's food taste evolves through time in response to the changing circumstances of supply and demand (Atkins & Bowler, 2001), particularly when it coordinates with the marketing forces and global distribution channels (Kivela, 2003).

Indeed, the case of the adaptation to the foreign food exemplifies previous statements. In his study of sociology of food in England, Wood (1994) proposed that British people are willing to try new foreign foods because of the increase in overseas holiday taking and disposable income, coupled with the involvement of members of ethnic minorities in the restaurant industry. Eventually, the spread of 'exotic' foods become acceptable to new consumers in a number of ways. This is supported by Warde and Martens's (2000) study which indicated that the majority of respondents in their survey liked trying ethnic cuisine when they dined. According to Wood (1994), ethnic cuisines were adapted to the perceived tastes and tolerances of the Anglo-Saxon British population. Not only is this observable in Anglo-Saxon societies, but for example, the diffusion of McDonald's restaurant has changed people's attitudes toward fast food in both Western and Oriental cultures. Importantly, in the context of this study, Chinese restaurants in different

countries, in particular, have a wide acceptance not only by the Chinese Diaspora, but also by the majority culture. These examples underpin the globalisation of food distribution and changing food habits.

Another reason in changing food habits is because of the development of mass media and social change (Fieldhouse, 1986). As societies progress, people are often encouraged by scientists to eat nutritious and healthy foods, resulting in people's belief that one should eat a healthy diet and stay away from fatty foods (Brug & Van Assema, 2001). In fact, the idea of healthy eating is to maintain and enhance an individual's resistance to disease or to promote one's longevity. Similarly, the concept of *yin* and *yang* (which will be discussed later on) rooted in Chinese food culture seems to conform to this current trend of food consumption behaviour. In addition, changing conceptions of diet and health, prompted vegetarianism have become another popular change in eating habits in some Western cultures. From the historical and cultural perspective, Beardsworth and Keil (1997) indicated that people who are vegetarians mostly adopt this diet out of their religious beliefs (Buddhist do not eat flesh foods) as well as from the moral standpoint, (e.g. animal suffering when obtaining meat), and food production concerns (unjustifiably extravagant use of natural resource). However, it must also be mentioned that vegetarianism, at least in some Western cultures, is also related to current trends in healthy eating. It could be concluded that the societies progress increase motivations for people to eat healthy.

Food ideology

Kivela (2003) noted that national cuisine governs the preparation of food. This suggests that each cultural group has their own distinctive culinary precepts that normally remain relatively stable over a long period of time. Even as people become more mobile, travelling to other countries has provided chances to taste unfamiliar or novel food items which are different from their own culture; the person's indigenous cuisine remains a firm constant. Although dietary and health concerns might preclude any intentions to intake of unfamiliar food (Beardsworth, and Keil, 1997), Elsrud (2001), on the other hand, underpinned that health risk or illness is the price in experiencing the real local culture. Despite the work done so far, there is little understanding about the hunger for novelty or risk avoidance in food choice by Chinese tourists while on holidays. In the context of tourism dining, the choice of food is not only about whether or not 'new' food is culturally/ethically acceptable, but is also about the motivational factors in searching for novelty and/or a familiarity experience.

Social aspects of food

While socialization process has the ability to modify peoples' eating habits, social class can also have an influence on attitudes towards eating. Finkelstein (1989) indicated that eating habits and foods have always been linked to social power and status. For example, in ancient China, the poor sustained themselves with unpolished rice, bean curd, earthy protein and other simple food while the rich dined on magnificent banquets consisting of hundreds of exotic meat and seafood delicacies. In addition, Makela (2000) proposed that the differences in

food consumption between social groups are embedded in the desire for luxury and necessity, for sustenance, as well as in attitudes toward healthy eating. It also could be said that working class meals are informal and easy to prepare whereas upper class meals are more concerned with the form and presentation of the meal.

In the context of eating out, Kivela (2003) postulated that eating out is often used by people to assert social status. This is because prestige and affluence is often attached to the circumstances and manner of eating out activities. For example, when dining out with friends, the Chinese will choose high status restaurant in order to show their wealth as well as to build either formal or informal relationships. In this regards, trendy and fashionable food often symbolize the prestige and display personal wealth to the Chinese. In the context of this study, dining out becomes an event that alludes to the Chinese tourists in differentiating their own identity from other social class while on holidays because exotic foods and expensive dishes have traditionally been symbols of wealth and status in China. As the meals for all-inclusive tour groups are normally pre-arranged, the selection of menu items for tour groups become an important indicator of conspicuous experience and, in turn, has significant influence on the Chinese tourists' meal experience.

The previous discussion summarizes food in the cultural context. Considering that cultural values are ingrained, routine behaviours are often accomplished without conscious thought. The attitudes to what are 'good' and

'bad' foods are therefore decided not only in each culture but also in different social class, gender and age group. The symbolic meanings of foods are accordingly attached in one culture to reflect its identity. Hence, learning and socialization process provide the opportunity for people to change the formation of their eating habits and dining preferences. This is often reinforced by television gourmet shows, lifestyle magazines and epicure guides. This implies that the motivation, triggered by marketing forces, affect peoples mental program about their food choice, perception of 'good' or 'bad', as well as the acceptance of new foods from another culture. Because dining with family or friends is a social activity in most cultures, investigating eating out in the motivational context is also necessary.

2.3 The motivational context of eating out at a destination

Kotler, Bowen and Makens (1996) classified dining motivation into the composition of 'pull' and 'push' factors. They elaborated that pull factors are the specific appeals of the restaurant that attract people to dine there, whereas push factors are internal motivation that predispose an individual to eat out. In this respect, the discussion of the tourists' motivational context of eating out will be depicted in two parts. This first part of the discussion elucidates the motivational factors that predispose the tourist to eat out at a destination. The second part of the discussions explicates the attributes which might influence tourists' propensity to dine at a destination.

Tourists' motivational factors of eating out

Different approaches have been proposed with respect to the delineation of eating out. However, little research has been conducted on tourists' motivation for eating out at a destination. In order to overcome this shortcoming, this section will review both the motivation of eating out and tourists' travel motivation so that the understanding of tourists' motivation of eating out could be underpinned.

Motivating factors of eating out

Previous studies indicated that the motivations for dining out ranged from satisfying a basic physiological need (hunger) to being engaged in a social, familial or business interaction (Fieldhouse, 1986). Campbell-Smith (1967) stated that people go to restaurants primarily for a good meal and that food is only one element in the consumer experience of dining out. In addition, Finkelstein (1989) suggested that the desire for novelty cause individuals to seek eating out activities in unfamiliar or new restaurant. Auty (1992) identified the reasons for eating out which included celebration, social occasion, convenience meal and business meal. More recently, Warde and Martens (2000) utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the symbolic significance of eating out and the relationship between public eating and domestic cooking in the U.K. They categorized that the reasons for eating out included experiencing something different from the everyday, getting a break from cooking, socializing, celebrating, a liking for foods and preventing hunger.

Tourist motivation

The above discussion on the motivating factors for eating out could be summarised as: (1) escape from mundane environment, (2) relaxation, (3) enhancement of kinship relationship, and (4) facilitation of social interaction. Interestingly, these eating out motives correspond with the tourist motivations which were proposed by Crompton (1979). In his qualitative study, Crompton (1979) propounded seven push (socio-psychological) and two pull (cultural) motives for pleasure vacationers. Other than the above four motives, exploration and evaluation of self, prestige, and regression were also identified as push motives. Two pull motives were also realised, namely, novelty and education.

Specifically, Crompton (1979) articulated that novelty motive denotes tourists' desire to seek out new and different experiences in order to alleviate boredom; and education motive represents tourists' desire to gain knowledge and expand intellectual horizons from travel experience. In fact, Crompton's propositions on tourist motivation have been corroborated by other studies. For example, Crompton and McKay (1997) suggested that cultural exploration and novelty seeking were two of the important motives which motivate visitors to attend festival events.

In fact, other than those motivating factors for eating out, cultural exploration and novelty seeking are particularly pertinent to this study as gastronomy could be deemed as an intangible asset of a destination which could satisfy tourists' desire in exploring destination's food culture (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher; 2007).

In addition, many authors have propounded that tourists are often keen to experience the environment and culture of a destination (Ondimu, 2002; Richards, 2002).

Alternatively, status-related motivations will affect people's food choice and eating out behaviour (Fields, 2002). It also influences peoples' eating patterns when they are travelling. Kivela and Johns (2003) suggested that eating out and travel is often used by people to assert social status which could be considered as conspicuous consumption. In addition, Fields (2002) also proposed that status-conscious tourists like to explore new cuisines and food that they and their friends are not likely to eat at home. In this regard, social status can be a strong motive for pursuing eating out activities, especially in a foreign destination. It is important to note also that tourists' financial position would be reflected on destination selection and the choice of restaurants at a destination. For example, budget travellers usually visit fast food stores while the affluent tourists will take meals at expensive restaurants.

Although many evidences have been found to prove that cultural and novelty motives are predominant tourist motivation, few research have empirically investigated tourists' motive in experiencing destination's gastronomy. In addition, it is still relatively unknown whether or not, or to what extent, tourist satisfaction correlates with tourists' motivations in searching for memorable dining experiences in a destination. In order to close this gap, this study aims to

identify Chinese tourists' eating behaviour in Australia and investigate the underlying motives for their behaviour.

Attributes in affecting the selection of restaurant

Having understood the motivational factors (push factors) that affect tourists to eat out at a destination, this sub-section will examine the pull factors that could influence tourists to dine in a restaurant. The pull factors such as the cuisine, food quality, service quality, restaurant ambience, location and price have been extensively studied in the attribution to the dining satisfaction (Auty, 1992; Almanza, Jaffe & Lin, 1994; Oh & Jeong, 1996). These studies posited the concept that diners consistently attach importance to pull factors when they eating out. In addition, these factors also constitute the diner's experiential dining experience. On the other hand, the push factors represent the individual's needs for eating out, and thus reflect their expectations in the selection of restaurants. Consequently, push motives could be useful in explaining the desire to go to restaurant, while pull motives have been considered practical for elucidating the choice of restaurant. This reveals that dining satisfaction is also a result of the pull and push factors. That is, dining satisfaction results when restaurant attributes (pull factors) exceed the customer's expectations (push factors). However, Finkelstein (1989) argued that eating out is not always motivated by the need for pleasure. For some people, eating out is the escape from the preparing meals at home and is often used as a reward, particularly for couples with young children. For some other people, eating out could be for facilitating business meetings; for

relaxation; for a novel experience; for dating; for socializing, or for alleviating boredom.

Despite the different reasons for eating out in restaurants, food quality is still considered as one of the main attributes in restaurant selection (Kivela, 1997). In addition to food quality, the review of the relevant literature reveals other restaurant attributes, namely, cleanliness, value for money, speed of service, convenience of location, friendliness of waiting staff, and new experience as being important (Auty, 1992; Dube, Renagham & Miller, 1994; Bonjanic & Shea, 1997; Kivela, Inbakaran, & Reece, 1999). A recent study by Clark and Wood (1999) also indicated that personal preferences and tastes are the main determinants of restaurant selection. According to Warde and Martens (2000), service (process of delivery) and formality (encounter between customers and staff) are normally considered when customers evaluate their eating out experience. It could be concluded that not only tangible attributes (i.e. food quality and décor, furnishings) contribute to customer satisfaction, but also intangible attributes (i.e. atmosphere, environment, and service staff attitudes). The literature also reveals that pull and push factors compose the motives for individuals to dine out. It also suggests that the push factors, intrinsic and unique to each tourist (Crompton, 1979), might vary according to different culture context because personal beliefs and attitudes varies with each culture. This is particularly noticeable when analyzing tourists' dining-out experiences. Nevertheless, previous studies about tourists' experiences did not pay attention to their dining experiences and how cultural influence could have impinged on their dining experiences. To illuminate

such an influence, the next section will be devoted to the discussion of eating out diversions during holidays.

2.4 The role of food in tourism

The delineations of the role of food in tourism are divided into three folds. From an attitudinal approach, the first part of the discussion explores tourists' perception towards dining out experience at a destination. Various strategies adopted by destination marketers in promoting gastronomy are also investigated so that the relationship between tourists' dining out experience and travel experience could be understood from the supply-side perspective. The second part of this section articulates tourists eating behaviour from different approaches. In this respect, along with motivational context of eating out at a destination, this study have delineated the role of dining out experience at a destination from motivational, attitudinal, and behavioural approaches. Finally, this section concludes with a decipherment of the significance of food consumption experience to the tourist satisfaction.

2.4.1 The relationship between food and travel experience

Tourists' perceptions toward travel dining experience

People have to eat when travelling away from home. However, some tourists may overlook travel dining experience because they merely regard it as extension of daily experience. Contrastingly, some tourists consider travel dining experience

as an integral part of the travel experience, which constitutes an indispensable source of pleasure and memory.

For those tourists who perceive travel dining experience as an extension of daily experience, Quan and Wang (2004:301) contended that those tourists are in quest of “*ontological comfort of home*”. They further explicated that tourists may seek ontological comfort from daily routines and habits in order to lessen anxieties when they face unfamiliar environment. Such a claim have corroborated with other studies. For example, Richardson (1996) suggested that tourists might seek high degree of familiarity to experience the host culture from well-developed facilities and service in the tourism industry, implying that less experienced or less adventurous travellers may seek comfort in familiar foods. That could explain why many tourists eat the same food as they would at home while on holiday. Hanefors (2002) also agreed that tourists prefer familiar foods and dishes when they travel. In essence, this type of tourists may need a degree of familiarity to enjoy their travel experience, which is analogous to an ‘environmental bubble’ of their home environment (Cohen, 1972). Thus, by implication, travel dining experience is regarded as “peripheral” for this type of tourists.

Other than merely serving as sustenance to satisfy hunger and comfort, food is often used as a medium for tourist to explore new culture and satisfy curiosity (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). In this regard, Kivela and Crotts (2006) accentuated that food could be deemed as an inextricable part of the travel experience. What is

more, Quan and Wang (2004) propounded that travel dining experience might be the 'peak' touristic experience.

In the earlier discussions, it was mentioned that cultural exploration and novelty seeking are the motives which push tourists away from their familiar foods and eating patterns, and pulls them toward new and exciting dining experience. This suggests that tourists are often in search of interesting and surprising experiences that differ from their daily life (Lee & Crompton, 1992). Because socialization is often cultivated through the practice of dining out, particularly when travelling or being away from one's own culture (Kivela & Johns, 2003), it implies that food and dining out provides an opportunity, and motivation, for many encounters with different cultures. Therefore, tourists may eat local food at destination in search of pleasure, and adventure, to fulfil an experiential part of their holiday dream. For example, in his qualitative study, Elsrud (2001) revealed that Western tourists ate 'deep fried bugs' with glee in Bangkok as they considered this act would brought them closer to Thai culture and further away from other tourists. Despite the fact that these bugs are considered as inedible and unhealthy by many means, the adventurous consumption of it becomes a strong statement about experience. To take a less extreme example, a highly health conscious tourists could possibly put aside his or her healthy eating belief and take on a culinary adventure in order to better 'experience' the destination (Johns & Kivela, 2001). Therefore, it is appropriate to say that many of the tourists perceive that partaking of indigenous food at a

destination is an experience which they should be having while travelling so that they could be brought closer to a destination's culture (Kivela & Crofts, 2006).

Promoting gastronomy as tourist attraction

Kivela and Johns (2003) referred to experiencing pleasure as an essential and normal part of the holiday experience and that dining out is often a very pleasurable and memorable experience. In this respect, gastronomy has been promoted as an experiential product by destinations marketers (Scarpato, 2002). Most travel programmes often introduce the distinctive gastronomy when presenting a destination. For example, Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley in California are portrayed as well-known wine tourism regions (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Alternatively, in developing a gastronomy experience for tourists, destinations often plan events to exploit gastronomy as a tourist product (Scarpato, 2002). For instance, the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, a high tourist rating event, has been capitalised on the promotion of Melbourne's food, wine and restaurants.

From the cultural tourism perspective, Kivela and Crofts (2006) propounded a significant aspect of the gastronomy in tourism. They contended that gastronomy could be deemed as manifestation of a destination's intangible heritage. This is because food plays a pivotal role in the human culture (Fieldhouse, 1986) and each dining opportunity is a chance to discern local food and people (Richards, 2002). In addition, Bessiere (1998) suggested that a destination's gastronomy represent the influence of the culture and environment on prevailing taste and

flavour of the destination. Kivela and Crofts (2006) further explicated that savouring gastronomy is an activity that speaks to all five human senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch). Hence, dining out at a destination will proffer new experiences to tourists and it may yield a high level of satisfaction. On the other hand, gastronomy is a viable alternative for destination to develop its identity. As noted, a gastronomy identity represents a destination's character that is unique in nature. Thus, other than natural or historical attractions, destination could also benefit from its gastronomy in attracting tourists' visitation. For example, as the gastronomy identity of Beijing, Peking Roast Duck appeals to many tourists when they visit Beijing.

Although destination marketers can employ gastronomy to construct marketable and publicly attractive identities (Long, 2004; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher; 2007), those tourists who perceive eating as supporting experience may still consider eating as a mundane experience rather than a leisure activity. Therefore, a destination needs to find ways to add value to the gastronomy experience in order to make it memorable as it is considered to be one of the opportunities in creating travel experience (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). In short, in the course of developing gastronomy experiences as a tourist product and creating a gastronomy identity to underpin the destination image, destination marketers need to consider tourists' motivations for travel; and be able to demonstrate how the destination will satisfy their gastronomy needs and wants. This would require the destination marketers to detect the eating behaviour of the

tourists. The next section will then explore different modes of tourist eating behaviour.

2.4.2 Tourist eating behaviour

A number of studies were undertaken with the intention to elucidate tourists eating behaviour. Amongst which ‘strangeness’ and ‘familiarity’ are important concepts of food interpretation in the context of tourism that have been employed by Cohen (1972) in the formulation of a typology of tourist roles. Based on the study by Cohen (1972), Hjalager (2003) delineated the tourists’ desire for experiencing familiarity and novelty into four modes of culinary tourists (see Table 2.1).

First, the recreationalists are conservative tourists who appreciate the familiarity of their home cuisine. They treasure kinship relationship, and therefore, the enjoyment of dining experience often stem from sharing with family and relatives. The recreationalists are reluctant to try foreign foods and strange food ingredients. Because food is not an important aspect of their holiday experience, the recreationalists prefer to stay in accommodation with self-catering facilities to avoid possible intimidation by arrogant service style or excessive bills. Most of the budget travellers are found to be recreational gastronomy tourists.

Table 2.1 The styles of gastronomy tourists

	Recreational gastronomy tourists	Diversionsary gastronomy tourists	Existential gastronomy tourists	Experimental gastronomy tourists
Gastronomy motives	Satisfying hunger and thirst	Eating while having fun with others	Tasting new food products.	Extensive food knowledge, gourmet food is a definite priority.
Social motives	Sharing meal experience with family and relatives.	Food and drink is an excuse to get together at social events.	Sharing the food/taste experience with others.	Prestige from eating the 'right' food in the 'right' places.
Avoidance	Foreign food and strange food ingredients.	Dislike 'strange' food items.	Fast food, pre-cooked and pre-packaged food	"Peasant" food, fast food, and restaurants that are not in fashion.
Preferred dining environment	Uncomfortable in elegant restaurant.	Large and rustic places. Casual service staff.	Simple, non-pretentious, ambience that match food.	In-places with modern/exceptional décor or good location. The whole service experience is important.
Dining out activities while on holidays	Preferred self-catering, brings own food to destinations.	Dining in familiar chain restaurants.	Cooking classes and other hands-on culinary learning events.	In searching leisure and pleasure food and wine tours.
Preferred destination	Home or charter destinations with many of same nationality	Well-known destination most likely to accommodate preferences	Countries rich in culinary history e.g. France, Italy, China.	Anywhere, good restaurants available in most trendy places.
Information gathering	Word-of-mouth advice from relatives and friends.	Destination brochures.	Internet, library, travel books.	Trendy epicure and lifestyle magazines.

Adapted from: Hjalager (2003) and Kivela & Crofts (2006)

The second mode of gastronomy tourists is called the diversionaries. The diversionaries tourists are somehow similar with the recreationalists because they both prefer familiar food while they eat at home. The difference between these two modes is that the diversionaries regard eating and drinking as a room for noise and laughter, whereas the recreationalists are less concerned with the eating atmosphere. In particular, diversionary gastronomy tourists consider eating and

drinking as an excellent way of getting together with friends and enjoying life. The diversionary gastronomy tourists actively seek casual dining environment with no particular restrictions on table etiquette and dress code.

For the third mode of tourist, the experimental gastronomy tourists, their major motivation of food consumption on holiday is to symbolize lifestyle. The experimental tourists are keen to acquire culinary and food knowledge, as well as to try new ways of eating and preparing food at destination. The quality of food is a major indicator to the choice of food since image and prestige are attached to the consumption pattern.

The last mode of tourists, the existential gastronomy tourists, is similar with the experimental tourists in which they consider the combination of food and eating with learning as essential. Eating and drinking at destination is more than a process of bodily nourishment, but can be a means to increase cultural knowledge about the local cuisine. For these existential gastronomy tourists, the satisfaction of holiday experience is stemmed from authentic restaurants which provide simple and unsophisticated peasant food with respect to tradition. These tourists are not keen on expensive restaurants, not because of the price, but to avoid the possible harm by overly extravagant decoration and service that could divert the attention from the food and the company. The existentialists actively participate in farm trips that offer opportunities for them to see where the food or drink comes from, and even cooking classes to learn the food production methods.

Tannahill (1973) and Martin-Ibanez (1979) suggested that dining experience could be classified into experiential, experimental and existential. In the context of tourist dining, experiential dining experience indicates that tourists may actively taste unknown foreign foods, but they might also encounter disappointment and then decide not to have these foods again. On the other hand, experimental dining suggests that tourists may actively try local foods on a trial basis until they find the foods to match their specific needs and desire. Finally, existential diners are those who are prepared to sample different cuisines, and them with foods in their own countries. Indeed, both the experiential and experimental diners seem to be exemplified by Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory since their attitudes to the foreign foods might be influenced by their dining experience. Alternatively, existential dining experience provides insights to the comparison between exotic foods and tourists' own food culture.

Long (2004) proposed three realms of culinary experience when coming to the crux of the different cultural dining environment, namely, the exotic, the edibility, and the palatability. In the context of this study, the personal preferences and motivational factors influence tourists' choice of the exotic foods and familiar foods. The tourists' attitudes toward what are edible and inedible foods are decided in their own culture value, or cultivated through the socialization process from inedible to edible. Palatability is somewhat similar to edibility, because for those foods which are considered culturally edible may be unpalatable to a particular group. For example, shark's fin is thought as nutritious food for Chinese, however, conservation groups may find shark's fin not only unpalatable,

but also inedible. The realm of the palatability is to see how foods please the sensory needs of the tourists. In other words, the tourists' selection of foods will depend on the savoury, pleasure of food itself. The inferential consideration to these three realms of culinary experience can be significant indicators in the final determination of tourists' dining experience. That are, the edibility determine what tourists can eat while the exotic and palatability underpin what tourists want to eat.

2.4.3 Familiarity vs. Strangeness

Previous literatures pertaining to tourist experience often concentrate on the assessment of the tourists' quest for familiarity or strangeness. Different sociological concepts such as tourist typology, cultural distance, and authenticity might be able to delineate why different attitudes and behaviours are emerged.

Tourist typology

Base on the personality attributes such as attitude and motivation, Cohen (1972) classified tourists into institutionalised tourists and non-institutionalised tourists. Cohen (1972) contended that institutionalised tourists prefer to seek a unique and novel travel experience from a familiar base. This suggests that institutionalised tourists would envelop themselves in an environmental bubble of familiarity in order to ensure that their travel experience is comfortable and non-threatening (McKercher & Chow, 2001). Institutionalised tourists often travel in tour groups; and many mass tourists belong to this category.

Alternatively, the major travel motive for non-institutionalised tourists is to escape from the mundane. Thus, they attempt to get away from the mass tourism system and prefer to explore destinations by their own arrangement. Specifically, Cohen (1972) proposed two forms of non-institutionalised tourists, namely, the explorer and the drifter. Though novelty is the dominant travel motive for the explorer, he or she still would not dare to leave the environmental bubble. In effect, comfortable accommodation and reliable means of transportation remain imperative for the explorer to experience the local culture. While the basic routine and comforts might affect the explorer's travel behaviour, on the other hand, the drifter would completely immerse himself in the local culture. Pursuing authenticity might be the main travel motive for the drifter. Thus, the drifter seek direct encounter with local people and strangeness from the travel experience.

In a similar vein, Plog (1974) identified a continuum of tourist type, ranged from the self-inhibited psychocentric tourists to the extrovert allocentric tourists. The psychocentric tourists are less adventurous, whereas the allocentric tourists are often inquisitive and curious about the host environment, and they perceive travel as an opportunity for personal growth and self-expression. However, most tourists fall into the midcentric category, and their prime travel motives are to escape from the mundane and to quest for an enjoyable experience (McKercher & Chow, 2001).

Based on the aforementioned premises, tourists might have different attitudes towards travel experience, and that concomitantly will affect their behaviour and types of travel activity to be undertaken. However, not only the tourists' attitude might affect their travel behaviour, the concept of cultural distance could also explain tourists' quest for familiarity and strangeness.

Cultural distance

McKercher and Chow (2001) contended that cultural distance is a concept that refers to the extent of difference between tourists' home culture and the culture of the destination being visited. By comparing tourists' participation rate in cultural tourism activities, McKercher and Chow (2001) proposed that the greater the cultural distance, the greater the tourists' interests in participating in cultural tourism activities. This suggests that tourists, especially non-institutionalised or allocentric tourists, may be interested in exploring cultural disparities for culturally distant destinations. However, despite the fact that culturally distant destinations might be appealing, some tourists, particularly institutionalised or psychocentric tourists, would find them too strange and intimidating. In that case, a sufficient environmental bubble could be created to instil the sense of familiarity and to shield tourists from the strangeness.

In the context of this study, savouring a destination's gastronomy could be deemed as a cultural tourism activity for one could explore the destination's food culture through the dining experience (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher; 2007). Considering the vast culture distance between Australia and China, Chinese

tourists would be keen to explore Australian's gastronomy. As Australia food culture has close association with Western food culture, it could be said that Australian food represents the 'exotic Western' to the Chinese tourists. Despite the expected strangeness, Australia cuisine is relatively non-threatening to the Chinese tourists because Australia is perceived as a modern and well-developed destination (McKercher & Chow, 2001). Hence, it is appropriate to say that Chinese tourists would be keen to explore Australian's gastronomy due to the cultural distance as well as the perceived security.

To this end, the concept of culture distance might influence Chinese tourists travel eating behaviour. While some Chinese tourists might prefer to savour Australian's gastronomy under the shield of an environmental bubble, they might not be able to directly encounter with the authentic Australian food culture. Thus, it may involve the issue of authenticity and staged authenticity. The next section will be devoted to discussing the relationship between authenticity and travel dining experience.

Authenticity and travel experience

MacCannell (1973) proposed that tourists are often motivated by a desire to experience the life of what local people truly lived. In other words, tourists are in quest of an authentic experience that would manifest the destination culture. Whether the travel experience is described as authentic or inauthentic depends upon whether the experience has been made or enacted by local people according

to tradition. In this sense, authenticity often connotes traditional culture and a sense of genuineness.

Destination marketers often strive to put their culture in front of tourists in order to create an appealing package, and would possibly adapt cultural manifestations to the tastes of tourists (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003). The degree of adaptation could have altered the nature of the cultural product to be presented. As a result, the authenticity sought by the tourists could become ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell, 1973). MacCannell (1973) contended that tourists in quest of originals could become victims of ‘staged authenticity’. Thus, he argued that the term ‘tourist’ is used as a derisive label for they are often provided with inauthentic experience.

Authenticity and travel dining experience

Many authors have agreed that authenticity is determined based on tourists’ encounter with the environment (tourist site), people-base experiences (interaction with local people) or the joint interaction of these elements (cultural events) (MacCannell, 1973; Pearce & Moscardo, 1986; Cohen, 2002). If tourists search for an authentic dining experience with indigenous food, tourists would inevitably face the interaction with local people in this cultural activity. In effect, authenticity has profound implications on travel dining experience. In order to experience the ‘true otherness’ of the destination’s gastronomy, tourists’ quest for authenticity might be reflected by their dislike of the mundane and preference for the exotic (Lu & Fine, 1995).

Referring to different typologies of tourists according to their preference of travel dining experience, Cohen (2002) contended that some tourists are prepared to expose themselves to considerable danger or discomfort in order to bring themselves closer to the 'genuine localities and cultures'. For example, Elsrud (2001) described an incident that Western tourists ate 'deep fried bugs' with glee in Bangkok as they considered this act would enable them to experience Thai culture and set themselves apart from mass tourists. Such tourists who were in quest of true authenticity may belong to non-institutionalised tourists (Cohen, 1972) or allocentric tourists (Plog, 1974).

On the other hand, the pursuing of authentic experience should be incorporated with hedonic qualities for those institutionalised or psychocentric tourists as they require the protection from the environmental bubble. In effect, enjoyment of travel experience, well-being and having a good time are likewise legitimate to the quest of authenticity (Cohen, 2002). For example, the cooking lessons might be an ideal way for tourists to participate in the indigenous food production process. It is believed that tourists could understand how the indigenous foods are prepared and produced so that the authenticity could be underpinned.

By implication, the previous discussions attest that perception towards authenticity and tourists' preference for authenticity might affect their travel behaviour. For instance, cooking lessons might appeal to less venturesome tourists

but would upset those allocentric tourists because of its staged authenticity. Thus, it is further assumed that authenticity is pertinent to tourists' satisfaction (Pearce & Moscardo, 1986). The next section elaborates how the concept of authenticity influences tourists' satisfaction.

Authenticity and tourist satisfaction

It can be said that tourists have different expectations towards their travel experience. This suggests that tourists' preference for authenticity would differ according to their expectations. Most importantly, whether tourists perceive their travel experience as authentic would play a mediating role to their visit satisfaction (Pearce & Moscardo, 1986). Hence, tourists' satisfaction not only demands a full consideration of the tourists' need or preference for authenticity, but also the understanding of the extent of tourists' acceptance towards authenticity. Such an assumption could be corroborated by Pearce and Moscardo's (1986) delineation of tourists' perception towards authenticity.

Pearce and Moscardo (1986) articulated that if the experience has been perceived as authentic, it would lead to a positive and enjoyable outcome no matter whether the tourist has a high or low preference for authenticity. Conversely, tourist may feel unsatisfied when authenticity is expected but stage authenticity is perceived. Yet, with regard to tourist dining experience, if an authentic dining experience is provided, it still can not ensure the tourists' dining satisfaction due to different perceptions towards edibility and palatability (Long, 2004). Thus, it could be argued that tourists' satisfaction is not only determined by

the degree of authenticity of the experience, but is also hinged on tourists' perception or attitude towards authenticity. It could be further assumed that tourists might be satisfied with 'staged authenticity' in order to have a palatable dining experience. Such an assumption could be substantiated by the fact that many restaurants have modified their cuisine to cater to the taste of tourists.

In the context of this study, tourists' dining satisfaction might not be achieved when authenticity is available but the desire for it is low. Using the example of Western tourists eating 'deep fried bugs' in Thailand (Elsrud, 2001), not every tourist has the courage to partake of extremely unusual indigenous foods even though it is considered as an authentic contact with the local culture. In effect, it can be said that the intake of 'deep fried bugs' would only gratify those tourists who have high preference of authenticity but may upset some tourists who have low preference of authentic experience.

In short, this sub-section articulates tourists' quest for familiarity and strangeness. The aforementioned discussions have delineated that different typologies of tourists, cultural distance between tourists and destination, and preference for authentic experience are all attributable to different tourist eating behaviour. In the realm of this study, these three concepts have become the variables in affecting Chinese tourists' travel eating behaviour as well as their visit satisfaction.

2.4.4 The significance of travel dining experience to tourist satisfaction

As tourists will engage in various activities while travelling, different components of travel experience are normally given as relating to tourist satisfaction. In particular, travel dining experience has now become indispensable to the travel experience. For example, according to most tourism statistics, e.g. the Bureau of Tourism Research (2004), tourists spend on accommodation and dining out average 25% of the total spending during their holidays in Australia. In addition, Sheldon and Fox (1988) propounded that bad foodservice experiences are more influential in damaging a destination's popularity than good experiences are in attracting tourists. This means that dissatisfaction with food service may lead to dissatisfaction with the overall travel experience, and would be a substantial reason for affecting repeat visitation. Alternatively, marketing success for destination depends on creating expectations that will motivate customers to choose particular destinations. Customer satisfaction depends on the extent to which these expectations are fulfilled. As food is the central to travel experience, travel dining experience in a destination therefore could be an instrument for destination management in adding value to fulfil expectations as well as creating motivation for tourists to choose destinations. It is therefore worthwhile to note that the role of dining experience in achieving tourist satisfaction while holidays (Nield, Kozak, & LeGrys, 2000). Nevertheless, the tourism marketing literature pertaining to the influence of dining experience on tourist satisfaction is scant.

Quan and Wang (2004) deciphered that tourist experience is the composition of the 'peak touristic experience' and 'supporting consumer experience'.

Specifically, the ‘peak touristic experience’ usually derived from the experience of visiting the attractions, whereas ‘supporting consumer experience’ could refer to the experiences on food and drink, accommodation, and transportation. While the peak experiences often constitute the major sources of tourist satisfaction, supporting experiences are commonly undervalued for they are deemed to be the extension of daily experience. Yet, tourist satisfaction can not merely depend on cheerful peak experiences but should also be supplemented by pampering supporting experiences. Such a claim has been recently recognised by a number of academics (Sheldon & Fox, 1988; Neild, Kozak, & LeGrys, 2000; Quan & Wang, 2004). However, these studies did not explicate what happens about travel dining experience because they were either theoretically grounded or the findings are derived from *post hoc* assessments of tourist experience. To further advance the knowledge of tourist satisfaction, this study will investigate the role of food consumption experience in tourist satisfaction.

This section articulates different aspects of tourists’ attitude and behaviour towards dining out experience at a destination. The review of previous literatures has revealed that different travel eating behaviours are attributable to the cultural aspects of the travel dining experience. Thus, whether dining out experience is perceived as supporting experience or peak touristic experience depends on tourists’ pursuit of familiar food or novel dining experience. In addition, destination marketers have realised that gastronomy can be utilised as cultural tourism products that may add value to the travel experience. Furthermore, the concept of familiarity and strangeness may elucidate the motives behind

Hjalager's (2003) model of tourist eating behaviour. Moreover, different dining experience proposed by Tannahill (1973) and Martin-Ibanez (1979) also suggested that there will be comparison existed between destination's indigenous food and tourists' own food culture. Finally, Long (2004) propounded that exotic, edibility, and palatability can be the indicators in the determination of tourists' dining experience. All in all, findings from previous literatures suggest that cultural factor plays a pivotal role in the tourists' dining experience. If this is the case, the challenge for destination marketers is to understand the cultural backgrounds of their target markets. The next section will focus on the Chinese food culture in order to better understand the needs and wants of the Chinese tourists who are visiting Australia.

2.5 Chinese food culture

China is a very large country with great regional diversity. Each region has its own food characteristics and cooking style. Space precludes discussing them all here, thus, the delineation of Chinese food culture will focus primarily on the general food beliefs in Chinese food culture rather than the sub-culture of each region. The first part of this section discusses certain food cultural values that are shared and accepted amongst members of the Chinese society. Eating out behaviour in Chinese culture is also articulated in order to assess whether Chinese tourists' eating behaviour in Australia is the reflection of their eating behaviour at home.

2.5.1 Chinese food culture value

General characteristic of Chinese food culture

The review of the relevant literature suggests that food is a significant aspect of Chinese culture because Chinese people have been particularly preoccupied with food and eating. Despite the place of origin, Chinese people will always stand alike in their passion for food. For example, there is an old saying, “to the people foodstuff is all-important”, which is amply exemplified by the greeting “have you eaten yet?” which Chinese people use day-to-day. Meaning that, food culture is of vital concern for the Chinese, and is the most popular verbal acknowledgement amongst members of the Chinese society. Alternatively, Anderson (1988) indicated that the significance of food to the Chinese could be manifested by the fact that Chinese use food to mark ethnicity, family events and social transactions. Therefore, no business deal is complete without a dinner; no family visit is complete without sharing a meal; and no religious event is correctly done without making an offering of special foods according to the ritual being celebrated.

To prepare a proper meal in Chinese culture, it must have suitable quantities of *fan* (rice and other starch foods) and *ts'ai* (vegetable and meat dishes). Typically, *fan* is the essential element of a meal and *ts'ai* is served as a complement to make *fan* palatable. However, to stress the importance of a meal in a restaurant or on a special occasion, *ts'ai* dishes predominate with rice and noodles served last to ensure that all are well fed on the occasion. In addition, the

number of *ts'ai* that accompanies the *fan* varies according to the wealth, occasion, and circumstance. For example, poultry and fish are more commonly served as festival food and long noodles wishing long life are a must at birthday occasions.

The Chinese food culture is known for its flexibility and adaptability because the Chinese are usually painstaking in their quest for edible foods (Chang, 1977). While the Chinese people adopted almost all animals and plants as food, the main and continual concern of food intake is to maintain harmony and balance in every aspect of method of preparation, meal structure, and even body health (Lu, 1986). Thus, the discussion of Chinese food culture in this study is related to the value construction of food in the Chinese culture, that are the *yin* and *yang* equilibrium, medical value and symbolic meanings that are attached to foods, rather than the ingredients and methods of preparation employed in Chinese food culture.

Medicinal values of Chinese food

No study about Chinese eating habits and foods would be complete without understanding the medicinal value food plays in the Chinese culture. The Chinese way of eating is characterized by the ideas and beliefs about the medicinal properties of food. Chinese people believe that food not only satisfies physical needs but also has a medicinal value. Therefore, the selection of the right food at any particular time must be dependent upon one's health condition at that time. This means that food is not only a means to satisfy hunger but also a way to sustain good health. The Chinese theory of health building developed from efforts to protect and build health, prevent disease, and prolong life. According to

Chinese culture, it is essential to maintain one's balance between internal *chi* (vital energy or strength) and external environment. In other words, having a healthy diet includes the intake of the tonic food.

While the Western dieticians concern with the nutrient content of the food, the Chinese interpretation differs markedly (Lu, 1986). For example, it is known that red pepper contains vitamins A and C, but Chinese dieticians also know that it is a 'warming food', which is consumed to make the body warm. It is therefore clear to see the difference between Chinese and Western dietary thought. Hence, in Chinese food culture, the complementary forces of *yin* and *yang* are critical to food selection (Wu, 1995). The forces of *yin* are cold and those of *yang* are hot. The Chinese give attention to the *yin-yang* equilibrium to prevent illness. Because illness is thought to be related to an unbalance that can be influenced with dietary intake, people often partake of the alternate foods to bring their bodies back into a harmonious and healthy state. For example, if one's body is imbalanced in the *yin* direction, one may be cold to the touch, have a lack of energy, or experience chills. Thus, consumption of 'warming foods' that have warming properties is one way of regaining the *yin-yang* equilibrium. In contrast, an imbalance in the *yang* direction may result in fever or shortness of breath, and 'cooling foods' should be consumed in order to retain the *yin-yang* balance (Swanson, 1996). In this context, for a body to remain healthy or to cure illness, one must remain or achieve balance in the intake of warm and cold foods. Chang (1977) pointed out that foods which are categorized as warming or cooling are not based on their physical appearances but from their taste, methods of preparation and their physical effects

on the body. Foods commonly classified as 'hot' are fatty meats, oily nuts, spices and ginger, whereas 'cold' foods include most fruits (except mango and lychee), bamboo shoots and crabs.

In addition, some foods are also thought to be especially strengthening (*bu*), that is, tonics for specific organs. For example, eating heart or kidney of an animal strengthens the corresponding organs in the human body. As noted earlier, Chinese medicinal cuisine is unique in China and has a long history. Many foods, usually high in protein and calories are said to be *bu*, are eaten in order to enhance one's energy and health. Strengthening foods are often prepared with traditional culinary materials together to cook delicious food, functioning as a healer and restoring health on the basis of Chinese traditional herbalism. The most prominent of these foods include bird's nest, shark's fin, and ginseng. For example, bird's nest is reputed to be good for the complexion, and ginseng which may either be stewed with other food or taken in powder form, are considered as a premier tonic. The Chinese people learn and follow the concept of *yin* and *yang*, which are passed from one generation to the next. However, a study on the influence of the Chinese traditional philosophy of food on the younger generation suggested that Western nutrition concept will continuously be recognised and accepted by the Chinese society due to the modernisation of lifestyle (Wu, 1995). In the context of tourists' dining experience, the influence between the values of the Chinese food traditions and Western nutritional philosophy needs to be identified, because this is seen as a critical feature of what Chinese tourists might look for when travelling to Australia.

Symbolic meaning of Chinese food

In addition to its medicinal value, foods comprise a language of symbols with their own semantic value to the Chinese (Swanson, 1996). Symbolic foods such as long noodles signify long life at birthdays, or a dish of lotus rhizomes, which stick together when separated, symbolises stability of marriage at wedding party (Anderson, 1988). Furthermore, in Chinese New Year banquets, fish and oyster dishes are often served because their names sound like desirable states – the words for ‘fish’ and ‘surplus’ sound alike, as do the words for ‘oyster’ and ‘happy events’. The wish is that the coming year will be filled with an ‘overflow of happy occasions’. On the other hand, many pregnant Chinese women avoid eating lamb because the Chinese word for lamb and epilepsy sound alike. The mothers to be afraid of the child may be born epileptic if lamb is eaten during pregnancy. While the shared symbolisms of foods help to unify the Chinese culture, nevertheless there are many who believe in the food symbolism with more conviction than others. However, some Chinese, including the Chinese Diaspora, may say they do not believe or hold to a particular symbolic meaning, but they are often very reluctant to go against the held belief, pragmatically, ‘just in case something bad might happen’.

The review of the relevant literature reveals that food values and beliefs of Chinese are often intense. The composition of proper meal is based on an appropriate amount of *fan* and *ts'ai*. The concept of *yin* and *yang* is often referred in the selection of dishes in order to maintain one’s *chi* balance. In addition, most

dishes have their own medicinal and symbolic meaning to the Chinese value system. In particular, the symbolic meaning of foods plays an auspicious role when served on special occasions and celebratory feasts. Hence, the Chinese tourists in Australia may have many ‘hazards’ to negotiate in adjusting to new eating sensations. Food and eating behaviour in Australia become elusive and challenging to the Chinese who subscribe to what is acceptable as food and how food is to be prepared. Moreover, values and attitudes are decisive indicators of eating behaviour and foods are used to send signals and tell stories of culture (Hjalager, 2003). The value and attitude toward foods become an affirmation of cultural identity between the Chinese and Australian. In this context, dining satisfaction for the Chinese people is not only underpinned by the ‘pleasurefulness’ of food (Finkelstein, 1989) but is also very strongly influenced by its psychological dimensions. The next section will discuss Chinese belief and attitudes toward the meal experience.

2.5.2 Eating out in Chinese culture

General Characteristic of eating out

For many people, eating out is a favourite way to relax and socialize with friends. For the Chinese, eating out is not just a necessity to stave off hunger, but is also an entertaining experience, and an enjoyment of the tasty foods. Given the important role food plays in Chinese culture, it is not surprising that the Chinese have developed strong traditions with respect to the meal experience. As noted earlier, many foods have symbolic connotations, representing everything from

wealth to longevity. In addition, the concept of *yin* and *yang* also plays a critical role when choosing foods. The Chinese style of dining out differs from that in the Western culture. Typically, Chinese restaurants are noisy; and not the least bit romantic. This is because Chinese feel more comfortable in inviting a large group of people so as to sample more dishes. Additionally, eating out with family, friends and work colleagues, and business associate is an essential part of building informal and formal relationships (Wright, Nancarrow, & Kwok, 2001).

Selection of restaurant and ordering food

In the selection of restaurants, the Chinese will choose restaurant according to guest's status. Otherwise, they will feel a 'loss of face' if they choose a wrong restaurant. This is because 'face', as a social and personal phenomenon, has its pervasive influence in interpersonal relations among the Chinese. Face can be loosely translated as one's status and importance within a group and/or community (Gilbert & Tsao, 2000). When entering a restaurant, seating arrangement is based on rank during formal meal occasions. Once seated, it is interesting to note how the Chinese select foods. Kivela (2003) indicated that Western diners in the Anglo Saxon societies are free to choose items from the menu, which then belong to the person who ordered it, and which is rarely shared with others. However, the Chinese order foods according to the concept of respect for authority and the implications of it might have on collectivistic culture. Therefore, the eldest member of a Chinese family has the dominant decision in ordering foods and all dishes are ordered for everyone to share and not for particular individual (Dewald, 2002). It is noted that the host or hostess will make

sure that a wide variety of foods are served in order to ‘deliver’ satisfaction to his/her guests, and to avoid loss of face. In addition, a final combination of menu items is the result of group consensus in order to assure everyone’s satisfaction (Kivela, 2003).

Table etiquette and evaluative criteria of dining experience

When foods are served, people do not begin to eat until the principal host raises his/her chopsticks and announces that eating has begun. A round table with a revolving stand in the centre is commonly found in restaurants thus ensuring that each guest is able to take a selection of foods as they please (Kivela, 2003). As a whole, Kivela (2003) proposed that freshness of food and food temperature are the key quality attributes by which the Chinese evaluate their meal and choice of restaurant. Additionally, Dewald (2002) also suggested that the idealized style of service in Chinese restaurants include dishes are re-layed to the table; teapots are refilled and empty serving dishes are taken away and all of these should be done constantly and smartly, but with little interpersonal contact with the guest and waiter.

Differences in dining experience between Chinese and Western culture

Kivela (2003) distinguished the differences in dining experience between Chinese and Western culture. He begins with the function of restaurant to the Chinese as being a natural extension of the home and for whole family whereas most restaurants in the Anglo Saxon societies are for adults only, excepting family and fast food restaurants. Alternatively, most Western dining etiquette stresses

quiet ambience in keeping with the need for social privacy according to characteristics of Western culture. However, the ambience in the Chinese restaurant is full of noises, which come from the host calling guests to help themselves for dishes as much as they can, and guests are encouraged to toast to each other. At the same time, children are playing and laughing between the tables. It seems to be disorderly but to the Chinese, the best meal experience is searching for home atmosphere.

Overall, the Chinese see eating out as a social activity to build up personal connection with guests. Importantly, this means the Chinese seldom eat out alone. That is, Chinese often look for dining satisfaction via membership. The criteria such as restaurant selection, menu items ordered, food quality, and ambience coupled with service quality are therefore considered when they evaluate their dining satisfaction. However, it would be interesting to investigate whether these attributes remain constant if they were in a different cultural environment. For example, the motivational factors might differ from those at home since eating out during trip is a more relaxed situation than social function; the menu items might be different if they are not dining at Chinese restaurant. Besides, service quality, food quality and other variables might be a new experience to them.

2.6 The influence of culture on consumer behaviour

As noted earlier, culture is a system of meaning and learned behaviour (Geertz, 1973). It is a way of thinking and believing for individuals and

determines normative regulation of behaviour in a group. In this respect, culture therefore has a strong influence on one's way of life. In terms of consumer behaviour, culture has influence on the people in buying products. There are several approaches in explaining the differences of consumer behaviour between each cultural group. Hofstede (1980) interpreted work-related values in over 66 countries and suggested cultural dimensions as individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity. Along with the Chinese Cultural Survey, Hofstede (1991) added Confucian Dynamism as the fifth dimension to create a non-Western bias. Similarly, Hall and Hall (1990) proposed the concept of high-context versus low-context for understanding the communication style of different cultures all over the world. As a whole, Hofstede (1991) and Hall and Hall (1990) indicated dimensions of cultures and distinguished the difference between Oriental and Western societies. In general, Hall and Hall's (1990) concept of high and low context could be integrated with Hofstede's (1991) individualism/collectivism and categorized into the same orientation, which are frequently cited in cross-cultural studies. For example, Winsted (1997) studied how consumers rated their service encounters based on the Hofstede's individualism versus collectivism to interpret cultural differences between Western and Asian customers. In another study, Mattila (1999) also utilized the dimension of individualism/collectivism and high- versus low context to investigate the role of culture in service evaluation. In sum, the extant literature drawn from the two dimensions: individualism/collectivism and high- versus low context are reviewed next.

Individualism/Collectivism

McLaren (1998) referred to individualism as the belief that each person should have the right to develop himself or herself according to personal choice, and each person is entitled to privacy. Hofstede (1980) suggested that in an individualistic society, people set and work toward their own goals. Consumers from individualistic cultures tend to focus more on their own achievement. They buy products based on their own decision rather than by reference group. In contrast, in a collectivist society, people are taught to place the group above the individual, the harmony within the group is important and confrontation should be avoided at all costs (McLaren, 1998). In collectivist culture, people are more likely to disregard their own goals in favour of goals a valued group sets. They expect their group to care for them in exchange for steady loyalty. Consumers from this culture will rely on peer group's opinion when they make purchase decision. Most Asian countries are categorized into this dimension. In terms of tourist behaviour, Chen (2000) cited individualism and collectivism to explain the travel information acquisition in different cultural backgrounds. Chen (2000) suggested that Asian cultures tends to be collectivist, which rely more on social groups, whereas Australia is an individualistic society, which is more independent and has a weaker relationship in a social group.

High versus low context of communication style

Hall and Hall (1990) distinguished between Western and Eastern cultures by way of communication styles. They propose that Western cultures endorse communications that are explicit, direct and unambiguous, whereas Asian cultures

endorse implicit, ambiguous and less verbal communication modes. Hall and Hall (1990) categorized explicit communication as low-context, and less verbal communication as high-context. They defined context as whatever surrounds an event and is bound up in it. People from high-context cultures can become impatient with people from low-context when they require giving information that they think should be known and understood. Conversely, people from low-context cultures are uncomfortable when they are not given the details they expect (McLaren, 1998). Therefore, people in low-context cultures respond explicitly to people and situations but people in high-context cultures respond implicitly. For example, the waiter in a low-context culture is there to wait on the customers as is in most Western countries. In a high-context culture some sort of relationship has to be developed between customers and waiters, for instance, by asking where the customers come from or by wishing customers a pleasant weekend. In the context of intercultural encounter, because Asian cultures place a primary emphasis on the interpersonal relationship, the interaction between employee and customer might be an indicator in the Asian customer's service evaluation (Mattila, 1999).

Influence of marketing communication on tourist behaviour

Middleton (2001) suggested that marketing communication may affect tourist behaviour. In order to depict the interaction of culture and consumer behaviour in detail, Luna and Gupta (2001) proposed a model (see Figure 2.1) to describe the mutual influence of culture and consumer behaviour. It has been noted that an individual's behaviour may be observed, imitated, or rejected by others. Accordingly, it can become the group's norm of behaviour and be

identified as part of the culture of a given society. As the model suggests, marketers play as a moderator in transferring meanings or values from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods (McCracken, 1986). Therefore, marketing communication is a vehicle that can affect culture on consumer behaviour.

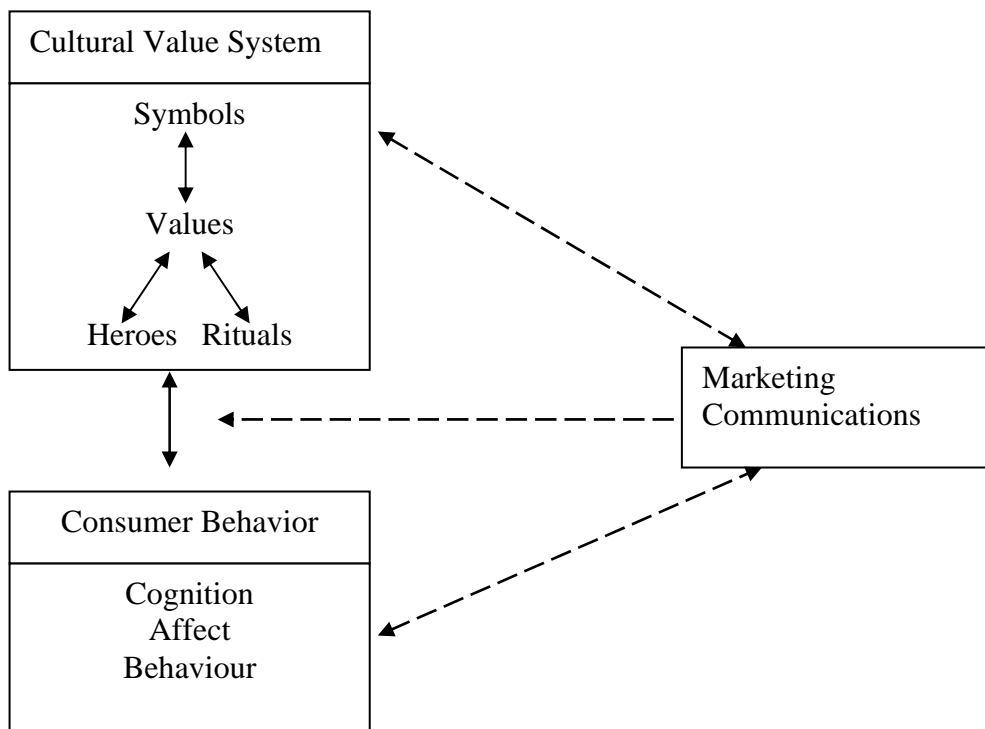


Figure. 2.1 A model of the interaction of culture and consumer behaviour

Source: Luna and Gupta, 2001.

According to Luna and Gupta's (2001) model, culture influences behaviour through its manifestations: values, heroes, rituals, and symbols (Hofstede, 1991). As mentioned in previous discussions, values and symbols somehow affect individual's eating behaviour. Therefore, these two variables are applicable in the context of tourist dining. Most research seems to agree that values drive an individual's behaviour (Rokeach, 1973; McCracken, 1986; McCort & Malhotra, 1993; Luan & Gupta, 2001). Recent literature in consumer behaviour often cites Rokeach (1973) who described values as enduring beliefs which guide actions and judgments across specific situations (e.g. pleasure or happiness). Correspondingly, McCracken (1986) suggested cultural principles to applied values theory and explained how individual organize and evaluate information in the environment. Example of cultural principles includes strength, refinement or naturalism. Individuals' behaviour embodies and expresses these cultural principles. It seems that McCracken's cultural principles suggest a strong similarity to Rokeach's values. Previous studies have focused on how cultural values are materialized in consumer behaviour. For example, in their study, Shim and Gehrt (1996) found that White, Natives Americans and Hispanics tended to approach shopping with orientations consistent with the predominant values in their respective groups. It explains the reason why many tourists eat the same food on holiday as they would do at home (Richards, 2002; Hanefors, 2002) because those tourists adopt a familiar value orientation when they are on holiday.

On the other hand, Geertz (1973) referred to symbols as a broad category of processes and objects that carry a meaning to a particular group of people. The

symbols most frequently studied by consumer researchers are language and consumer products especially in an advertising context (Luna & Gupta, 2001). Schmitt, Pan, and Tavassoli (1994) who compared speakers of Chinese and English, found that structural differences in languages result in dissimilarity in information processing and mental representations. In fact, language is an important variable when marketing communication is used as a vehicle to influence consumer behaviour. In another study, Sparks, Bowen, and Klag (2003) indicated that many tourists make their choice of restaurant based on perceptions they gain from actually seeing the restaurant. In other words, restaurateurs appear to communicate with tourists through the display of a menu in the window and the explanation of menu items in the menu. Eventually, the clarification of language on the menu suggests that marketing communication could be a vehicle to affect the tourists' restaurant selection. That is, what tourists can directly see, read and experience appears to have strong influence on tourists' dining behaviour. Indeed, it is the experiential nature of tourism product, which makes tourist behaviour different from other consumer behaviour. The next section therefore explores the consumer behaviour of tourism in details.

2.7 Consumer behaviour in tourism

Characteristics of tourism product

Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Wanhill, and Shepherd (1998) suggested that an understanding of the tourist satisfaction will be ineffective without recognizing the ways in which tourists make decisions and act in relation to the consumption

of tourism products. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) proposed that, due to its experiential nature, tourism products may have a considerable effect on consumers during their decision-making process. This means consumers will be highly involved in the purchasing process since there are some risks related to purchase decision. Kotler, et al. (1996) also proposed that, first, due to the intangible characteristics of service, consumers cannot see, taste or smell before purchase. It means that the consumer can often have high levels of insecurity during the purchasing process. In turn, the consumer will look around for reassurance about their choices. The second characteristic of service product is inseparability, which means that customers are part of the product. In other words, customers may be satisfied with the food in restaurant but if the service person provides inattentive service they will not be satisfied with the overall experience. Yet it is often difficult for the service provider to give the same level of service at every meal encounter. This represents the third characteristic of tourism product – heterogeneity. Therefore, it is also very difficult for the consumer to judge the potential quality of experience they will gain when they purchase the tourism product. Finally, tourism products often lead to feelings of satisfaction, as memorable experience – e.g. cognitive state, rather than the ownership of a tangible item.

Due to the idiosyncratic characteristics of the tourism products, the tourists' dining experience therefore becomes a complicated phenomenon. In this respect, tourists will heavily rely on information searched by themselves and the reference group. For example, tourists often search information from brochures, travel

guidebooks, or word-of-mouth recommendations from friends or local people (receptionist or staff in tourist information centre). In this case, marketing communication plays an important role in the modelling of consumer behaviour. Besides, the satisfaction with the dining experience will not only include the food quality but also service encounter with service staff. This means that cultural factors will have an influence on the satisfaction since the tourists' dining experiences involve intercultural encounters between themselves and service staff who usually have different cultural backgrounds. Since the service product lacks ownership, the dining experience will have a considerable emotional significance for the tourists, which confirms that perceptions and values system will affect tourists' dining satisfaction based on their cultural background.

Behaviours in buying tourism product

A model developed by Middleton (2001) may explain buyer behaviour with regard to buying tourism products. In his stimulus-response model of buyer behaviour (see Figure 2.2), Middleton delineated buyer characteristics and the decision process into six processes. The stimulus inputs and communication channels are included in the first two processes. The second phase incorporating buyer characteristics and decision process, which are determined by perceptions and motivations of consumers. The final stage of this model is purchase outputs that deals with the post-purchase responses and feelings. Among these three phases, the first two phases seem more applicable to tourists' dining behaviour. Because stimulus inputs contains the range of products that are designed to motivate prospective customers; hence, not only do the tour operators offering

different kinds of holidays seek tourists' interest, but so do the restaurants in providing choices of menu items to attract tourists' attention. There are two ways in which communication channels may affect buyer decision. The formal one is through advertising, sales promotion, brochures and the Internet. The informal one is through word-of-mouth and reference groups. The reference groups include family, friends, and peer groups. Again, Middleton's (2001) model could further exemplify the previous discussions on consumer buying behaviour in the context tourism. That is, decision-making among tourists will be influenced by other people and high-level information search.

According to Middleton (2001), perception is the way consumers select and organize the mass of information they are exposed. Perceptions change over time through experience, the learning process and exposure to reference groups. At this stage, all the information and stimulus inputs will go through a perceptual mental filter. However, the messages that are sent by companies may not be the same as the message the prospective buyer perceives. This is because different buyer characteristics will affect the motivational process of buyer behaviour. Buyer characteristics includes, firstly, the individual's needs, wants and goals; secondly, their socioeconomic demographic characteristics; thirdly, psychographic attributes such as, risk taking or risk avoiding; and finally attitudes towards the product. These elements sometimes provide or reinforce the motivation and sometime act as constraints upon the purchase decision. Consequently, motivation stems from the interaction between the four elements in the buyer decision process. It is obvious that the motivation process is a dynamic process in buyer behaviour

because it bridges the gap between a felt need and the decision to act. In a sense, products can be designed as solution to customers' needs.

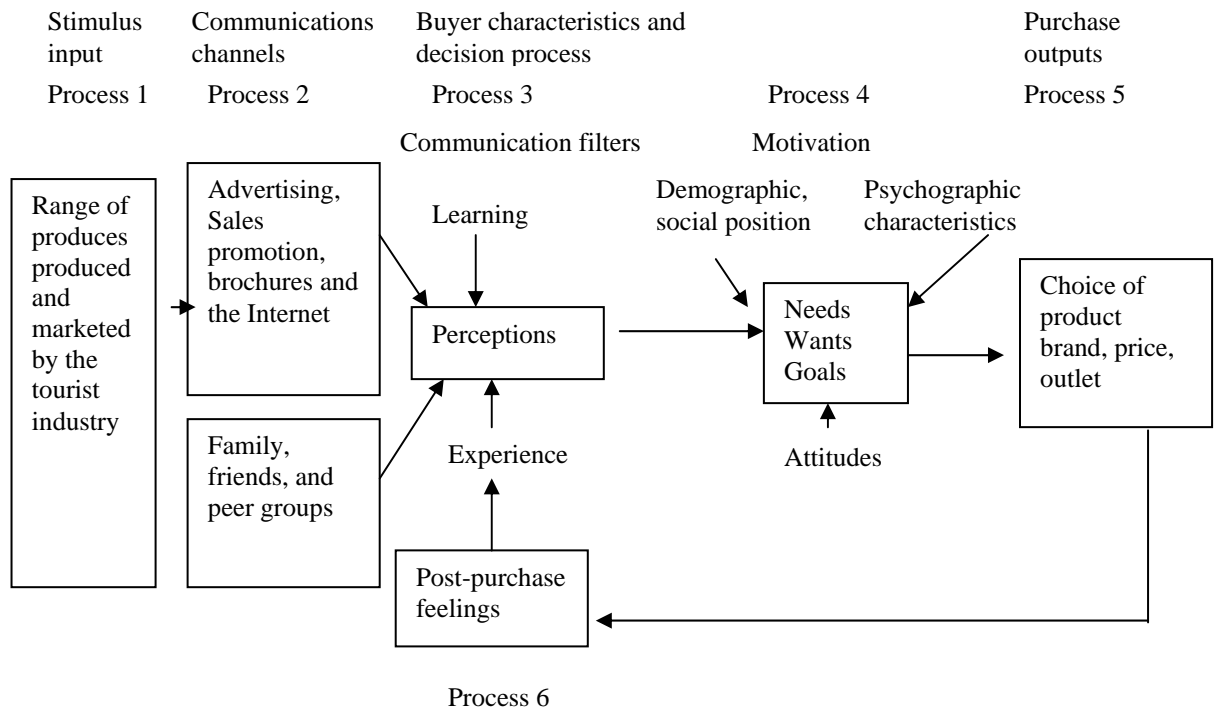


Figure 2.2 A stimulus-response model of buyer behavior
Source: Middleton, 2001

In sum, the phase of buyer characteristics and the decision process of buyer behaviour appear to have a close relationship with cultural issues when it is applied to tourist dining behaviour. Previous experience, the learning process and recommendations from reference groups will modify tourists' perceptions towards foreign foods. In addition, buyer characteristics also determine tourist behaviour. In this respect, perceptions and buyer characteristics are determined by the tourists' cultural background since culture is a shared composition of characteristics, attitudes, behaviours and values (Goodenough, 1971). Apart from the individual's need, socioeconomic demographic characteristics signify social

status will also affect an individual's eating behaviour. For example, working class meals are informal and easy, whereas upper class meals are more concerned with the form of the meal (Makela, 2000). Finally, psychographic attributes will reflect uncertainty avoidance. In other words, risk taking tourists are willing to try foreign food, while risk avoiders tend to eat familiar foods as they do at home. Hjalager (2003) has proposed four modes of gastronomy tourists with respect to their attitudes and preferences for familiarity and novelty of food and eating behaviour at destination. It is suggested that recreational and diversionary gastronomy tourists are risk avoiders who keep away from unknown food and prefer dining in familiar restaurants, while existential and experimental gastronomy tourists actively seek new food/taste experience at destination.

Middleton (2001) stressed that buyer decision is linked to motivation and buyer characteristics. Accordingly, motivations may be influenced through product design and the ways products are presented to prospective customers. In practice, all decisions made by customers are systematically monitored by many large companies through market research in order to assess why customers buy at what price and through what distribution channel. However, Pine and Gilmore (1999) claimed that customers are moving away from a 'service' experience to an 'experiential' experience while purchasing. Therefore, it is essential for service providers to create a compelling and memorable experience for customers. The foodservice industry is likely to be at the forefront of such a change (Johns, 1999) since the product of restaurant is experiential in nature, and involves people-based service to stage this experiential service. Hence, if customers have a good

purchase experience, this may lead to repeat purchase and good feelings about the product. Conversely, if the experience is highly unsatisfactory, the extent of damage will depend on the importance of the purchase. However, the worst scenario might be that consumers may, through word-of-mouth, influence their friends with negative attitudes toward the product.

It could be concluded that Middleton's model separates out motivations and perceptions in consumer buying behaviour. Taking this model cross-culturally, it seems possible to amalgamate Luna and Gupta's (2001) model of interaction of culture and consumer behaviour with Middleton's (2001) model. Luna and Gupta (2001) propose that marketing communications act as a moderator in transfer of meanings or values from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods. This encompasses the communication channels in Middleton's model. In addition, the cultural values system will reflect on consumers' needs, wants and attitude of the product. Indeed, the cultural value system is affected not only by personal perception but also marketing communication. This implies that tourist behaviour at destinations will be affected by the service provider's marketing communication. For example, the menu design of the restaurants, word-of-mouth recommendations from reference groups and information from guidebooks are the communication channels between service providers and tourists. Finally, taking all these processes along with the choice of product, that is, the experiential service provided by restaurants, or the final process of buyer behaviour, will lead to tourist dining satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The remaining sections review different approaches in the understanding of customer satisfaction.

2.8 The determinants of tourist dining satisfaction

The purpose of this section is to identify the concepts that relate to the tourist dining satisfaction. In so doing, the first part of this section conceptualise customer satisfaction in a generic perspective. Due to the fact that travel dining experience often involves intercultural service encounter (Kivela & Crofts, 2006), the discussion also pays attention to this noteworthy phenomenon. Cohen and Avieli (2004) accentuated that tour guide could play as a ‘culinary broker’ who can introduce indigenous food and local food culture to tourists in order to enhance visit satisfaction. In this regard, the role of tour guide in the travel dining experience is explored. The contribution of tour guide to the tourist dining satisfaction is investigate because many of the tourists would rely on tour guide’s assistance in their dining experience at a destination (Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2001). In the final part of this section, the implication of these related concepts to the understanding of the tourist dining satisfaction is propounded.

2.8.1 Conceptualisation of customer satisfaction

Several researchers have developed various frameworks to explain customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1977, Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1988, Oh & Parks, 1997, Kivela, Reece, & Inbakaran 1999, Parker & Mathews, 2001). Among these studies, Parker and Mathews (2001) identified that the concept of customer satisfaction could be viewed as an outcome of a consumption experience or activity as well as a process of evaluation between what was received and

expected. Some researchers also apply the concept of service quality into customer satisfaction. The discussion of customer satisfaction is divided into two parts: service quality gap between customers' expectation and service providers' performance, and customer satisfaction as an outcome of a consumption experience and a process of evaluation.

Service quality and customer satisfaction

Parasuraman et al. (1988) addressed service quality as a discrepancy between consumers' perceptions and expectations. Accordingly, they propose the SERVQUAL model to conceptualize the gap between customer's expectations and the perception of the service providers' performance. In order to achieve customer satisfaction, they suggest five dimensions of service quality that must be present in service delivery. It includes reliability (the ability to perform the promise services), responsiveness (the willingness to help customers), assurance (the knowledge and courtesy of employees), empathy (individualized attention to customers) and tangibles (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, and personnel). In other words, these five dimensions of service quality represent a set of service attributes offered by the service provider to achieve customer satisfaction. In the context of this study, Johns and Pine (2002) argued that SERVQUAL summarizes service attributes in a theoretical way, and that it takes little account of food quality attributes of the dining-out experience. Many empirical studies of service quality also reconfirmed the importance of food quality and also shown that customers see service as just one of several factors affecting the quality of restaurant offering (Oberoi & Hales, 1996; Lee & Hing,

1995; Johns & Tyas, 1996). Apart from food quality, Riley (1994:16) contended that despite the general assumption that food quality and variety are the key factors in eating out experience, but “*it is the holistic and the intangible that really matter*”. He also made a clear statement that restaurants need to strive for an ‘authentic’ environment. Such a claim means that the tangible factor of food quality and intangible factors of experiential service constitute the totality of customer satisfaction in the dining-out experience. This reflects the distinction between five dimensions of service quality and experiential service. That is to say, experiential service is intangible ambience factor, which is determined by the customer’s perceptual framework.

SERVQUAL measures service quality as the gap between a customer’s expectations and the perceptions of what is actually delivered (Oh & Parks, 1997). Pizam and Ellis (1999) suggested that the gap is not only a measure of the quality of service but also a determinant of customer satisfaction. This is based on the assumption that the smaller the gap, the better the quality of service provided. However, in the context of the tourist dining experience, the expectations are more complex structures because the tourists often have limited experiences of the actual service performance since they are unfamiliar with foreign culture and, most of all, tourist’s own standard and beliefs, and marketing communication will have strong influence on their perceptual expectations.

Since its introduction in 1988, SERVQUAL has been applied in numerous studies in the hospitality and tourism industry (Lee & Hing, 1995, Ryan & Cliff,

1997). However, there has been some arguments about SERVQUAL. For example, Smith (1995) address that the 'expectation' in the model is a difficult concept to quantify, thus, the gap score becomes less secure as a measurement of customer satisfaction. In addition, Johns and Pine (2002) pointed out that previous studies using SERVQUAL, have mostly used quantitative method to find out the factors which could affect customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, it could only identify what attributes affect customer satisfaction, but have failed to identify how those attributes determine customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is the outcome of consumption experience

After reviewing Oliver's (1977) work, Parker and Mathews (2001) proposed that satisfaction could be studied as an outcome of the consumption experience that includes emotion (the surprise element of consumption experience), fulfilment (the desire to satisfy needs) and state (the reinforcement and arousal). On the other hand, customer satisfaction also includes analyzing satisfaction as a process of evaluation (Pizam & Ellis, 1999). In this respect, the definition of customer satisfaction is focused on the background to satisfaction rather than satisfaction itself. As a result, this approach of definition in customer satisfaction has been directed at understanding the cognitive processes involved in satisfaction evaluations. This approach is derived from the discrepancy theory (Porter, 1961) and a number of studies had contributed their efforts to form a basic research framework in studies about the effects of contrast. For example, Howard and Sheth (1969) proposed the contrast theory to suggest that consumers would exaggerate any contrast between expectations and product evaluation. In addition,

Anderson's (1973) assimilation-contrast theory was further developed from the contrast theory. This theory asserts that people's tendency to overstate the disparity between expectations and perceptions as a typical example of contrasting effects.

Expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm

Currently, the most frequently adopted method of customer satisfaction assessment is the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm. The expectancy disconfirmation theory was proposed by Lewin (1938) and further developed by Oliver (1977). This paradigm posits that satisfaction is the result of discrepancy between expectations and perceived performance. Oliver (1977) suggested that expectations are formed by customer's general knowledge and their past experience; other people's experience; and the firm's marketing initiatives. Johns and Pine (2002) suggested that customers assessed their satisfaction through sets of attributes; and expectancy disconfirmation theory was the principal theory to link customer's attitude to attributes. Therefore, when actual performance is higher than or equal to what was expected, customers will be satisfied; if actual performance is lower than expected, consumers will be dissatisfied. Specifically, positive disconfirmation leads to increased satisfaction, whereas negative disconfirmation has the opposite effect (Oh & Parks, 1997).

The majority of hospitality and tourism satisfaction studies have tested the validity and reliability of this paradigm in measuring satisfaction (Barsky, 1992, Davis & Heineke, 1998). Despite its dominance, Yüksel and Yüksel (2001)

criticized that the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm has limitations especially in accessing customer satisfaction in the hospitality and tourism industry. First, due to the characteristic of hospitality and tourism service (experiential in nature), the use of expectations might be less meaningful for intangible service than for tangible goods. Customers may be satisfied with the service experience even when the perceived performance falls short of their expectation. For example, food quality may become the peripheral concern to some customers if they are contented with the restaurant ambience. Second, the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm only uses predictive expectations as the comparative standard. However, consumers may use other standards which they bring into the consumption experience. Third, this paradigm cannot support the dynamic nature of expectations because consumers' initial expectations might be different if a service experience involves several encounters. Finally, the paradigm does not provide comparative information on performance of alternative products/services for evaluation judgement. According to Yüksel and Yüksel's (2001), it seems that customer expectation is not only constituted by the service experience but also the comparison from alternative products/services. Thus, tourists' dining experience might also be evaluated according to their dining experience at home or at other destinations. Therefore, the attributes that affect tourists' dining satisfaction still heavily depend on product/service values of the eating out experience when on holiday, which could be compared with their dining experience at home.

It appears that product/service values have major effect in evaluation judgment of the travel dining experience. In general, Becker, Murrmann,

Murrmann, and Cheung (1999) indicated that US students require eye contact, personalization and product knowledge, while Hong Kong students value respect, modest helpfulness and personal cleanliness in their expectation of restaurant service. However, Johns and Pine (2002) argued that customer satisfaction is concerned not only with attribute values, but also with broader value systems, suggesting that, customer satisfaction is also related to culture. In the debates of cultural factor in expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, Spreng and Chiou (2002) argued that expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm might not hold in a collectivist culture. According to Hofstede (1991), consumers from a collectivist culture might focus on group norms rather than his/her own expectations. Thus, the standards of comparison might not be pre-purchase expectations but some type of norm. This would therefore reduce the extent of the relationship between expectations and disconfirmation, and between disconfirmation and satisfaction. Referring to the previous discussion, it is revealed that the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm needs to be further tested by empirical research in the cross-cultural hospitality and tourism context.

2.8.2 Intercultural service encounter

Consumer behaviour and customer satisfaction research indicated that customer-employee interactions are important in the overall assessment of customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Furthermore, other studies of 'satisfaction' have also suggested that the server-customer interaction component of service delivery is critical when evaluating customer satisfaction or

dissatisfaction (Solomon & Anand, 1985, Barsky, 1995, John & Tyas, 1996, Oh & Jeong, 1996, Kivela & Chu, 2001). These studies have provided valuable insights in the quality of service delivery to confirm the importance of the interaction dimensions of service encounter to customer satisfaction. Solomon and Anand (1985) defined the term service encounter as the dyadic interaction between a customer and a service provider. Thus people learn to behave, or increase the probability of behaving, in such a way they “expect” will lead to positive outcomes. Expectations are formed according to customers’ and service employees’ pre-experience beliefs and standards, which they use to measure and assess the “success” of their respective experience (Kivela & Chu, 2001). For example, the relationship between a waiter and a customer suggests that a quality relationship can lead to a rewarding dining experience. This is particularly evident in restaurant operations, where the waiters’ table manners are very important to customers.

Definitions of the ‘role theory’

Solomon and Anand (1985) proposed that customers and service providers have roles to play during and, possibly, after service encounters and that these roles are based on “interpersonal interactions” between organization and customers. Within the context of service encounter analysis, there is a similar emphasis on the continuity of interaction between service provider and client, and the interpretation of change within the encounter in terms of mutual expectation, reinforcement and interdependence. This prompted Broderick (1998) to elucidate the role theory, or the understanding of management of service encounters. When

one considers interpersonal dimensions of service encounters, the role theory has a fundamental contribution to make (Broderick, 1998). According to Biddle (1979: 11), the role theory could be defined as

“A science concerned with the study of behaviours that are characteristic of persons within contexts and with processes that produce, explain or are affected by these behaviours”.

This definition means that both customers and service providers would normally behave according to the role script inside their mind. In other words, the expectation from customers and service performance of service staff are rooted from the role script in their perceptual framework during service encounter. In the context of this study, the role script of the tourist’s dining satisfaction is determined by the cultural knowledge about food culture both at home and at the destination. On the other hand, to achieve dining satisfaction, service providers will not only need to know customer’s role script (eating behaviour), but also play their own role well (provide the experiential service).

Role theory and dining satisfaction

The emergence of the role theory begins with the focus on social exchange within service encounters (Broderick, 1998). For people-based service, customers have clear role expectations of professionals and they will evaluate service encounters on the basis of the perceived role performance of the service provider. The degree to which a service provider and client engage in a mutually beneficial and appropriate role script may determine the overall benefits of the encounter as perceived by the client (Broderick, 1998). For example, if a restaurant waiter can

manage the role script well (be knowledgeable about menu options, be responsive to specific concerns of the customers, take account of the non-verbal clues) to meet the role expectations of a client, and encourage appropriate role involvement on the part of the client (client clearly indicates preferences and is ready to make decision), then positive role evolution should occur. In short, service encounter is a two-way process. The service receiver and service provider play equally importance roles. While the cultural background of the service receiver will affect perceptions of service quality, it will also affect perceptions of the quality of service to be provided (Hubbert, Sehorn & Brown, 1995). In their study, Johns and Kivela (2001) addressed that customers instinctively feel that they are invading territorial boundaries when they eat at an unfamiliar place. Therefore, it is important that they feel friendliness in advance of their visit that they are going to be made welcome by the service staff. Thus, it could be contended that the ‘welcome message’ is also the special attributes in affecting tourist dining satisfaction.

2.8.3 The effect of tour guide’s performance on tourist dining satisfaction

All-inclusive package tour is found to be the preferred mode of outbound travel for most Asian tourists (Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000). Within an all-inclusive package tour, transportation, accommodation, and meal arrangements are all pre-arranged, and yet there are times that unforeseeable hindrances could have affected the performance of the package tour. Under this circumstance, tour guide is often there to be prepared for any contingency. Alternatively, tour guide

plays the cultural mediator role between tourists and the host country (Cohen, 1985; Yu, Weiler, and Ham, 2001). For those tourists who have limited knowledge, whether linguistically and/or culturally, about the host country, tour guide can serve as an information giver to enhance tourist satisfaction through their knowledge and interpretation of host culture. Without doubt, the role of tour guide is of paramount importance to the success of the all-inclusive package tour.

Main duty of tour guide

Previous literatures have unearthed that the main duties of tour guiding are to smooth the organization of the tour, offer interpretation of a destination's attraction and culture, mediate between tourists and host country, and to act in a jocular manner to enliven tourists (Cohen, 1985, Ap and Wong, 2001; Yu, Weiler, and Ham, 2001). A review of previous literature reveals that a success tour guide should possess a variety of skills, such as knowledge, interpersonal and intercultural skills (Yu, Weiler, and Ham, 2001). Specifically, knowledge skills include language and interpretation ability about tourist sites and attractions. By interpreting cultural landscape and playing as mediator between tourist and host country, tour guide can help tourists to obtain more insights on the customs, history, and artefacts of the destination. Apart from professional knowledge, tour guides also face challenges of interpersonal communication between themselves and tour members. If there are disruptive behaviours or complaints, tour guide need to keep every tour members contented and ensure all services are provided as contracted. As travel experience is the composition of different cross-cultural scenarios, many empirical studies have given attention to the intercultural ability

of the tour guide for this is a crucial factor in enhancing tourist satisfaction. Richards (2002) proposed that tourists are increasingly willing to learn and boost their cultural capital by experiencing rather than just consuming the holidays. Thus, cultural inattentive tour guide could disengage tourists from authentic lifestyle in destination and might devastate the entire travel experience. As such, tour guide is considered to be more indispensable to the package tour and is more instrumental in achieving tourist satisfaction (Bowie and Chang, 2005).

Tour guiding and travel dining satisfaction

Cohen and Avieli (2004) indicated that many western tourists find it difficult to savour indigenous food in Asian destinations because the menu is not rendered in English or European language. Subsequently, Cohen and Avieli (2004) propounded that tour guide is one of the 'culinary brokers' who can mediate between tourists and indigenous food. Likewise, in the realm of package tour, tourists usually heavily rely on tour guide's assistance when dining out at a destination. In fact, many aspects of the tour guide's duties involve the function as 'culinary broker'. For example, smoothing the organisation of the tour includes tour guide's assistance in facilitating the dining experience in response to the requests from tourists (Geva & Goldman, 1991). Consequently, tour guide should not only introduce the knowledge about the customs, history, and artefacts of the destination but also the culinary information and local food culture to the tourists. Indeed, tour guide's performance, as 'culinary broker', is an important determinant in tourists' dining satisfaction.

Application of customer satisfaction in tourist dining satisfaction

This section has deciphered that customer satisfaction could be studied as an outcome of consumption experience and a process of evaluation. In search of tourist dining satisfaction, the outcome of dining experience could be seen as the basic fulfilment of their psychological needs, and surprises from encounters with new cultural dining patterns. On the other hand, the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm represents the satisfaction as a process of evaluation. In this respect, tourists' expectations are formed by their own food behaviour; past experience; other people's experience; recommendations from mass media; and restaurant marketing initiatives. It has been stated that differences between tourism and other consumer products make it difficult to measure tourist satisfaction (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001). This is also true in the assessment of the tourist dining satisfaction. Laws (1995) proposed that the majority of tourists might compare their travel experience among different destinations according to facilities, attractions, and service standards. By implication, tourists' expectation may refer to their previous dining experience in other destinations. These may also be one of the key sources when measuring tourist dining satisfaction.

The perceived performance of the tourist's dining experience include the food itself, the ambience of the restaurant, intercultural encounter with service staff; and tour guide's assistance to the dining experience. It could therefore be concluded that the outcome factor of surprise from the dining experience and the

evaluation of the perceived performance is anchored to the experiential service provided by both restaurant and tour guide.

To conclude, the investigation of Chinese tourists' dining satisfaction could be accessed from the experiential service offered by service providers on the one hand, and the Chinese tourists' expectations of the dining experience on the other. In particular, service providers refer to restaurant and tour guide and Chinese tourists' expectations may constitute food quality, tourists' past experience, and food cultural value that attached to the tourist.

Chapter review

This chapter focuses on the current debate about cultural factors which influence people's attitude toward food choice and eating behaviour. The definitions of culture have been critically reviewed from a subjective perspective in order to explore the effect of culture on people's perception on food choice. In addition, different authors' propositions on how culture determines individual's eating and dining preferences are addressed. The discussions were organised into five categories according to the context in which the culture affect tourists' dining experience: edibility context that dictates what is 'good' and 'bad' food, symbolic meaning of food to represent the identity of one social group, socialisation context that delineates the reasons in changing food habits, palatability context that governs tourist's sensory experience, and socioeconomic class context that examine the role of conspicuous consumption as a major motive to experience gastronomy at a destination. Particular attention was given to the motivational context of eating out, and to investigate tourist's perception in eating out experience in a new cultural environment. The review proceeds with looking at Hjalager's (2003) typology of gastronomy tourists: recreational and diversionary gastronomy tourists who prefer familiar food at a destination, and existential and experimental gastronomy tourists who like to seek new ways of eating at a destination.

Correspondingly, the Chinese food culture is reviewed so as to understand Chinese tourists' attitude to food and their meal experience. Apart from food culture, this chapter discussed the influence of culture on consumer behaviour and

the different approaches in the debate of tourist dining satisfaction. Since culture determines individual's behaviour in a group, it therefore has influence on people's way of life. Hofstede's (1991) cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism and Hall and Hall's (1990) proposition of high-versus low context reflect the cultural differences between the Chinese and Western cultures in group orientation and communication style. This means that Chinese tourists and service providers have different perceptions of communication in an intercultural dining service encounter. Because tourists are unfamiliar with a new cultural environment at a destination, marketing communication therefore plays an important role in their decision-making process and their expectation. In this respect, Luna and Gupta's model of the interaction of culture and consumer behaviour delineates how marketing communications affects the cultural value system and consumer behaviour. In fact, Middleton's stimulus-response model of buyer behaviour provides a more complete account of tourist behaviour since it conveys the motivations and perceptions in buying behaviour in the context of service products.

In order to investigate how tourist behaviour leads to satisfaction, SERVQUAL and the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm were reviewed. SERVQUAL proposed that service quality is a gap between customer and service provider and it is also a determinant of customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction also could be assessed through the concept of the outcome of consumption experience or a process of evaluation. In this respect, the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm has been the most commonly accepted

paradigm used in the study of customer satisfaction. This paradigm addresses satisfaction as the result of discrepancy between expectations and perceived performance. Finally, role theory is discussed to explain the intercultural service encounter. Based on the above discussions, a conceptual framework for this study is developed (see Figure. 2.3) and the main findings emerging from this review are given below (see Table 2.2):

References to the gastronomy in tourism are found in recent studies (Hjalager, 2003), but previous literature failed to uncover studies on the effect of cultural factors such as value and attitude towards foreign food and expectations concerning the tourists' dining experience. As yet no attempt has been made to probe the role of cultural factors on tourists' dining experience and its contribution on tourist satisfaction. Therefore, aforementioned discussions concerning the effect of culture on food choice, the examination of the relative contribution of motivating factors to dining out, and the gastronomy tourist behaviour all attempt to clarify how the Chinese tourists' dining satisfaction is evaluated on the basis of the Chinese food culture.

The analysis of the reviewed literature revealed that although different consumer behaviour and customer satisfaction theories and concepts have their strengths and help to explain the influence of culture on tourist dining satisfaction, they have remained partial and have failed to develop a comprehensive understanding in their own right. In other words, most studies, conducted from the

positivist tradition, have been invoked in an *ex post facto* manner in an effort to explain tourist behaviour. Therefore, it is important to state that the extant literature is still equivocal and needs further contribution and development. There appears to be little research on these issues relating to the influence of culture on tourist dining satisfaction. Because culture is a socialisation process, tourists will need to acquire new eating behaviour in order to socialise into a new meal experience. Thus, it is not known what happens when a tourist faces a new meal experience. In addition, do tourists' mental programme affect their expectations and does it lead to dining satisfaction?

Oliver's (1977) expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm proposes that customer satisfaction is the result of what was expected and what was received. This model appears to offer a foundation for investigating tourists' dining out satisfaction because it recognises 'expectation', and 'perceived performance' from consumers and service providers. In addition, expectations mean the perceptual framework inside Chinese tourists mind and perceived performance include the service attitude and food quality, and these two concepts are both influenced by cultural factors. Moreover, the variables identified in this framework are clearly defined and itself leaves room for an exploratory type of research. That is, dining experience expectations of Chinese tourists is affected according to the group orientation, communication style, marketing communication, and learning history, whereas perceived performance is decided by experiential service (i.e. food quality, ambience of restaurant, service attitude, and tour guide's performance). In this respect, the conceptual framework for this research could be deciphered on

one hand, antecedent factors of the satisfaction that also constitute Chinese tourists' expectation for the dining experience in Australia. It comes from Chinese tourists' personal food beliefs and reflects on their perceptions on Chinese food culture. In addition, the socialization process and marketing communication might affect Chinese tourists' attitude towards foreign food as well as the image of cuisine in Australia. On the other hands, perceived performance means the stage of dining experience in Australia. It includes food quality, restaurant ambience, and service encounter with restaurant staff and tour guide. Indeed, these might be the indicators when Chinese tourists evaluate their dining experience. Finally, this study will investigate how dining experience associate with tourist satisfaction.

This research employs an ethnography strategy which firmly rooted in the inductive research approach (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2000). According to this research approach, the literature review is to identify the gaps within the extant literature and clarify the research focus. One issue need to be distinguished is that the research context restrict on the Chinese tourists' dining experience in Australia. Despite the findings of the research may not be able to be applied to the other research context, the theoretical context derived from this research is capable to be exploit in other study context related to the issue of travel dining experience. The next chapter outlines the methodology employed for this research.

Table 2.2 Summary of literature review

	Findings from literature	Implications to the study
Food culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural behaviour shapes food habits of individuals. - Socialisation process is a consequence of how tourists acquire new value systems and attitudes toward different foods. - Cognitive dissonance theory explains the changing formation of eating habits and dining preferences when people are facing unfamiliar foods and cultural situations. - Culture dictates the edibility and acceptability of different foods. - The idea of ‘proper meal’ is a reflection of core values and beliefs in a society. - Indigenous foods and expensive dishes are the symbols of wealth and status as well as an important indicator of conspicuous experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comforting reason might be the major reason for an individual to consume food and it outweighs other cultural as well as personal factors. - How tourists socialise dining out experience at destination? - Whether or not tourists convince themselves mentally that the food is good for taste experience or lower their expectations in order to maintain the cognitive consistency. - There is little knowledge if the elements of ‘proper meal’ will remain the same or modified in a new cultural environment. - There is little understanding about the desire for novelty or risk avoidance in food choice by Chinese tourists while on holidays.
Motivational context of eating out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desire and experience are the motivations that cause individuals to anticipate eating out activities in unfamiliar or new restaurant. - Both tangible and intangible attributes contribute to pull and push factors and it compose the motives for individuals to dine out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Push factors might be culture contextual because personal beliefs and attitudes are different in each culture. - It is still unknown whether or not or to what extent Chinese tourist satisfaction correlates with tourists’ motivations in searching for memorable dining experience.

(continued)

	Findings from literature	Implications to the study
Tourism dining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourists anticipate new eating sensations at a destination, not merely to satisfy hunger but for the sake of experiencing the “otherness”. - Travel dining experience is the ‘peak’ touristic experience. - The destination aims to develop the gastronomy experiences as a tourist product and by which to underpin its destination image. - Hjalager’s (2003) four modes of culinary tourist behaviour is an important indicator in examining tourists’ desire for experiencing familiarity or novelty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Destination marketers need to consider tourists’ motivations for travel and demonstrate how the destination will satisfy their gastronomy needs and wants.
Chinese food culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A proper meal in Chinese culture includes suitable quantities of <i>fan</i> (rice and other starch foods) and <i>ts’ai</i> (vegetable and meat dishes). - The selection of dishes is pre-determined according to the concept of <i>yin</i> and <i>yang</i> in order to maintain one’s <i>chi</i> balance. - Dining satisfaction for the Chinese people is not only a satisfaction of nutritional need but is also strongly influenced by the foods’ “psychological” dimensions. - Freshness of food, food temperature, and idealised style of service are the key quality attributes for the Chinese by which they evaluate their meal experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether ‘proper meal’ concept, <i>yin-yang</i> balance, and attributes of evaluation of meal experience remain constant when the Chinese are in a different cultural eating environment?

(continued)

	Findings from literature	Implications to the study
The influence of culture on consumer behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural values system will reflect on consumers' needs, wants, and attitude with the product and it is affected not only by personal perception but also marketing communication. - Tourists adopt a familiar value orientation when they are on holiday; thus, they eat the same food on holiday as they do at home. - What tourists can directly see, read, and experience appears to have strong influence on tourists' dining behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The influence of different culture and different food culture on Chinese tourists' dining out behaviour and its influence on their dining satisfaction.
Customer satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SERVQUAL only identifies what attributes affect customer satisfaction but fails to explain how those attributes determine customer satisfaction. - Customer expectation is constituted by both the service experience and the comparison from alternative product/service. - Dining experience could be seen as the basic fulfilment of tourists' psychological needs and surprise from encounters with a new culture when dining out. - 'Welcome message' is the special attribute in the search of tourist dining satisfaction. - Tour guide's performance as a 'culinary broker' is significant to travel dining experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether or not tourists might compare their experiences among different destinations according to facilities, attractions, and service standards? - Expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm needs to be tested in the cross-cultural hospitality context.

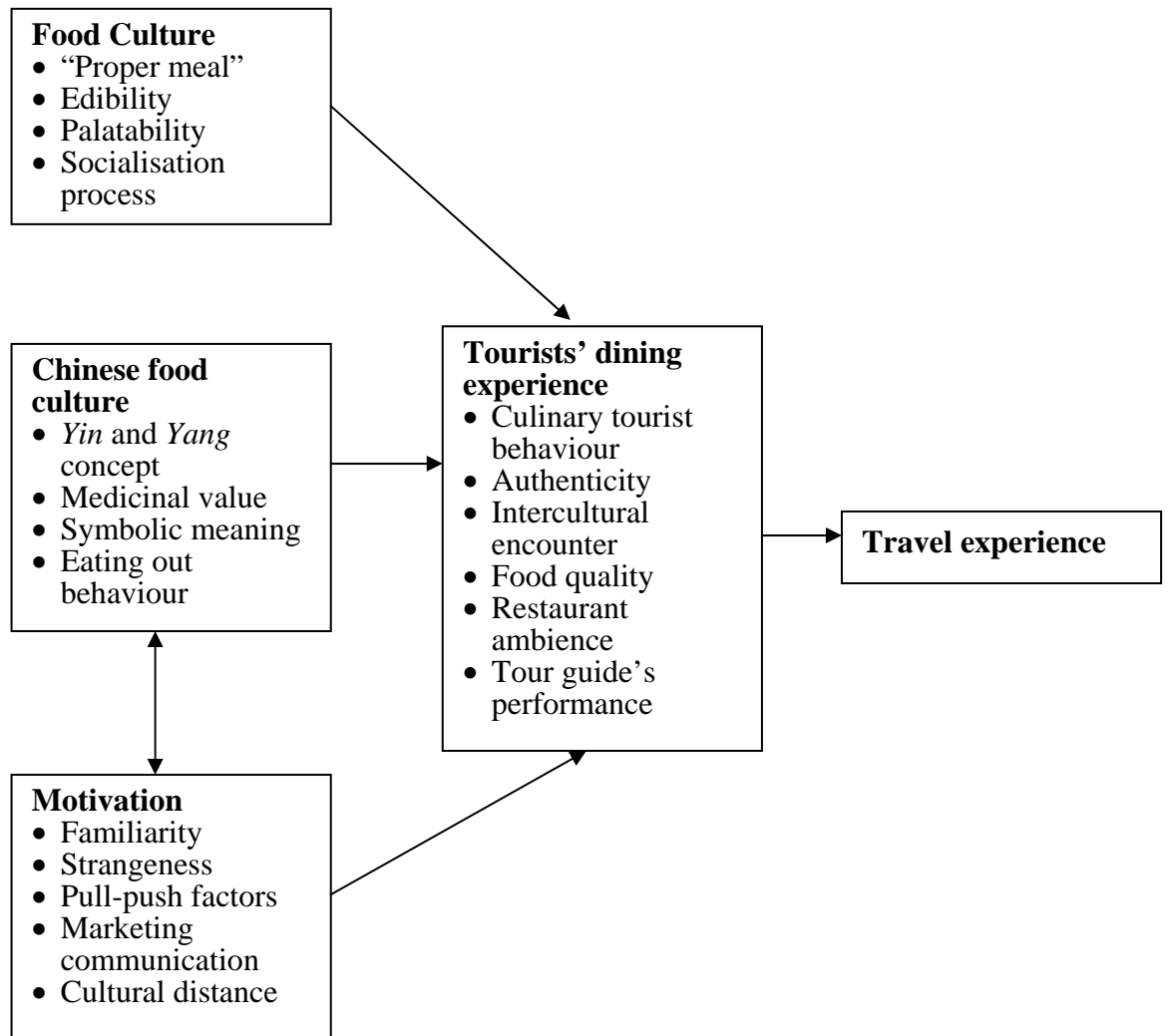


Figure 2.3 Conceptual framework of the research

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology utilised in this research study. First, the chapter begins by evaluating two alternative research philosophies and justifications are made for the adoption of a qualitative research strategy and ethnographic approach. This is followed by an explanation of the method employed in the selection of sample tourists, as well as the specific way to access the sample. The choices of data collection methods are then elaborated, and the entire data collection process including focus groups interview and observations are outlined. Finally, qualitative data analysis methods adopted for this study were also described.

3.1 Research design

There are two research philosophies that dominate the extant literature, namely positivism and phenomenology. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) proposed that the positivist research approach focuses on the facts through formulating and testing hypothesis that could allow the researcher to generalise findings from the empirical research data. The phenomenological approach, on the other hand, aims to develop a detailed understanding of what is happening, and to develop hypotheses through inductive reasoning from the data. The positivist approach can be closely associated with quantitative data collection methods such as experiments, surveys, and structured interviews. The phenomenological approach tends to employ more qualitative methods such as observation, in-depth interview, and focus groups interview. Wood (1999) argued that the basic beliefs of these

two research philosophies may be quite incompatible. However, when one evaluates the actual research methods and techniques used by researchers, the differences are by no means so clear and distinct. Some of the differences between these two philosophies are summarised on the Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Different approaches to research

Key Areas	Positivism	Phenomenology
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world is external and objective. • The observer is independent. • Science is value-free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world is socially constructed and subjective. • The research is part of what is observed • Science is driven by human interests and motives
The researcher should	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on facts. • Look for causality and fundamental laws • Reduce phenomena to simplest elements. • Formulate hypotheses and then test them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on meaning. • Try to understand what is happening. • Look at the totality of each situation • Develop ideas through induction from data.
Research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured, formal and specific detailed plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolving and flexible.
Involvement of the researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher remains distanced from the material being researched. • Short-term contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher gets involved with the phenomena being researched • Emphasis on trust and empathy and long-term contact.
Sample selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and representative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small samples investigated in depth or over time.
Data collection methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiments, surveys, and structured interviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation, documentation, open-ended and semi-structured interview.
Research instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires, scales, test scores and experimentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great opportunity for researcher to retain control of research process • Clear theoretical focus • Clarity about what is to be investigated and data collection can be fast and economical. • Helps to generalise previous research findings and test previously developed hypotheses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to look at change process over time. • Flexible and useful when the existing knowledge is limited. • Adjust to new issues and ideas as they emerge. • Contribute to the evolution of new theories. • Good at understanding social processes.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods tend to be rather inflexible and artificial • Weak at understanding social process • Not very helpful in generating theories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Difficulty of analysis of data • Harder for the researcher to control the research process • Reliability problem with findings.

Adapted from Wood (1999), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), and Saunders, et al. (2000)

It is apparent that positivist research approach asserts scientific techniques and a large scale of statistical investigation in order to reduce bias and enhance rigour

of findings. Nevertheless, the dehumanisation of quantitative research may produce the simple and sterile results which often can only superficially explain the research problems. Although phenomenological research philosophy has its profound limitations on subjectivity and reliability of the findings, it is worthwhile to note that qualitative method can contribute a holistic understanding of the research phenomenon. While there are a number of debates about the pros and cons of the application on quantitative versus qualitative research, Walle (1997) clamoured for an eclectic research method in order to better cope with the multiplicity of research problems and issues. In effect, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2000) suggested that both positivism and phenomenology have advantages and disadvantages and can be complementary to each other. They further suggested that the choice of the research methodology should correspond to the nature of phenomena being studied. In addition, the choice of the research strategy depends upon the extent of the existing knowledge in the research area, the research question, researcher's skills, time and available resources. In the context of tourism research, Walle (1997) claimed that tourism scholars are increasingly aware of the application of social anthropology to investigate the influence of tourism activities upon people and regions. As a result, with its strength in explaining the lifestyle, attitude, motives, and personality of a specific population, qualitative research has gained prestige within those studies in culture and consumer behaviour setting (Simpson, 1993).

The review of the current literature revealed that there is a knowledge gap with regard to understanding how Oriental tourists experience dining in Western

countries and how this experience contributes to tourists' satisfaction. Hence, the main objective of this study is to investigate Chinese tourists' dining experiences while on holidays in Australia. That is to say, this study aims to understand what is happening during the dining experience and tries to seek connection and explanations for each situation rather than to test the hypotheses from existing theory. Therefore, it was decided that the qualitative research method, which is anchored in the phenomenological research philosophy, would be the most appropriate methodology to be employed.

According to the review of literature on the topic of dining satisfaction, studies in this field have extensively explored a range of attributes that supposedly had an effect on dining satisfaction, and it would seem useful to adopt a positivist and quantitative research approach with the use of questionnaires survey to capture tourists' perception in satisfaction. However, the quantitative approach often falls short in explaining the more subtle meanings that are often present in tourists' dining out experiences. It seems plausible that quantitative data can provide detailed and reliable outcomes, which allow restaurateurs and other stakeholders to decide whether a particular action would be worthwhile. Despite the fact that quantitative approach can report the probability that, for example, XYZ attributes will lead to dining satisfaction, they are rarely able to explain much about how and why those attributes are transformed into dining satisfaction (Miller, Dingwall & Murphy, 2004). That is to say, positivist research philosophy is much suited in addressing categorical questions associated with service encounter during

holidays, nonetheless, it is often unable to generate detailed insights into the nature of the tourists' dining experience (Bowen, 2001).

By following the phenomenological research philosophy, the inductive approach is chosen as the research tool because existing theories are inadequate and incomplete, and this study attempts to uncover new theoretical insights into the tourists' dining experiences. Since the aim of this research is to investigate the influence of Chinese food culture on Chinese tourists' eating behaviour in Australia and to explore the role of dining experience at a destination toward visitor satisfaction, ethnography strategy is adopted in order to be flexible and responsive to new patterns of thought that may arise from the observed phenomenon (Saunders, et al., 2000). According to the inductive process (see Figure 3.1), the implementation of the research are divided into three major phases. The first phase of the research aims to induce a detailed and systematic appreciation of previous literature. This is to help the researcher carefully review the associations and assumptions that surround the topic so that the research questions could be apprehensively formulated (McCracken, 1988). The second phase of the research involves the discovery of Chinese tourists' delineations of their travel dining experience through focus group interviews and observations. The third phase of the research deals with the analysis of travel dining experiences from the different perspectives of the Chinese tourists, and the explication of observed phenomena.

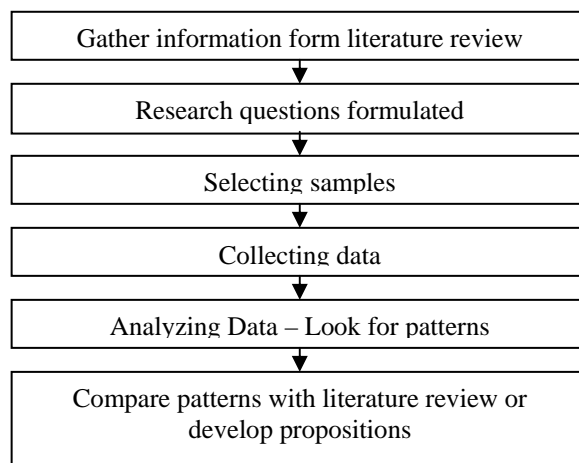


Figure 3.1 Inductive process of the research

3.2 Sample selection and gaining access

Since this study is to generate understanding rather than to generalise finding to a large population, purposive sampling is employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While purposive sampling can reflect some feature or phenomenon in which the research is interested, more importantly, purposive sampling should also need to fit into the theoretical proposition of the research (Bryman, 1993). In other words, purposive sampling is based on theoretical development, rather than generalising the results to the population at large. Thus, the participants are selected not because of their representativeness of the target population, but for the insights that they could provide about what is being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The target samples of this study are the four groups from three selected regions, namely Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Many empirical

studies have shown that joining tour groups is the preferred mode of outbound travel for most Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese travellers when taking overseas vacations (Wen & Laws, 2001; Wong & Lau, 2001). This means that tour groups can not be overlooked when studying the Chinese tourists market. Regarding to the theoretical insights which this study investigates, it is believed that tour group would enable the researcher to explore and discover the in-depth understanding about travel dining experience. The following deliberation could validate such a claim.

Some might argue that tour group travellers may not have the opportunity to select their own dining experience in Australia since meal arrangements for tour groups are often pre-arranged by travel agency. However, it is still possible to examine the extent to which Chinese food culture affects travel dining experience. This is because tourists' food preference and the evaluation criteria towards the perceived meal arrangement are ultimately influenced by Chinese food cultural traits (Warde & Martens, 2000). In other words, meal arrangements for tour groups enable the reflections of group tourists' perception on what kind of foods are regards as gastronomic delights according to their collective food cultural traits. In addition, it can be assumed that tourists have indirectly influenced the travel agency in arranging preferred meals in tours so that tourist satisfaction could be enhanced (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Such a claim reflects the travel agency's understanding that tourist satisfaction can not merely depend on wonderful experiences derived from attractions, but should also be supplemented by a pampering experiences involving food, drink and accommodations (Quan &

Wang, 2004). Thus, meal arrangements for tour groups have become a significant contributing factor on tourist satisfaction.

On the other hand, selecting tour groups as the target sample would enable the researcher to personally participate in their dining experience in Australia and observing their dining behaviour accordingly. In effect, such an approach could help the researcher to develop a holistic understanding of the Chinese tourists' travel dining experience; and would enhance the robustness of the interpretation of research findings (Silverman, 2000).

Take into account the abovementioned discussions; tour groups are selected as the target sample in this study to investigate the extent of Chinese food culture in affecting the Chinese tourists' eating behaviour at one hand, and to elaborate the relationship between meal arrangements and tourist satisfaction on the other.

Because access restrictions can limit the facilitation of fieldwork (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991), the researcher has attempted to achieve or sustain access agreements prior to data collection. Some researchers have suggested that the selection of samples and access should be flexible and opportunistic for qualitative research. For example, Buchanan, Boddy, and McCalman (1988) recommended using friends and contacts wherever possible. Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) also suggested that access is much easier if the researcher has a ready contact. In this regard, the access to the tour groups was facilitated by the support

from three tour leaders in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, with whom the researcher has developed good collaborative relationships.

Albeit the selection of sample is convenient in nature, the appropriateness of sample selection has achieved the theoretical requirement. Maxwell (1996) have accentuated that the control of setting, events, and process are critical to avoid bias in the qualitative research. Accordingly, the selected groups have similar characteristics (see Table 3.2) as follows:

- The size of tour groups ranged between 12-15 tourists.
- Tour groups have similar travel itinerary. For example, the target tour groups all visited Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane.
- Tour groups have similar meal arrangements. For example, the three selected tour groups have arranged both Chinese foods and indigenous cuisine for the participants to savour.

Table 3.2 The Characteristics of the selected tour groups

	Mainland China Group	Hong Kong Group	Taiwan Group
Number of participants	12	15	14
Duration of the tour	8 days	10 days	8 days
Travel itinerary	Sydney → Gold Coast → Brisbane → Cairns	Cairns → Gold Coast → Brisbane → Sydney → Melbourne	Brisbane → Sydney → Melbourne → Gold Coast → Brisbane
Summary of meal arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chinese restaurants occupied most of the meals - Two meals in Western buffet style - Sydney Fishery Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two meals in Chinese restaurants - Australian BBQ restaurants - Western buffet - Sydney Fishery Market - Free dining activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chinese restaurants occupied most of the meals - Australian BBQ restaurants - Australian seafood buffet - Italian restaurant

Table 3.3 provides an overview of the characteristics of the participants. Although the invitations of tourists' participation were subject to their agreement, the participant pool reveals a contrast among participants which conform to the 'rules' of the purposive sampling method (McCracken, 1988). For example, participants were different in gender, age, occupation, and travel history. In other words, the sample selection has achieved what is theoretically desirable and practically possible.

Table 3.3 Overview of participants' characteristics

Participants	Descriptions of Personal Characteristics
Taiwanese Group	
P-1	Single Female, mid-20s, primary school teacher, experienced traveller abroad.
P-2	Single Female, mid-20s, primary school teacher, first-time traveller abroad.
P-3	Single Female, early 20s, student, experienced traveller abroad.
P-4	Single Female, mid-20s, primary school teacher, experienced traveller abroad.
P-5	Married housewife, mid-30s, experienced traveller abroad.
P-6	Female, married, self-employed, over 60, experienced traveller abroad.
P-7	Married housewife, over 60, experienced traveller abroad.
P-8	Married primary school teacher, female, early 40s, experienced traveller abroad.
P-9	Married primary school principal, male, mid-40s, experienced traveller abroad.
P-10	Widowed nurse, female, mid-50s, experienced traveller abroad.
P-11	Single Female, mid-30s, high school teacher, first-time traveller abroad.
Hong Kong Group	
P-1	Single female, early 30s, administrative clerk, experienced traveller abroad.
P-2	Single female, late 20s, high school teacher, experienced traveller abroad.
P-3	Single female, late 20s, high school teacher, experienced traveller abroad.
P-4	Male, married, early 40s, government servant, experienced traveller abroad.
P-5	Female, married, early 40s, government servant, experienced traveller abroad.
P-6	Male, married, mid-40s, self-employed, experienced traveller abroad.
P-7	Married housewife, mid-40s, experienced traveller abroad.
P-8	Male, single, early 30s, administrative clerk, experienced traveller abroad.
P-9	Female, single, early 30s, administrative clerk, experienced traveller abroad.
Mainland Chinese Group	
P-1	Married female, late 20s, government servant, experienced traveller abroad.
P-2	Single female, mid 30s, government servant, experienced traveller abroad.
P-3	Single female, late 20s, government servant, experienced traveller abroad.
P-4	Single female, late 20s, government servant, first-time traveller abroad.
P-5	Male, retired doctor, over 60, experienced traveller abroad.

3.3 Data acquisition

Data collection started in July 2005 and was completed by September 2005. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, focus groups interviews and observation were employed to gather primary data. These research methods are considered to be appropriate strategies to obtain in-depth context specific information about tourists' dining out experience (Yin, 1994). The justifications for choosing these methods are elaborated below.

3.3.1 Focus Group interviews

A tour group often consists of a number of tourists thus providing an opportunity to explore differences and diversity of views about their dining experiences. Given such an advantage, focus group interviews were utilised in order to enable Chinese tourists to present their own views and to discuss their dining experiences in Australia. Focus group interviews also have a merit of allowing participants to react upon the responses made by other people. In that way, a synergistic view point or position could be reached (Wilkinson, 2004). Moreover, focus groups offer the opportunity to see how ideas and meanings emerge in a more naturalistic setting, thus leading to the generation of more elaborate accounts. The relatively free flow of conversation between participants reflects the normative influences and shared meanings that they perceive, experience and understand (e.g. dining experiences in Australia). Therefore, the main advantage of the focus groups is the spontaneity that arises from social context (Finch & Lewis, 2003). Because Chinese tourists will listen to other

participants during the discussion, they will be more readily relate and reveal their own frame of reference on their dining experience. In addition, the language and vernacular they use, the emphasis they give and their general framework of understanding, are more spontaneous on display. Furthermore, the data from focus groups is less influenced by the interaction from the researcher.

Finch and Lewis (2003) propounded that the researcher should get acquainted with participants in order to enhance their collaboration with the study. Therefore, the number of focus groups can be augmented as many as possible and the richness of data from tour groups is assured accordingly (Silverman, 2000). Surprisingly, most of the participants have shown their willingness to participate in the focus group interview. This could be attributable to the introduction by the tour leader as well as the researcher's personal participation in the tour groups. The tour leaders have introduced the researcher to the tour group members in the beginning of the trip which helped to break the ice between the researcher and participants. In addition, it was believed that the researcher have minimised the power distance between the two parties by joining the tour group. In effect, many of the thick descriptions (McCracken, 1988) about travel dining experience were stated by the participants.

Because of the intensiveness of the travel itinerary, timing of the focus group is important. Focus group interviews were held after each day's dining activities starting from the middle of the trip. For example, if it is a seven-day tour in Australia, the researcher will start the focus group interview on the fourth night

until the end of trip. This is to ensure that the tour group members have sufficient dining experiences to reflect on their perceptions.

For practical reasons, focus group interviews were mostly undertaken in hotel rooms so as to minimise interference and background noise in restaurants, which might lead to poor recording quality. Yet, Hong Kong group's interviews were carried out either during meal time or at airport lounge (when tour group members were awaiting transfer for domestic flight). This was because Hong Kong participants often went out to explore the city after they have checked in a hotel. Subsequently, the restaurants and airport lounges were chosen as alternative venues for focus group interviews to allow the participants more spare time to talk about their dining experiences in Australia.

Considering the fact that data from focus groups are often broader in scope as compared with the in-depth interviews (Finch & Lewis, 2003), a small group discussion approach (3-5 tourists) was adopted in order to ensure rich narratives. Among the three selected tour groups, 11 participants (with a combination of 4-3-4) from the Taiwanese group; 9 participants (with a combination of 3-3-3) from the Hong Kong group, and 5 participants (only one focus group was conducted) from the Mainland Chinese group were invited to participate in the focus group interviews.

Based on the focus group topic guide (see Appendix-1), the expected duration (one hour) of the discussion was explained to the participants followed by a list of

warm-up questions on participants' travel experience. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended the use of self-exposure to reduce power distance between the moderator and the participants. Indeed, as noted earlier, the researcher was travelling with three tour groups respectively, and this permitted the researcher to be familiar with the participants and to minimise the power distance gap between the two parties. In addition, focus group interviews started with sharing of travel experiences among the participants. This strategy have allowed the participants to familiarise themselves with each other as well as to provide the contextual information so that the viewpoints from group discussions could be better understood. Importantly, the role of the moderator is to maintain the focus of group discussion (Wilkinson, 2004). The researcher, in this regard, has kept the discussion on track and ensured that all group members contributed to the discussion.

3.3.2 Observation

Several scholars have accentuated that observation is an ideal approach to ascertain rich data from the qualitative research. For example, Bowen (2001) argued that results from customer satisfaction questionnaire-based surveys are often superficial and only consist of customer perceptions regarding a variety of the most easily identified attributes. Observation, on the other hand, can yield rich, detailed, context specific behaviours which could often reveal tourists' real feelings about their experiences (Saunders, et al., 2000). Seaton (2002) contended that, by adopting an ethnographic approach, observation can present different problems and opportunities for the researcher. Furthermore, observations could be

used to validate and further explore information obtained from the participants (Schein, 1992). In addition, participant observation is stated to be an ideal approach in developing a holistic understanding of the dining experience from an insider's perspective (Silverman, 2000). According to the justifications from previous research, it was believed that observation could help the researcher to have a better understanding of the underlying influences that shape the Chinese tourists' perceptions of travel dining experiences, their levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction when dining out in Australia, and the characteristics of Chinese tourists and their eating behaviour. Therefore, observation was utilised in order to secure an in-depth data about Chinese tourists' dining experience in Australia.

Observations were carried out from the commencements of the trip and ended until the last day of the trip. Each meal was observed including the breakfast. It is suggested by Saunders et al. (2000) that observation diary should be kept as it will help the researcher to understand, recall, and to explain what was going on when writing up the research findings. Thus, an observation diary (see Appendix-2) was used in order to note down details and unanticipated phenomena (Maxwell, 1996). The observation diary included the physical setting of the restaurant, the key participants and their activities (not only dining activities), particular events and their sequence, the service processes, and participants' expression of their dining experiences.

With regards to ethical issues, the researcher had given participants a brief explanation of the nature of the research and assured them that they could refuse to answer any questions and/or withdraw from the interview at any time. In addition, all participants were informed that their identities would remain confidential and all information obtained would be used solely for academic purpose. In this respect, all participants were asked to review and sign an informed consent letter (see Appendix-3) prior to the beginning of the interview. To this end, focus group interviews and observation were served as the main methods to gather the primary data for the study. The triangular relationship between these methods is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

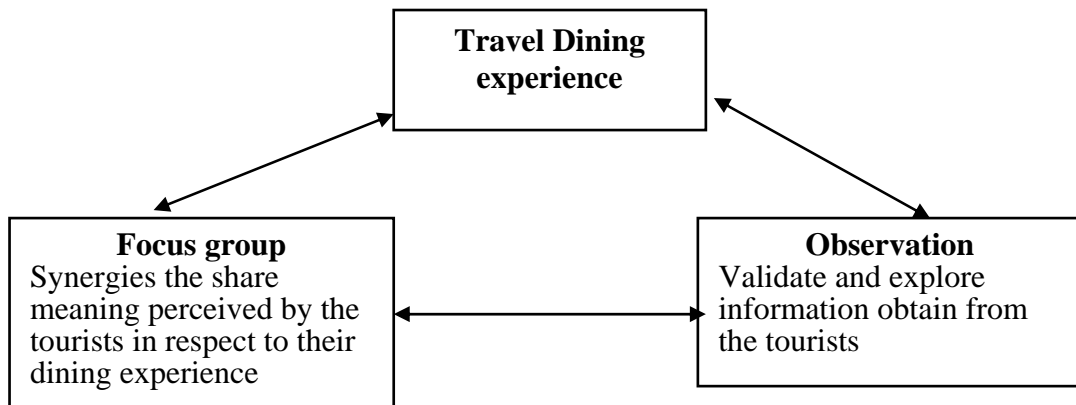


Figure 3.2 The triangular relationship of the data collection method

3.4 Data analysis

Based on aforementioned discussions in the literature review chapter, the existing literature paid scant attention on tourists' dining experience at a destination, especially those pertaining to Chinese tourists. This study, therefore, utilised the exploratory and inductive data analysis approach to explore issues related to Chinese tourists' dining experiences in Australia in order to fill the knowledge gap. In this respect, inductive-oriented approach was employed in the analysis of findings for this research. Alongside the inductive-oriented approach, the literature review and the research framework have also helped to shed light on the analysis of findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Previous studies have identified different models and stages as the framework for qualitative analysis. However, most qualitative researchers agree on three fundamental steps that are associated with the process of analysing qualitative data, they are (a) unitising the data, (b) categorising the data, and (c) contextualising the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; McCracken, 1988; Maxwell, 1996). While some may argue that this framework cannot be viewed as a rigid structure due to different research objectives, the framework could serve as a basis for further modification or adjustments to suit other qualitative research (Maxwell, 1996). According to this framework, the specific steps that incorporate to conduct the inductive analysis for this study are described below.

3.4.1 Unitising the data

While qualitative data analysis is often a ‘messy’ business (Saunders, et al., 2000), particularly in the early stages, with many loose ends and unconnected ideas and pieces of information, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested that raw data from qualitative methods need to be analysed as soon as possible in order to capture and reflect all verbal and non-verbal messages of the interviews and observations. It is worthwhile to note that familiarisation with data will enable the researcher to be aware of and notice interesting issues or phenomena that emerge from the data (Saunders et al., 2000). Accordingly, the researcher listened to each audio recording several times to note the expressions and intuitions with regard to both interviewee and the interview content. Fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and observation diaries were also reviewed before transcribing the data.

The researcher has made every effort to transcribe interview and observation notes as soon as possible, however, it was difficult to transcribe all audio recording and fieldnotes during the fieldwork trip due to the intensive travel schedule. Besides, transcribing a one-hour audio recording had taken a long time especially as data for this study needs to be transcribed into written Chinese and then be translated into English. English version was afterwards compared with the written Chinese transcripts, and then audio recording again to ensure accuracy and also to double-check if any adjustments were necessary.

In total, 127 pages of transcribed data were content analysed. The first step in analysing the data was to unitise them into the smaller pieces that could stand alone. The initial coding process was guided by the literature review as well as the research questions of this study. For example, participants' travel eating behaviour were coded into food preference, healthy eating behaviour, the family influence on eating behaviour, and attributes which might affect participants' evaluation on travel dining experience.

3.4.2 Categorising the data

The second step in data analysis started with labelling and categorising of phenomena as indicated by the first step. This coding process was to make connections or relationship between each category and develop sub-categories where necessary. This is to help the researcher to examine what conditions caused the categories or the consequences that arise from the categories. Finally, all of the categorised materials were integrated into a stable and meaningful category set, which accounts for the phenomena being investigated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Due to the large volume of data and complex coding structure, a computerised tool (NUD.IST) was used to fragment the data into discrete units and construct a tree structure of the Chinese participants' travel dining experience in Australia. It is believed that the NUD.IST can reliably help the researcher to track seemingly disparate pieces of data, reflect on the emerging concepts and generate hypotheses

(Rouse & Dick, 1994). In addition, by using a thorough and systematic approach, NUD.IST can enhance the interpretive accuracy of the data.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the example of how the coding structure was generated and the relationship between each category. As shown in Figure 3.3, food preference is one of the Chinese participants' travel eating behaviours which play as the main theme of this coding structure. Subsequently, Chinese food was found to be one of the Chinese participants' food preferences. According to the participants' accounts, core eating behaviour, appetizing assurance, and familiar flavour were labelled which could delineate the underlying reasons why Chinese participants prefer to partake of Chinese food during holidays. Among the three underlying reasons, familiar cooking methods and familiar food items were added as sub-categories to further explain what Chinese participants look for from the familiar flavour. It should be noted that this structure was created for the purpose of analysing the three selected regions. In this regard, the analysis of the raw data could be undertaken simultaneously in order to reach a compatible description of travel dining behaviour for participants among the three selected groups.

Due to the dissimilar meal arrangements among the three tour groups, participants' comments on meal arrangement could not be analysed collectively. Thus, findings from participants' evaluative comments on meal arrangements were sorted according to the tour group. The objective of this coding strategy is to assess participants' dining satisfaction in Australia by evaluating their comments

towards the meal arrangement in their respective groups. Along with the participants' accounts pertaining to their travel dining behaviour, the discussions on meal arrangements also aim to identify the similarities and disparities among the three tour groups.

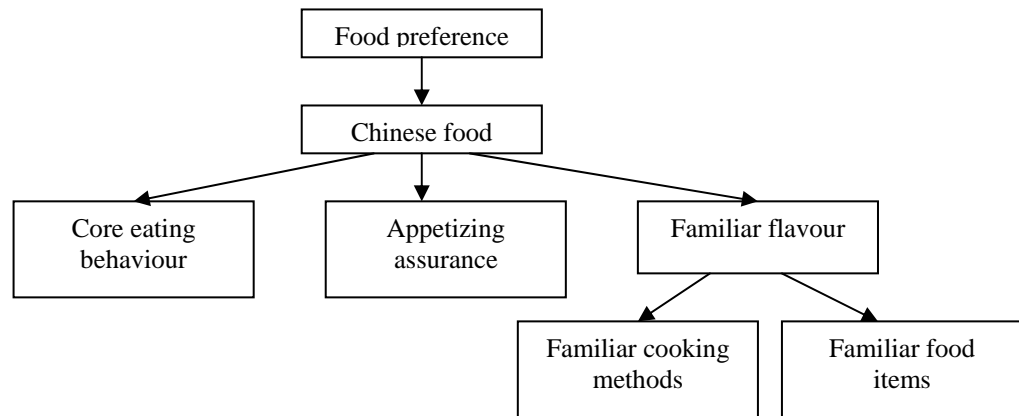


Figure 3.3 Sample of the coding structure

3.4.3 Contextualising the data

The final step in the data analysis is to identify the relationships between categories in an effort to develop a meaningful depiction of the Chinese tourists' dining experience in Australia. Narrative analysis was utilised in this research for the purpose of contextualizing the connections between categories and themes.

Narrative analysis has been employed in the analysis of first-person accounts of experience derived from interviews and has been extensively used by sociologists. For example, Riessman (1993) used narrative analysis in a study of the poetic features of divorce narrative in order to understand the gender

differences in the verbal expression of emotional difficulties during divorce. Stern, Thompson, and Arnould (1998) utilised narrative analysis to study a marketing relationship from a phenomenological interview. Recently, Elsrud (2001) studied backpackers' narratives from in-depth interviews and addressed the risks and adventures in travelling. All of these studies have justified the use of narrative in the interpretive paradigm as a contribution to better understand the participants' experience. Importantly, McQuillan (2000) proposed that narrative is present in every society and is often shared by all human groups to represent their cultural norm. That is to say, narrative can be detected in a cultural pattern, and to some extent, narrative is endowed with the function of conveying and constructing social norm. In this regard, narrative analysis can be utilised to unravel the cultural meaning behind the story, particularly in cross-cultural studies.

In focus group interviews, participants reflect and give meanings to the travel dining experience that are being discussed. This would enable the researcher to interpret how the travel dining experience have been described and understood by the participants (Riessman, 1993). In the context of this study, narrative provides a pragmatic view to participants' travel dining experience in Australia, offering insight into the ways how the dining experience and service encounter were actually evaluated. By retelling the story, narrative provides an emic point of view of what is perceived as important to the tourists during their dining experience.

The major strength of narrative analysis is that a narrative can be viewed not only as a way of recounting someone's consumption experience, but also as a way to reveal one's relationship with the others and the reasons behind them in a more holistic way (Stern, et al., 1998). In this respect, Shankar and Goulding (2001) suggested that the researcher could broaden the interpretation to include context, conditions and consequences, and the dimensional properties which contribute to a more holistic understanding of consumer motivations and actions. Similarly, Stern et al. (1998) pointed out that the researcher could examine consumption narrative representations of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with relationships by identifying standard elements such as plot (the action), character (the players), structural pattern (the organisation), and language (the verbal expression).

In this study, from a narratological perspective, the Chinese participants are the central characters (the narrators) sharing their dining experience in Australia in the first-person. The underlying motives for their travel dining behaviour, and the attributes which might affect their evaluation of the dining experience comprised the plot (the what). And their language revealed the metaphorical and structural systems (the how and why) that they imposed on the plot. For example, when participants expressed that they preferred to have a variety of food selection for them to savour (the what), their accounts suggested that cultural appreciation might be the underlying motive for the demand, and the concept of neophilia, fashionability, and diversity were utilised to articulate why such a motive emerged (the how and why).

In order to increase the robustness of the interpretations, findings from the observations were supplemented to explain, or reflect, the descriptions from the participants' accounts. In addition, findings from the previous literatures as well as some of the Chinese maxims were utilised as references to corroborate the interpretation of the findings.

In short, the data analysis for this study could be described and referred to as in the analytic hierarchy (see Figure 3.4). According to this hierarchy, data management and descriptive analysis are done by NUD.IST in order to synthesise data to prepare descriptive accounts, identifying key dimensions and mapping the range and diversity of each phenomenon. Eventually, narrative analysis was employed so as to move from descriptive to explanatory analysis. Patterns of association were then being detected and attempt was made to identify the underlying reasons of those patterns (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor, 2003).

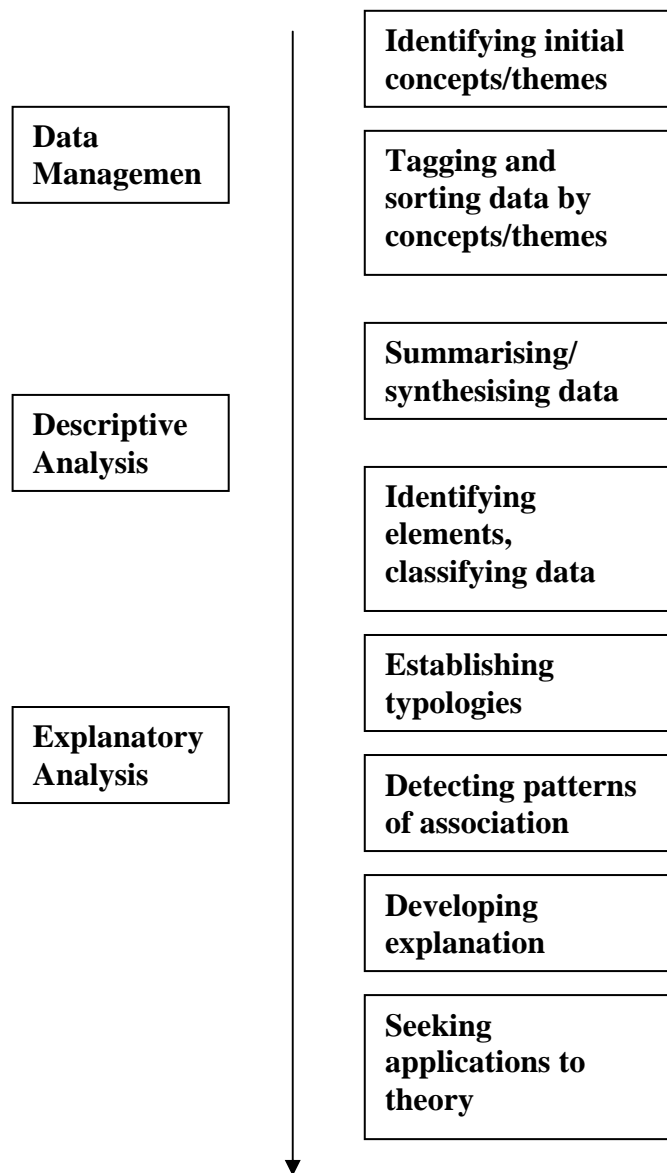


Figure 3.4 The analytic hierarchy

Source: Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor (2003)

3.5. Trustworthiness of data

Some quantitative researchers are in the opinion that qualitative work is subjective and lacks reliability and validity, the prime concern of qualitative research is, therefore, the trustworthiness of data. While quantitative study emphasises on valid results that come from reliable interpretation, Lincoln and Guba (1985), on the other hand, suggested four aspects to enhance 'trustworthiness' in qualitative research, (1)credibility, (2)transferability, (3)dependability, and (4)confirmability. In quantitative research, the data analysis procedure is often divided into discrete stages of data collection, data processing, and data analysis. Yet, in qualitative work, data collection and data analysis are not easily alienated into temporal stages because the qualitative researcher begins the process of reasoning the information at the time the first pieces of data are being collected. However, a 'trustworthy' research requires systematic data collection, justifiable research procedure, and allowing of research process and findings to be open for *post-hoc* evaluation by others. Based on four aspects of trustworthiness proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), respective strategies were employed in order to enhance the rigor of this study. They are being outlined in the subsequent sections.

Credibility

Credibility could be referred to the internal validity in the quantitative research that relates to the truth of the findings. Credible research findings mean that the interpretation of findings is congruent with the minds of the participants. Lincoln

and Guba (1985) suggested several techniques in establishing a study's credibility. These include, prolong engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checking. Amongst these techniques, triangulation (the use of different data collection), peer debriefing, and member checking were incorporated in this study to ensure findings and interpretation will be found credible.

The major strategy to ensure credibility for this research was the triangulation of data collection. In essence, triangulation is the use of different methods to avoid personal and methodological bias. There are four modes of triangulation exist: the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigator and theories (Decrop, 1999). In this study, data triangulation and methods triangulation were utilised. Focus group interviews and observation were used to complement each other. For example, the dining experience recounted by the Chinese tourists was validated by observation. In addition, theories or concepts that were found in previous literature also served a complementary way to elaborate tourists' travel eating behaviours.

Apart from triangulation, peer debriefing was the second techniques that was adopted for enhancing the credibility. The researcher sought assistances from other research students in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to serve as peer debriefers so as to identify any hidden aspects in the research. The third techniques to ensure credibility was member check. The researcher has asked

relevant probing questions in order to assess whether participants' meanings has been interpreted precisely. For example, if a participant stated that he/she wanted to try local food at a destination because of curiosity, the research would accordingly probe into the curiosity variable by asking: "Could you tell me more why you are curious about local food?" This iterative process of on-site interpretation permitted the researcher to ensure the credibility of interpretation that emerged from the interviews. Besides, the researcher has tried to have causal chat with all of the target groups including both participants and non-participants (e.g. tour guide and tour leader), heeding their wording and examining their attitude. This helped to verify accuracy of the research findings.

Transferability

Transferability is analogous to the applicability in the quantitative research. It refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other research contexts or with other participants. Strategies for enhancing transferability in this study included robust description and purposive sampling.

Positivist research often demands large and representative samples to assure that the results can be generalised and transferred to studies in other contexts. This qualitative study selected small samples to participate in the research because of their personal in-depth involvement in the studied phenomena. In other words, the issue of transferability in this study will be addressed by collecting sufficiently robust descriptions of phenomena in context, and to present data in a precise way

to allow reader a better understanding of the phenomena of interest. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), applicability should be determined by future researcher who would like to transfer the information into a different context. Therefore, the results from this study would be germane to the travel dining experience in Australia and may not readily be applicable for further research concerning other destinations. However, the theoretical context of this study – dining experience at destination – would be applicable to a different destination in future research.

Dependability

Dependability refers to a qualitative research should provide its reader with evidence that if it were replicated with the same or similar research context, the findings would be repeated. That is to say, dependability is to ensure the consistency of the findings. As contended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), an audit trail is the key strategy to maintain dependability of qualitative research. Consequently, every aspect of the information collected, such as who, where, when, and how, regarding the conduct of the study were all attached in the appendix section of the thesis to confirm that the findings were dependable.

Confirmability

Confirmability is to ensure the findings are the product of the participants' perspective, rather the bias of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, confirmable findings would enable the reader to determine if the conclusion, interpretation, and recommendations can be traced to their sources

and if they are corroborated by the research investigation. The same audit trail was also carried out in order to ensure the objectivity of the findings.

It should be noted that the interdependence of qualitative research often involves iterative process, which requires the researcher moves back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence among research questions, literature, and findings (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Thus, the research questions may have to be changed, research methods may need to be modified, and even sampling plans may be expanded because of the new ideas emerging from data. However, the major issue – the Chinese tourists' perceptions towards their dining experience in Australia, was always monitored and confirmed throughout the whole research process. Altogether, the abovementioned strategies incrementally and interactively contribute to the trustworthiness of data, thus ensuring rigor and impartiality. Furthermore, theories that were developed in this research would be comprehensive, logical, and consistent.

3.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations in this study are outlined as follows. First, this study is limited to the Chinese tourists from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. However, those Chinese who come from Singapore, Malaysia and other Diasporas may also be included when investigating the socialisation process of Chinese food culture

to a destination's gastronomy. Second, this research was carried out in Australia. The Chinese tourists' dining experience in other destinations may differ. The findings therefore are limited to a study about the dining-out experiences of Chinese tourist while on holidays in Australia.

Despite the abovementioned limitations, Australia offers a range of Western foods and it provides the opportunity for Chinese tourists to experience different foods among indigenous foods. Walle (1997) proposed that results from qualitative research can assist to pose hypotheses which can often be tested and refined by scientific and statistical research methods. Consequently, findings from this study not only are relevant in the context of dining-out experience of Chinese tourists while on holiday in Australia, the findings can also contribute to future studies in other destinations.

Chapter 4 Research findings and discussions

The purpose of this chapter was to explore and develop an understanding of the Chinese participants' dining experience in Australia. Findings about the Chinese participants' travel dining experience had been divided into four parts. The first part of this chapter presents detailed minutiae of the diversity of the Chinese participants' food preference. For example, what the Chinese participants preferred to eat in Australia and what the underlying motives that formulated the Chinese participants' food preference. Based on the discussions in the focus group interviews, the Chinese participants suggested two particular aspects in the Chinese food culture that might affect their eating behaviour when on holiday in Australia. One was the healthy eating beliefs and the other one was the family influence. The second part of this chapter discussed how these two aspects related to the Chinese participants' eating behaviour in Australia. In order to identify how Chinese participants evaluated their travel dining experience, the third part of this chapter highlighted the six attributes that emerged from the focus group interviews. The six attributes' respective influence on the Chinese participants' travel dining experience was investigated. Subsequently, a comparison of meal arrangement among three selected regions was discussed. In essence, this was to examine whether the Chinese participants' evaluation on meal arrangement was the reflection of their food beliefs as well as to investigate how this meal arrangement contributed to their visit satisfaction. In the final part of this chapter, a synthesis of the research findings was presented. This section discusses the role of travel dining experience in the participants' holiday experience in accord with

the emergent findings. In addition, the synthesis also recapitulates the Chinese participants' dining behaviour in Australia and categorises their dining behaviour into different typology.

It should be noted that the term 'indigenous food' used in this chapter referred to those local foods such as seafood, kangaroo meat, crocodile meat, and Aussie meat pie. It also broadly denoted the western foods in the participants' meal arrangement such as the Italian food and western buffet. This was because of the many cultural influences that made Australian cuisine become one of the most diverse cuisines available anywhere. Modern Australian cuisine has been heavily influenced by the country's South East Asian neighbours, and by the many waves of immigrants from there, and all parts of the world (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). In effect, many of the Chinese participants regarded western foods symbolised Australian food since it also encompassed the authentic encounter with Australian culture. Thus, other than Chinese food, most of the western foods were deemed to be the Australian food.

4.1 Food preference

Findings about food preferences among the Chinese tourists are presented in this section. With an intention to unravel motivational factors behind the Chinese tourists' dining behaviour in Australia, focus has been placed on the behavioural intention rather than the taxonomy of food preferences. Although the Chinese tourists passively partook of meals that were pre-arranged by the travel agents,

their food preferences were still being manifested according to different context of the pre-arranged meals. Findings revealed that some participants were not accustomed to new eating experience and expressed their inclination towards Chinese foods. On the other hand, some participants were excited and enthused by having the chance to dine in local Australian restaurants and had shown a great deal of curiosity about the indigenous foods. Yet, some participants displayed a non-fastidious attitude with food when travelling. They seemed to have little interest in food and they regarded food merely as sustenance rather than a source of pleasure. In this respect, the unravelling of the food preferences of the Chinese tourists are conceptualized according to three predominate themes, namely '*Chinese food*', '*Indigenous food*', and '*Non-fastidiousness of food*'. Each of the preferences and the related reasons are discussed below.

4.1.1 The Chinese food

Despite different cuisines being arranged by the travel agent, it was found that some of the participants were not accustomed to the indigenous food and remained steadfast in their preference for Chinese food while travelling in Australia. The following sub-sections examine the underlying reasons of this behaviour.

Attitude towards Chinese food

As one's belief and attitude would affect their behavioural intention (Geertz, 1973), it is essential to understand participants' attitude towards the Chinese food

in their home country before unravelling their motivation of the Chinese foods in Australia. In the discussion about food preferences, one participant's remark on her affection for Chinese food was particularly revealing:

“I love Chinese food, as well as others kind of food. But among these various foods, Chinese food is always my favourite. Firstly, I think Chinese food boasts enough variety and is a sophisticated cuisine. Secondly, Hong Kong has the best Chinese food in the world. Thus, I spend most of my mealtimes on Chinese food in Hong Kong. Thirdly, I often have Chinese food at home and this is my family's dietary habit (sic).” (HK-P2)

The participant explicitly praised the variety and sophisticated nature of Chinese food, which suggested that these two criteria were important sources of her gustatory pleasure. Indeed, Chinese cuisine has been well known as non-monolithic with a high degree of variation and sophistication (Newman, 2004). As Chinese food possessed these two criteria and was able to offer the participant gustatory pleasure, it was considered as the participant's favourite food among other kinds of food. In this respect, the Chinese food offered a sense of *'appetizing assurance'*. In addition, the participant subjectively complimented that Hong Kong had the best Chinese food in the world. As a result, the participant spent most of her mealtimes consuming Chinese food in Hong Kong, as it was perceived to provide the 'best' appetizing assurance. Furthermore, when the participant conveyed that Chinese food dominated her dietary habit at home, this implied that Chinese food might provide her with a *'familiar flavour'*. As ingrained eating behaviour would be difficult to change (Fildhouse, 1986), the *familiar flavour* would also be deeply embedded as one of the critical criteria that affects one's food preference.

Considering the above, two underlying criteria were derived from the participant's utterance, namely *appetizing assurance* and *familiar flavour*, which could have their respective effect on participants' food preferences when travelling in Australia. Although these two criteria were based on the participant's own judgement, yet, it was observed that other participants in this study have, directly or indirectly, conveyed similar comments.

Core Eating Behaviour

Another important finding was, regardless of the participant's inclination towards Chinese food or indigenous food, that Chinese food would always remain as the core value of their eating behaviour. The following statement best described such a claim:

"...I will not miss the chance to have a try of them....but soon, I will miss Chinese food again. It's a long trip. How could I eat local food every day? Definitely, I will be drawn back to my original dietary habit...." (HK-P2)

Furthermore, it was found that when they travelled for a prolonged period of time, the craving for Chinese food might appear for no apparent reason. One participant's utterance exemplified this:

"...But I still miss Chinese food, I mean if I leave home for a long time, occasionally having a Chinese-style meal will be welcomed..." (HK-P3)

The above utterances implied that no matter what kind of different foods the participants had tasted, the Chinese food would remain as the core value of participant's eating behaviour. This has confirmed Fieldhouse's (1986) proposition that food habits were likely ongoing and resistant to change once established. In addition, participants' accounts suggested that tourists would seldom change their own eating habits while on a sojourn. Although the former participant (HK-P2) was interested in tasting indigenous food, she still emphasised that it was impossible for her to consume local food for every meal. This suggested that participants might perceive the intake of indigenous food as part of the travel experience rather than a 'proper meal' in their culinary provision (Wood, 1994). This was because the intake of indigenous food did not occupy the same meaning in their dietary habits. Tasting indigenous food could satisfy participants' experiential wants but it was not enough to satiate their physiological needs. Eventually, having Chinese food during the trip could induce participants' gustatory contentment. In other words, participants would feel physically content when the meal arrangement was accorded to their core eating behaviour and this was the underlying reason why some participants would be inclined to Chinese food during their trip in Australia. Even for an 'explorer' type of tourist like the former participant (HK-P2), she could not withdraw from her ingrained eating behaviour completely. Hence, it reaffirms the proposition that Chinese food would remain as core eating behaviour wherever participants travel to, and one which could be generalised to other Chinese tourists. It could be further postulated that no matter how much tourists accept indigenous food, after a prolonged period of

time, their inclination towards foods would be drawn back to their core dietary habit.

Appetizing Assurance

Given that Chinese food would remain as core value of the participants' eating behaviour wherever they travel, its associated appetizing assurance and familiar flavour would have exerted their respective influences on participants' food preference when travelling in Australia. One participant mentioned how Chinese food offered assuring "satisfaction" after her disagreeable encounter with the foreign food:

"...I do not know the name of the pasta we had, but anyway, it was awful. At that moment, all of a sudden, I started to miss the foods in Taiwan. And the result was that I felt most satisfied with Chinese food at dinner." (TW-P3)

Generally speaking, to taste indigenous food was a "must" in any travel programmes (Hjalager, 2003). Yet, not every tourist would be accustomed to the new taste of the indigenous food. From the above example, it was obvious that the participant was unsatisfied with the taste of the foreign food. In this circumstance, the intake of the Chinese food comparatively became a more reliable way for the participant to obtain gustatory pleasure. This was because Chinese food was familiar and accustomed to the participant, and thus offered a sense of assurance that it would be appetizing. In other words, the participant favoured the Chinese food because of the appetizing factor (Long, 2004).

According to observed phenomena, there was always at least one Chinese meal arranged per day for the Taiwanese tour group. Most of the participants praised that this was a good arrangement because they often missed Chinese food, particularly when they were unaccustomed to the indigenous food. Apparently, the Chinese food provided most of the participants with a sense of *appetizing assurance* that satisfied their gustatory desire.

Familiar flavour

As the core value of participants' eating habits, Chinese food concomitantly offered them with a familiar flavour, which was another important criterion that would affect food preference. The term familiar flavour did not merely denote familiar taste in this context, but also encompassed a broader denotation including *familiar food item* and *cooking method*.

While tourists often travel in the quest of novelty, they also need a certain degree of familiarity to enjoy their experience (Cohen, 1972). The familiar flavour of the Chinese food could provide Chinese tourists with a comforting sense of familiarity. And as such, the provision of familiar flavour, food item or cooking method, could be used as an ancillary means to make consuming indigenous food become more easily accustomed. In fact, this proposition had been corroborated by an opposite approach of the introduction of Chinese food in the western society. It was found that many Chinese restaurants in western society have modified the flavour of the Chinese food so as to offer palatable, but

not authentic, Chinese foods to westerners. Similarly, Cohen and Avieli (2004) also suggested that tourist-oriented restaurants could mitigate the extreme taste of indigenous foods in order to encourage tourists to partake in it.

Familiar food items

Findings revealed that for some participants, particular Chinese condiments could serve the function of adding a familiar flavour to the foreign food to enhance the taste or sensory appeal. One participant's remark represented such an opinion:

“I hope to have Chinese soy sauce. In this way, even if I cannot stand the food, I can add some soy sauce to go with the rice. Soy sauce and pickled vegetable, these two kinds of things can help to go with the rice when dishes are not delicious.” (CH-P5)

The Chinese participant (CH-P5) considered that the addition of a familiar flavour (soy sauce and pickled vegetable) could help him to mitigate the unaccustomed taste of the foreign foods. Soy sauce, a fermented sauce made from soybeans, roasted grain, water and salt, is a condiment widely used by Chinese to improve flavour of food. Pickled vegetables, on the other hand, are commonly served as a condiment added to rice, congee or noodles. From the participant's account, it was found that these items were used as a means to add a familiar flavour to the foreign foods in order to enhance the palatability.

Familiar cooking methods

The effect of familiar flavour was also reflected on cooking methods. One participant's conversation exemplified this:

“So far, in this trip, most of the meals are Chinese style. But even for these Chinese style meals, they have blended it with local flavour. For example, mud crab is the specialty of Australia, but it was cooked in the Chinese way. We all took it quite well...” (HK-P1)

The Hong Kong participant (HK-P1) conveyed that she was satisfied with the local specialty which was cooked in the Chinese way. According to Kivela (2003), cuisine represents cultural identity through style/method of cooking, use of specific ingredients, and mode of dining. The local specialty in this example was palatable because it was prepared in a familiar cooking method which had met the combinatorial appropriateness of the participant's attitude. In other words, the indigenous food was found palatable as it was prepared with perceived appropriate cooking method which was in line with the participant's core eating behaviour.

For those intransigent participants who might not readily accept new eating behaviour, the supplement of a familiar food item was found to be most accommodating. This conclusion was manifest in one participant's sharing of her meal experiences in Australia:

“...Only one exception is Australian-style BBQ that day. I could not accept that at all. Luckily, besides chicken fillet, I also had rice to eat. So some rice accompanied chicken fillet would suffice. I like Chinese food better, but

travelling abroad, I do not care what to eat as long as I can have rice to get my stomach stuffed.” (TW-P5)

When the Taiwanese participant (TW-P5) was not accustomed to the Australia-style BBQ, the provision of a familiar food item (rice) with the foreign food encouraged the acceptance of the foreign food. In this case, the familiar food functioned as a mediator between the participant’s ingrained dietary behaviour and the new eating experience. Indeed, such a provision facilitated an easier adjustment in the partaking of indigenous food.

In addition, the participant had pointed out that rice was an indispensable food item to her. Actually, this idea came from the concept of proper meal in the Chinese food culture (Chang, 1977). Rice is the one of the most important staple foods in China. Accordingly, rice was not just regarded as a familiar food item, but also an essential element of a “proper” meal. Although other vegetable and meat dishes were there to make rice palatable, fundamentally, a meal would be “proper” only with the intake of rice. Thus, no matter what indigenous foods the participants had tried, without the intake of rice, the meal would not be regarded as a “proper” one. This implied that the intake of indigenous foods could not be separated from the participants’ dietary habits.

The above suggested that familiar flavour could make the unfamiliar foods from unpalatable to become palatable. In essence, the familiar flavour served to transform indigenous food into culturally acceptable food. Participants had realised that it was inevitable to try indigenous foods when travelling. While the

participants had braced themselves for indigenous food in Australia, they still had a concern of not able to get accustomed to the local food. Thus, participants could only rely on the familiar flavour to reduce their *neophobia* (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997).

Implications

In sum, participants' utterances quoted in this sub-section revealed that they had a propensity of not being accustomed to new eating experience and had a steadfast preference towards Chinese foods when travelling in Australia. Yet, it was worthwhile to note that the participants' reminiscences about Chinese food were mainly derived from the discussion on partaking of indigenous food. This suggested that participants did not actively look for the Chinese food in their travel dining experience. However, whenever participants tried any indigenous food, they would still be attached to Chinese food, which dominated as their *core eating behaviour*, as well as providing them a sense of *appetizing assurance* and *familiar flavour*.

For example, some participants stressed that they would more easily adapt themselves to the indigenous food if it has been endowed with their familiar flavour or has been prepared with the appropriate cooking method. These types of participants were relatively intransigent, and have a strong inclination towards partaking of Chinese food. They were in quest of gustatory pleasure rather than spiritual value. As the intake of food was to satisfy their physiological

gratification, they would prefer Chinese food which offered a familiar flavour that could provide appetizing assurance.

On the other hand, they would not refuse to taste indigenous foods. What they want was to have the indigenous food blended with their familiar flavour. In that way, their gustatory pleasure could be assured. Consequently, participants fundamentally considered that arranging Chinese food during their trip could prevent them from being unaccustomed to indigenous food. In addition, Cohen and Avieli (2004) reiterated that tourists were afraid of sampling indigenous food because they were cautious about those unfamiliar food items. And this has induced tourists to eat familiar food while travelling. However, findings from this study rebutted this proposition and suggested that the Chinese tourists' inclination to Chinese food was due to their desire to seek familiar flavour from the food that could concomitantly offer appetizing assurance. To a certain extent, participants still had a wish in consuming indigenous food in Australia. Consequently, an appropriate response to this proposition would be to identify their reasons to partake of indigenous food in Australia.

4.1.2 The indigenous food

Despite the fact that some Chinese participants were not accustomed to new eating experience and expressed their inclination towards Chinese foods when travelling in Australia, on the other hand, findings revealed that many Chinese participants were excited and enthused by having the chance to partake of

indigenous food in Australia. They were eager to be involved in the local gastronomic experience. This section explores the underlying reasons for such an enthusiasm for partaking of indigenous food. As past experience has been proved to be related to tourists' choice of product (Middleton, 2001), it was essential to examine participants' attitude toward foreign foods in their home country so as to have a more complete picture of their dining behaviour while travelling.

Experience of foreign foods in home country

When inquiring into participants' dining out behaviour in their home country, a rather homogeneous pattern of dining out behaviour was discovered. That was, if they want to experience foreign food, they would dine out in foreign restaurants rather than spending time to prepare it at home. One of the participants' utterances epitomized such a pattern:

“Most of the time, I eat rice and dumpling, and other traditional Chinese food at home. If I want to try western food, I will usually dine out, such as in a steak house. I would not spend too much time preparing western-style dishes at home.” (TW-P8)

Every individual has a desire to experience something that is different from the everyday life when dining out (Warde & Martens, 2000), and this participant was of no exception. However, the participant's account revealed that she would consume foreign food only on dining out occasions, and obviously it was not her dietary habit to cook foreign food at home. This implied that dining out occasion was perceived as a means to experience foreign food; as the avenue to experience

something different from the everyday life, and as an opportunity to broaden the participant's culinary experience.

Extrinsic forces

Similarly, another participant had explicitly revealed her willingness to explore different cuisines when dining out in her home country:

“I would choose Chinese food while dining out, but sometimes I would also try some distinctive cuisines, such as Mexican food, Korean BBQ, Thai food, and Indonesian food. Actually, I am willing to try everything. I am interested in all kinds of foods recommended by friends or introduced on the Internet, irrespective of what kind of cuisine it is.” (HK-P2)

According to the utterance, the participant was interested and willing to try any cuisines that were recommended by friends or introduced on the Internet. In other words, these two sources have become the *reference group*, whose recommendations of foreign food were highly valued and trusted by the participant. Thus, the reference group's opinion significantly influenced and shaped the participant's interest toward different foreign cuisines. Different individual could certainly have different reference group constituents, such as family members, co-workers, mass media, and even epicure magazine.

Moreover, tasting foreign foods could be perceived as a fashionable activity (Finkelstein, 1989), the participant, in the quest of foreign gastronomic experience, could have been motivated by the pursuit of fashionability. Fashionability implied a trend which is popular and approved of at a particular time, thus the pursuit of it reflected the individual's taste, style and discernment.

It entailed a sense of superiority and is often associated with conspicuous consumption. The participant (HK-P2) was interested in cuisines which were recommended by the reference group, “*irrespective of what kind of cuisine it is*”. Apparently, she was in pursuit of what is in fashion. As a result, tasting different cuisines have provided a means for the participant to experience first-hand cuisines that were currently valued, accepted and fashionable.

Furthermore, the recommendations made by the reference group reflected the *general public interest*. And the participant was motivated by general public interest, rather than individual interest, of what foreign cuisine should be eaten. This was comprehensible as the participant was under the influence of collectivism of the Chinese culture (Hofsted, 1991). Thus, general public interest served as the ‘pull’ factor which motivated the participant to dine in foreign restaurants.

Considering the above, the participant’s desire to experience foreign foods in home country was affected by extrinsic forces including *reference group*, *fashionability* and *general public interests*.

Frame of reference

The preceding discussions have articulated that participants’ primary motive to taste foreign foods was to experience something different from their daily life. In other words, they sought an experience which was in “contrast” to their own dietary habit, and this could be affected by extrinsic forces such as reference

groups, fashionability and general public interest. Yet, no matter what motivated the participants to try foreign food in their home country, it was certain that participants' dining experience in foreign restaurant in home country would constitute a *frame of reference*. Essentially, frame of reference refers to a particular set of beliefs or ideas which an individual based his or her judgement on (Kivela et al., 1999). Middleton (2001) contended that learning history and previous experience might affect consumer's perception towards buying experience. In this respect, the frame of reference could affect participants' expectation and perception towards the indigenous foods in Australia, as they had previous experience to compare with.

One might argue that the motivation and context of dining environment were different between Australia and participants' home country. In fact, it is the interest of this study to understand whether the participants' dining out behaviour in their home country would be duly reflected during their travel dining experiences. The following section, therefore, elucidates participants' attitudes towards Australian food.

The intake of indigenous foods in Australia

When investigating the reasons for participants in partaking of local food, *exploring local culture* was found to be the predominant underlying motivation. This implied that participants regarded food not only as a sustenance, but also a way to satisfy their experiential needs when on holiday. In any case, participants

considered partaking of indigenous food as a critical component of a '*genuine*' *travel experience*. It further corroborated the proposition that food consumption in tourism can be regarded as supporting consumer experience, but at the same time, can also be regarded as peak touristic experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). Furthermore, participants viewed tasting indigenous food as a *learning* experience, which could enrich their *cultural capital* and fulfill their *need for prestige* as well as *self-actualization*. This corresponded with extant literature which indicated that tourists are increasingly learning and experiencing destination's culture through its indigenous food (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). In addition, participants' *subjective perception* of the Chinese food in Australia, and their *ingrained eating behaviour*, were found to be important factors affecting their desire on partaking of indigenous food.

Exploring Local Culture

Although most of the meals for tour group were pre-arranged by the travel agent, participants were keen to try local indigenous food whenever the opportunities arose. According to observed phenomena, many of the participants were inquisitive about local indigenous food and they were enthused to taste indigenous food when they had to make their own meal arrangement. For example, on the first day when the Taiwanese group arrived in Sydney, participants were curious about the pie (Aussie meat pie) which they saw at a food stall. They asked the local tour guide how these foods were consumed in local community. In particular, they were interested in the meanings of these

foods in the local eating behaviour. This implied that participants have used local food as the means to understand local culture.

In fact, '*exploring local culture*' was explicitly given as the reason for partaking of indigenous food by most of the participants. This reflected that participants perceived partaking of indigenous food as a way to appreciate the local culture. Many participants have indicated that they were interested in anything which could represent the Australian culture, and food and dining certainly provided many opportunities for tourists to encounter various facets of the local culture (Kivela & Johns, 2003). Accordingly, this explained the reason why participants were enthusiastic in trying local indigenous food. One participant's utterance corroborated this proposition:

"I think eating local food helps you get a better idea of local culture. What do local people eat, how to prepare them, and how do they taste? These things are the clues to discover local culture...." (HK-P1)

The participant (HK-P1) perceived eating indigenous food as a channel to get a glimpse of the local culture. She was interested in the cultural meaning rather than gustatory experience of indigenous food. In other words, the participant wanted to know how local people eat and why they eat certain food items. Because food reflects human cultures (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997), various aspects pertinent to local food, such as the way local people eat, the food preparation process, and the taste of the indigenous food, provided "clues" that were critical for better appreciation of the local culture. In this respect,

indigenous food served as a means to explore Australian culture and to satisfy curiosity.

Genuine Travel Experience

Other than to explore local culture, another important reason for participants to partake of indigenous food was the quest of a ‘*genuine*’ travel experience. There was an old saying: “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”, and Chinese people generally believe that when visiting a foreign country, one should follow the customs of those who live in it in order to show respect and blend in with the local people. Such belief was captured in one Chinese participant’s utterances:

“...In my opinion, you should eat local food and drink local beer while travelling. That’s what we call genuine travel. If you take us to have a Chinese meal, it’s not like travelling but return to China.” (CH-P2)

Under the influence of such a belief, the participant (CH-P2) would be inclined to adapt to the local cultures as well as eating habits, and eat what the locals eat. Besides, this suggested that the participant would have a feeling of being brought closer to Australia only when she totally immersed herself in the local eating behaviour. Actually, this was a cohesive stance amongst many other participants. For those participants who held this attitude, they considered food has a greater value on cultural and intellectual aspects rather than mere physical pleasure. In fact, a large number of participants, mostly single women, strongly perceived tasting indigenous food should be an integral part in the travel program. This was because when they travel, they wanted to look for different dining experiences which were appealing and novel to them. Indeed, this has

confirmed the notion that tourists were inclined to seek interesting and surprising experience while travelling (Lee & Crompton, 1992). In addition, based on the participant's (CH-P2) definition, without tasting indigenous food, the trip could not be regarded as a 'genuine' travel experience. This proposition has also been validated by another participant when discussing food preference while travelling:

"We should have a taste of local flavour in Australia since we do not have much chance to try Australian food in Taiwan. It is the same case for me wherever I go....Otherwise, I just feel I have not got the genuine experience when I travel in some place. ...It would be a pity if I do not taste local specialties when I travel to a destination. I always eat local indigenous foods wherever I travel so that I can share my experience with my friends when I go back to Taiwan" (TW-P1)

The participant (TW-P1) also explicitly expressed that tasting indigenous food was a 'must' in her travel experience. The reasons were threefold. Firstly, Australian foods were not readily available in her own country. Secondly, similar to the Chinese participant (CH-P2), the participant would not regard the trip as a 'genuine' travel experience without trying indigenous food. Thirdly, the participant can share her travel dining experiences with her friends when she returned to her home country.

When compared with other western cuisines such as Italian, French and American, Australian cuisine is not as well known amongst the Chinese. This is particularly so in China and Taiwan, because there are not many Australian restaurants in the region. And as such, Chinese are generally not aware of the distinctive features of the Australian cuisine. The Taiwanese participant (TW-P1)

realized that there was not much chance to try Australian food in Taiwan, and therefore, she would fully capitalize the opportunity to try authentic Australian food when she travelled there.

As food and dining offered many conduits for tourists to experience various aspects of a destination's culture, Australian food served as the ideal means for participants to explore its culture. Thus, tasting indigenous food became one of the essential components in participants' travel experience. This explained the reason why participants were enthusiastic in trying indigenous food. And this notion was manifest in both the Taiwanese participant's (TW-P1) and the Chinese participant's (CH-P2) utterances. They were of the opinion that tasting indigenous food was a critical constituent in their travel experience. In other words, they leaned towards seeing indigenous food as '*peak touristic experience*' rather than merely '*supporting consumer experience*' (Quan & Wang, 2004). For participants holding this viewpoint, without tasting indigenous food, the trip could not be considered as a '*total travel experience*'.

Learning and Self-actualization

As indigenous foods were intertwined with the local culture, it offered many facets for tourists to get a glimpse of the local culture. By means of sampling indigenous foods, participants were able to gain an in-depth understanding of the local culture, and in turn enhance their cultural capital. Through observation, it was found that many participants considered that tasting Australian local foods as a direct means to 'learn' Australian culture. Such learning experience would enable

them to acquire new food knowledge so that they could have the capacity to discuss and evaluate Australian foods, as the Chinese maxim suggests “Travelling ten thousand miles is better than reading ten thousand books”. Evidently, Chinese people regard travelling as a more effective way than reading to learn and experience the world first-hand. This confirmed the notion that participants regarded partaking of indigenous food as an effectual learning experience that could enhance their cultural capital. According to Maslow (1970), individuals would have a need of self-actualization when they desire to become capable on something. As partaking of indigenous food would enable participants to increase their cultural capital, a sense of accomplishment could be induced, and thereby fulfilling their needs of self-actualization.

Sense of Prestige

As mentioned in the above section, one of the reasons for the Taiwanese participant (TW-P1) to taste indigenous food was to share the travel dining experience with her friends after she returned to her home country. Tasting indigenous food, accordingly, served as evidence that the participant has travelled to a destination. In the past, outbound travels of Chinese residents were restricted due to economic constraints, tight political control and visa restrictions. And even with today’s increased disposable income per capita, the ability to travel abroad still symbolized social status and privilege in China (Zhang, Pine & Lam, 2005). In fact, Kivela and Johns (2003) contended that dining out and travel is often used by people to assert social status, which could be considered as conspicuous consumption. Moreover, Fields (2002) also proposed that status-conscious tourists

like to explore new cuisines and food that they and their friends are not likely to eat at home. Thus, to a certain extent, the ability to travel abroad and tasting indigenous foods were akin to conspicuous consumption. When the participant shared her experience with friends, she could assert her social status as she possessed more cultural capital than her friends. As Australian food was considered a new cuisine and not readily available in Taiwan, such an experience could instil a sense of prestige.

Subjective Perception

Another reason that triggered participants to taste indigenous food was because they subjectively perceived that Chinese food in Australia would not be authentic. For example, one of the Chinese participants expressed her subjective opinion on the Chinese cuisine in Australia as follows:

*“Why do we eat Chinese food again while travelling abroad? We have had enough of it at home. Besides, Chinese cuisine here is not authentic at all.”
(Ch-P3)*

As stated earlier, the Hong Kong participant (HK-P2) has praised that Hong Kong had the best Chinese food in the world, implying that the Chinese food in Australia would not be as good as those in Hong Kong. In fact, it was observed that most of the participants held the assumption that Chinese food in Australia would not be as good as they had in their home country; therefore, they were unlikely to eat Chinese food after flying thousands of miles from their home country to Australia. As participants presumably depreciated the Chinese food in Australia, they were inclined to try indigenous food, or different foreign foods.

Thus, for these participants, their reason to taste indigenous food was affected by their subjective perception that the Chinese food in Australia did not meet their standard of palatability.

Association with Ingrained Eating Behaviour

In the course of exploring local food culture, it was found that many participants naturally compared the Australian's food culture with the Chinese food culture. This was an interesting revelation that participants' choices of indigenous food were closely associated with their ingrained eating behaviour in home country. A statement made by one of the Taiwan participants exemplified such a propensity:

"I like small snacks in Taiwan, so I am curious about the snack food in Australia rather than those typical specialty meals; I prefer home-made food."
(TW-P2)

Despite the fact that there were always different opinions on what should be the representative food of a destination, destination marketer would often identify certain typical foods to characterize the destination. They would promote such typical foods through mass media, such as magazine and television travel programme. However, the participant in this instance was not interested in those typical indigenous foods promoted by the mass media, but was instead curious about the snack food in Australia. In other words, this participant was not looking for fashionability in her dining experience. She would rather favour snack food than those fine dining restaurants in Australia, similar to what she was used to do

in Taiwan. This reflected that the participant's travel dining behaviour was somehow associated with her original dining behaviour.

According to observed phenomena, it was surprising that many participants considered their genuine contact with Australian culture was through the snack foods on the street rather than those arranged meals in the restaurants. Hjalager (2003) have proposed that some tourists were reluctant to have meal in restaurant due to the uneasiness with elegant restaurant. However, Hjalager's proposition was developed from the western viewpoint, findings from this study presented a different rationale from the Chinese perspective. That was, for those Chinese participants who were reluctant to have meal in restaurant could be partially due to the uneasiness with the elegant ambience, however, a more relevant reason could have come from their ingrained eating behaviour. As most Taiwanese people were accustomed to eating snack food, they would consider that such food could duly represent the Taiwanese food culture (Hsieh & Chang, 2006). As a result, they were of the opinion that the Australian's snack food would likewise be a good representative of Australia food culture. This explained why many participants favoured snack foods in Australia rather than meals in the restaurants in the course of exploring culture via indigenous food.

Implications

Emergent findings revealed that participants partook of indigenous food as they perceived it as a means to *explore local culture*. They regarded partaking of

indigenous food as a critical element of a '*genuine*' *travel experience*. They valued *learning* via travelling as it would increase their *cultural capital* and fulfil their *need for self-actualization*. As the ability to travel abroad and tasting indigenous foods symbolized status and privilege, *sense of prestige* would also be the underlying cause of sampling indigenous food. In addition, participants' *subjective perception* that the Chinese food in Australia would not be authentic, and their *ingrained eating behaviour*, was found to be influential in affecting their desire on partaking of indigenous food.

Hjalager (2003) have contended that tourists who actively sought a chance to taste indigenous food did so because they were looking for gourmet food. However, emergent findings from this study suggested another possibility from the Chinese tourists' perspective. It was found that participants who had intention to eat indigenous food were predominantly driven by their cultural interest. However, Kivela (2003) also proposed that palatable food to one culture might not be equally appetizing to another culture group. Findings substantiated this proposition that participants might not find the Australian 'representative' food equally palatable as the Chinese food. However, they were motivated by the cultural element of the indigenous food, which provided them with *learning* opportunities, increased their *cultural capital* and thus leading to a '*genuine*' *travel experience*. This implied that participants wanted to pursue intellectual value or cultural quality rather than gustatory pleasure from the indigenous food.

4.1.3 Non-fastidious on food selection

Findings further revealed a third type of participants who were not fastidious about either Chinese food or indigenous food. Participants who held this attitude seemed to have very little interest in food, viewing it simply as sustenance rather than a source of pleasure. Because Chinese people place importance group harmony, many participants admitted that they would accommodate their friends' food preference when dining out in their home country. This attitude towards food selection had been reflected on their eating behaviour while travelling. Some of the participants indicated that they were prepared to compromise with the meal arrangements in Australia. Responding to this group-oriented food choice, participants conveyed that food selection was not their main concern since they had joined the tour. For example, one participant expressed her views on meal arrangements as follows:

“...Participation in a tour group means you agree to the arrangement made by the travel agency. I have no special requirement for food as long as my stomach is not empty. After all, it is understandable that we cannot have the same delicious food as in Taiwan....” (TW-P6)

This participant further conveyed her comments on foods at a destination as:

“You can never find a home away from home, where you can have a good sleep and a good meal as comfortable as home. Therefore, what I am concerned is not the meals but the quality of tour.” (TW-P6)

The above utterances suggested that the participant (TW-P6) have preconceived idea about foods during the trip. From the participant's perspective, food and accommodation were regarded as 'supporting consumer experiences'

(Quan & Wang, 2004), and she assumed these experiences would not match the comfort she had at home. In this respect, the participant was prepared for the compromise and to lower her expectation on these ‘supporting consumer experiences’. After all, what the participant valued during the trip was the excitement from visiting tourist attractions, in other words the ‘peak touristic experiences’.

In fact, when the participant indicated that “*it was understandable that we cannot have the same delicious food as in Taiwan*”, and “*nowhere could find a good sleep and a good meal as comfortable as home*”, she virtually implied that she perceived the palatability of food in Australia of a lower quality. As such, she passively accepted the arranged meals and turned her concern on the quality of travel experiences rather than food experiences. It was plausible that the participant did not deliberately undervalue the food experience; it was the preconceived idea about the food in Australia that had led her to focus on the other travel experiences. According to one of the participant’s remark, tour leader’s advocacy had also contributed to such preconception:

“...the tour leader always said: travelling is to climb the mountain, enjoy the sight of scenery. You do not have to be fastidious about meals and accommodations, but actually he wanted to convince you that you should not fastidious about meals and accommodation” (CH-P2).

The participant (CH-P2) criticized the tour leader for the prejudiced advocacy, for it was a means to avoid complaint about meals and accommodations. As discussed earlier, some of the participants who were

interested in indigenous food, stressed that ‘genuine’ travel experience should involve every aspects of travel experience, including food and accommodation. However, there were still some participants who accepted tour leader’s suggestion and merely paid attention to the satisfaction derived from ‘peak touristic’ experiences. It was noted that participants who held this attitude mostly belonged to the elder generation group.

It could be assumed that those elder participants were often intransigent tourists who remained steadfast in their ingrained eating behaviour. In addition with tour leader’s advocacy, they had predetermined and a prejudiced opinion that the food at a destination could not compare with the food in their home country. On the other hand, these elder participants were largely risk-avoidance type of tourists. When travelling to a foreign country, they were particularly cautious about safety and security issues as they were not proficient in English. Such observation was manifested in one of the elder participant’s utterances:

“In a foreign place, without arrangement of the travel agency, we could have gone nowhere with our poor English. In fact I do not have too many expectations for travel group, so long as they introduce more scenes and guarantee security.” (CH-P5)

Hence, they tended to avoid any adventurous activities (including different foods) and preferred to stay in their ‘environmental bubble’ on the trip (Cohen, 1972). This was one of the reasons why they joined package tour and this also explained why they were inclined to follow tour leader’s guidance of what should be done when travelling. Accordingly, they would gladly accept the pre-arranged

meals and would not have any special requirement on meals as long as they could travel safely.

Yet, this did not mean that meal arrangement would not affect their travel satisfaction even though they were prepared for the compromise. The Chinese participant had further expressed that food would affect travel satisfaction:

“Though I am unsatisfied with the meal arrangement, but the goal that I come here is not eating, but to see the things that I have not seen. Although food is not particularly important to me, but it will still influence my mood.”
(CH-P5)

Without doubt, the emergent finding confirmed that ‘supporting consumer experiences’, such as food and accommodations, have their respective roles within the overall travel experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). Likewise, even though the elder participants were not fastidious on consuming Chinese food or indigenous food, their satisfaction on the meal arrangement would also in turn affect their total travel satisfaction. It was noted from observation that the elder participants judged the meal quality in terms of sumptuousness. As these elder participants did not have preference to partake of Chinese foods or indigenous foods in Australia, as long as the arranged meals could offer them a feeling of plenitude, they would feel contented.

It was found that most elder participants belonged to this type of non-fastidious tourists. They regarded food consumption while travelling as

‘supporting consumer experiences’. Accordingly, they did not have a particular preference on the type of cuisine being arranged. Their prime concern was travel safety and security. They tended to derive satisfaction from ‘peak touristic experiences’ such as visiting tourist attractions; they were of the opinion that it would be difficult to find another ‘home away from home’. They preconceived that the ‘supporting consumer experiences’ such as food and accommodation would not be as comfortable as in their home country. Therefore, they had prepared for the compromise and this further explained why they adopted a non-fastidious attitude towards food consumption. However, it was found that even though they were relatively non-fastidious on food consumption, if the meal was poorly arranged, their travel satisfaction could have been affected.

Discussion

One of the research objectives of this study was to investigate the influence of Chinese food culture on Chinese participants’ eating behaviour during holidays in Australia. The above-mentioned premise has revealed that Chinese participants’ food preference is largely influenced by Chinese food culture. At first glance, Chinese participants appear to have great interests in sampling indigenous foods in Australia. This suggests that Chinese participants might have temporarily withdrawn themselves from their ingrained eating behaviour. However, according to Chang (1977), Chinese food culture is well-known for its flexibility and adaptability and Chinese people are intrepid in the pursuit of “edible” foods. In this respect, the Chinese participants’ keenness on indigenous food is correlated

with their enthusiasm in quest for edible foods under the influence of Chinese food culture.

In general, it could be said that most of the Chinese participants preferred to partake of indigenous food while travelling. While there are some participants who remained steadfast in Chinese food; however, they have indicated that the Chinese food served as a lubricant for making the intake of indigenous food become an enjoyable dining experience. This implied that the Chinese participants were in favour of having indigenous food as part of their travel dining experience. Yet, as consuming Chinese food was the *core eating behaviour* of the Chinese participants, they believed that Chinese food would provide them a sense of *appetizing assurance*. Thus, they rely on the *familiar flavour* of the Chinese food which could make the indigenous food become palatable. In this respect, the ideal way to appreciate indigenous food culture is to partake of the fusion food of Chinese and Australian food. This suggests that participants still have a concern of not getting used to the new taste and new flavour of the indigenous food. To some extent, participants' anxiety towards indigenous foods corroborates the influence of Chinese food culture on their eating behaviour.

Hofstede (1991) proposed that a person might need to adapt a new behaviour when facing a new cultural environment. This suggests that Chinese participants need to adapt themselves to the Australian food culture. However, findings convey that the Chinese participants' eating behaviour is guided by the Chinese food culture even when they are in a different cultural environment. Although

most of the participants actively look for a new dining experience when travelling, yet they prefer to socialise, rather than to adapt, to a new eating behaviour in Australia. In other words, the Chinese participants are trying to behave in a way which is acceptable in the Australian food culture. Fundamentally, Chinese participants are reluctant to withdraw their eating behaviour from the Chinese food culture. This coincides with Fieldhouse's proposition (1986) that participants are unlikely to change their ingrained eating behaviour even though they might be tempted to taste indigenous foods in Australia. In essence, the socialisation to a new eating behaviour is a temporary phenomenon for the purpose of experiencing Australian food culture; participants' core eating behaviour would still remain constant. It could be further assumed that the socialisation of new behaviour only exists at participants' travel dining experience. After all, as participants suggested, they could not continuously partake of indigenous food throughout the journey because consuming indigenous food could not satisfy their physiological needs. This proves that the Chinese food value is embedded in the participants' mind which could not be altered easily.

To this end, the first proposition is developed from the emergent findings:

Proposition 1: No matter whether tourists accept or reject indigenous foods, they are reluctant to withdraw from their ingrained eating behaviour while travelling.

Bareham (1995) delineated that people would acquire new attitudes and behaviour through socialisation process and in turn, affect their value system. Yet, findings from this study contradict with the Bareham's (1995) proposition and suggest that the socialisation process could help participants to further confirm the pre-existing food value system. Such a claim could be supported by following deliberations.

First, it was found that participants often compared food quality and palatability between indigenous food and Chinese food. In addition, this study has shown that most of the participants were pursuing the familiarity from the food even for those participants who are in favour of indigenous food. This was the evidence which could prove the influence of Chinese food culture on Chinese participants' eating behaviour. Participants have articulated that cultural interest is the major reason why they are interested in partaking of indigenous food. In fact, the comparison between two food cultures have made the Chinese participants realise how tasty the Chinese food is as they perceived it. Based on the emergent findings, Chinese participants have subjective perceptions of palatability stemmed from the Chinese food culture. Besides, participants expressed that they found indigenous foods unpalatable because it was not prepared according to their familiar cooking methods. This could explain the reason why Chinese participants appreciate more of Chinese foods after tasting indigenous foods.

Second, most of the participants travelled to Australia only for a short period of time. This implies that participants might not have had sufficient time to fully

immerse themselves in the Australian food culture. In addition, the pre-arranged meals did not allow participants to have a chance to participate in the food preparation process. Participants had only superficially encountered with Australian food culture. Thus, the new dining experience to the participants was to ‘discern’, not to ‘learn’, new eating behaviour in Australia. In this respect, participants did not absorb new food values, instead their food value system still remained constant. Richards (2002) reiterated that tourists are willing to learn local culture through food intake. However, in a more precise way, Chinese participants merely increased their cultural capital by knowing what is the ‘social mannerisms’ (Finkelstein, 1989) on the table and how they should act in a particular way within the context of dining in Australia.

This section conveys participants’ food preference while travelling. Some might argue that participants could not actively pursue their food preference due to the nature of package tour. Participants could only passively accept the meals that were pre-arranged by the travel agency. Yet, findings from this study revealed that most of the participants have somehow actively engaged in the food selection process. For example, participants have suggested that they prefer to have fusion food of Chinese and indigenous food. Even for those participants who were not fastidious about food preferences, they have also expressed their liking for sumptuous Chinese meals. In response to this inclination, it was observed that travel agencies have provided some indigenous foods which are prepared in the Chinese style. Thus, Chinese participants have exerted indirect influence in affecting the pre-arranged meals provided by the travel agencies.

It is mentioned that the ideal way to encounter with Australian food is the fusion between Chinese and indigenous food. This sub-section further elucidate that participants appreciate more of Chinese food by tasting indigenous food. Furthermore, participant did not change their food culture value after consuming indigenous food. Altogether, the second proposition is derived:

Proposition 2: Travel dining experience provides a stage for cultural socialisation between Chinese food culture and Australian food culture.

Hjalager and Richards (2002) contended that travel dining experience constitutes an important memory of the travel experience. Boniface (2003) delineated that food and drink at a destination would offer educational experience for tourists to render to discern a destination's food culture. The emerging findings from this study corroborate the propositions in the previous literature. Indeed, participants' accounts suggest that cultural interest is the major pull factor which motivated their consumption of indigenous food. To be more precise, cultural interest denotes participants' gastronomic interest on indigenous foods. This finding is in line with the long-standing Chinese belief "*Travelling ten thousand miles is better than reading ten thousand books*". The Chinese participants perceived travelling as an experience characterized with educational input. They regarded travelling as an effective way to learn and experience the Australian culture first-hand. As indigenous foods are entwined with the local culture, it proffers participants a direct means to 'discern' and 'experience'

Australian culture. The intake of indigenous foods allowed participants to have a deeper understanding of the local food culture, and in turn enhanced their cultural capital. In the Chinese society, the ability to travel abroad and tasting indigenous foods symbolized status and privilege, as such induced a *sense of prestige*.

No matter whether the participants were motivated by a desire to enrich their cultural capital or by the sense of prestige, one of the critical elements of the travel dining experience is to be ‘memorable’ (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). It was found that participants expected the travel dining experience to be memorable, which is analogous to a take-home souvenir, for which the remembrance could be retained and some of the magic of the vacation be carried forward into the holiday afterlife (Boniface, 2003). Such a memorable dining experience would build up participants’ cultural capital. On the other hand, participants would be able to share the unique dining experiences after returning home, and thereby fulfilling their desire of a sense of prestige. Consequently, the ‘memorability’ of the travelling dining experience constitutes an indispensable element of what participants regarded as the *‘genuine’ travel experience*. Accordingly, this leads to the formation of the third proposition:

Proposition 3: Partaking of indigenous food could actualise tourists’ desire for a memorable dining experience which is a critical element of a genuine travel experience.

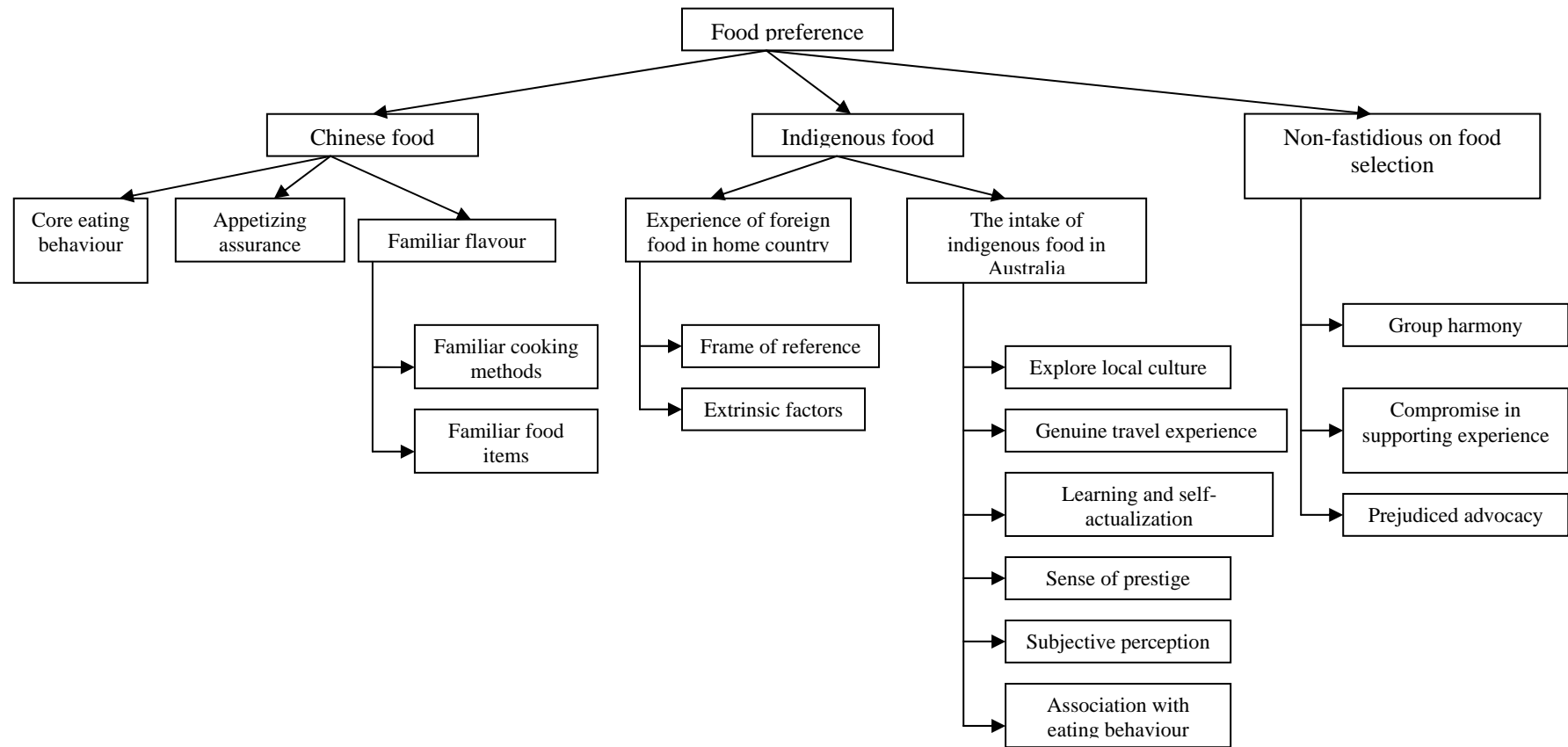


Figure 4.1 A model of tourists' food choice

Based on the discussions on participants' food preference in their travel dining experience, a model of tourists' eating behaviour (see Figure 4.1) is developed in order to depict Chinese tourists' food choice while visiting Australia. Partaking of Chinese food is found to be the core eating behaviour for the Chinese tourists. Many of them conveyed that they prefer to eat Chinese food when they travel, for it can provide them the senses of appetizing assurance and familiar flavour. Specifically, Chinese tourists look for familiar cooking methods and food items from their travel dining experience.

In addition, the model suggests that tourists' experience of foreign food in home country might constitute a frame of reference that would affect their attitude towards indigenous food at a destination. Several underlying motives are proposed to delineate tourists' choice on indigenous food, namely, explore local culture, genuine travel experience, learning and self-actualisation, sense of prestige, subjective perception, and association with eating behaviour.

Moreover, it was found that some of the tourists were not fastidious on food selection. This model depicts that Chinese tourists would respect group harmony, compromise in supporting experience, and even accept the prejudiced advocacy made by the tour guide, in order to ensure the safety and security of their travel experience.

The development of this model is based on the data collected and analyzed. Although the model may only be applied in the context of this study, it is believed

that the model could contribute to a better understanding of tourists' eating behaviour in the tourism literature. Based on this model, it is suggested that further studies could examine the causal relationship between each category. For example, whether tourists' dining-out experience at home country would affect tourists' attitude towards the choice of indigenous food.

4.2 Healthy eating while travelling

In focus group interviews, the awareness of healthy eating was mentioned mostly in the context of asking participants about personal food preference. Accordingly, this led to reminiscences about food selection and gave an opportunity for participants to reveal their health-consciousness while travelling. Different aspects of health eating behaviours were revealed by the participants. They were, *the influence of yin-yang concept, sufficient nutrition, breakfast, and food related risk.*

The Influence of Yin-Yang Concept

In focus group interviews, participants have pointed out that the *yin-yang* concept not only impinged on their eating preference at home but also on the selection of menu when dining out. For instance, when describing food choice at restaurant, one participant's utterance exhibited her belief on the *yin-yang* concept:

"I like white meat better than red meat...because the Chinese traditional medicine says that red meat is a bit 'hotter', so it is not good for us to eat too much of it" (HK-P2).

Although the *yin-yang* concept dominated the Chinese food culture, the western healthy eating habit with a quest for dietary balance similar to the *yin-yang* concept has been gradually welcomed by the Chinese. In fact, to a certain extent, the two concepts have been coexisting harmoniously in the Chinese food culture. For instance, one participant stated her belief on healthy eating as follows:

“I am alone at home for most of the time, so I always eat simple meals. I favour vegetable. And I prefer to have Chinese-style family dishes at home. I do not like meat, besides, at old age, meat is not good for health, so I try to choose some light food.”.... “I only take less greasy food at home. But travelling abroad, I decided to indulge myself a bit and resume old habit when I go home.”(TW-P10)

The eating habit of the participant revealed that she has been somehow influenced by the western healthy eating habit, which emphasises on the intake of vegetables which was high in fibre, and to avoid excessive partake of greasy food. It was obvious that the participant’s tendency of healthy eating was driven by self-awareness. From the participant’s perspective, the choice and preparation of food should follow the ‘correct’ route to healthy diet, particularly for her age. Thus, meat with high level of cholesterol was labelled as unhealthy food by the participant. Besides, the foods need to be cooked in a healthy way so as to meet her healthy needs. And as the participant indicated, she could maintain a healthy diet at home because the food choice and cooking method were at her control.

Nonetheless, as meals for tour group were often pre-arranged, the participant’s (TW-P10) belief on healthy diet might not be able to be sustained when she joined the tour group. While the arranged meals might not coincide with

the participant's food beliefs, the participant would need to accept and temporarily give up her ingrained food beliefs. In fact, the participant decided to lay the healthy diet aside and indulge herself with group's arrangement. When the participant was in search of interesting and surprising experiences (Lee & Crompton, 1992), healthy diet was no longer a major concern as the participant looked for relaxation at travel dining experience. Another motive that might induce the participant to disregard her healthy diet was because the participant was tantalised by the sumptuous meals. In this respect, the concept of hedonism could have made the participant alter her eating behaviour in Australia. On the other hand, the temporary disregard of the participant's healthy dietary habit could be considered as a socialisation process (Bareham, 1995). When the participant wanted to experience local indigenous food, she would need to modify her food beliefs and to learn a new eating behaviour and this explained the reasons why the participant would adapt, or compromise, a different eating behaviour in Australia.

However, the observed phenomena suggested that findings from the Taiwanese participant did not equally apply to Hong Kong participants' eating behaviour. At the Australian barbeque restaurant and buffet restaurants, Hong Kong participants have exhibited that their consciousness on healthy eating would remain constant when travelling. While the buffet restaurants offered comparatively sumptuous buffet for participants, it was noticed that most of the participants still favoured vegetable salads, seafood, and fruits. The meat items, such as steak, chicken Kiev, were abandoned. In essence, vegetable, seafood, and fruits were often deemed to be 'cold' foods whereas steak and the deep-fried

chicken Kiev were regarded as the warming foods. The observed phenomena proved the Hong Kong participants would maintain the *yin-yang* concept when travelling.

The above findings suggested a clear distinction between the ‘novelty’ group, which represented by the Taiwanese participant, and Hong Kong participants was included in the ‘familiarity’ group. The former tended to disregard the healthy diet and look for a hedonic travel dining experience. On the other hand, the ‘familiarity’ group preferred not to compromise their beliefs in healthy diet for the foods which were familiar to them. Obviously, these two groups held contrasting views on the acceptance of foods. Participants of the ‘familiarity’ group were much more likely accustomed with western foods. As Hong Kong has been exposed to the Western culture for a long period, the arranged meals, both Chinese foods and western foods, were relatively familiar to Hong Kong participants. It was therefore assumed that Hong Kong participants considered dining out at a destination as an extension of their daily experience. Thus, when Hong Kong participants have perceived the familiarity from the arranged meals, their patterns of dining out would remain constant as they normally do at home and the concept of healthy diet would still appear even when they were in Australia.

In contrast, the Taiwanese participant (TW-P10) was overwhelmed by the tempting appearance of foods and a wide array of food selection though there were similar meal arrangements between Taiwan and Hong Kong groups. The

Taiwanese participant decided to temporarily disregard her belief in healthy diet because she found the arranged food was appealing and it offered the experience of excitement and exoticism (Finkelstein, 1989). It suggested that the participant wanted to pursue pleasure so as to make her dining experience to be memorable. In addition, it was the novelty foods enticed the participant to disregard the healthy diet and adapt to a new eating behaviour. And this have made her abandonment on healthy diet became more rationalised. While both groups have different rationale on healthy diet, the ‘novelty’ group considered pursuing a surprising and satisfying food experience as the main reason to disregard healthy diet whereas the ‘familiarity’ group was reluctant to change their healthy diet for familiar foods. However, both groups’ view on healthy diet was the emphasis they placed upon the temptation of foods. Thus, by implication, if Hong Kong participants had found the arranged foods were appealing, they would disregard the concept of *yin-yang* and indulge themselves with the tempting foods.

Sufficient Nutrition

One additional consideration of healthy eating emerged from focus group interviews was the sufficient nutrition. Participants clearly recognized that the sufficient nutrition was important to their dining experience in Australia. The following utterances conveyed participants’ motive on partaking of nutritious food during the trip in Australia:

“The most important thing for travel is sufficient nutrition, which can support my activities of one day. For example, I could not find the congee in the morning, and had to drink the milk instead. But after drinking, I felt very uncomfortable. However, if we take coffee or other dishes as an alternative to

milk, these foods had no nutrition, and the Chinese do not like drinking coffee at all. So I mostly had to eat the food with soup in the morning, and I was not very used to it....” (CH-P5)

“On a journey, we need more strength. And the best way to gain energy is to eat more. A lot of people assume that eating is not important; but in my opinion, it is just the opposite. That is because you need to have sufficient nutrition when travelling...” (CH-P2)

Scholars often considered food in trip as a means to explore local culture or to fulfil tourists’ experiential part of holiday dream (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Foods were deemed to be the representation of local culture and could be used to appeal tourists in travel brochure or television travel programme. In this respect, destination marketers focused on the promotion of foods in terms of its presentation and acceptability. The above utterances described participants’ eating behaviour in Australia, however, suggested a further approach to participants’ requirement on meal arrangement. That was, sufficient nutrition was necessary to maintain strength for their activities during the trip. The insight was consistent with Chinese food culture which indicated the sufficient nutrition was critical to maintain one’s *chi* (energy or strength) balance (Lu, 1986). In this respect, proper nutrition would contribute to disease prevention. Conversely, nutrient deficiencies and starvation could result in a weakened health condition. In order to prevent from illness during the trip, the nutritional food and sufficient food quantity tended to become indispensable to the participants’ requirement on meal arrangement. In fact, the participants’ account suggested that there should be nutritional foods provided so as to afford their strength when travelling. And this was to prevent illness so that the Chinese tourists could enjoy their holidays in a

healthy state. Otherwise, they would feel uncomfortable and, in turn, affect their travel experience.

On the other hand, the participant's (CH-P5) expectation towards nutritional food was associated with his eating behaviour. The lack of food items (congee) have forced the participant to sample new substance (milk), however, this was a discontented experience to him. Although milk was perceived as nutritional food to the participant, it was still difficult for him to adapt this new eating behaviour. This suggested that the participant was not merely consuming nutrients; he was also pursuing a gustatory experience. In other words, the nourishing food items were shaped not only by its ability to satisfy the body's nutritional needs but also by its palatability and edibility (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997). This palatability and edibility came from the participant's cultural construct, thus, the context of the nutritional foods should also correspond with the participant's eating behaviour.

Breakfast

Meanwhile, the participant (CH-P5) implied that breakfast was an important meal to attain nutrition based on his food belief. Nonetheless, the participant stated that he did not adapt himself to breakfast setting in Australia. Indeed, this was a pervasive subject to which many participants referred. For example, some participants stated:

“Usually, I eat Chinese food, because in Taiwan, people are used to Chinese food. But it is different in Australia, especially for breakfast. Instead of hot

soybean milk or hot milk, Australian people eat cold food for breakfast. I do not get used to it very much.” (TW-P1)

“Yes, nothing else but some western-style breakfast. I wanted to eat some hot food, but what I saw was just bacon or sausage. They looked very greasy.” (HK-P5)

The above utterances unravelled that most of the participants referred their breakfast behaviours as to partake of some hot and less greasy food. They preferred watery food, such as rice congee or soybean milk, to smooth the stomach at breakfast. Participants’ accounts suggested breakfast was an area that most Chinese tourists were reluctant to change their eating behaviour. This implied that they were hesitant to take on culinary adventure right after waking up.

There might be two plausible causes for participants not to take on culinary adventure at breakfast. First, as noted by the participant (CH-P5), breakfast was significant to maintain a healthy state and it was the source of nourishment for daily activities. When the intake of breakfast was considered to be the bodily nourishment rather than the pursuit of pleasure, it was plausible that participants would attach to their familiar foods to assure its nutritional values. The other reason might be the content of breakfast made participants to lose their appetite. The content of the English breakfast comprised of such as, bacon, sausage, and scramble eggs were regarded as greasy foods which were high in cholesterol, and it contradicted with their beliefs in healthy diet. Besides, although the English breakfast could be considered as local eating behaviour, the content of breakfast was, however, considerably familiar to them. Thus, as alluded earlier, many of the

participants would not alter their eating behaviour at breakfast for unhealthy and familiar foods.

Food Related Risk

Another consideration related to the Chinese tourists' attitude towards healthy eating was food-related risk. Elsrud (2001) proposed that health risk or illness could preclude tourists to experience local indigenous food. However, one participant indicated that food-related risk was not the prime concern when she partook of indigenous food in Australia. The participant conveyed her awareness on food-related health risks as follows:

“In China, I absolutely will not eat oyster, but here (in Australia) I will eat it at will. In China, oysters are allegedly imported, but I am afraid there will be domestic oyster amongst them. You know the environment in China. Currently, many factories are set up in China, and many rivers had been polluted...” (CH-P1)

Cohen and Avieli (2004) contended that many tourists were wary of consuming indigenous food in Asian destinations because of the ‘unhygienic’ look of foods and unknown ingredients. In fact, the anxiety with the ‘unhygienic’ look of food came from unacceptable methods of food preparation and production, and unknown ingredients could be associated with edibility (e.g. the fear of encountering unpalatable flavours or textures) or religious beliefs (Kivela, 2003). While previous literature emphasised on the cultural or nutritional aspects of food-risk management (Fieldhouse, 1986; Cohen & Avieli, 2004), the participant’s account suggested destination image would also affect her attitudes toward food-related risk. The participant has shown her concern on pollution which affected

the oyster quality, however, her ambivalence came mostly from the potential effect from the acute environmental pollution. In essence, what the participant worried about was the food production and processing that might have produced negative influence on food safety. Ironically, her concern on food safety only occurred when she was consuming domestic foods rather the Australian foods. As Australia symbolised a developed and affluent society in the participant's perception, this reassured that safety issues at every stage of the chain, from food production, distribution, to retail would be strictly under control. Accordingly, this lessened the participant's anxiety, or offered reassurance, on food-related risk in Australia. Thus, by implication, adherence to the food risk when travelling was related to the developing status of the destination. It was most likely that food-related risk was not the issue when tourists perceived the destinations was a well-developed society. This suggested that Cohen and Avieli's (2004) proposition, perhaps, only applied to scenarios of western tourists travelling to Asian destinations. For those Chinese tourists, they believed that the indigenous foods from a developed destination would not pose threats to their health.

Discussion

In this section, the findings suggested that tourists might temporarily disregard their food beliefs in order to socialise into a new eating environment. The pursuit of hedonic dining experience was proven to be associated with the abandonment of healthy diet when travelling. Equally, if the foods had not inspire tourists' taste bud, tourists would be reluctant to lay their healthy diet aside as they regarded the

dining experience in Australia merely as an extension of daily experience. In addition, the findings revealed tourists' needs for nourishing foods. It was conveyed in terms of sufficient food quantity and quality of breakfast in order to prevent illness and provide nutrition and energy to support their travel activities. While Cohen and Avieli (2004) postulated that tourists would not try local indigenous food because of the unhygienic look or unknown ingredients, the findings from this study disputed that the proposition only existed in the case of Westerner visit Asian countries. The Chinese tourists in this study disregarded the food-related risk and had a faith to try local indigenous food because participants perceived Australia as a developed and affluent society.

Referring to the objectives of this study, the purpose of this section is to investigate whether the healthy diet belief, a significant part of Chinese food culture value (Lu, 1986), would affect the Chinese participants' travel eating behaviour. Based on the emergent findings, Chinese participants disregard their healthy diet beliefs while travelling.

Albeit Lu (1986) contended that maintain harmony and the *yin-yang* balance of the food intake are imperative to the Chinese food culture, it was found that some of the participants disregard the harmonious eating behaviour due to the temptation from the sumptuous meals. In this respect, it appears that participants' eating behaviour did not operate in tandem with their healthy eating beliefs. This finding is insightful since it corroborates the proposition in the previous literatures. Hofstede (1991) indicated that a person would adopt a new behaviour in order to

socialise into a new cultural environment. Findings from this study further suggest that the reason for the adoption of a new eating behaviour might not be the purpose of socialisation but the lure of the sumptuous meals. In addition, Wu (1995) suggested that the concept of *yin-yang* equilibrium would become significant particularly when the Chinese physically feel uncomfortable. Thus, it could assume that the Chinese participants would overlook the *yin-yang* balance while travelling since it is the peripheral concern to the food intake if the Chinese participant is in a healthy state. Particularly, this study has proposed that the pursuit of hedonic dining experience might induce the Chinese participants disregard their healthy beliefs while travelling. Altogether, it could propose that the Chinese participants' disregard their healthy diet beliefs because they are overwhelmed by the sumptuous dining experience. As healthy diet belief is part of the Chinese food culture value, the Chinese participants would disregard the pre-existing eating behaviour if they decide to indulge themselves with the sumptuous meals.

On the other hand, the influence of Chinese food culture on participants' eating behaviour is manifested by their emphasis on a proper meal should comprise the nutritional foods and sufficient food quantity when travelling. According to the Chinese food culture, these two aspects are considerably critical to sustain one's energy and strength (Lu, 1986) and in turn maintain people in a healthy state. Importantly, this finding reveals that travel with a health state has a significant influence upon tourist satisfaction. Based on the emergent findings, a sufficient food supply meal would prevent tourists from travel with an empty

stomach which would affect tourist satisfaction. Previous literature often emphasise on the marketing function of the travel dining experience. For example, Cohen and Avieli (2004) suggested that food could be manifestation of destination's local culture. Okumus, Okumus, and McKercher (2007) proposed that a destination's food culture could be deemed as intangible asset which could be utilised in marketing tourist destination. However, findings from this study suggest that the practical function of food in satiating tourists' physiological need is also worthwhile to be noted. As participants' suggested, sufficient food supply could support them for the travel activities.

To some extent, participants' accounts suggest that the nutritional concern would affect their choice of food during holidays. In the earlier accounts, participants have expressed that they could not continuously partake of indigenous food throughout the journey due to their concern on the physical contentment. This implies that the intake of indigenous food might fail to attain their strength for travel activities. Therefore, it could be assumed that the nutritional concern might be the barrier which precludes participants from taking culinary adventure while travelling.

Breakfast is another dining context that participants reluctant to alter their eating behaviour. Many participants have consciously referred that they are unaccustomed with breakfast setting when they describing their travel dining experience. What is more, participants are unlikely to try unfamiliar foods at breakfast. This implies that breakfast is imperative to their travel dining

experience. Nevertheless, previous literature did not pay attention to this area. This study revealed that most of the participants were unaccustomed with breakfast setting during their holidays in Australia. Importantly, participants also expressed that breakfast had affected their travel satisfaction to some extent. In fact, this could be explained by a Chinese aphorism: “The whole day's work depends on a good start in the morning.” In this respect, a contented breakfast might bring in good mood as well as provide the sufficient nutrition to tourist for their travel activities. Thus, by implication, when organising the meal arrangement for tour group, travel agency should cater for participants’ ingrained eating behaviour in order to enhance the travel dining satisfaction.

Whereas the western tourists are often anxious about edibility of indigenous food when travelling to less-developed destinations (Elsrud, 2002; Cohen & Avieli, 2004), the Chinese participants are willing to try indigenous foods because they do not perceive any food related risk in Australia. From participants’ perspective, the intake of indigenous food would not induce any health risks.

To this end, this section unravelled that the Chinese participants did not consistently maintain their healthy diet belief when they are tempted by the sumptuous meals. However, their emphasis on nutritional foods and sufficient food quantity are the reflection of influence from the Chinese food culture. In addition, participants are reluctant to take food adventure during breakfast because they have accentuated the importance of healthy eating at breakfast. Thus, the proposition is derived as:

Proposition 4: Chinese participants' dining behaviour do not operate in tandem with their healthy diet beliefs only if they are overwhelmed by the temptation of the sumptuous meals, otherwise, their healthy diet beliefs still remain constant.

Whether healthy diet will remain or be abandoned on a sojourn might depend on different causes as discussed in above section, however, this healthy food belief was handed down from generation to generation. Thus, this suggested that influences from family would help the formation of one's food belief. The next section would, therefore, discuss the family influences on the Chinese tourists' eating behaviour in Australia.

4.3 Family influence on eating behaviour

Fieldhouse (1986) contended that one's eating habit was often informally acquired from family. A number of previous literatures have also reiterated the significant influence of family influence upon one's eating behaviour (Fieldhouse, 1986; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997). This section looks at how family influence has impacted upon participants' travel eating behaviour, particularly in the Chinese cultural context.

Traditional parent influence

Findings in this study confirmed that Chinese participants' eating behaviours were largely shaped by family meal patterns. For example, when discussing eating preference in home country, one participant stated:

“I like both Chinese and western food, such as Chinese plain noodle and meat- paste noodle, and western pasta. I usually eat Chinese noodle in Taiwan because my mother is good at cooking Chinese noodle.” (TW-P2)

Traditionally, parents, especially the mother, leads the dominant role in shaping the eating pattern of the members in the family. According to Beardsworth and Keil (1997), the mother often plays the role as the ‘gatekeeper’ who determines or controls the food preparation and production in the family. And as a result, familial eating behaviour is mostly determined by the cooking techniques and styles employed by the mother. The participants’ (TW-P2) utterance corroborated the proposition. She was fond of eating Chinese noodle because her mother is good at cooking it. This suggested that the participant’s mother has exerted a major influence on food preferences and control on her food intake. In fact, such a top-down influence would particularly be pertinent to Chinese participants. That was because Chinese value family highly and it is a long-standing custom for Chinese to respect their parents and follow their advice. Accordingly, it could be inferred that Chinese participants’ eating behaviour was predominantly shaped and influenced by their parents.

Increasing children influence

While traditionally parents have the dominant influence of the familial eating pattern, emergent findings also revealed that there is a rising tendency for parents to pamper and please their children, particularly in terms of eating. In other words, children are having an increasingly dominant role in influencing the familial eating pattern. In the discussion of dining out experience in the home country, a parent's utterance affirmed a strong inclination to pleasing her children:

"...We always select dishes based on our children's preference, such as seafood, baked dishes and fast-food..." (TW-P5)

The participant deliberately selected dishes in order to cater to her children's preference. This suggested that children's eating preference has coerced parents to adjust their eating behaviour. While the selection of food is primarily intended to please children, parents might need to compromise their values and attitudes toward foods. The edibility and palatability of the food are no longer major considerations to the parents. They are not in pursuit of personal excitement, but instead are looking for *familial contentment* (Finkelstein, 1989). In addition, parents are more likely to follow children's food preference if the familial dining out occasion is a means to fulfil children's fantasy, particularly when it is regarded as a reward for the children. This bottom-up influence is frequently manifested in advertisements of chain fast-food restaurants, which often intentionally evoke the desire for *familial contentment*.

The impact of children influence on travel eating behaviour

Kivela (2003) proposed that the Chinese often order food based on group consensus, which is different from westerners' practice to order food on individual basis. This practice is unique in the Chinese society, and could significantly impact upon Chinese participants' familial eating behaviour while travelling. Indeed, the Chinese's emphasis on filial duty of their parent is often manifested in the ordering of food. For example, Dewald (2002) postulated that eldest member of a Chinese family has the dominant decision in ordering food. Yet, findings from this study suggested that elder participants might not have the deciding role if they were accompanied by their children. That was due to the fact that modern family had gradually shifted their attention focus from elder members to the children, and inevitably, the selection of food would largely be influenced by the children's preference.

Such a phenomenon was attributable to the 'one child policy' implemented in China, and the decreasing birth rate in Taiwan and Hong Kong, which had produced the over-indulged children. Many parents are eager to pamper their children, by satisfying their needs and wants, and spending time and money on activities that are deemed beneficial for their children. This proposition is further validated by the fact that the Chinese participants were keen to bring along their children to travel in order to increase their cultural knowledge and to expand their global vision.

Findings revealed that the increasing children influence on familial eating behaviour was significant not just in the home country, but also when travelling.

For instance, the Taiwanese group had an opportunity to make their own meal arrangement during their trip to Warner Bros. Movie World in Gold Coast. It was observed that those participants who opted for fast-food were all accompanied by their children. They did not try foods that were considerably new or unfamiliar to them, for example, the Aussie meat pie. In contrast, they followed their children's preference on food choice and they seemed to enjoy fast-food along with their children. In addition, it were the children who ordered the foods in English, as their parents encouraged them to communicate with foreign service staff.

Since Warner Bros. Movie World was similar to a theme park that was ideal for family activities, it was plausible that parents would be particularly keen to follow children's food preference in order to achieve *familial contentment*. This has proved that familial contentment did not only exist in dining out occasion in the home country, but was also found within travel dining experience.

In addition, restaurant is a place where an individual could convey the personal possession such as wealth, fine taste, and social manner (Finkelstein, 1989). Dining out occasion thus is a chance for an individual to learn social value or the sense of fashion through socialising at the table. In this respect, participants viewed familial dining out occasion as an opportunity for their children to learn social manner. Therefore, other than achieving familial contentment, parents of the Taiwanese group regarded the trip to Australia as an educational experience for their children. This was substantiated by the encouragement parents had given to children to speak English with foreign service staff.

In conclusion, although participants' eating behaviour was predominantly shaped and influenced by their parents, findings revealed that there was an increasing children influence over familial eating behaviour, both in the home country and while travelling. Such a phenomenon has significantly impacted upon participants' travel eating behaviour. Firstly, as participants tended to satisfy their children's needs and wants, they would follow children's food preference when dining out in order to achieve familial contentment. This tendency has also been duly reflected in participant's travelling eating behaviour. Secondly, participants wanted to provide as many educational experiences to their children as possible, and dining out occasions has been regarded as opportunities for children to learn social manner. Accordingly, participants viewed dining opportunities in Australia as educational experiences that would allow their children to have a better understanding of local culture, custom, and language. Thus, by implication, the design of tourists' dining experience should take into consideration the children influence on travel eating behaviour.

Discussion

With the advent of the 'one child policy' in China and the decreasing birth rate in Taiwan and Hong Kong, the average family size in the three regions is shrinking. Emergent findings revealed that many participants were willing to satisfy their children's needs and wants, and to spend time and money on activities that are considered as beneficial for their children.

The ancient Chinese said “*travelling for ten thousand miles is worth much more than reading ten thousand books.*” Although reading is the means for accomplishing fundamental knowledge, travelling provide the opportunity to learn from observation. Accordingly, travelling abroad epitomizes an effective learning opportunity to broaden children’s international exposure. This is particularly important in an era that emphasizes the significance of globalization. As a result, many Chinese participants were keen to bring along their children to travel in order to increase their cultural knowledge.

The propensity of parents to eagerly provide their children with learning opportunity is also evident in terms of dining. It was found that Chinese participants would be willing to follow children’s food preference when dining out not only to achieve familial contentment, but also to allow their children to learn social manner or acquire the sense of fashion through socialising at the table.

The increasing children influence over familial eating behaviour has been duly reflected in participants’ travel eating behaviour. Travel dining experiences are viewed by participants as learning opportunities that could increase their children’s cultural knowledge and sensitivity. For that reason, dining opportunities in Australia were perceived as learning experiences that would allow their children to have a better understanding of local culture, custom, and language.

Therefore, parents were willing to adjust their eating behaviour in order to follow the preference of their children. This involved the compromise of their ingrained eating habits and attitudes and minimising the concern on palatability and edibility. In other words, parents forgone their gustatory pleasure in exchange for dining experiences that would allow their children to better learn and experience the destination.

Consequently, these findings yielded the fifth proposition:

Proposition 5: Children often exert purchasing influence over parents' travel eating behaviour.

4.4 Attributes that affect the evaluation of dining experiences

This section aims to identify and distinguish the attributes which might affect participants' evaluation of their dining experiences in Australia. By examining participants' statements during focus group interviews, this section highlights six attributes. They are: *participants' own food culture, the contextual factor of dining experiences, variety of food selection, perceptions of Australia, service encounter, and tour guide's performance*. The following discussions articulate their respective impacts on the participants' dining experiences in Australia.

4.4.1 Participants' own food culture

Kivela (2003) contended that each cultural group has their own distinctive food culture. This food culture determines which flavours and culinary precepts are acceptable to that cultural group. This food culture affects an individual's evaluation of food from other cultural groups. The Chinese participants revealed that they evaluated food indigenous to Australia based on their own food culture. It was found that participants were not accustomed with the flavour and cooking methods of indigenous food.

Flavour

Some participants found that new flavour were not immediately enjoyable. One of the participants said that kangaroo meat was unpalatable because of its unfamiliar flavour and texture. The participant said:

“Yes, such as kangaroo meat. I was not quite used to it, because I had hardly eaten them before, and it was smelly. As for the crocodile meat, I do not know whether it was real crocodile meat or not, for it tasted not very good.” (HK-P4)

In the above utterance, the participant (HK-P4) emphasised that his lack of previous experience or knowledge of indigenous foods made it hard to ascertain the food's quality. In essence, the utterance embodies the complexity of tourists' food evaluation process. Oliver (1977) suggests that customers often evaluate consumption experience according to their expectation and the perceived performance. In addition, expectations are formed by the customers' general knowledge and their past experience. In this study, the participant's (HK-P4) lack

of previous experience or knowledge of indigenous food implies that they did not have a predictive expectation toward indigenous food. Thus, the participant could only evaluate indigenous food quality based on his own food culture value. Yet, what is 'palatable food' to one culture might be 'unpalatable food' to another (Kivela, 2003). In this respect, the participant's comment that the indigenous food was unpalatable was reasonable because the indigenous food quality might not be able to please the aesthetic and gustatory component in the participant's own food culture value.

Cooking Methods

On the other hand, most participants indicated that their evaluation of indigenous food quality was largely based on the cooking methods of indigenous food. Participants' criticism of the cooking methods of indigenous food was a theme that emerged constantly throughout the focus group interviews. Many of the participants have indicated that they disliked the cooking methods for those indigenous foods. The criticism of the cooking methods duly reflected their own culinary precepts. This criticism of cooking methods was directed to both Chinese and indigenous foods. For example, one participant (HK-P2) attributed the lack of taste of Australian seafood to improper cooking methods. The participant highlighted the issue by stating:

"The Australian chef really wasted the seafood. Take, for example, the mud crab, I really don't understand why it was cooked that way. If I cook it like the hairy crab, which is my favourite, I will just steam it or cook it only with some garlic and green onion. But in Australia, they actually deep-fry the crab. In this way, the crab will be too greasy and people can not have too much of it. In HK, we just simply steam the crab and it will be delicious." (HK-P2)

According to Chinese food culture, the deep-fried food is said to be the ‘hot’ food (Chang, 1997). Consuming too much ‘hot’ food will cause an imbalance in the *yin-yang* equilibrium, which is unhealthy. In this respect, the way that the Australian chef cooked seafood confronted with her belief in healthy eating. Eventually, the palatable food became unpalatable. It was plausible for the participant to evaluate the quality of seafood according to her own food culture values since seafood was considerably familiar to her. But participants did not only evaluate the familiar food that they have tried before; they also assessed the quality of unfamiliar indigenous food according to their own food culture value. As one participant attested:

“And the Australian-style BBQ was just so-so, not very delicious. I ordered chicken fillet. It tasted dry and plain. Then later I dip it into a sauce prepared by the restaurant, but the taste did not improve. In Taiwan, we can use different cooking methods for meat, for example, soaking in soy sauce, pot-stewing, frying, or stir-frying. But here, they only have BBQ. And I can not accept the sauce here. It is difficult to tell the taste of it, so I do not like it.” (TW-P11)

It was obvious that the participant (TW-P11) was unaccustomed with the Australian barbeque foods. Similar to another participant (HK-P2), the participant suggested the proper way to cook indigenous foods when she was discontented with the perceived food quality. In fact, the above two examples best validate Kivela and Crotts’s (2006) proposition that culinary precepts normally remain a firm constant in people’s mind even after they taste unfamiliar or novel food. Both participants suggested the appropriate cooking methods which could make indigenous foods became more palatable. However, it should be noted that their

suggestions virtually came from their own culinary precept. This implies that regardless of participants were enthralled by indigenous food; they still could not withdraw from their own food culture values when it came to the evaluation of indigenous food.

Discussion

The emerging findings on the Chinese participants' evaluation of indigenous food quality were insightful since they validated Yüksel and Yüksel's (2001) argument on the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm. Yüksel and Yüksel (2001) contended that, due to the experiential characteristic of the hospitality and tourism service, tourists might use other standards in formulating expectations. The findings from this study proved that the Chinese participants would use their own culinary precepts as the basis for their expectations. For example, the Hong Kong participant (HK-P4) mentioned earlier assessed the palatability of indigenous foods (kangaroo and crocodile meat) based on his own food culture values. Despite his lack of previous encounter with the indigenous foods, his judgement and opinion were formed by cross-referencing to his native food culture value.

In addition, different expectations of cooking methods have resulted in a discrepancy between expectations and perceived food quality to some participants. What was more; findings also suggested that this was the outcome of differences between the food culture of Chinese participants and the Australian food culture. Thus, by implication, the effect of tourists' food culture values and

culinary precepts on the judgement of food quality will affect their overall assessment of their dining experience. Yet, it should be noted that no matter what comments participants made about the quality or the cooking methods of the indigenous food, participants did not feel unsatisfied with the indigenous food, they just constantly compare the characteristics of the indigenous food with their own food culture value.

Based on the abovementioned premises, the proposition regarding the influence of food culture value on the evaluation of dining experience is proposed:

Proposition 6: Even for the indigenous foods which tourists have not encountered previously, judgement and opinion will be made by cross-referencing to their native food culture value.

In fact, participants' accounts revealed that they might disregard food quality when evaluating a travel dining experience. This suggested that contextual factors were another critical attribute which might affect dining experience. Thus, the next section will unravel participants' perspectives on the influence of the context of dining upon their travel dining experience.

4.4.2 The contextual factor of dining experience

Yüksel and Yüksel (2001) proposed that tourists might be satisfied with the service experience even when the perceived service quality falls short of their

expectation. This suggests that participants might disregard indigenous food quality if they were looking for a new dining experience. In fact, participants have revealed similar perspectives towards their dining experience in Australia. For example, one participant (HK-P2) explicitly indicated that the palatability was not her major concern towards indigenous food; it was the dining experience itself that mattered. The participant described her experiences with indigenous food by stating:

“I also think it was not as delicious as expected, but anyway it is a quite funny experience. After all, no one guaranteed it would be delicious definitely. And I had already been prepared for its possible bad taste. Anyway, it represents one of the local characteristics. I do not care about its taste, but just treat it as a new experience.” (HK-P2)

Many of the participants had similar comments when they conveyed their attitude toward Australian foods. From participants’ perspective, partaking of indigenous food was to broaden their dining experience. In this respect, it was acceptable if indigenous food did not meet their standard of palatability. This could be explained if participants consciously presumed the indigenous food quality would not be as good as the Chinese food. According to the participant’s (HK-P2) utterance, it could be assumed that the participant was primarily concerned whether the indigenous food represented local characteristics, so that she could immerse herself in the Australian culture through the dining experience. Thus, they were prepared to compromise, in this context of seeking a new experience, on indigenous foods that did not accord to their food culture. This notion, indeed, best elucidated why participants placed their emphasis on dining ambience instead of indigenous food quality.

The emerging findings on participants' contentment with new dining experiences can be validated by observed phenomena. Both of Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese groups had a chance to dine at a buffet style meal when they were cruising at Darling Harbour in Sydney. The menu on the cruise included chicken wing, stir-fried squid with vegetable, curry beef, vegetable salad and rice. It was obvious that the menu was provided according to Asian tourists' flavour. However, it seemed that participants did not like the foods because much of the foods were left over from the plate and many participants bought snack and cookies at the next scenic spot. Nonetheless, participants were contented with the dining experience on the cruise. They were excited and enthused by having their meal on board and at the same time cruising and touring at Darling Harbour. They perceived this dining experience as romantic and impressive. They were enlivened with foreign service staff although they could not communicate with them. Even though the arranged foods did not satisfy the participants' physiological needs, it was obvious that the meal experience itself fulfilled participants' desire to sample a different dining experience. The observed phenomena proved that the participants often overlooked food quality at foreign restaurants if they were contented with the experiential parts of dining experience.

Based on abovementioned premises, there might be two reasons that explain participants' shift in focus from food quality to the context of dining experience. These are the *dining purpose* and the *intangible value* that is attached to the

dining experience.

Dining Purpose

Warde and Marten (2000) proposed that customers might disregard food quality if they were dining out to celebrate a particular celebration, such as a birthday. This might explain why indigenous food quality became a peripheral concern for the Chinese participants' dining experience in Australia. Since the purpose of participants' dining out in Australia was to look for an understanding of local culture, the cultural aspect of the dining experience became more important than food quality. To the participants, dining out in Australia symbolised a cultural experience. For example, one participant (HK-P2) explicitly indicated that she could accept 'unpalatable' (based on her own food culture values) indigenous food as long as it represented local culture. The participant appreciated the opportunity to learn and contact local culture from the dining experience.

Intangible Value

On the other hand, based on observed phenomena, the contact of local culture could also be represented through encounters with foreign service staff. In addition, dining on a cruise was a considerably new experience to the participants and was also perceived as romantic and impressive. Under these two circumstances, participants did not emphasise the food quality but the ambience of the restaurant (buffet in cruise) as well as the intercultural encounter with

service staff. Thus, participants were satisfied with dining experience even though the food quality did not meet their expectations.

Discussion

It should be noted that previous literature has suggested that the tangible factor of food quality and the intangible factor of experiential service constitute the totality of dining satisfaction (Riley, 1994; Lee & Hing, 1995). Yet, the emerging findings reveal that the tangible food quality might be set aside by the Chinese participants when the intangible value fulfilled their experiential needs. Many of the participants were well-aware of the differences in food cultures between China and Australia, and they realised that indigenous food quality might not be able to gratify their gustatory pleasure. In effect, as long as the indigenous food and dining ambience characterised the Australian culture, the weighting of the tangible food quality could be reduced to the minimum in the Chinese participants' evaluation process. After all, due to participants' lack of knowledge on indigenous food, they could not evaluate indigenous food quality in a right stance. Hence, this implies that intangible experiential factors appear to be more significant to the participants' dining experience. Altogether, the following proposition is derived:

Proposition 7: For tourists whose dining purpose is to broaden their dining experience, the intangible experiential factor is more significant than the tangible food quality of the travel dining experience.

4.4.3 Variety of food selection

Variety of food selection was another attribute that influenced participants' dining satisfaction in Australia. Such a notion is an extension of their dining out behaviour in their home country. As discussed in the earlier accounts, many of the participants often choose different cuisines which were recommended by their friends or the internet when dining out. This behaviour was triggered by participants' desire to look for unusual or interesting features from dining out experience so that they could broaden their culinary experience (Finkelstein, 1989). In effect, participants had conveyed that, when dining out, they liked to taste different cuisines ranging widely across the world, such as Thai, Japanese, Italian, and American food. Participants avoided partaking of similar foods when they dining out. Even variety and change were necessary components of participants' dining out behaviour in their home country, and this demand for the variety of food selection continued to be observed in their eating behaviour in Australia accordingly. The participants' utterances indicate that *cultural appreciation* was the major motive for participants' inclination to sample a variety of food. In addition, the concept of *neophilia*, *fashionability*, and *diversity* could also help to articulate why such a motive emerged.

Cultural Appreciation

Participants had conveyed their expectation from seeking a variety of food selection. Some suggested that a meal should comprise of a variety dishes, where

the appeal of the meal derives each dish and from the diversity of the dishes. One participant described her food preference by saying:

“The meal should have its own distinctive characteristics, with various and changing dishes.” (HK-P1)

From a cultural perspective, the participant (HK-P1) expected the meal to be representative of a culture different to her own food culture. In other words, indigenous food should offer different features from the participant’s food culture. Since the participant was seeking a new dining experience, the variety of foods that the participant wanted were those that she has never tried before and which were remarkable and novel with respect to her own food culture. This notion was related to the participant’s motive for partaking of indigenous food. In the earlier accounts, the participant indicated that indigenous food could help her to have a better understanding of Australian culture. After all, the more indigenous food the participant has eaten, the more she understood the Australian culture. Thus, the variety of food selection was to boost the participant’s opportunity to encounter and appreciate the Australian food culture (Warde & Martens, 2000).

Neophilia, fashionability, and diversity

On the other hand, some participants assessed the variety of food selection in the variety of meals available rather than the variety within a single meal. In other words, participants not only emphasised the variety of food within a meal but also the variety between meals. For example, one of the participants appeared content

with the meal arrangement since it provided diversified cuisine. The participant said:

“...I think we had a large choice of food in this group, such as Mongolian BBQ, seafood buffet and pasta. Obviously, the travel agency was conscientious to arrange the meals, providing us with various dining experience....” (TW-P11)

As the participants were inquisitive about everything while travelling (Richards, 2002), they would seek out a diverse range of activities during their journey, including a variety of travel dining experiences. The travel agent understood this and arranged novel dining experiences. This strategy had apparently met the participant's (TW-P11) expectation as she praised the travel agency by saying that they were conscientious. In fact, the reason that participants sought a variety of dining experiences was affected by the concept of *neophilia*. *Neophilia* is a contemporary food consumption pattern which advocates exposure to new products, new experiences, and new pleasures (Fischler, 1980). In this sense, this concept could be applied to the participant's inclination for various dining experiences because she wanted to partake of all kinds of cuisine when she travelling. Thus, it was comprehensible that the participant had sensational satisfaction because those foreign cuisines and exotic ambience were the dining experiences which were absent from her immediate world (Finkelstein, 1989).

In the earlier accounts, it has been mentioned that the choice of foreign food was a reflection of *fashionability* (Finkelstein, 1989). When destination marketers, travel magazine, and media programmes constantly promote the novel dining

experience of a destination, participants might feel inspired to follow fashions and seek out the promoted dining experience in their travel experience. In fact, the pursuit of diversified dining experiences enabled participants to confirm their perception on a destination's gastronomy.

The observed phenomena further confirmed that the repeated dining experiences prompted were often regretted. It was observed that there was always at least one Chinese meal arranged per day in the Taiwanese group. Most of the participants praised that this was a good arrangement because, being unaccustomed to foreign food, they often missed Chinese food. However, participants indicated that they felt tired of the similar foods at Chinese restaurants. This suggested that the sense of pleasure diminished when participants continuously partook of similar foods even though the meals were sumptuous. As the 'travel climate' advocates exposure to new dining experiences and new pleasures (Cohen & Avieli, 2004), repetition devalued the tourists' dining experience. Taiwanese participants lost their interests in the Chinese food because they had repeatedly eaten similar foods. This implies that the tourists' expectations of dining experiences were analogous to their travel activities. That is, *diversity* was the prime objective that they were pursuing. Thus, the meal arrangement should not only have diversified cuisines but also have the different foods for them to experience.

Discussion

Based on aforementioned premises, participants' accounts suggest that the variety of food selections would confer great value on the breadth of travel experience. In essence, variety should be supplemented with culinary differentiation for participants to appreciate Australian food culture. Warde and Martens (2000) suggested that the legitimacy of consumer culture means consumer can choose freely among enormous volume of goods and service. In addition, the Chinese emphasize hospitality spirit and generosity to others. They often order many dishes when they dine out with friends or else they would feel a "loss of face" (Wright, Nancarrow, & Kwok, 2001). Consequently, the Chinese generally prefer to have a variety of dishes in dining out occasions. In short, the legitimacy of consumer culture and dining out behaviour of the Chinese further support the claim of participants' liking for the variety of dishes and meal experience during holidays.

On the other hand, tourism marketers have accentuated that indigenous food serve as intangible assets when promoting a destination (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Couple with the advocacy from epicure and travel magazines, consuming indigenous food when travelling has become a modern and contemporary travel activity. What is more, the intake of indigenous food is not merely a 'must do' travel activity, it should encompass the uniqueness and distinctive feature of a memorable experience for which participants could share with friends. In order to make the intake of indigenous food become special and extraordinary from participants' immediate world, the variety of meal experiences

might be the possible way to accomplish their desire on a novel and memorable dining experience (Warde & Martens, 2000). As participants' accounts suggested, the more different cuisine they have eaten, the more opportunity they could broaden their culinary experience. To be more precise, the variety of meal experiences should not be limited to different dishes in a sumptuous meal, but should also include diverse cuisines between each meal.

To this end, the above discussions yield the following proposition:

Proposition 8: A wide range of indigenous foods with cultural sophistication would actualise participants' desire for novel and memorable dining experience.

4.4.4 Perception on Australia

Another attribute which might affect the Chinese participants' dining satisfaction was the perception that participants had of Australia. The emerging findings suggest that participants' impressions have significantly influenced their beliefs and attitudes on what *foods should be eaten* as well as *what service should be delivered* in Australia. This would influence the participants' expectations towards their travel dining experience in Australia.

What Food Should Be Eaten

Participants' perceptions on what food should be eaten were related to Australia's gastronomic identity. As a gastronomic identity can represent a destination's character (Bessiere, 1998), it might be one of the reasons that attracted participants visit Australia. If this is so, the gastronomic identity would exert influence on participants' expectations on what food should be eaten during their dining experiences in Australia. For example, one participant conveyed her disappointment because her expected food was not included in the meal arrangement:

“It is a pity we have not had lamb! In a country abounding in sheep, how could you believe there should be no lamb in our meal arrangement?...” (TW-P8)

Most likely, tourists would consume representative foods when they travel to a destination. For example, when tourists travel to Hong Kong they taste Dim-Sum. Peking duck is a famous dish which could represent Beijing's gastronomic identity. From the participant's (TW-P8) perspective, the cognitive image she had of Australia was associated with sheep. In this respect, Australian's gastronomic identity was lamb since Australia is a country abounding in sheep. Whether or not the participant's personal judgement was right or wrong, it determined the participant's expectations of foods. Hence, it was obvious that the participant (TW-P8) was disappointed with the meal arrangement since she did not have opportunity to partake of her expected food (lamb). As the food eaten in Australia was not the same as the food that the participant expected, it is understandable that she was disappointed. Indeed, this example shows that the participant's evaluation

of dining experiences involves a comparison between the initial expectations and the actual result of the service quality (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1988). A gap between the participant's expectation and the perceived service appeared. As the participant had her perception of 'what to eat,' she strongly anticipated eating lamb while in Australia. Since the eating of lamb was expected, it formed one of the underlying desires. The failure to satisfy this desire affected the participant's dining satisfaction. Indeed, the participant's account proved such a claim. Thus, it can be suggested that the participant's perceptions of Australian's gastronomic identity determined her expectation of what food she would eat, and this accordingly impinged on the dining satisfaction.

What Service Should Be Delivered

The other perception which participants had about Australia was 'what service should be delivered.' From the participants' perspective, the level of service that was delivered was related to how civilised the destination was. In other words, participants considered that a modernised country like Australia should provide a better food service. The following quote best captured the participants' expectations that food service would be determined by destination's affluent status:

"...but speaking fairly, many tourist attractions in Mainland are really quite backward. In this case, we do not raise special requests about meals and accommodations, because they cannot achieve the standard indeed. However, travelling abroad is not the same case.... Eating is closely related to wealth and sanitation of a country. Actually eating is a complex behaviour. Since being in a modernized country, I would have higher expectation on eating and accommodation." (CH-P2)

Interestingly, the participant's account implied that travelling to a modernised country (Australia) meant patronising luxurious restaurants. In this respect, a destination's development status would determine her expectation of perceived service. Kivela, et al. (1999) proposed that customers might have different expectation towards restaurant service. Customers would accept low service quality in an economical restaurant. In contrast, customers would expect attentive service staff in a high-priced restaurant. Likewise, the participant indicated that she could understand the low level service quality in Mainland China as its developing status could not compare with Australia. While most Western tourists are prepared for unhygienic eating environment when they travel to less-developed countries (Elsrud, 2001), the Chinese participants pursued a luxurious dining experience in Australia. In fact, this perception on a high level of service was somehow correlated to participants' perception of conspicuous consumption behaviour. The earlier discussions have shown that most of the Chinese participants considered that their ability to travel to Australia represented their social prestige. In this respect, a high level of service should also be provided so as to display the participant's superiority.

Discussion

Previous literature has proposed that tourists' expectations might be the amalgamation of previous experiences, the destination's marketing, and recommendations from reference groups such as friends and media (Bowen, 2001; Middleton, 2001). Findings from this study further suggest that tourists' initial

perceptions of a destination also shape their expectations, and accordingly, their perceptions have an effect on their understanding of ‘*what foods should be eaten*’ and ‘*what service should be delivered*’ during their travel dining experiences. In essence, this perception might be the reflection of a destination’s image. For example, one the Chinese participant (CH-P2) considered Australia as a developed country which would, because of its developed status, offer a high quality of service. Such a notion was neither the outcome of the participant’s previous experience nor the influence of destination’s marketing communication. This was merely the participant’s perception of Australia, and it existed before the tourist’s visit. Thus, by implication, when pursuing the effect of the tourists’ expectations upon their visit satisfaction, the perception towards destination should also be gauged in order to generate a more complete picture of the tourists’ expectations. Subsequently, this implication leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 9: Tourists’ initial perceptions towards destination would affect the formulation of expectation and determine the visit satisfaction accordingly.

4.4.5 Service encounter

Kivela et al. (1999) have accentuated that server-customer interaction is critical when evaluating customer satisfaction; however, in the realm of tourist dining experience, the delivery of service served various purposes for the participants. For example, as discussed earlier, service delivery was a means that

participants could educate their children by communicating with foreign staff. In addition, by imitating other's table etiquette, participants had more opportunities to appreciate cultural phenomena while at the table. In this respect, the server-customer interaction was not only a process of service delivery but also a stage for participants' learning experience. Other than the educational function of the service encounter, participants have also revealed that *the pleasure of being served, communication, the influence of 'role theory' and service speed* were other components that would affect the service encounter during their travel dining experience.

The pleasure of being served

Previous discussions have revealed that the experiential part of the dining experience was significant to participants' travel dining experience. Thus, the pleasure of being served was a theme that constantly emerged from focus group interviews, particularly for those participants who were not fastidious in their food preferences. One participant's utterance epitomised this notion:

"Though I am not concerned much about food quality, I will pay special attention to service attitude." (TW-P6)

From the participant's (TW-P6) perspective, attentiveness of service appeared to be more significant than food quality to her travel dining experience. This indicates that the participant regarded the travel dining experience as the peripheral activity to her overall travel experience. Earlier accounts have suggested that the reason that some participants were not fastidious in foods

selection was because they regarded travel dining experiences as not being important to their overall travel experience. After all, those participants valued the issue of security while travelling. Thus, a feeling of being served was requested as an important accompaniment to the travel dining experience by those participants who were not fastidious on food selection.

Communication

Participants clearly recognised the cultural differences between themselves and service staff. Descriptions of these differences tended to be in terms of communication. Not surprisingly, the difference in languages appeared to be the most significant component in the communication between participants and service staff. It was worthwhile to note that the communication barrier not only existed in the foreign restaurants, but also in the Chinese restaurants. For example, one participant (TW-P5) revealed a clear distinction between Chinese restaurants and foreign restaurants on service attitude due to communication failure. The participant stated:

“Their service attitude (Chinese restaurant) is not good indeed, but I think service in other restaurants (foreign restaurants) are fine since we did not know what they are talking about” (TW-P5)

The interpretation for the participant’s utterance could be explained by the observed phenomena. It was observed that Taiwanese participants seldom had interaction with service staff in the Chinese restaurants. However, it was noticed that there was always chatting and greeting between participants and service staff

when Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese participants dined in the Chinese restaurants. Language might be the barrier that created a distance between Taiwanese participants and service staff. Though both Taiwanese participants and service staff in Chinese restaurant shared same culture, they speak different language (most of service staff speak Cantonese). As there was a distance between two parties, the participant (TW-P5) consciously felt the service attitude was not good enough since only a few interactions happened. This was because most of the participants came from a high-context culture that emphasised the relationship between customers and service staff (Mattila, 1999). Such a notion explained why the Taiwanese participants felt discontented with service encounters in the Chinese restaurants. The interpersonal relationship was missing in the dining experience. There might be another reason which could explain the Taiwanese participants' disappointment with the service staff. According to Chinese thinking, one of the joyful things in life is to meet friends from home while travelling. Nevertheless, the service staff did not show their amiability to the Taiwanese participants, guests who came from the same culture background. In this respect, the Taiwanese participants felt disappointed with those service staff in the Chinese restaurants since they seldom conversed with the Taiwanese participants.

Conversely, the participant did not complain about service staff in the foreign restaurants even though there appeared to also be a communication gap between herself and service staff. It was plausible that language barrier might have been the reason that created the communication gap. Yet, the participant tolerated this limitation as she could not understand what the service staff talked

about. It could be interpreted that the Taiwanese participant considered the communication gap occurred because of her English deficiency. In this respect, the participant reproached this shortcoming on herself rather than the foreign service staff. The participant therefore considered the service in foreign restaurants acceptable. The above example exhibited a particular remark on the intercultural service encounter. Even though both parties (the participant and the foreign staff) were different in communication style, the participant's accounts suggested, surprisingly, that there was no conflict between the participant, who belonged to a high-context culture group, and service staff, who came from a low-context culture group (Hall & Hall, 1990).

While previous literature has reiterated that cultural distance often exists when tourists and service providers do not speak the same language (Mattila, 1999; Luna & Gupta, 2001; Sparks, Bowen, & Klag, 2003), this study further suggests that cultural distance might be tolerable if the tourist has predicted the cultural distance would exist in the intercultural service encounter. For example, the Taiwanese participant had prepared for this shortcoming and regarded culture distance as acceptable process when dining at foreign restaurants.

The Influence of 'Role Theory'

Broderick (1998) proposed that the behaviour of both customers and service providers was based on a '*role script*', held inside their minds during service encounters. This notion was substantiated by participants' encounter with service staff in the foreign restaurants. For example, some participants assessed the ways

service staff responded to them on the basis of their own *'role script'*. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction occurred because the service staff's response to participants confronted the perceptions of service style. In the following utterance, the participant (TW-P1) applied her own *'role script'* when evaluating service staff's performance:

"But I do not appreciate him taking away the dish so soon. For example, while I was waiting for others after I finished my meals, he took away the dishes. It made me felt he was driving us out.... In Taiwan, only you ask the waiter to take plates away, they will come to clean up the table, at least in my experience." (TW-P1)

The participant did not expect the waiting staff to clean the table for her. Because there was a different perception of normal or correct service procedures, the participant's expectation conflicted with the service delivered by the service staff. Hence, a negative experience occurred. In fact, this evidence substantiated the effect of cultural differences on service encounters. Both the participant's and service staff's expectation of service style came from their respective experiences (Kivela & Chu, 2001). Nevertheless, service staff did not comprehend the participant's *'role script'* (dining behaviour) and had induced an uncomfortable feeling to the participant. It was obvious that the cultural background of both the service receiver (the participant) and service provider (service staff) had affected each other's perceptions of the encounter, which also affected the perception of the quality of service received (Hubbert, Sehorn & Brown, 1995).

Service Speed

It was noticed that both Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese tour group did not spend too much time on their dining experience. In addition, it was observed that tour leaders often hurried the service staff to serve the dishes once participants sat down in a restaurant. Indeed, both Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese participants were impatient if the meal was served slowly. What was more, they often gobbled lunch so that they could have more time to visit the next attraction. They also ate their dinner quickly so as to allow more time to rest in their hotel.

It was worthwhile to note that the above phenomenon was mostly found in the Chinese restaurants. This indicates that participants preferred not to spend too much time dining in a Chinese restaurant for it was perceived as an extension of their daily experience rather than a part of the travel experience. Under this circumstance, the faster the meal time the better. Otherwise, the meal time would occupy too much time on their itinerary and it might affect the quality of their travel experience. In this respect, the purpose of dining out was merely to satisfy participants' physiological needs rather than experiential wants. Hence, participants' dining experiences in Chinese restaurants appears to be analogous to their dining experiences in fast-food restaurants, where service speed is critical to their evaluation of dining experience.

To most of the participants, the exotic ambience in the foreign restaurant offered a feeling of romance and an impressive experience which would not upset participants regardless of whether the meal engaged a long period of time. It was

plausible that service speed did not affect the participants' dining experience since they enjoyed their foods in the free and easy atmosphere of the foreign restaurants. After all, dining in a foreign restaurant, to some extent, was deemed to be the part of the travel activity by the participants. Thus, by implication, the significant of service speed to the tourists' dining experience was determined by tourists' perception of the purpose of dining out and by the character of the restaurant.

Discussion

This sub-section scrutinises the service encounters between participants and service staff (both Chinese and foreign staff) in different aspects. The emergent findings suggest that participants have different expectation and attitudes toward Chinese restaurants and foreign restaurants. Participants assess their service encounter in Chinese restaurants in accord with their pre-existing evaluative criteria because they share the same cultural background. In this respect, responsiveness and empathy are deemed to be imperative to the quality of service encounter (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1988). In particular, findings reveal that amiability is significant to the service encounter for the Chinese believe that one should show his/her hospitality when they meet friends overseas. Yet, participants have expressed that they would like to have immediate service in the Chinese restaurants. That was because they would not like the Chinese meal to occupy too much of the travel time, and would prefer to reserve more time for other travel activities.

On the other hand, participants evidently tolerated the shortcomings during their service encounter in the foreign restaurants. Such a notion could be supported by the following deliberations. First, service encounters in foreign restaurants were deemed as possessing educational value to the participants as it allows participants to contact with local people and to learn different table etiquette. Second, most of the participants have anticipated the potential communication barriers due to their language deficiency. Although different 'role script' have created the miscomprehension toward service style (Broderick, 1998), participants reproached this shortcoming on themselves and have prepared for the foreseeable hindrance. Finally, in contrast to the expectation of prompt service in the Chinese restaurants, participants disregarded the service speed for they prefer to enjoy the exotic ambience and romantic experience in the foreign restaurant.

To this end, the above findings and discussions lead to the following proposition:

Proposition 10: Communication barrier would not create obstacles to the intercultural service encounter since tourists have predicted the potential barrier and are prepared to condone the foreseeable hindrance.

4.4.6 Tour guide's performance

A pervasive theme that emerged from the focus group interviews was that the tour guide's performance significantly influenced their dining experiences in

Australia. Participants wanted to rely on their tour guide to look after their dining activities so as to bring them a feeling of plenitude. From participants' accounts, tour guides could enhance their satisfaction on dining experience in three aspects, namely "*interpretation of indigenous food*", "*culinary broker of local dining behaviour*", and "*facilitating of dining experience*".

Interpretation of Indigenous Food

It should be noted that the term 'tour guide', from participants' perspective, referred to the local tour guide who conduct the tour in a particular city in Australia rather the tour leader who escorted the tour all through the journey. In this respect, tour guide was expected to have broad-based knowledge of local culture, including food culture. One participant's remark encompassed such an expectation:

"The tour guide is very important. A quality tour guide should be able to give clear introduction of everything, including not only tourist attractions, but also local food. But the tour guide we had this time was very ignorant. I really do not know why we ate them." (HK-P6)

The participant's (HK-P6) utterance revealed an important perspective. That was, the participant did not merely consume the indigenous food, the participant also wanted to know the symbolic meaning behind the indigenous food. In the earlier discussions, it was revealed that exploring local culture was one of the motives which motivate participants to consume indigenous food. Accordingly, the contact with Australian food culture was not only to partake of Australian food

but also to understand the symbolic meaning of the indigenous food. Otherwise, from the participant's perspective, the intake of indigenous food would become meaningless if the explanation of indigenous food was not presented. In this respect, a tour guide's knowledge and interpretation of indigenous food was expected to fulfil the participant's desire to attain knowledge of the local food (Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2001). Nevertheless, the tour guide who was assigned to the Hong Kong group failed to help the participants obtain more insights on the customs, history, and artefacts of the destination (Ap & Wong, 2001). Consequently, there was dissatisfaction.

Yu, Weiler and Ham (2001) delineated that tour guides could enhance tourist satisfaction through their knowledge and interpretation of a host culture to which tourists were exposed. In this respect, it was the tour guide's obligation to provide knowledgeable information for the participants since they were keen to acquire new understanding of local food culture. The earlier discussions have revealed that the intake of indigenous food was regarded as a learning experience to most of the participants, thus, the interpretation of indigenous food should also be attached to the travel dining experience. The tour guide's duty was to meet this expectation. Hence, the role of tour guide in the participants' dining experience was not only the *'interpreter'* but also the *'educator'*.

Culinary Broker of Local Dining Behaviour

Most of the participants had a voracious curiosity about local culture (Richards, 2002). Hence, it could be assumed that participants would be gratified

if their tour guide could introduce them to the local dining behaviour. In fact, as Cohen and Avieli (2004) proposed, a tour guide could play as ‘culinary broker’ to introduce and recommend the indigenous food to the participants. Likewise, one of the participants (TW-P1) had conveyed that she appreciated her tour guide’s introduction and recommendation of indigenous foods and it had enlightened her about the local delicacies for which she would not have understood otherwise. She attested:

“...the tour guide in Melbourne introduced us to buy Propolis sugar and Ming-Tai (both are local delicacies) in the supermarket. These two delicacies can not be found on the internet. Without the introduction of local guide, we would not have any idea of them. Actually, we are not very familiar with Australia, so if someone can give us some instruction, it will be quite good.”
(TW-P1)

In fact, the side trip to the local supermarket gratified most of the participants as they indicated that shopping in the local supermarket brought them many ideas about the local life in Australia. Besides, the local delicacies could not be found from mainstream information sources, such as the internet, travel magazine. From the participant’s perspective, while this side trip was not included in the itinerary, it created added-value to their journey since there was an element of surprise in the visit. It was worthwhile to note that participants would not have had a chance, without their tour guide’s assistance, to shop in the local supermarket and to try the local delicacies. The arrangement of these two activities was actually over participants’ expectation. Thus, satisfaction was achieved.

Cohen (1985) indicated that tour guides might select from the diverse choice of cultural and entertainments at a destination, deciding what the participants will see or not see. In fact, since the participants' tour guides understood the standard of their palatability (their tour guides were simultaneously familiar with both Chinese food culture and Australian food culture), the tour guides would be able to make recommendations or suggestions that would please participants' taste buds. The dining satisfaction would be more easily achieved because of the reliability of the tour guide's recommendations. Hence, the reason why tour guide's performance would significantly contribute to the participants' dining experience in Australia was their ability to create the extra value to the participants' dining experience. By implication, tour guides play a role as '*advisers*' to the participants' dining experience.

Facilitating of Dining Experience

One of the duties for the tour guide was to look after the provisions of service and amenities to the tour group (Cohen, 1985). This suggested that the tour guide was expected to be responsible for pampering participants during their 'supporting' experiences – in restaurants and hotels (Quan & Wang, 2004). Some of the participants might feel dependent, particularly with their limited knowledge, whether linguistic and/or cultural, about Australia. Thus, the responsiveness of tour guides to the participants was often regarded as the principal component of the tour guide's role because participants would rely on tour guide to be the mediator between themselves and the Australian community

and to act as a translator if the participant could not communicate with local service staff (Holloway, 1981).

For this reason, most of the participants conveyed that it was the tour guide's responsibility to stay around at the table in order to assure the meal was properly served. For example, it was observed that the tour guide for the Taiwanese group in Brisbane had done a proper job in gratifying the Taiwanese participants during meal times. He pleased the participants with a complimentary dish to compensate for the poor quality Chinese food. In addition, he had made special arrangements for those participants who were vegetarians. Nevertheless, the Mainland Chinese participants expressed their disappointment with tour guide's performance. One of the Chinese participants stated:

"...the tour leader did not behave very well. She has not looked after us at all at meals. While having meals in the restaurant, we seldom saw her. At least, she should have asked if we had enough to eat." (CH-P3)

According to the participant's (CH-P3) account, there might be some unforeseeable hindrances that could affect the dining experience, for example, insufficient quantity of food supply or some special dietary needs of a participant. Thus, a tour guide should look over the participants' needs and wants from the dining experience. In essence, the participant was seeking a feeling of being served and a sense of security. Ap and Wong (2001) accentuated that willingness to help tourists was one of the qualities that tour guides should possess. The participant, therefore, would expect their tour guide to show his/her empathy to their dining experience. From the above example, the participant (CH-P3) might

or might not have been contented with her dining experience, yet, she felt disappointment due to tour guide's inattentive service. This suggested that tour guide's service was taken into consideration when the participant evaluated the quality of the dining experience. In this case, the role of tour guide was more like a '*caretaker*' who was looking after the participants' requests during the dining experience.

Discussion

While Parasuraman et al. (1988) proposed five dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles) of service quality that should be presented in service delivery, the emerging findings from this study suggested that an optimal travel dining experience counts on not only the waiting staff of the restaurant but also the contribution of the tour guide. This is because language and cultural barrier would require tour guide's attendance to help waiting staff to enhance service quality. For example, tour guides could offer interpretation of indigenous foods, help participants to communicate with service staff and show individualised attention to participants who need assistance.

In addition, previous literatures have unearthed that the main duties of tour guiding are to smooth the organisation of the tour, offer interpretation of a destination's attraction and culture, mediate between tourists and host country, and to act in a jocular manner to enliven tourists (Cohen, 1985; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Ap & Wong, 2001; Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2001). In the realm of tourists meal

experience, tour guide should not only facilitating the organisation of the meal experience but also offer the interpretation of the symbolic meaning on indigenous foods and Australian food culture. Importantly, findings reveal that tour guide has manipulative power in affecting tourists dining satisfaction. This is because tour guide simultaneously understand both the Chinese and Australian food culture. In effect, tour guide could create value-adding input to participants' dining experience by suggesting the right choice of indigenous food to please participants.

While previous studies have failed to take into account the role of tour guides in tourists' dining experiences, phenomenological insights generated from this study suggested that tour guides might render significant improvements towards the quality of travel dining experiences. It was found that participants in this study displayed reliance on their tour guides when consuming indigenous food in Australia. As their tour package service was of an intangible nature, tour guide's service very often became a tangible manifestation of the quality of the meal experience (Ap & Wong, 2001).

Altogether, the findings and discussions on the influence of tour guide's performance on tourists' dining experience yield the following proposition:

Proposition 11: Tour guide serve as the mediator to alleviate the language and cultural barrier faced by the tourists, and thus would contribute significantly towards tourists' dining satisfaction.

4.5 Evaluative comments on the meal arrangement

Having understood the participants' expectations and evaluation attributes on their travel dining experiences, the purpose of this section is to identify whether the abovementioned expectations and attributes would affect/reflect on their comments on the meal arrangement. As there were different considerations of cost or of cooperation with the itinerary, the three selected tours (Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) exhibited dissimilar meal arrangements (see Table 4.1). It is noteworthy that all of the tours arranged both Chinese food and Australian food which embodied the travel agency's acknowledgement of catering for the different food preferences of the participants. However, it appeared that the Hong Kong participants had more opportunities to partake of indigenous food than the Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese groups. The Hong Kong participants in particular could make their own arrangements for their dining. The following discussion will, therefore, respectively examine the causal relationship between meal arrangements and participants' expectations among three selected tours.

Table 4.1 Meal arrangements for the tour group

	<i>Chinese food</i>	<i>Australian food</i>	<i>Western food</i>	<i>Others</i>
Mainland Chinese Group (8 day trip)	- Occupied most meals in Australia	- Sydney Fishery Market	- Western buffet	
Hong Kong Group (10 day trip)	- Two meals in Chinese restaurants	- Australian BBQ restaurant - Sydney Fishery Market	- Western buffets	- Free dining by tourists themselves
Taiwanese Group (8 day trip)	- Occupied most meals in Australia	- Australian BBQ restaurant - Australian seafood buffet	- Italian food	- Mongolian BBQ

4.5.1 Comments from the Mainland Chinese tourists

The Chinese participants conveyed that the meal arrangements were acceptable (see Table 4.2). Although the Chinese participants had a memorable dining experience in Sydney Fishery Market, many of them criticised the meal arrangement, saying that it lacked a surprise element.

Table 4.2 Comments about meal arrangements from the Mainland Chinese tourists

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Excerpts</i>
P-1	<i>It does not give me deep impression. Back home, if others asked me about this trip, I can only tell him nothing but the experience in the Sydney Fishery market.</i>
P-2	<i>I also think it [food] did not have the characteristics of its own.</i>
P-3	<i>Just tolerable! I mean it is not very good, but still acceptable. But I do not think it is nice, at least it was not impressive me at all.</i>
P-4	<i>I think the meal arrangement is better than I expected.</i>
P-5	<i>Meal arrangement this time is unsatisfactory except for one fact that basically we at least had enough to eat.</i>

Memorable Dining Experience at Sydney Fishery Market

As the participant (CH-P1) indicated, the dining experience in the Sydney Fishery Market was the only memorable one she had in Australia. The following observed phenomena could explain why this dining experience was remarkable. The Chinese participants were tantalised by the variety of fresh seafood in the fishery market. The tour guide had a brief introduction on what the local specialties were and how to order the food from the counter. Two of the participants ordered one dozen of oyster. They stated that oysters were a

relatively expensive food in China and this was the chance to indulge their passion for oysters. Another participant received a recommendation from the tour guide and ordered the fish and chips as it represented the character of indigenous food. All participants seemed contented with their dining experience at fishery market as they shared their experience with each other with great relish when they back to coach. In addition, they revealed that the free dining activity boosted their opportunities to experience indigenous food.

The Chinese participants were contented with their dining experience in Sydney Fishery Market because it possessed several features that would gratify participants, such as *joy, appreciation, achievement, and participation* (Warde & Martens, 2000). The sumptuous seafood had brought *joy* to the Chinese participants and this was the chance for them to *appreciate* indigenous food. In addition, as the dining experience was impressive, the participants could share with their friends when back home (CH-P1) which could be deemed as an *achievement* for the participant. What was more, the Chinese participants did not passively accept a pre-arranged meal; they *participated* in the dining experience by choosing their own seafood.

The Chinese participants' dining experience in Sydney Fishery Market also revealed one particular implication. That was, the free dining activity was an opportunity for group participants to pursue their personal interest on food. One of the shortcomings for joining a tour group is that group participants might need to compromise their personal food preferences to cater to the group consensus.

However, the free dining activity offers the chance for participants to decide what foods to consume according to their own wishes. While some participants might be afraid of being exposed in an unfamiliar cultural environment, the Chinese participants' experiences suggested that it was feasible if the exploring of indigenous food is within an 'environmental bubble' (Cohen, 1972). In other words, the arrangement of free dining activity should be undertaken in a designed area, with the support of the tour guide's gastronomic information on indigenous food. In this way, the assurance of palatability of indigenous food could be enhanced by the introduction of the tour guide/leader and participants would not fear losing their way in a distant country as they were in a designed area.

Lack of a Surprise Element in the Meal Arrangements

In line with Richards's (2002) proposition that tourists are increasingly looking for memorable and surprising experiences for their journey, the participants' utterances revealed that the pursuit for impressive and memorable dining experience was imperative to the meal arrangements. Nevertheless, the participants explicitly conveyed that the meal arrangements failed to create a surprise element to their dining experience. This was because Chinese food dominated the meal arrangements and it obviously fell short of the Chinese participants' expectations. Though Chinese meals protected participants unaccustomed with indigenous food, most of the Chinese participants appeared to disagree with such arrangement because the intake of Chinese food was considerably familiar to them. Thus, the participants consider the meal

arrangements as plain and ordinary since they did not reflect their keenness for a varied dining experience that reflected the characteristics of Australian food. In addition, Parker and Mathews (2001) accentuated that satisfaction is the outcome of the consumption experience that includes emotion (the surprise element of consumption experience) and fulfilment (the desire to satisfy need). In this respect, the meal arrangements disregarded participants' desires for novelty foods and resulted in poignant comments towards meal arrangement.

It was observed that Mainland Chinese participants controlled the dining experiences in the Chinese restaurants. For example, they spoke to restaurant managers directly if food quantity was short and they checked the menu with their tour guide to prevent any disliked dishes from being served. With their dominating role, participants seemed satisfied with their dining experiences at Chinese restaurants. In effect, they perceived that the food quality was good; that it catered to their tastes and that the quantity of food was plentiful. Thus, one participant (CH-P5) was fairly satisfied with the meal arrangement as he attested as, saying that: "*basically we have enough to eat*". In addition, another participant (CH-P4) also conveyed that she felt contented with meal arrangements. Although Chinese food might contribute nothing new to the participant's dining experience, it was still better than the food that she normally had at home. This could possibly explain why participants assessed the meal arrangements as acceptable even though the characteristic of impressiveness was missing. In this respect, the participants' travel dining satisfaction came from

Chinese food quality rather than experiential and cultural value which might have been obtained from indigenous food.

In short, the Chinese participants had shown their keenness to acquire new dining experience while travelling. This was epitomised by their dining experience in Sydney Fishery Market. Nevertheless, there were too many familiarities (Chinese food) in the Chinese group's meal arrangements and it did not enable the participants' to sample the 'otherness' (indigenous food) in Australia (Long, 2004). As the Chinese participants had already known the taste of the Chinese food, it would not be able to produce surprise element in their meal arrangement despite the Chinese foods offered a feeling of 'comfort'. In this respect, the Chinese participants did not completely satisfy with the meal arrangements. Thus, by implication, though the gustatory pleasure is imperative to the dining experience (Warde & Martens, 2000), the experiential parts of dining experience was more significant to the tourists' dining experience.

4.5.2 Comments from Hong Kong tourists

The emergent findings suggested that Hong Kong participants' travel dining satisfaction was determined by the gastronomic experience that was provided by the travel agency/destination rather than their motivation for search for memorable dining experiences. According to the participants' utterances (see Table 4.3), the meal arrangements did not receive positive comments from the Hong Kong participants. The comments from the Hong Kong participants, similar

with the Mainland Chinese participants, were a reflection of their desire for impressive and memorable dining experiences.

Table 4.3 Comments about meal arrangements from the Hong Kong tourists

Participant	Excerpts
P-1	<i>Up to now, general meal arrangement is not bad, because it had wide variety and also because it gives us the chance to taste local food. Beside, it also considered the taste of the Chinese people and arranged a lot of Chinese-style meals.</i>
P-6	<i>...meal arrangement is not very attractive, that is to say, regarding food, it could not appeal to us. It did not give us deep impression after eating it.</i>
P-7	<i>...They arranged local meals, but not good enough. Too much buffet. With such high price, I expect better meals.</i>
P-8	<i>Nice arrangement. The food is ok, but not too many meals had been scheduled. We have to dine out. I was not quite used to it.</i>
P-9	<i>As a whole, I give 7.5 out of 10 to the meal arrangement for this trip. The problem is that we had to dine out by ourselves, rather than follow the instruction of the travel agency....</i>

The Combination of Familiarity and Novelty

Fairly speaking, the contents of the meal arrangements for the Hong Kong group were relatively sumptuous if compared with the Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese groups. For example, participants had sumptuous seafood in the Chinese meal, such as live mud crab, steam oyster, tiger prawn. The most impressive menu item was the ‘Monk Jumping over the Wall’ soup, a soup which included considerably expensive ingredients such as a blend of abalone, chicken, ham, mushroom, and herbs. Hence, participants positively expressed that the Chinese food they had in Australia was palatable for it blended with local flavour. Indeed, Hong Kong participants have conveyed one of their food preferences when travelling was to have indigenous food intermingled with Chinese flavour. One participant (HK-P1) stated that: *“it also considered the taste of the Chinese*

people and arranged a lot of Chinese-style meal", Hong Kong participants were contented with their dining experiences in the Chinese restaurant since the intake of indigenous food (Australian seafood is famous) was suited to their dietary habits.

Condemnation of the Meal Arrangements

Hong Kong participants had more opportunities to experience authentic indigenous foods. For example, they dined in an Australian barbeque restaurant and at the Sydney Fishery Market. Those participants who were contented with meal arrangements perceived that their desires were fulfilled during various dining experiences. Nonetheless, some of the participants (HK-P6 and HK-P7) were not satisfied with the dining experiences. They perceived the meal arrangements as not being good enough and unattractive. There might be some reasons behind the participants' condemnation of the meal arrangements.

Firstly, the historical background of Hong Kong and the development of foodservice industry in Hong Kong might affect Hong Kong participants' comments on the meal arrangement. As Hong Kong used to be the British colony, Hong Kong participants were presumably more familiar with western food culture. Besides, there are a bundle of foreign restaurants that proffer various cuisines in Hong Kong. This means that Hong Kong participants might have more opportunities to experience foreign foods when they dine out. In effect, the pre-existing eating habits of the Hong Kong participants might be an integration of western food culture and Chinese food culture. Accordingly, Hong Kong

participants might have higher expectation towards indigenous food in Australia. In this respect, the pre-arranged Australian barbeque, fishery market, and western buffets were still not good enough to inspire Hong Kong participants' taste bud because the pre-arranged indigenous foods were already considerably familiar to them. Thus, this suggested that Hong Kong participants were not only in a quest for the indigenous foods, which were an important part of their travel dining experiences, but also that they wanted luxurious foods that exhibited their cultural distinction. In essence, for the Hong Kong participants, the indigenous food should have shown gastronomic differentiation from their eating behaviour in Hong Kong. In fact, this was the major cultural difference between Hong Kong participants and Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese participants. While the Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese participants were enlivened by experiencing indigenous foods in Australia, the Hong Kong participants might regard their travel dining experience as an extension of daily life if the gastronomic differentiation was not concomitantly attached. Thus, it could be assumed that Hong Kong participants had a much greater gastronomic interest than Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese participants.

Secondly, the Hong Kong participants were looking for a feeling of importance from their travel dining experiences. One participant (HK-P7) indicated that the pre-arranged meal did not meet her expectations as she paid high price for the tour. The participant's remark proved the proposition that is proposed in the extant literature, that the higher the price, the higher the expectation (Kivela, et al, 1999). However, when probing the participant's

definition for a better meal, the participant suggested that she preferred to be served with a sit-down table service rather the format of buffet meal, which requires self-service. This suggested that the participant was looking for a feeling of being served. Kivela and Johns (2003) accentuated that people might use dining out and travel as a means to assert social status. To some extent, the participant (HK-P7) considered that the arranged meals should also display her social distinction as she had paid a high price to the tour. Only extraordinary service quality and an indulged dining experience could affirm that the service was worth the money that the participant had paid. Indeed, such a claim echoed the Taiwanese participants' motives for the partaking of indigenous food in the earlier discussions. That was, one of the motives for consuming indigenous food was to pursue a sense of prestige.

Thirdly, one participant (HK-P6) censured the tour guide's performance, saying that the tour guide did not offer the interpretations of the cultural meanings attached to the indigenous foods. Thus, without the attachment of the rationale for partaking of indigenous food, the participant did not have an impression after consuming it. This explained the reason why the participant (HK-P6) found the intake of indigenous foods was not appealing. To this end, findings confirmed the participants' keenness for the partaking of indigenous foods was not only to broaden their culinary experience but also to obtain new food knowledge from the dining experience. Thus, by implication, as Kivela and Crofts (2006) proposed, tourists' impression of indigenous food could be enhanced by their engagement in the whole food-culture process, for example a holistic approach that involves

cooking and tasting lessons, seeing and experiencing how food is grown and prepared, and by explaining (teaching) the tourists how recipes are made up, and what cultural significance food has to the indigenous people.

Fourthly, the travel agency endeavoured to arrange free dining activities for participants to explore Australian food by their own arrangements, which some participants considered as malpractice which was not conscientious and far less than their expectation. While some of the participants conveyed that the pre-arranged meals might deprive them of an opportunity to sample indigenous food, the emergent findings revealed that there were some Hong Kong participants still reluctant to dine at a destination without the arrangement from travel agency. This was the particular remark of two participants (HK-P8 and HK-P9) who were proficient in speaking English. The language barrier is often perceived as an impediment for tourists' patronage of local restaurants at a destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). The generated insights from the participants' accounts conversely suggested that, other than language barrier, there might be some other reasons which would also deter participants' intention to consume in a local restaurant by themselves. In the Hong Kong participants' case, they were discouraged from exploring indigenous foods because they felt that they were abandoned by the tour leader at the free dining activity. It was plausible that participants joined the tour group to be free from wondering about the arrangement of foods and accommodations (Cohen, 1972). In this respect, the participant (HK-P8) had not expected to plan his own meals, as he had joined a tour group. Another participant (HK-P9) also perceived the free dining activity as a shortcoming in the meal

arrangement because it involved their own efforts to enjoy indigenous food. This might contradict with their rationale for joining tour group, that is a desire for a pampering travel experience. Thus, by implication, some of the participants might have passively reduced their chances of experiencing indigenous foods due to their language deficiency. However, some participants might feel reluctant to explore new dining experiences by their own efforts since they wanted to be pampered during the arranged meals.

In short, the Hong Kong participants' comments on their meal arrangement have revealed that there is a direct relation between their food culture and travel dining behaviour. As Hong Kong participants, having been exposed to the western food culture for a long time, had a breadth of experience with western food, and this, in turn, formed a higher gastronomic interest in their dining experience in Australia. In addition, the pursuit of an indulged dining experience fairly represents Hong Kong participants' desire on a sense of prestige. This also affects Hong Kong participants' inclination to dine in Australia by their own arrangement. Importantly, the cultural meaning of indigenous foods should be concomitantly attached with their dining experiences in Australia. In this respect, tour guide's performance could have a significant impact upon Hong Kong participants' dining satisfaction in Australia.

4.5.3 Comments from Taiwanese tourists

In general, the meal arrangements for the Taiwanese group received satisfactory comments (see Table 4.4). The Taiwanese participants revealed that the pre-arranged western foods had fulfilled their desires to sample indigenous food. At the same time; the Chinese food had accommodated their needs for familiar foods. Based on the participants' utterances, they were satisfied with meal arrangement because it had broadened their dining experience as well as encompassed various food selections which took into account the dietary differences among participants.

Table 4.4 Comments about meal arrangements from the Taiwanese tourists

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Excerpts</i>
P-2	<i>In my opinion, meal arrangement for this trip is generally acceptable, especially the impressive Italian cuisine, lobster, seafood, because they are quite different from Taiwan.... Compared with eating habits in Taiwan, the meals here are more luxurious....</i>
P-11	<i>Actually, meals were arranged quite well this time. Chinese foods accounted for at least half of the meals. The rest are left to indigenous foods...I think we had a large choice of food in this group, such as Mongolian BBQ, seafood buffet and Italian pasta. Obviously, the travel agency was conscientious to arrange the meals, providing us with various dining experience.</i>

The Context of the Dining Experience

According to one participant's (TW-P2) utterance, the meal arrangements brought her completely different dining experiences, which were impressive, romantic and luxurious, from those that she normally had at home. In fact, the reasons why the meal arrangements were impressive and romantic could be epitomised by the context of the dining experience. For example, the travel agency had arranged a meal in an authentic Italian restaurant. Many of the

participants were enlivened by encountering with foreign staff although they could not communicate with them. In addition, the exotic ambience of the restaurant had confirmed that they were in a distant country. Even though most of the participants were not accustomed with the pre-arranged menu (Spaghetti Carbonara and green salad), they stated that this was the most impressive and romantic dining experience in Australia. In this respect, it was the intangible value of the dining experience that contributed to Taiwanese participants' gratification.

The Content of the Menu

The Taiwanese participants' eating behaviour could also elucidate why the dining experiences were impressive and luxurious. For example, participants were impressed with the magnificent 'lobster meal' in a Chinese restaurant. As lobster is a relatively luxurious food in Taiwan, most of the participants were amazed when they were individually served a whole lobster on their plate, with complimentary white wine. In addition, even the familiar Chinese foods had satisfied the Taiwanese participants' desires to sample different foods while travelling. Many of the participants presumed that most of the Chinese restaurants in Australia had been opened by Hong Kong immigrants. In this respect, they perceived that the Chinese foods in Australia were different from those they had at home. In fact, roasted meat, such as roast duck and roast pork, was often seen on the Taiwanese participants' menu. Drinking tea during the meal was not a part of the normal eating habits of the Taiwanese participants. To the Taiwanese participants, these two distinctive characters indicated to them that they had

consumed the Chinese foods in Hong Kong style and that this was a new dining experience. It was apparent that Taiwanese participants were satisfied with the tangible attributes of the dining experience, such as food quality.

Correspondence between Expectation and Perceived Meals

On the other hand, the positive comments came from a correspondence between Taiwanese participants' expectation and arranged meals. When talking about participants' food preferences when travelling, one of the participants (TW-P4) disclosed that meal arrangements should take into account the dietary difference among participants. The participants attested:

"...But different flavours need to be kept balance within meal arrangement. If you can not get used to indigenous foods, you can have other choices. That is better." (TW-P4)

To be more precise, the participant meant that balance should be kept within meal arrangements. Familiar (Chinese food) and novel (indigenous food) dining experiences should be arranged in an even way. In essence, the participant's expectation for such an organization was epitomised by the Taiwanese group's meal arrangement. For example, there was always at least one Chinese meal arranged each day. In effect, most of the participants praised this as a good practice because they felt that it was impossible for them to partake of indigenous food for every meal. It was observed that indigenous foods were often arranged as lunch. Based on an informal conversation with the tour leader, the reason why travel agency arranged the indigenous foods at lunch time was because the travel

agency had predicted, according to their previous experience, that most of the Taiwanese tourists would be unaccustomed with indigenous foods. Yet, to taste indigenous food was a necessity and had become part of travel activities. In order to satiate participants' physiological needs, travel agency often accommodated indigenous food at the lunch time so that participants could have chance to buy something to eat if they were not accustomed with indigenous food. In effect, this practice had attained positive comments, with participants calling it considerate and conscientious. In other words, the meal arrangement had reflected participants' expectations on the dietary differences among participants.

The Additional Encounter with Local Food Culture

In addition, one of the participant's utterances conveyed that the variety of food selection should not only display the travel agency's deliberation on dietary differences, but also offer opportunities for participants to explore local culture:

“If western food had dominated the meal arrangement, we might not be able to get used to it; but if there had been too much Chinese food, we would be deprived of the chance to taste indigenous foods....if joining a tour group, I hope Chinese food and indigenous food can respectively take up half of the meal arrangement” (TW-P11).

It appeared that the participant expected the meal arrangements to comprise of both familiar and exotic flavours. Fortunately, the arranged meals were in accord with the participant's expectation as *“Chinese foods accounted for at least half of the meals, the rest are left to indigenous foods”* (TW-P11). The arranged meals enabled participants to explore local food, tour guides had also created as many

opportunities as possible for participants to encounter with local eating behaviour. For example, it was observed that the tour guide in Sydney had introduced the Aussie Pie as a typical Australian snack when participants saw it at a food stall. The tour guide in Melbourne proposed a side trip to local supermarket and gave a detailed explanation of local eating behaviour according to the displayed foods. To this end, it could be assumed that Taiwanese participants' satisfaction with the meal arrangements was not merely derived from the perceived dining experiences, but also from the tour guides' efforts to introduce local eating behaviour. As one of the rationales for the meal arrangement was to understand local food culture, the tour guide's introduction to indigenous foods appeared to add value to the meal arrangement, since participants perceived that they had experienced local food culture both from mainstream dining experiences and by other means, such as looking at local snacks and at the local foods in a supermarket.

The abovementioned utterances and observed phenomena suggested that Taiwanese group's meal arrangements satiated the participants' gustatory needs and it had further gratified their experiential wants since both the indigenous foods and Chinese foods were new dining experiences to the Taiwanese participants. Compared with the other two tour groups, the Taiwanese group conveyed a particular remark on the role of Chinese food within meal arrangement. While Hong Kong participants and Mainland Chinese participants perceived that the Chinese food was familiar to them, Taiwanese participants

considered that the Chinese food in Australia was in the Hong Kong style, which was a relatively novel dining experience.

All in all, Taiwanese participants' contentment on meal arrangement was attributable to both tangible food quality and intangible exotic ambience. In this respect, the Taiwanese group's example corroborates previous literature, with both tangible and intangible attributes affecting tourists' dining satisfaction, and with the outcome of satisfaction corresponding to the difference between expectation and perceived service (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001; Johns & Pine, 2002; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). This study further suggests that a key basis of tourists' dining satisfaction is cultural participation. Kivela and Crofts (2006) have proposed that cultural participation could be undertaken by taking part in cooking and tasting lessons. The emergent findings reveal that consuming local snack foods and shopping in the local supermarket could also be deemed as authentic encounters with local food culture.

Discussion

One of the research objectives of this study is to identify the food cultural similarities and disparities among participants from three selected regions. This study intends to accomplish this objective by investigating participants' comments on meal arrangements since it duly reflect their attitude and behaviour towards travel dining experience in Australia. As both Chinese foods and indigenous foods

are respectively arranged for the Chinese participants, it could be presumed that meal arrangements among three selected regions are mostly the same except for minor differences. In effect, it is believed that the deliberations on food cultural similarities and disparities among three selected regions could be delineated in an objective way. The food cultural similarities and disparities among three selected regions are summarised and articulated as follows:

Similarities

Based on the findings that emerged from the participants' comments on meal arrangement, the similarities among three selected regions are conceptualized according to three predominate themes, namely '*gustatory pleasure*', '*avoidance of immutable eating behaviour*', and '*participating dining experience*'. Each theme is discussed below.

Gustatory Pleasure

All of the participants are looking for gustatory pleasure from the travel dining experience. Participants have explicitly conveyed that the intake of indigenous food is to explore local food culture; however, it would have 'added-value' if the gustatory pleasure could be attained. Such a notion is manifested by their liking for fusion food between Australian and Chinese food. The fusion food is the ideal way to satiate their desire on sampling indigenous foods and, at the same time, harmonize with their original eating behaviour. In addition, participants' comments have revealed their desire for gustatory pleasure particularly when they were dining at Chinese restaurants. For example, the Mainland Chinese

participants took dominating role in facilitating dining experience so as to ensure their dining satisfaction in Chinese restaurants. The Hong Kong participants placed their emphasis on gustatory pleasure because they were looking for an indulgent dining experience. The Taiwanese participants indicated their satisfaction with meal arrangement because the menu items have been deliberately chosen to cater for their tastes. All in all, all of the participants' comments have revealed that gustatory pleasure is imperative to the travel dining experience. This is because the Chinese regard eating as the first and foremost priority in life. In this respect, even when partaking of indigenous food during travelling, the gustatory pleasure would not be easily disregarded.

Avoidance of immutable eating behaviour

Apart from gustatory pleasure, the propensity to avoid immutable eating behaviour is another common feature that is found among the participants. In the earlier discussions, it was mentioned that the Mainland Chinese participants criticized that there were too many familiar Chinese foods in the pre-arranged meals. On the contrary, Taiwanese participants were satisfied with the pre-arranged meals as they were intermingled with various dining experiences. The Hong Kong participants also felt contented with the combination of familiarity and novelty in their meal arrangements. Altogether, participants' comments implied that "immutable" meal arrangements would devalue their travel dining experience, and thus pre-arrange meals should be well thought out and be imbued with a diversified food selection.

Indeed, participants' avoidance of immutable eating behaviour duly reflects the propositions related to the motivation of dining out in the previous literature (Finkelstein, 1989; Warde & Martens, 2000; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). According to the literature, it is an aphorism that people dine out because they are pursuing unusual and interesting dining experience that is different from their everyday life. This is even true if being applied to the context of tourists' dining behaviour, since one of the important travel motivations is to expand the breadth of life experiences. Thus, participants would naturally expect diversified dining opportunities in order to broaden their culinary experience.

Avoidance of immutable eating behaviour also refers to participants' inclination on escaping from pre-existing eating behaviour. Previous discussions have indicated that participants' expectation on various dining experience is associated with their motives on partaking of indigenous food. It is found that participants consider the intake of indigenous foods could bring them closer to the Australian food culture. In addition, participants have accentuated that an ideal travel dining experience should be a memorable one which they could reminisce or share with their friends. To some extent, participants have revealed their propensity for seeking novel dining experience. Besides, Ward and Martens (2000) proposed that dining out experience should not be the repetition and replication of routine dining behaviour at home. As a whole, it is plausible that participants would reject the immutable, repetitive and or replicated dining behaviour when travelling. Moreover, travel dining experience should represent and symbolise the local culture; one that expresses the destination's uniqueness and is differentiated

from routine dining experience. After all, participants are in quest of novel dining occasions that could induce a memorable travel experience.

However, avoidance of immutable eating behaviour does not mean to completely withdraw from ingrained dining behaviour. Participants have conveyed that they could not continuously partake of indigenous foods or consume Chinese foods throughout the trip. In addition, participants' accounts also suggested that even the sumptuous food would become insipid if similar foods were arranged repeatedly. In this respect, avoidance of immutable eating behaviour suggests a diet balance in the meal arrangement. Thus, by implication, indigenous foods and Chinese foods should equally and reciprocally occupy the meal arrangement. Participants would enjoy diversified dining experience that breaks the dullness of their routine meal arrangement. To this end, meal arrangement is analogous to travel activities for which the sense of pleasure is induced from the exposure of new and various experience (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Ryan, 1997; Richards, 2002).

Participating dining experience

Pine and Gilmore (1999) proposed that customers often quest for an 'experiential' service while purchasing. This implies that tourists prefer to take part in the travel dining experience so as to make the experience memorable. Kivela and Crofts (2006) corroborated this proposition and proposed that foodservice providers should attempt in engaging the tourists in the food

production process so that tourist could have a holistic involvement with the dining experience. In the case of Chinese tourists' dining experience, free dining activity offered participants' the opportunity to take part in a memorable dining experience.

Participants have agreed that free dining activity is an active and experiential practice which enables them to participate in the dining experience. This is because, rather than passively accept pre-arranged meals, participants could actively decide upon what to eat according to their food preference. Such a claim could be substantiated by participants' comments on meal arrangements. For example, the Mainland Chinese participants had a memorable free dining experience in Sydney Fishery Market because most of them have chosen their favourite seafood. The Taiwanese participants were also content with the free dining activity as their tour guide has introduced local eating behaviour to them beforehand. Nevertheless, the Hong Kong participants were disappointed with the tour guide's lack of gastronomic information provided to them during the free dining activity.

Yet, participants have conveyed that they often stay in tour guide's 'shelter' for they perceived language is going to be a barrier. Besides, participants were afraid of being exposed in an unfamiliar environment. In this respect, due to language barrier and security concern, participants' accounts revealed that the ideal way to undertake free dining activity is by the protection of the 'environmental bubble' (Cohen, 1972). In other words, the arrangement of free

dining activity would be feasible if participants were dining in a designed area with the tour guide/leader's recommendation of gastronomic information of indigenous food. In this way, the assurance of palatability of indigenous food could be enhanced by the recommendation provided by the tour guide/leader. Thus, findings confirmed that encouraging tourists' participation in the dining experience could lead to enhanced tourists' dining satisfaction. Yet, it should be noted that free dining activity should be carried out in a designed area with the assistance and suggestions from local tour guide.

Disparities

Despite there were different evaluative comments toward meal arrangements among three regions, it is believed that the differences are partially attributable to the tour guide's performance as well as the contents of meal arrangement. However, the major reason that provokes different evaluative comments might be the dissimilar exposure to the western food culture and it accordingly reflects different gastronomic interests among the three selected groups (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Disparities in gastronomic interest among three regions.

	Gastronomic interest	
	Characteristics	Preference
<i>Mainland China</i>	- limited knowledge about Australian food culture	- indigenous foods which could represent western food culture
<i>Hong Kong</i>	- rich experience with western food culture	- higher expectation in gastronomic interest
<i>Taiwan</i>	- reflection of pre-existing dining behaviour	- Australian snack foods

Gastronomic interest

Although participants were found to have desire on sampling indigenous food, they have different gastronomic interests in Australian food. Based on the emergent findings, the Mainland Chinese participants did not reveal particular gastronomic interest about Australian food culture. The Mainland Chinese participants pursued a dining experience which could enrich their culinary experience, or could be a remembrance to their travel dining experience. The Hong Kong participants, on the other hand, have shown a higher expectation on meal arrangement because they have already tasted the varied exotic foods at home. The Taiwanese participants' gastronomic interest duly reflected their pre-existing dining behaviour as they were interested in Australian snack food like they normally are in favour of snack food at home.

Different stimulus might affect participant's gastronomic interest. It might be the participants' perceptions towards destination's gastronomic identity (Bessiere, 1998), or the inputs from destination marketer's marketing communication (Middleton, 2001), or participants' pre-existing dining behaviour (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). In the case of this study, the pre-existing dining behaviour is found to have significant influence on participants' gastronomic interest. According to Kivela (2003), pre-existing dining behaviour is the reflection of an individual's regional characteristic and the degree of exposure to western food culture. Since the regional characteristic and the degree of exposure to western food culture are different among China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, this explained the diverse gastronomic interests of the participants from these three regions.

The above deliberations explicated the reason why the Mainland Chinese participants did not reveal particular gastronomic interest in the meal arrangement. This is because the Mainland Chinese participants might have only limited knowledge about Australian food as Mainland China has begun to feel the input of western food culture only in recent years (Pine, 2002). On the other hand, Hong Kong participants have rich experience with western food culture as there are an abundance of foreign restaurants in Hong Kong. In this respect, Hong Kong participants would seek for more assorted gastronomic experience for themselves to indulge in. Finally, the Taiwanese participants' gastronomic interest is the reflection both their distinct regional characteristic and their pre-existing dining behaviour. As the Taiwanese participants are used to eating snack foods at home, they have displayed a great deal of interest in sampling Australian snack foods.

The implication behind participants' diverse gastronomic interests is the manifestation of their dissimilar food identity. The Mainland Chinese participants' dining behaviour duly symbolised Chinese food culture since the encroachment of western food culture have not yet significantly influenced their dining behaviour. Hong Kong participants' dining behaviour is the combination of western and Chinese food culture. The Taiwanese participants' food identity was manifested by their inclination in Australian snack food as snack food could be the representation of Taiwanese food culture (Hsieh & Chang, 2006). All in all, the discussions on participants' gastronomic interests not only reveal that tourists' dining behaviour often reflects their food identity, but also suggest that western

food culture have generated different degree of influence onto the dining behaviour of Chinese participants' among Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

4.6 Synthesis of the research findings

This section aims to synthesise the phenomenological insights that are generated from this study. The synthesis is presented according to two major themes. The first theme attempts to discuss the role of travel dining experience at a destination towards visitor satisfaction, which is also one of the research objectives of this study. The second theme tries to classify the Chinese participants into typologies based on their travel dining behaviour.

4.6.1 The role of dining out experience at a destination towards visitor satisfaction

Douglas (1997) proposed that food is an essential part of the human culture. This suggests that one could discern a culture through the understanding of its eating behaviour. In this respect, the travel dining experience in Australia could help the Chinese participants to learn about the Australian culture; and since one of their predominant travel motivations is on cultural exploration, dining experience contribute significantly to the overall visitor satisfaction. Such a notion also implies that travel dining experience would not only be regarded as a 'supporting experience' for satiating tourists' hunger (Quan & Wang, 2004).

Rather, dining out experience at a destination is more like a ‘must do’ travel activity to the most of the tourists. In fact, this proposition was repeatedly found and confirmed in various parts of the research findings. The following deliberations, from the motivational, attitudinal and behavioural perspectives, integrate the previous discussions and develop a proposition pertaining to the role of travel dining experience at a destination.

Motivation

Many scholars suggested that gastronomy has now become a new niche to attract tourists to visit a destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Long; 2004; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). For those tourists who travel for a destination’s gastronomy, travel dining experience would be the peak touristic experience to their travel experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). Yet, the findings from this study suggest that travel dining experience could turn out to be a peak touristic experience even when tourists’ predominant motivation is not to explore a destination’s gastronomy.

From a motivational perspective, Quan and Wang (2004) proposed that the role of travel dining experience in tourism is determined by the memorability and intensification of the experience. In the focus group interviews, it was found that the main motivation to visit Australia was not about gastronomy for most of the participants, however, many of them revealed that they were keen to pursue a memorable dining experience for which so that they could share with their friends, or retain as a mental souvenir of their trip. In this respect, travel dining experience

could be deemed as a peak touristic experience since it creates an impressive component to the travel experience. On the other hand, most of the participants have expressed that partaking of indigenous food enable them to enrich their culinary experience. In essence, travel dining experience has gratified participants' visual, sensual and spiritual desires. As travel dining experience involves various sensational experiences, it is analogous to other travel activities which could enrich tourists' travel experience. Consequently, it offers a comparable motivational effect as a peak touristic experience does.

Attitude towards dining experience

From a cognitive approach, the emergent findings suggest that participants consider travel dining experience as a learning experience. Such learning experience not only enables them to acquire new gastronomic knowledge but also the Australian food culture. What is more, from the parents' perspective, travel dining experience is the stage where their children could expand global vision by encountering with foreign service staff. As the Chinese maxim suggests "Travelling ten thousand miles is better reading ten thousand books", this means Chinese people believe that travel is an effective way than reading to learn and discover the world. In the same vein, Chinese participants generally share the same attitude that travel dining experience is an effective way to discern Australian culture. Thus, travel dining experience could once again be proven to be a peak touristic experience.

Furthermore, many participants have mentioned that partaking of indigenous food could bring them closer to the Australian culture. Some of the participants even were in the opinion that the trip would not be 'genuine' without trying indigenous food. As tasting indigenous food has become a 'must' in travel experience, travel dining experience would not merely be a supporting experience to satiate participants' hunger. It is deemed as an indispensable peak touristic experience which could enable participants to be immersed in the Australian food culture.

Dining behaviour

Participants' dining behaviour in Australia corroborated the significance of travel dining experience to the overall visitor satisfaction. It was unravelled that participants prefer to have various dining experience which are different from their routine and familiar dining experience at home. This suggests that participants' dining behaviour is in a context of novelty-seeking rather than merely to sustain their pre-existing food habits. Such novelty-seeking dining behaviour might be incorporated into the 'travel climate' which advocates exposure to new experience and new pleasure while travelling (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). In effect, it could be presumed that the prime objective of the travel dining experience is analogous to peak tourist activity. Specifically, diversity is the critical element that could turn both travel dining experience and travel activity into an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Participants' dining behaviour towards indigenous foods is particularly revealing. Unlike they often 'gobbled' the Chinese foods; it was observed that participants were relaxing when they were savouring the indigenous foods. This phenomenon conveys a lot of meaning. Participants might perceive the intake of indigenous foods as part of the travel activity so that they want to savour and enjoy it with a comforting pace and ambience. On the other hand, the Chinese food is regarded as an extension of daily dining experience which could not offer new opportunities in expanding culinary experience. Yet, despite the familiarity of the Chinese food, participants still expressed that they were appealed to the sumptuous Chinese meal. Since travel is to escape from the daily experience (Cohen, 1972), the participants were appealed to the sumptuous Chinese meal because it characterized a remarkable dining experience. To this end, it can be deduced that participants are in quest of a novel and unusual dining experience no matter they savour indigenous food or Chinese food. Participants' dining behaviour reveals their yearning for a novel yet memorable dining experience, and has once again proven that travel dining experience could be a peak touristic experience.

All in all, the abovementioned premises validate the idea that travel dining experience could be the peak touristic experience from different approaches. From the motivational perspective, it was unravelled that cultural motives push participants to seek an unusual and memorable dining experience to enrich their culinary experience. From the attitudinal perspective, dining experience is perceived as a learning experience and an effective means to discern the

Australian culture. From the behavioural perspective, participants' dining behaviour was found to be in a context of novelty-seeking; no matter they partake of indigenous food or Chinese food. Consequently, these findings yield another proposition for this study:

Proposition 12: Travel dining experience can significantly influence visitor satisfaction as tourists regarded it more as a 'peak touristic experience' than merely as a 'supporting experience'.

4.6.2 The typology of the Chinese tourists' dining behaviour

In order to recapitulate the Chinese tourists' dining behaviour in Australia, this study categorises their dining behaviour into three typologies; namely, *observer*, *browser*, and *participator* (see Table 4.6). Each typology highlights the variation in food consumption motives, attitudes toward healthy dining behaviour, expectations toward travel dining experience, and the significance of the dining experience to the travel experience. The depiction of the typology of the Chinese tourists' dining behaviour is incorporated with Hjalager's (2003) model of the gastronomy tourists since many aspects of the Chinese tourists' dining behaviour are correlated with, and reflect the characteristics of the gastronomy tourists.

Observer

The observer represents the Chinese participants who prefer to partake of the Chinese food in Australia. Although they are interested in local culture and

indigenous food in Australia, their tendency towards nostalgia keep them away from indigenous food. This implies that observers' dining behaviours in Australia might have been predisposed by the Chinese food culture. Thus, they are in quest of *appetizing assurance* and *familiar flavour* from the travel dining experience. In addition, they are relatively health-conscious due to the influence from the Chinese food culture which emphasis a healthy and balanced dietary regime.

Table 4.6 The typology of the Chinese tourists' dining behaviour

	OBSERVER	BROWSER	PARTICIPATOR
Food consumption motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appetizing assurance - Familiar flavour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food choice depends on group's consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore local culture - Broaden culinary experience - Display prestige
Attitude towards healthy dining behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health consciousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not revealed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disregard healthy dining behaviour
Attitude towards dining experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dining experience is a learning experience. - Learning by observing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dining experience is not the main concern of travel experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dining experience is a learning experience. - Learning by participating.
Dining behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look for familiar foods. - Remain core eating behaviour - Passively accept pre-arranged meals - Prefer fusion food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safety and security is the main concern - Prefer to stay under tour guide's 'shelter' - Passively accept pre-arranged meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Novelty-seeking - Disregard pre-existing dining behaviour - Actively pursue new dining experience - Prefer free dining activity
Evaluation on dining experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food quality - Sumptuousness - Dining ambience - Tour guide's performance on facilitating the dining experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service attitude - Tour guide's performance on facilitating the dining experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Variety of food selection - Dining ambience - Correspondence of expectation and perceived meals - Tour guide's performance on the interpretation of the indigenous food.
Role of dining experience to travel experience	Peak touristic experience	Supporting experience	Peak touristic experience

The observer is somewhat similar with the *recreationalist* type of culinary tourists, which was identified by Hjalager (2003), because both of them are the more conservative tourists who look for the familiarity of their food culture from the travel dining experience. Yet, whilst the recreationalists are often reluctant to try foreign food, the observer might have a trial of indigenous food as they are inquisitive with the local culture. To some extent, the observer is favourable towards indigenous food because exploring local culture during travelling is one of the predominant motivators which are commonly shared by most of the participants. However, the observer might dread of being unaccustomed to indigenous food and need to have familiar flavour to make unpalatable food (based on their own food culture value) become palatable. Such behaviour suggests that observer tend to prefer a blended dining experience with Chinese food and indigenous food. In this respect, the fusion of the Chinese food and indigenous food might be a good option for them to partake of. It is, therefore, presumed that the observe prefer to observe, or discern the Australian food culture, rather than totally immerse in it. This also implies that the observer is sentimentally attached to the Chinese food.

Findings revealed that the underlying reason behind the observer's propensity of seeking familiarity from the travel dining experience is the concern on palatability. Palatability is of particular importance to the observer since they are sentimentally attached to the Chinese food and could not be completely withdrawn from their ingrained dining behaviour. In other words, the observer

type of participants would rather stay in the 'environment bubble' (Cohen, 1972) and actively seeks a pampering dining experience in Australia. In effect, they place their emphasis on food quality, sumptuousness, dining ambience, and tour guide's performance on facilitating the dining experience when evaluating the travel dining experience.

Although Chinese food culture is deeply embedded in the observer's dining behaviour, the observer did not relinquish their opportunity to savour indigenous food. As noted earlier, the observer prefers to have fusion of Chinese food and indigenous food to experience the 'otherness' (Long, 2004). This suggests that the observer might perceive the dining experience as part of the travel experience. Thus, the food consumption experience is considered as peak touristic experience for the observer type of participants.

Browser

There are some Chinese participants who are not fastidious about food selection while travelling. For this group of participants, food is not a major concern in gauging the level of satisfaction for the holiday. They could be accommodated by either Chinese food or indigenous food as pre-arranged by travel agency. They are defined as 'browser' because they regard dining experience in a casual way, and are not particularly concerned about travel dining experience. The browsers have prepared to compromise their food preference in order to reach group harmony. Although the Chinese food culture might not have influenced the browsers' attitudes and behaviours toward indigenous food in

Australia, their group-oriented dining behaviour manifests the effect of Chinese culture.

Cohen and Avieli (2004) proposed that language might create impediments for those western tourists when they travel to less-developed destinations in terms of food risk involvement as well as communication barrier between tourists and service staff. Yet, for the browsers type of participants, language deficiency is more related to the security and safety aspects of the travel experience. The browsers are afraid of ~~loss~~ losing their way in Australia because they can not fluently communicate with local resident in English. This also affects their inclination to discover indigenous food and prefer to stay under the 'shelter' of the tour guide. Security and safety, thus, have become a more prominent concern to the browser. In this respect, the browser is willing to accept the pre-arranged meals.

The browsers might not be able to be categorised into Hjalager's (2003) typology of culinary tourists because their dining behaviour do not epitomize a typical culinary tourist. Yet, the characteristics of the browsers are noteworthy because many of the Chinese tourists might correspond with this category, particularly those in the elder generation who are often relatively intransigent, risk-avoidance and remain steadfast in their ingrained dining behaviour. In addition, findings also reveal that most of the browsers preconceived that the travel dining experience would not be as comfortable as in their home country.

Thus, they shift their emphasis from the palatability of the food to the safety and security of the travel experience.

The emergent findings suggest that the browsers are likely to follow the tour guide's lead in order to sustain their own safety and security. In this respect, tour guide's performance become critical since the browsers would rely on tour guide to resolve any unforeseeable hindrances. Consequently, the browsers valued the feeling of being served, and evaluate dining experience according to service attitude as well as tour guide's performance on facilitating dining experience.

Participator

The participators are those who have great gastronomic interests on indigenous food. They believe the best way to appreciate local culture is through the participation of indigenous dining experience in Australia. The participators perceive travel dining experience as a learning experience to explore local culture and broaden their culinary experience. Subsequently, the participators consider the intake of indigenous food could increase their cultural capital and leading them to a genuine holiday experience.

In contrast to the other two types of participants who might have reservation towards indigenous food, the participators are overtly willing to savour the unique gastronomy in Australia. In addition, while most of the participants passively accept the pre-arranged meals, the participator actively participate in the

organisation of the dining experience even though they join tour group. For example, they prefer to have free dining activity so that they could choose the food by their own decision. As the intake of indigenous food could have confronted with their pre-existing food culture value, the participators are more likely to disregard their ingrained dining behaviour in order to pursue a genuine contact with the local food culture. Besides, the participators also tend to disregard the healthy eating principle in the Chinese food culture.

In a way, the participators are analogous to the existential and experimental mode of culinary tourists as they all are advocators of sumptuous gourmet (Hjalager, 2003). Tasting new food is an indispensable part of their holiday experience. In particular, quality and fashionability (Finkelstein, 1989) of dining experience is a prime concern since it symbolise the participator's lifestyle and display their prestige.

The participators' attitudes and behaviours toward travel dining experience have been duly reflected in their evaluation of the dining experience. First, the participators actively seek chances to experience indigenous food in Australia for they believe that the wider the variety of indigenous foods they have tasted, the broader the scopes of the local culture they could be encountered with. Thus, the variety of food selection becomes an important indicator to the satisfaction of their dining experience. And as the motivation for travel dining experience is to enrich culinary experience, both food selection and dining ambience should

characterise Australian culture so that the participator could confirm they are in an exotic dining environment.

Second, Hjalager (2003) contended that some of the tourists might pursue the trendy and fashionable foods which have been introduced by epicure or travel magazine. Likewise, the participators are often in the pursuit of what food is in fashion or what cuisine that is currently valued. In effect, such notion could provoke the participators to form a preconception towards Australian foods prior to their visit. The preconception could be derived from reference groups, such as from friends or media, and often be incorporated with the destination image. As the participators could be motivated by sampling fashionable indigenous food in Australia, the success of travel dining experience therefore might be determined by whether the content of meal arrangement has corresponded with their expectation.

Finally, since the participators are keen to acquire new knowledge about the local food culture, they would rely on tour guide's interpretation so as to obtain more insights on the indigenous food of the destination. Without knowing the symbolic meanings behind indigenous food, the participator might consider the intake of indigenous food as meaningless and accordingly, appreciation and acceptance of the indigenous food could have been significantly diminished. Indubitably, the participators' keenness on sampling indigenous food proves that food consumption is an inextricable part of their holiday experience. This

corroborates that travel dining experience is certainly deemed as peak touristic experience to the participators.

As noted earlier, Hjalager's (2003) model of the culinary tourists depicts the ways how culinary tourists savour and experience gastronomy in a destination. Nevertheless, Hjalager (2003) leave a gap in how normal tourists perceive the importance of travel dining experience to their holiday experience. This study proposes a generic understanding of tourists' dining behaviour. Findings reveal that other than those gourmands who might actively seek new culinary experience (the participator identified in this study); most of the tourists also perceive travel dining experience as an inextricable part of their holiday experience. Importantly, differences in food culture value between tourists and destinations could induce different attitudes and behaviour towards travel dining experience. In addition, findings also suggest that safety and security concern would preclude tourists' propensity to discover destination's food culture. Thus, by implication, the destination marketers need to ascertain the balance between the exotic and familiar dining environment as well as food selection in order to cater to tourists' desire for a memorable dining experience but also lessen tourists' anxiety about unfamiliar food.

4.6.3 The difference of travel dining behaviour among the three regions

Based on the typology of the Chinese tourists' dining behaviour, this study further develops a matrix (see Figure 4.2) to depict the differences in travel dining behaviour among tourists from the three selected regions. The matrix is based on

three aspects, namely, food consumption motive, dining behaviour, and evaluation of dining experience.

	Food consumption motive	Dining behaviour	Evaluation of dining experience
Mainland China	Observer	Browser	Observer
Hong Kong	Participator	Participator	Participator
Taiwan	Browser	Observer	Participator

Figure 4.2 Differences in travel eating behaviour among Chinese tourists

As portrayed in this matrix, the Mainland Chinese tourists' food consumption motive is classified into the observer type, for they look for appetizing assurance and familiar flavour in their travel dining experience. Since most of them are first-time travellers to Australia, they prefer to stay under tour guide's 'shelter' to savour indigenous foods, thus, their dining behaviour could be categorised into the browser type of tourists. The Mainland Chinese tourists have conveyed that sumptuousness is an important element in their travel dining experience. It could be assumed that the observer type of tourists could duly represent Mainland Chinese tourists' evaluation of their dining experience.

As Hong Kong tourists have rich experience with western food culture, their food consumption motive, dining behaviour, and evaluation on dining experience all fall into the participator type of tourists. In this respect, Hong Kong tourists are

more active in exploring new culinary experience, they tend to disregard their pre-existing eating behaviour, and require tour guide to provide comprehensive information about indigenous food.

Based on the findings emerged from the Taiwanese tour group, it was found that most of the Taiwanese tourists respect group harmony towards travel dining experience. This suggests that Taiwanese tourists' food consumption motive might be analogous to the browser type of tourists. Their preference on fusion food exemplifies that their travel dining behaviour is the reflection of the observer type of tourists. However, Taiwanese tourists emphasis on the variety of food selection and expect tour guide's interpretation of the indigenous food which suggests them as the participator when evaluating travel dining experience.

It should be noted that this matrix may articulate the differences in food consumption motive, dining behaviour and evaluation of travel dining experience among the three regions. Yet, it can not fully represent every tourist's eating behaviour in the selected regions. For example, some of the Mainland Chinese tourists' dining behaviour may be pertinent to the participator type of tourists because they are overtly willing to explore destination's gastronomy by their own arrangement. While the proposed matrix may not be able to generalise to the whole population, the matrix is believed to provide groundwork for further studies, especially in quantifying the difference of the dining behaviour among the three regions.

Chapter Review

This chapter identified several findings from the Chinese participants' dining experience in Australia. Findings reveal that some of the participants prefer to partake of Chinese foods. Yet, the ideal Chinese food for their travel dining experience is the fusion of Chinese food and Australian food. In this respect, the compounded Chinese food can fulfil participants' desire for sampling indigenous foods, but at the same time, offer the gustatory pleasure. While findings corroborate the intake of Chinese food is participants' core eating behaviour, it also suggests that participants do not relinquish their right to encounter with Australian food even when consuming the Chinese food. It was found that many of the participants are keen to be involved in the local gastronomic experience. Exploring local culture is the predominant underlying motivation for such an inclination. This finding substantiates the propositions that tourists regard local cuisine as a key channel to explore a destination's culture (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Long, 2004; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Meanwhile, this study discovers the cultural element of the indigenous food will provide learning opportunity to participants, which in turn lead to a genuine travel experience. Findings further suggest that some participants were not fastidious on food selection. Though this type of the participants did not have particular food preference, they have conveyed that the sumptuous food is necessary to their travel dining experience or it will affect their dining satisfaction.

While the healthy eating concept is deeply rooted in the Chinese food culture (Chang, 1977), the findings reveal that many of the Chinese participants may disregard their healthy beliefs if they are overwhelmed by the sumptuous foods when travelling. Conversely, participants pay attention to the sufficient nutrition and the content of breakfast because these two aspects will determine whether they can travel in a healthy state. This is the area that has not been addressed in the literature, and is a prominent factor which will affect participants' travel dining satisfaction. Cohen and Avieli (2004) proposed that food might be an impediment to the tourists' satisfaction if the intake of indigenous food involves food related risk. The findings in this study suggest this proposition might only exist when tourists travel to a less-developed country because the Chinese participants do not perceive the intake of indigenous food will involve risk-taking for Australia is a modernised country.

Previous literature has reiterated that one's eating behaviour is predominantly shaped and influenced by their parents (Fieldhouse, 1986; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997). However, findings reveal that such a top-down influence will be altered if participants are accompanied by their children. The reason why those participants cater to their children's food preference while travelling was because they quest for familial contentment. In addition, the parents consider the travel dining experience as an educational experience that allows their children to have a better understanding of local culture, custom, and language.

This chapter highlights six attributes that might affect the Chinese participants' dining experience in Australia. The first attribute is the Chinese participants' own food culture value. As each cultural group has their own distinctive food culture value and culinary precepts (Kivela, 2003), flavour and cooking methods are accordingly determine the edibility and palatability of the indigenous foods. The contextual factor is the second attribute that might influence the Chinese participants' travel dining experience. This is because of the participants' dining purpose is to look for a new dining experience and intangible value that is attached to the dining experience. Findings reveal that the more indigenous food the participants have eaten, the more they understand the Australian culture. In this respect, a variety of food selection is the third attribute that might affect the participants' travel dining experience. Findings also suggest that participants' initial perceptions of Australia will formulate their expectation on 'what foods should be eaten' and 'what service should be delivered' during their travel dining experience. Thus, the fourth attribute that might have an effect on their travel dining experience is the participants' perceptions on Australia. The fifth attribute that might impinge on participants' dining experience in Australia is the service encounter. This study indicates that the pleasure of being served, communication, the influence of 'role theory', and service speed are the components that would determine the success of intercultural service encounter between participants and foreign service staff. Finally, tour guide's performances also have effect on participants' travel dining experience. Findings propose that tour guide can enhance participants' dining satisfaction by interpreting the cultural

meaning of indigenous food, introducing local dining behaviour, and facilitating participants' requests during the dining experience.

The participants from three selected regions had revealed different comments towards their meal arrangements. As the ability to travel abroad symbolise social status and privilege in Mainland China (Zhang, Pine & Lam, 2005), the Mainland Chinese participants have shown their keenness to look for a new dining experience that they and their friends are not likely to eat at home. Nevertheless, the Mainland Chinese participants explicitly convey that meal arrangement fail to create a surprise element to their dining experience because there are too many familiarities (Chinese foods) arranged in their meal arrangements. The Hong Kong participants' comments on meal arrangements reveal that they have a much greater gastronomic interest than Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese participants. This is because they have been exposed to western food culture for a long time. In addition, the Hong Kong participants' disappointment on meal arrangements is also influenced by poor performance of their tour guide as well as the inconsiderate organization of the free dining activity. The Taiwanese participants satisfy with their meal arrangements because there is a correspondence between expectations and perceived meals. While Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese participants regard the Chinese food as familiar food to their dining experience, Taiwanese participants perceive the intake of Chinese food is a novel dining experience because the Chinese food in Australia is in the Hong Kong style.

Participants' comments toward meal arrangements reveal that they all in quest of gustatory pleasure from travel dining experience; avoid of immutable travel eating behaviour; and prefer to have free dining activity to participate in the dining experience. On the other hand, findings suggest that participants have different gastronomic interests due to dissimilar exposure to western culture among three selected regions.

In the final part of this chapter, the discussion focused on the synthesis of the phenomenological insights that generated from this study. Based on the emergent findings, this study proposes that the Chinese participants have regarded travel dining experience more as a 'peak touristic experience' than merely as a 'supporting experience'. In addition, this study classifies the Chinese participants' dining behaviour into three typologies; namely, observer, browser, and participator. This typology fills the gap in the Hjalager's (2003) model and suggests that other than gastronomy tourists, most of the tourists would also perceive travel dining experience as an inextricable part of their holiday experience.

This chapter has explored different aspects of the Chinese participants' dining experience in Australia, and has investigated the underlying motives, reasons, and attributes, that might directly or indirectly affect the Chinese participants' travel dining experience. Most importantly, followed by the discussions of the research findings, there are twelve propositions developed in this chapter. The development of these propositions reflects the research questions of this study.

The next chapter will discuss how these propositions correlate with research objectives. Subsequently, the theoretical and practical implications of this study will be proposed and the conclusion could be drawn for this study.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter summarises the research findings by presenting the propositions according to the research objectives. After that, the contributions made by this study are highlighted. Finally, suggestions for further research and recommendations for destination marketers are proposed.

5.1 Revisiting the research objectives

This research scrutinizes Chinese group tourists' travel dining experience when on holiday in Australia. In particular, the influence of Chinese food culture on tourists' eating behaviour is explored, attributes that will influence tourists' evaluation of their dining experience are identified, differences in travel eating behaviour are distinguished, and the role of dining out experience towards visitor satisfaction is investigated. Based on the research findings, twelve propositions are postulated. They are recapitulated in the subsequent sections along with corroborating evidences in order to address to the respective research objectives.

5.1.1 To investigate the influence of Chinese food culture on Chinese tourists' eating behaviour during holidays in Australia;

The influence of Chinese food culture on Chinese tourists travel eating behaviour is manifested by the following evidences:

- Appetizing assurance and familiar flavour were found to be two important factors in Chinese tourists' travel dining experience. In this regard, Chinese tourists preferred to have fusion food of Chinese and Australian food;
- Chinese tourists would prefer not to continuously partook of indigenous food because it could not satisfy their physiological needs;
- Although most of the Chinese tourists actively looked for new dining experiences, yet they would socialise rather than adapt to a new eating behaviour in Australia;

Proposition 1: No matter whether tourists accept or reject indigenous foods, they are reluctant to withdraw from their ingrained eating behaviour while travelling.

- Chinese tourists often compared the palatability of Australian food with Chinese food, which means that Chinese tourists' attitude towards Australian food was guided by their own food culture value;
- Chinese tourists discerned the 'social mannerisms' (Finkelstein, 1989) within the context of dining in Australia rather than adapted new eating behaviour;

- Chinese tourists appreciated more of Chinese food after savouring indigenous food;

Proposition 2: Travel dining experience provides a stage for cultural socialisation between Chinese food culture and Australian food culture.

- Chinese people are, in general, intrepid in the pursuit of ‘edible’ food (Chang, 1977). In addition, findings confirmed that tasting indigenous foods while travelling symbolises status and privilege in the Chinese society. Thus, the Chinese tourists in this study perceived that the partaking of indigenous food is one of the critical elements of a genuine travel experience;

Proposition 3: Partaking of indigenous food could actualise tourists’ desire for a memorable dining experience which is a critical element of a genuine travel experience.

- Some of the Chinese tourists would disregard their healthy diet beliefs due to the lure of sumptuous meals. Fundamentally, Chinese tourists’ eating behaviour would still remain constant;

- Chinese tourists have shown their health-consciousness in terms of their emphasis on nutritional foods and sufficient food quantity in order to maintain a healthy state to cope with the travel activities;
- Breakfast is another aspect in eating behaviour that Chinese tourists were reluctant to alter due to health concern;

Proposition 4: Chinese participants' dining behaviour do not operate in tandem with their healthy diet beliefs only if they are overwhelmed by the temptation of the sumptuous meals, otherwise, their healthy diet beliefs would still remain constant.

- Some of the Chinese tourists would temporary forgo their eating behaviour in exchange for a new dining experience that could allow their children to better learn and experience the Australian culture.

Proposition 5: Children often exert purchasing influence over parents' travel eating behaviour.

5.1.2 To identify what attributes influence Chinese tourists' evaluation on their dining experience while visiting Australia;

This study identifies six attributes that would affect Chinese tourists' evaluation on their travel dining experience. They are: Chinese tourists' own food culture, the contextual factor of dining experience, variety of food selection, perceptions towards Australia, service encounter, and tour guide's performance. Their respective influences are outlined as follows.

- The effect of tourists' food culture and culinary precepts created a discrepancy between expectation and perceived food quality for some Chinese tourists.

Proposition 6: Even for the indigenous foods which tourists have not encountered previously, judgement and opinion will be made by cross-referencing to their native food culture value.

- Many of the Chinese tourists were well-aware of the differences in food cultures between China and Australia, and they also realised that indigenous food quality might not be able to gratify their gustatory pleasure. In effect, as long as the indigenous food and dining ambience characterised the Australian culture, the weighting of the tangible food quality could be reduced to the minimum in the Chinese participants' evaluation process.

Proposition 7: For tourists whose dining purpose is to broaden their dining experience, the intangible experiential factor is more significant than the tangible food quality of the travel dining experience.

- Variety of food selections would confer great value to the breadth of travel experience. In addition, variety should be supplemented with culinary differentiation for Chinese tourists to appreciate Australian food culture.

Proposition 8: A wide range of indigenous foods with cultural sophistication would actualise participants' desire for novel and memorable dining experience.

- Chinese tourists' initial perceptions towards destination included what foods should be eaten and what service should be delivered. It can be said that tourists dining satisfaction is dependent on the perceptions they had of the destination before visiting compared with the actual dining experience they had perceived.

Proposition 9: Tourists' initial perceptions towards destination would affect the formulation of expectation and determine the visit satisfaction accordingly.

- Amiability is significant to the service encounter in Chinese restaurant because the Chinese believe that one should show hospitality when they

meet friends overseas. In contrast, Chinese tourists tolerate the shortcoming during intercultural service encounter for they foresee the communication barrier between themselves and the service staff.

Proposition 10: Communication barrier would not create obstacles to the intercultural service encounter since tourists have predicted the potential barrier and are prepared to condone the foreseeable hindrance.

- Dining satisfaction can be enhanced if tour guide mediates between service staff and the Chinese tourists to reduce language and cultural barrier. In addition, tour guide can create value-adding input to travel dining experience by interpreting the food culture of the destination and suggesting the right choice of indigenous food to the Chinese tourists.

Proposition 11: Tour guides serve as the mediator to alleviate the language and cultural barrier faced by the tourist, and thus would contribute significantly towards tourists' dining satisfaction.

5.1.3 To distinguish the differences in travel eating behaviour among Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese tourists;

This study identifies the similarities and disparities in travel eating behaviour among Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwanese tourists. Several common

travel eating behaviours are recognized among the tourists from the three selected regions.

- All of the Chinese tourists in this study pursued gustatory pleasure from travel dining experience no matter they partook of Chinese or indigenous foods. This is because Chinese people place emphasis on eating and regard it as the first and foremost priority in life. It was revealed that fusion food was the ideal way to satiate tourists' desire on savouring indigenous food, while at the same time, harmonize with their pre-existing eating behaviour.
- Chinese tourists in this study were all inclined to avoid immutable eating behaviour during their trip to Australia. This finding corroborates with propositions in the previous literature that travel dining experience should not be the repetition and replication of routine dining behaviour at home (Finkelstein, 1989; Warde & Martens, 2000; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Thus, Chinese tourists would expect diversified travel dining experience that breaks the dullness of their routine meal arrangement.
- Chinese tourists commonly preferred to have free dining activities to be integrated into their itinerary in order to allow them the chance to seek for experiential dining experiences. However, free dining activities would only be feasible if it is undertaken in a designated area with the assistance and suggestions from the tour guide.

Disparities in travel eating behaviour are also distinguished among the Chinese tourists from the three selected regions. It is believed that the disparities are attributable to the dissimilar exposure to the western food culture and thus bringing about different gastronomic interests among them. In essence, Chinese tourists' diverse gastronomic interests are the manifestation of their food identity. The followings exemplify the disparate gastronomic interests among Chinese tourists from the three regions:

- Mainland Chinese tourists may have only limited knowledge about Australian food. In this respect, they were interested in indigenous food which could represent western food culture;
- Due to extensive exposure to the western food culture, Hong Kong tourists displayed more sophisticated gastronomic interest. They sought for richness and diversity in their travel dining experience;
- Taiwanese tourists were accustomed to eating snack foods at home; therefore, they have revealed a great interest in savouring Australian snack foods.

5.2 Proposed contributions to knowledge

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991) propounded that the contribution of a doctoral dissertation to knowledge can be as new knowledge about the management, as new theories and ideas, or as new methods of investigation. According to this proposition, the contributions of this study are presented below.

New knowledge about gastronomy in tourism

Gastronomy has become a new niche in marketing strategies to attract tourists. Literature suggests that gastronomy is often used to appeal to tourists' needs in travel brochures and television travel programmes. Although, there is evidence to suggest that the role of food or gastronomy is positively correlated to destination choice, little has been done to examine gastronomy's contribution on tourists' satisfaction and/or enjoyment of the visit. Pine and Gilmore (1999) claimed that customer quests for an 'experiential' service while purchasing. A dining experience is an opportunity to see and try the food, smell its aroma and taste the new flavours which fulfil tourists' experiential motivation. Since dining experience will be memorable and add to the enjoyment of the visit, this study uncovers new theoretical insights into tourist dining experience which can be the reference for both industry practitioners and academic scholars. This study affirms the emphasis Chinese tourists' placed on travel dining experience and acknowledges its contribution on visit satisfaction. From the food culture approach, this study provides empirical information to articulate that dining

experience may be the delight of the travel experience or it may impair the visit satisfaction due to dissonance in food beliefs.

New knowledge about dining out patterns and characteristics of Chinese tourists

The Chinese tourists' dining experience in Australia is the major focus of the study. The Chinese tourist market has been recognised as a potentially huge outbound tourist market in the world and for Australia (Australia Tourism Commission, 2007). While most research efforts have concentrated on business opportunities in China, little research has focused on Chinese outbound tourists. As a consequence, knowledge about Chinese outbound tourists remains scant (Zhang, 1996). In addition, previous studies have articulated the motives behind eating preference and dining out patterns in Chinese food culture. However, there appears to be no detailed research into the confrontation between Chinese food culture and Western food culture. Furthermore, the extant literatures on food in tourism are mainly concerned with the visits by Westerners to destinations in Asia, or how Western countries have been promoted as gastronomic destinations.

Altogether, this study identifies a research gap – a lack of understanding of the Chinese tourists' eating behaviour while on holidays. From a food cultural perspective, this study investigates the real life processes of Chinese tourists' dining experience in Australia. Findings from this study are believed to significantly contribute to the understanding of Chinese tourists, and will assist the foreign industry practitioners in catering for the needs of the Chinese tourists.

The results of this study could be beneficial to the Australian tourism industry for segmenting tourism markets and releasing new marketing strategies which are appropriate for the Chinese market.

New methods of investigation

Previous studies often adopt quantitative research method to elicit tourists' perceptions towards their travel experience. This study employs qualitative research method to investigate the real life experience of tourists' dining experience at a destination, this provides researchers in gastronomy tourism and hospitality management with a good example of the application of phenomenological approach which to date has been under-utilised. In terms of contribution to the study of travel experience, this study is particularly important because it propounds the employment of qualitative research method to gain more detailed insight into the understanding the travel dining experience. By utilising focus group interviews, tourists have the opportunity to discuss their dining experience with fellow members. In effect, data from focus group interviews are considered to be objective for it is the consensus of the participants rather the individual's viewpoint. This study also proves that observation enable researchers to be immersed in tourists' dining experience so that the interpretation of findings can be made from an insider's perspective. In addition, observation can validate the findings from focus group interviews and identify hidden aspects of the tourists' dining behaviour. Despite the fact that qualitative research methodology may involve a great deal of uncertainty and a high level of risk, this method can,

however, help researchers to delineate the real life experience of tourists' dining experience at a destination.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

Several research suggestions are proposed below in order to offer some possible directions in extending the knowledge relating to the travel dining experience.

- This study has explored different concepts that would affect travel dining experience such as tourists' own food culture value, eating behaviour, motivation for travel, gastronomic interest, and attitudes toward travel dining experience. Although the initial attempt has been made, there is still a need to confirm whether the findings from this study could be applied to a large group of tourists. Therefore, future studies are likely to incorporate questionnaire survey to test the propositions developed from this study and to find out the relationship between each variables.

- Due to time and financial constraints, this study investigates tourists' eating behaviour during the trip and examines its relationship with their pre-existing one. It is suggested that further research could take a longitudinal approach, e.g. post-tour eating behaviour, to scrutinize

whether tourists' eating behaviour have changed due to their encounter with western food culture.

- This study focuses on Chinese tourists' eating behaviour while travelling in Australia. Yet, Chinese tourists' may behave differently when they travel to another destination. Further research could consider examining Chinese tourists' eating behaviour between different destinations in order to enhance the generalisability of findings.

- This study has proved that tourists' eating behaviour is correlated with their food culture value. The results of this study are considered to be applicable to other research setting. As China is well-known by its gastronomy, further research could investigate the Westerners' travel dining experience in China. Alternatively, further studies could also examine Chinese tourists' eating behaviour when travelling to a domestic destination. Some may claim that travel eating behaviour in a domestic context may be analogous to their dining-out behaviour which has been extensively researched in previous studies. Yet, China is a country with great regional diversity in gastronomy; tourists from various regions may adapt a new eating behaviour even when they visit another domestic destination. For example, Hong Kong tourists may encounter new eating behaviour when travelling to Beijing or Taiwan.

- This research explores group tourists' dining experience in Australia. Further research could investigate the individual tourists' dining experience. As individual tourists need to choose restaurant by themselves, it is believed that their travel dining behaviour might differ significantly from the group tourists.

5.4 Recommendations for practitioners

Findings from this study have revealed several significant insights for destination marketers in developing their gastronomy products, and for travel agencies in facilitating optimal meal arrangements for group tourists. The recommendations are elaborated as follows.

For travel agencies:

- This study reveals that tourists have different needs and wants towards meal arrangement. For instance, tourists who were travelling with their children preferred to have the opportunity to interact with local service staff, and elder tourists were found to be steadfast in Chinese food. Although most of the travel agencies have surveyed tourists' special dietary needs before departure, it cannot identify tourists' particular gastronomic interest. Thus, it is recommended that travel agency could distribute questionnaire to the tourists before embarking on the tour in order to facilitate an optimal combination of Chinese food, indigenous food and/or free dining activity according to tourists' preference. In this

respect, the meal arrangement can be more diversified and flexible in catering for different tourists' needs and wants.

- It is found that gastronomy could be the ideal way to create value-adding to the travel experience. For example, Taiwanese tourists were contented with the side-trip to local food market and the attentive service offered by local tour guide at dining out occasions. In addition, gastronomy could gratify tourists' desire to seek experiential experience while they travel. Furthermore, many tourists considered travel dining experience as peak touristic experience rather than supporting experience. Therefore, it can be said that detailed description of gastronomy experience in the travel itinerary could be an effective marketing strategy to attract tourists to join the tour. Travel agency needs to offer more opportunities for tourists to savour indigenous food and arrange sumptuous meals so that tourist satisfaction can be enhanced.

- Findings from this study suggest that most of the Chinese tourists were keen to be involved in the dining experience. For example, many of the tourists stated that they preferred to have free dining opportunity because they could choose their own food. Thus, travel agency may incorporate some free dining activities into the meal arrangement of the tour group. However, free dining activities should be undertaken in a designated area with guidance and suggestions provided in advance from the tour guide. Otherwise, Chinese tourists may feel abandoned and vulnerable due to

their English deficiency. Alternatively, travel agency may also arrange some travel programme for tourists to participate in the indigenous food production process. It is believed that tourists could have a memorable and experiential dining experience if they could understand how the indigenous foods are prepared and produced.

For destination marketers:

- Findings from this study reveal that many of the Chinese tourists possess initial perceptions toward destination and its gastronomy prior to the trip. In effect, this perception impinges on tourists' motivation to visit the destination and affect the evaluation of the travel experience. On the other hand, gastronomy represents destination's food culture for which most tourists would be interested in when visiting the destination. This suggests that when developing a destination image, destination marketers need to highlight the unique gastronomic identity of the destination in order to capitalise on this booming interest in gastronomy.

- Most of the Chinese tourists indicated that they preferred to partake of fusion foods between Chinese and indigenous food. While fusion food could lessen tourists' anxiety towards indigenous food, it would inevitably impair the authenticity of the indigenous food. Consequently, fusion food may be welcomed by tourist, but on the other hand, it may be considered

unpalatable by local residents. Thus, the suggestion is that restaurateurs may serve indigenous food in different versions to allow tourists and local residents to have their own choice of taste.

- Chinese tourists have stated that participation in the dining activities was the most memorable part of their travel dining experience. Indeed, previous studies also revealed similar proposition that destination marketers should engaging tourists in the food-production process (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Wolf, 2002; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). In this respect, destination marketers could develop dining activities that involve tourists to take part in cooking and tasting lessons, for them to see and experience how food is grown and prepared, and to explain to tourists the cultural significance of the indigenous food.

- This study has revealed that Chinese tourists may lack knowledge about Australian food culture which made it difficult for them to savour the authenticity of Australian food. Therefore, it becomes indispensable for destination marketers to provide comprehensive information and to educate Chinese tourists how to enjoy the foods which they try to promote. The strategy to educate the tourists means that destination marketers need to provide user-friendly, attractive, informative and guided information about its gastronomy. Such information may include the history of the destination's food culture, local table etiquette, and the manner of food

preparation. Hence, tourists would be able to better appreciate the indigenous foods.

- The intercultural service encounter often involves human interactions between tourists and local service staff. This means that local service staff play a pivotal role in achieving tourist dining satisfaction. In fact, this study has proved that cross-cultural communication is important to the travel dining experience. Chinese tourists may tolerate service failure due to language barriers, yet, the service failure still exists which implies that tourists were not completely satisfied with the dining experience. Therefore, destination marketers are urged to provide training for the service staff to cater for tourists from different cultural backgrounds. Specifically, the training should cover the understanding of cultural values and eating behaviour of the tourists. In addition, service staff should possess basic language skills in order to communicate with tourists. At least, menu description needs to be translated into a bilingual version, or alternatively, photo of dishes be displayed to ensure that tourists can order the food that they want. This study has provided useful insights about Chinese tourists' travel eating behaviour and their food culture values. It is believed that destination marketers could capitalise on the findings of this study to meet Chinese tourists' service expectation and makes their travel dining experience more enjoyable and memorable.

Appendix-1

Focus Group Topic Guide

Date:			
Place:			
Attendees:			
Name	Age	Occupation	Travel history (No. of travel, country)

1. Introduction

- a. Introduction of moderator and the Polytechnic University conducting the research
- b. Background information about the research

2. Discuss procedure

I will be taking notes and tape recording the discussion so that I do not miss anything you have to say. I explained these procedures to you when we set up this meeting. As you know everything is confidential. No one will know who said what. I want this to be a group discussion, so feel free to respond to me and to other members in the group without waiting to be called on. However, I would appreciate it if only one person did talk at a time. The discussion will last approximately one hour.

3. Participant introduction (5 min.)

Now, let's start by everyone sharing your name, your occupation, and your travel experience.

4. Warm up (15 min.)

Could each of you tell me what is your favourite food and why do you feel this way. We're going to go around the room so you can share your choices. Please explain, as much as possible why you selected the food you did.

5. Group discussion (60 min.)

- How would you describe a pleasant meal? Why?
- What do you prefer to eat when you travel? Why?
- Please describe, as much as possible, what kind of foods you had so far during the trip?
- Could each of you share your opinions, as much as possible, on meal arrangements you had so far during the trip?

6. Closure (10 min.)

Is there any other information regarding your dining experience during this trip that you think would be useful for me to know?

Thank you very much for coming this group discussion. Your time is very much appreciated and your comments have been very helpful.

Appendix – 2

Observation Diary

Date: Weather: Tour group: No. of group: Type of restaurant:	
Key theme	Incidents
Restaurant ambience	
Menu	
The feeling of dining at restaurant (Anxious or excited)	
Food quality (Food presentation, the quality of food)	
Service quality (Encounter between service staff and tourists)	
Meal experience (Seating arrangement, menu items)	
Overall dining satisfaction (Reflection on dining experience)	
Others	

Appendix – 3

Informed Consent Letter

(English version)

Dear respondent:

My name is Richard Chang. I am a PhD student from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I am working on a project entitled: An analysis of the Chinese leisure travellers' dining-out experiences while holidaying in Australia and its contribution to their visit satisfaction.

This focus group discussion will be tape recorded and will last approximately one hour. The purpose of this study is to understand the ways that tourists evaluate their dining experience in Australia and its contribution to visit satisfaction. As a participant in this study, please read and understand your rights below:

- You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.**
- You are free to withdraw from interview at any time and the tape will be given to you if you request it.**
- This interview will be kept strictly confidential. The tape and its transcript will only be read by myself and my supervising professors.**

Excerpts from the interview may be made part of the dissertation and subsequent publications, but your name or any identifying characteristics, will in no way be connected with your comments.

If you have any questions about this study after the interview, I can be contacted at

Tel: (852) 2766-

E-mail: hmrchang@

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that I have informed you of its contents, and that you agree to them.

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Date _____

Informed Consent Letter

(Chinese version)

研究同意書

您好:

我的名字是張景煜。我是香港理工大學博士班的學生。我目前正從事一項研究項目: 對中國休閒遊客在澳洲旅遊的用餐經驗的敘說分析和它對他們的參觀滿意度的貢獻。

這次討論將持續大約一個小時並且全程錄音。這項研究的目的是瞭解遊客如何評估他們在澳洲的用餐經驗和它對參觀滿意度的貢獻。作為在這項研究的參加者, 請您細讀並瞭解以下的權利:

- 在任何時候, 您可以自由拒絕回答任何問題。
- 您可以隨時且自由地停止採訪, 而且如果您需要的話, 我會將錄音帶交給您。
- 這次採訪內容將會被嚴密地被保持機密。錄音帶和它的抄本將只由我自己和我的指導教授閱讀。

採訪中的節錄也許會被做為我的學術論文和隨後相關的出版文章的一部分, 但您的名字或所有辨認特徵, 將絕不會與您的評論被連接。

在採訪結束之後, 如果有關於這項研究的任何問題, 您可以用以下聯絡方式與我聯絡:

電話(852) 2766-

電子信箱 hmrchang@

如果您同意以上的內容, 請您簽署這個研究同意書。謝謝您。

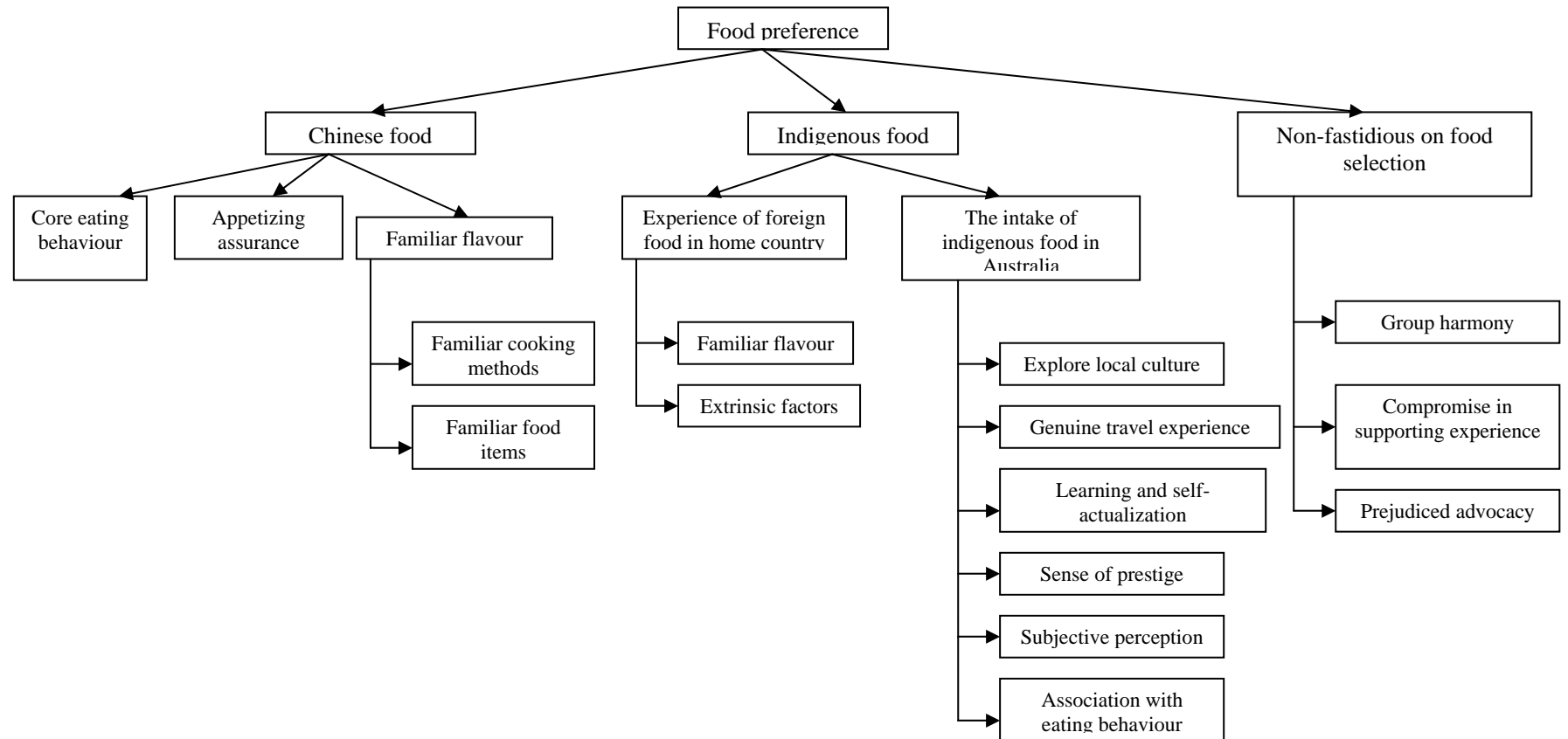
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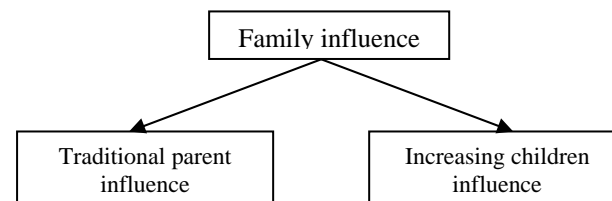
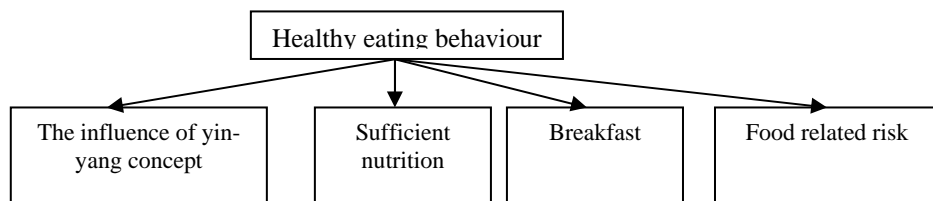
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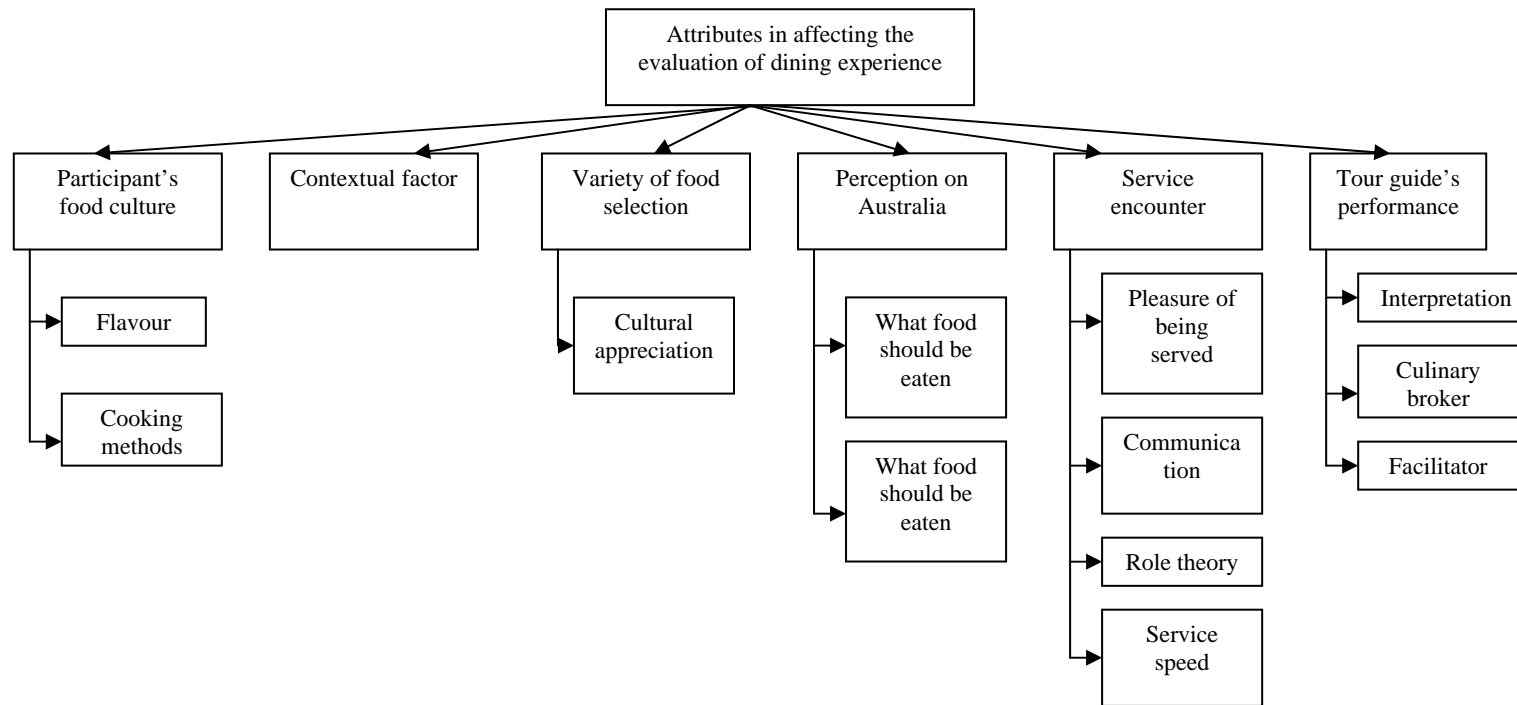
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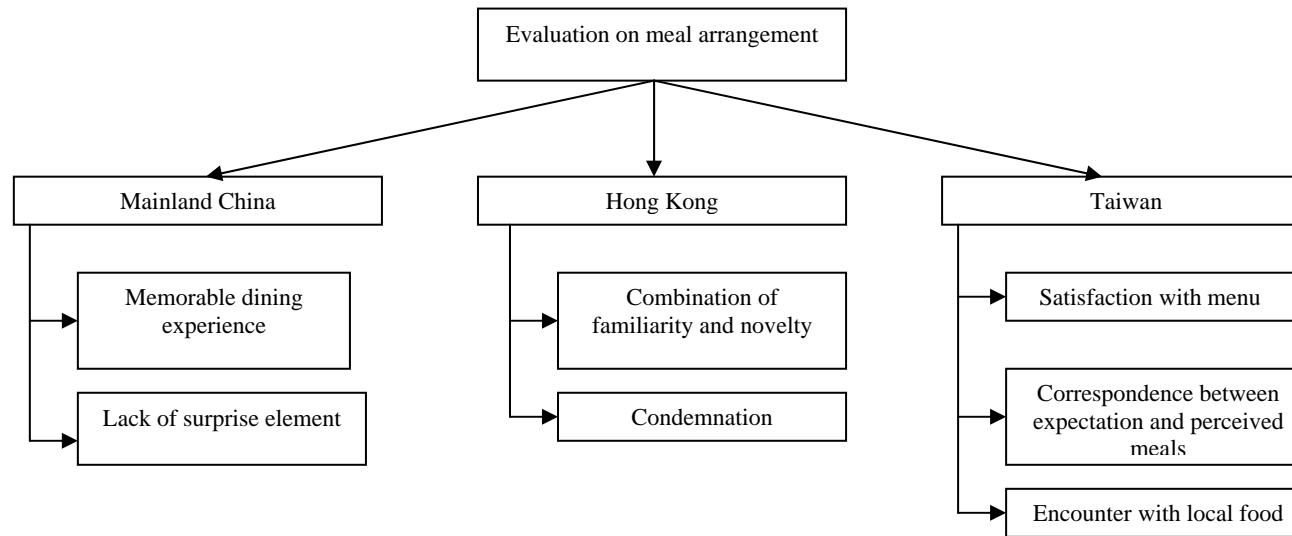
Appendix – 4

Coding structure of the data analysis









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