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**TOURISTS' DINING EXPERIENCES WHILE TRAVELLING IN CHINA:
A SEMIOTIC APPROACH OF ITS INFLUENCE ON
THEIR TRAVEL PERCEPTIONS**

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Ph. D.

**THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
School of Hotel and Tourism Management

**Tourists' Dining Experiences While Travelling in China:
A Semiotic Approach of Its Influence on Their Travel Perceptions**

TSANG Wing Sze, Lancy

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

August 2012

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ABSTRACT

Tourists are increasingly becoming interested in gastronomy and are visiting certain destinations to experience and partake of gastronomy (Richards, 2002; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Despite the current level of research, not much is still known about dining experiences in the context of tourism in China; and even less about how tourists' dining experiences might contribute to their overall travel experiences while visiting China. This study endeavours to close these gaps by investigating the influence of Chinese food culture and gastronomy on visitor perceptions during intercultural service encounters. This study provides insights into inbound tourists' behaviour which can assist China's tourism stakeholders in developing better marketing strategies for their destinations. Hence, the key research question for this study is how did China's gastronomy contribute to the tourists' experiences while travelling in China?

This study aims to understand what is happening during the dining experience and tried to seek connection and explanations for each situation rather than to test the hypotheses from the existing theories. Thus, the phenomenological research philosophy is the most appropriate methodology, and the inductive approach was used as the research tool. On-site participant observation, focus group interviews and individual interviews were conducted, respectively with tourists while they travelled in China. The target samples of this study are travellers from destinations such as, North America, Oceania, European Union, and South East Asia (Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia and Japan) who are (a) participating in all-inclusive package tours to China, and (b) who are independent travellers will be targeted. China's main city-

attractions such as Shanghai, Guilin and Hangzhou are chose to conduct the study because for many first-time travellers to China, “China is China” no matter what city/province they are visiting. A computerised tool (NUD.IST) was utilised to synthesise data, identify key dimensions, and map the range and dimension of each phenomenon. By using narrative analysis, the attributes that affect tourists’ evaluation of their travel dining experience were examined.

Findings revealed that tourists’ dining experiences can be affected by a number of attributes that are conceptualised into three predominate themes, namely, ‘personal experiences and food related values’, ‘personal food preferences and taboos’, and ‘food related environment’. The attributes that would affect tourists’ evaluation on their dining experiences were also identified, which included culture, authentic location, indigenous foods, special travel needs, novelty or adventure seeking, hygiene and health, menu, and physical and spatial environment. Most importantly, findings indicated tourists’ dining experiences would significantly influence tourists’ perceptions towards a destination. Furthermore, this study also analysed the narratives of the tourists, which provided a more lucid and comprehensive interpretation of their dining experiences and semiotics behind those experiences. Based on the research findings, fifteen propositions are postulated in order to achieve the research objectives of this study.

This study has contributed new knowledge about gastronomy in tourism and the tourists’ dining out patterns when travelling in China. Several suggestions are proposed for further research in extending the knowledge relating to the travel dining

experience. Recommendations are also suggested for destination marketers in developing their gastronomy products to enhance tourists enjoying their trips.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Travellers dine out or go to restaurants for many reasons. Even a cursory overview of the related literature is sufficient to reach the conclusion that travellers go to the destination's restaurants with the expectation that they will enjoy themselves, experience something new, and partake of the local culture. This is in addition to being in the company of friends and associates, and savouring good food (Martin-Ibanez, 1979; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). The need for food has an obvious biological underpinning, but food consumption, particularly when dining out, is influenced by social, cultural influences as well as a desire for a pleasurable experience (Sanjur, 1982). Some social scientists suggested that culture is a learned experience that is not biologically determined, and therefore it can be modified or unlearned. This concept is fundamental to understanding the formation of eating habits, dining preferences, and how eating and dining preferences change over time, particularly when juxtaposed with market forces and travel (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Because dining is a response to biological and socio-cultural stimuli any study of the salient social and cultural factors that affect dining and tourism must also include an examination of visitor behaviour and the role local gastronomy plays in tourism. According to Kivela and Crofts (2006) gastronomy is defined as the art of opting for good eating as well as service and the enjoyment of fine food.

While the five thousand year-old history of China's diverse cuisine is globally known, it is also true that its representation is often a modified, localized

version of the real thing (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). This occurs in both Western nations but also in Southeast Asia and Japan, such that authentic regional cuisines provide new and often challenging gastronomic experiences which are often very different from the visitors' perceptions of the Chinese food based on their experiences with it in their own country (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Needless to say, the awareness and understanding of tourists' attitudes, behaviour, and acceptance toward authentic and regional Chinese cuisine is essential when designing and developing gastronomy tourism strategies and marketing initiatives. While European Union, Canadian, Australian and, more recently, Taiwanese tourism providers have put significant work into the development and marketing of their regional gastronomy tourism initiatives, anecdotal evidence suggests that China's tourism industry, although to a lesser extent in Hong Kong, remains largely unprepared for the inclusion of gastronomy as part of its overall tourism product and has scant knowledge about visitors' cultural attributes and food experiences (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). This implies that the tourism planners and providers in China may not be able to develop marketing strategies to cater to tourists' needs. The consequence of this neglect could be that tourists' travel perceptions are coloured by less than satisfactory experiences with local and regional foods and a possible decline in future visits to China.

There is a lack of understanding about how travellers to China experience its gastronomy and how this impacts their overall travel experience and satisfaction while visiting China. This study aims to investigate the impact of Chinese food culture and gastronomy on tourists' dining experiences and their perception of China as a travel destination.

1.1.1 Dining out – socialisation and acquisition

According to Lowenberg, Todhunter, Wilson, Savage and Lubawski (1979), the vicissitudes and scope of one's eating and dining influences increased with exposure to diverse eating and dining experiences, values and beliefs, which included travel. However, eating and dining habits that have been informally learned at home are often reinforced or contradicted in a remote setting such as encountered when travelling abroad. Abrahamsson (1979) suggested that the eating and dining habits learned earliest are most likely to persist later in life and are often resistant to major shifts or changes. Often, we can detect a conflict, for example, between the destination's food and home-country food, with the latter displaying more dominance. This is not to say that it is better in quality. Rather, it makes us aware that travellers will often evaluate a destination's food against their own region's or country's gastronomy (Kivela & Chu, 2001). Even though the destination's food might be of superior quality, a home-country meal is often believed to be better. However, new or "foreign" foods may be tolerated or they may eventually become accepted and incorporated into mainstream food behaviours, just as Chinese, Japanese, Indian and other Oriental foods and restaurants have in many Western countries.

1.1.2 Dining out - an overview of the dimensions of consumption emotion patterns

Consumption emotion refers to a set of emotional responses elicited specifically during the dining event or consumption of food. It can include distinctive categories of emotional experience and expression such as joy, or the structural dimensions that underlying emotional categories, such as relaxation / action, calmness /

excitement, or pleasantness / unpleasantness, satisfaction / dissatisfaction (Russell, 1979). Consumption emotion is distinguished from the related affective phenomenon of mood (Gardner, 1985) on the basis of an emotion's relatively greater psychological urgency, motivational potency, and situational specificity, (i.e. the restaurant and the dining out occasion). Since a judgment of satisfaction can vary along a hedonic continuum, the question posed by researchers is whether or not satisfaction and consumption emotion are distinguishable theoretical constructs. Hunt (1977:459) suggested that "satisfaction is not the pleasurable-ness of the [consumption] experience, but that it is the evaluation rendered that the experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be."

1.1.3 Gastronomy and its influence on tourism

The first formal study of gastronomy was undertaken by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin [1755–1826] and published in *La Physiologie du gout* (1825), translated into English as *The Physiology of Taste* (1925, rev. Ed. 1971). Brillat-Savarin's work paved the way for subsequent studies about the relationship between the senses and food, and food and beverage consumption as a science. Etymologically, the word "gastronomy" is derived from the Greek "gastros", meaning stomach, and "gnomos", knowledge or law. Alternatively, Long (2004) introduced the term "culinary tourism" to describe the process of experiencing other cultures through food. Culinary tourists search for, enjoy, and prepare the destination culture's food and drink. According to this definition, culinary tourism applies only to those tourists who visit wineries, farmers' markets, and fine restaurants. This definition implies that the culinary experience is set

apart from and is only 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, the use of the term gastronomy is more appropriate this research because it implies that the gastronomy experience is a holistic part of tourism activity. Though the terms “gastronomy” and “culinary” or “culinaria” will be used interchangeably, where appropriate, to mean the same phenomenon. As noted by Richards (2002), 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) also noted that interest in gastronomy travel is 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) (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Chang, Kivela & Mak, 2011). 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).

1.1.4 The significance of the in-bound tourism market to China

According to the UN World Tourism Organization (2012), among the world’s leading tourism destinations, China ranked third in international tourist arrivals in 2011 bypassing Spain, and having overtaken both the United Kingdom and Italy during the past few years. In terms of international receipts, China ranked fourth that

same year. Moreover, figures from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) show that collective investment by the government in the tourism industry has totaled in excess of US\$4 billion annually since 2001. By 2020 foreign exchange earnings from the industry expect to hit US\$58 billion (rising from US\$39 billion in 2009). Additionally, annual visitor numbers will reach 210 million a year, up from 134 million for 2010 (Business Monitor International Ltd, 2012).

In 2011, China's tourism continued to grow tremendously; the visitor arrivals reached 135 million, representing an increase of 1.24 percent over 2010 arrivals. The foreign exchange income generated from international tourism registered US\$56 billion, a 14.3 percent increase over the previous year (Business Monitor International Ltd, 2012).

Among the 135 million inbound tourists in 2011, foreign nationals accounted for 27.11 million, representing a 3.77 percent increase over the previous year; 79.36 million by compatriots from Hong Kong SAR a 0.05 percent increase; and 23.69 million from Macau SAR, an increase of 2.23 percent. In addition, 5.26 million visitors came from Taiwan Province, a 2.38 percent increase over the previous year (China National Tourism Administration, 2010a, 2011a). Table 1.1 summarizes the breakdown of the visitor-arrivals during January – December 2010 and 2011 by nationality:

Table 1.1 Breakdown of visitor arrivals from January-December 2010 and 2011

	Jan-Dec 2010 (persons)	Jan-Dec 2011 (persons)	Growth (%)
Total	133,762,200	135,423,500	1.24
<i>Hong Kong SAR</i>	<i>79,321,900</i>	<i>79,357,700</i>	<i>0.05</i>
<i>Macau SAR</i>	<i>23,172,900</i>	<i>23,690,800</i>	<i>2.23</i>
<i>Taiwan Province</i>	<i>5,140,600</i>	<i>5,263,000</i>	<i>2.38</i>
<i>Foreign nationals</i>	<i>26,126,900</i>	<i>27,112,000</i>	<i>3.77</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Asia</i> (<i>Japan, Korea, Korea, D.O.REP, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Others</i>) 	<i>16,188,700</i>	<i>16,650,200</i>	<i>2.76</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America</i> (<i>U.S.A., Canada, Mexico, Others</i>) 	<i>2,995,400</i>	<i>3,201,000</i>	<i>6.87</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Europe</i> (<i>U.K., Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Others</i>) 	<i>5,687,800</i>	<i>5,910,800</i>	<i>4.20</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Oceania</i> (<i>Australia, New Zealand, Others</i>) 	<i>789,300</i>	<i>859,300</i>	<i>8.87</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Africa</i> 	<i>463,600</i>	<i>488,800</i>	<i>5.44</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Others</i> 	<i>2,100</i>	<i>1,900</i>	<i>-10.07</i>

Sources: China National Tourism Administration, 2010a, 2012a

Based on the above statistics, it appears that Hong Kong SAR is the largest tourist group to China, accounting for 58.6 percent of the total visitor arrivals; however, this figure is inflated considerably due to the return-home permits held by most Hong Kong citizens who usually travel to China on short two to three day visits to relatives and friends; the foreign guest market is 20.02 percent of the total visitor arrivals.

Among China's major cities, the following were the most visited by foreign guests in 2011(China National Tourism Administration, 2010b, 2012b): Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Shenzhen, Suzhou, Chongqing, Dalian, Guilin and Nanjing. The breakdown of the visitor arrivals to these cities is shown in Table 1.2

Table 1.2 Breakdown of visitor arrivals in selective major cities in 2011.

Major Cities	Foreign guests	Hong Kong SAR	Macau SAR	Taiwan Province	Total Visitor Arrivals	Growth (%)
Shanghai	5,549,900	479,536	24,244	632,464	6,686,144	-8.87
Beijing	4,474,101	434,223	12,946	282,751	5,204,021	6.19
Guangzhou	2,762,730	4,026,892	462,133	535,134	7,786,889	-4.43
Hangzhou	2,108,263	360,291	30,742	563,844	3,063,140	11.10
Shenzhen	1,712,004	8,818,300	50,458	464,752	11,045,512	8.23
Suzhou	1,670,290	151,130	9,291	495,607	2,326,318	12.10
Chongqing	1,326,135	283,794	8,572	245,515	1,864,016	36.04
Dalian	1,038,060	60,305	1,737	69,943	1,170,035	0.34
Guilin	1,037,220	201,110	7,466	398,139	1,643,935	10.61
Nanjing	999,239	197,387	12,605	297,411	1,506,642	15.12

Source: China National Tourism Administration, 2010b, 2012b

More than 5.55 million foreign travellers visited Shanghai in 2010; while more than 8.8 million visitors from Hong Kong SAR visited Shenzhen mostly. In addition, there were 0.63 million visitors from Taiwan Province visited Shanghai and more than 0.46 million visitors from Macao SAR visited Guangzhou (China National Tourism Administration, 2012b). The Expo 2010 in Shanghai held from May to October 2010 boosted the 2010 tourist arrivals dramatically. Tourism numbers had been

expected to increase significantly not only at the Expo sites but to other parts of the country because of tourists' multiple destination itineraries.

1.2 Problem identification

The recent hospitality and tourism literature suggests that gastronomy is an important attribute in the development of niche travel and niche destinations (see Fields, 2002; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Although the literature supports the view that there is a connection between tourism and gastronomy, little is known about tourists' experiences of gastronomy in China. The present study, therefore, sets out to answer the following questions:

1. In what way does China's gastronomy contribute to tourists' quality of visit experiences?
2. What are travellers' perceptions, expectations, and experiences of Chinese gastronomy?
3. How do travellers cope when encountering Chinese culture (the Other) through food?

And yet as noted, major tourist destinations such as Italy, France, Spain, Greece, and more recently Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have addressed these questions at the national and regional tourism authority level; the same cannot be said

for China. Kumar (1996) suggested that the researcher's own experiential knowledge can shape perspectives and insights about the subject being studied. Based on the researcher observed, while preparing for this study, that the meals for most in-bound tour groups in China are often arranged by the tour operators at assigned restaurants both within and outside hotels. Thus, local indigenous gastronomy is not often offered to tourists, unless there is a specific demand from the travellers to do so. This observed phenomenon suggested to the researcher that this is a common practice in China, tourism providers prefer to offer in-bound¹ tourists either a non-Chinese gastronomy or a modified form of Chinese gastronomy rather than authentic Chinese gastronomy experiences. Based on these observations it can be therefore hypothesized that in-bound tourists may prefer non-Chinese foods when they are travelling in China because it is more comforting to them and adds to their trip satisfaction. Empirical research was undertaken in order to test the proposed propositions. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

1.2.1 The impact of food culture on eating behaviour while travelling

Several attempts have been made to develop more holistic 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 that culture is 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, as

¹ "In-bound tourists" are tourists who do not reside on Mainland China but include travellers from Asia, the European Union, North America, and Australia and New Zealand.

Kluchhohn & Strodtbeck (1961) suggested, cultural values become the basic motives behind human behaviour. As noted earlier, individuals tend to choose food according to preferences developed throughout their lives. Specifically, this behaviour is based on past experience, food attitudes, and personal traits. On the other hand, travellers often adapt new value systems and attitudes when facing new food experiences, especially in different cultural settings. For example, younger Western tourists might modify their food choices while on holidays in China. The study of eating behaviour in the context of food culture is scant and only a few academic studies so far have provided some insight into the relationship between gastronomy and tourism (Hanefores, 2002; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Hence there is a need to investigate to what extent tourists' own culture and the impact of Chinese food culture affects the tourists' dining-out experiences when travelling in China. This need is especially timely given the rapid growth of China's tourism industry.

1.2.2 Recognising tourists' food needs and wants

Both Fields (2002) and Richards (2002) have suggested that gastronomy experience while travelling is a tourist activity which might be of equal importance to the traveller as other destination attributes such as culture, antiquities, history, nature, theme parks, etc. If so, dining out activities could be a significant catalyst for facilitating interaction between visitors and their Chinese hosts. That is, it is postulated that dining out activities and a destination's gastronomy allows a traveller to learn and experience the host culture at a deeper level.

This is based on the notion that tourists are often in search of interesting and surprising experiences that differ from their daily life, including new foods (Finklestein, 1989). Ondimu (2002) also suggested that tourists are often eager to experience the environment and culture, and to gain some knowledge about the destination. This supports Lee and Crompton's (1992) and Richards' (2002) notion that tourists are willing to learn and increase their cultural capital by experiencing rather than just consuming, for example, the holidays. In a similar way, local gastronomy could be a means to a greater appreciation of the local culture, especially its gastronomy. On the other hand, tourists might seek food familiarity when visiting the host culture (Richardson, 1996). This means that less experienced or less adventurous tourists might prefer to seek "safety" and comfort by choosing familiar foods when travelling. Furthermore, for those tourists who are not looking for authenticity in local foods, authentic local gastronomy may become an impediment to their visit satisfaction (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Although the literature about such phenomenon at Western destinations is on the rise, apart from Kivela & Crotts' (2006) Hong Kong study, there have been no other reported studies that would specifically identify whether tourists perceive gastronomy as an attraction or an impediment to their travel or visit to China.

1.2.3 The consequence of dining experience to tourists' satisfaction

As noted earlier, Richards (2002) and Kivela and Crotts (2006) have posited that a segment of travellers is increasingly becoming interested in gastronomy and are visiting certain destinations to experience and partake in gastronomy. This research is in its nascence and thus much remains unknown the relationship between dining

experience and tourism, especially in the case of China. Even less is known about how dining experiences might contribute to visitor satisfaction while visiting China. Given that most travellers to China spend up to 25 percent of their travel budget on accommodation and food (China National Tourism Administration, 2008), dining experiences while travelling in China and their impact on travellers' satisfaction warrant investigation. Hence, the following propositions:

1. If China's gastronomy is a positive contributory factor in visitors' overall experience, the significance of local gastronomy, and dining out activities while travelling in China, cannot be overlooked. And,
2. If China's gastronomy is a positive contributory factor in visitors' overall experience, Chinese gastronomy is likely to have a positive impact in the way travellers perceive the destination.

1.2.4 Recognising tourists' dining behaviours

As noted earlier, the literature affirms gastronomy tourism is a travel phenomenon. For example, Fields (2002), Hjalager (2002), Hjalager and Richards (2002), and Richards (2002) identified specific issues about the connection between gastronomy and tourism. Kivela & Crotts (2006) reported how tourists perceived and experienced gastronomy while visiting Hong Kong and Cohen and Avieli (2004) analysed gastronomy's role as either an attraction or an impediment in destination development. Although some of these studies focused on Western travellers who visit

destinations in East and Southeast Asia, or how Western countries have been promoted as gastronomic destinations, few studies exist about travellers and their experiences of gastronomy in China. Similarly, connections between gastronomy and tourism in China have not been explored. Hence, there exists a significant gap in the literature about the travel dining experience and its influence on tourists' travel perceptions.

1.2.5 *Dining experience when travelling*

Previous research, (Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Neild, Kozak, & LeGrys, 2000; Richards, 2002; Wolf, 2002; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Quan & Wang, 2004) confirmed that food and gastronomy play important roles, when evaluating tourists' travel experiences. However, many of these studies have been either theoretically based and/or their findings were drawn from *post hoc* assessments of tourists' experiences. There is a lack of in-depth analysis about tourists' actual dining-out experiences at a destination (as recounted by the travellers themselves), and to what extent their dining experiences contribute to their overall perception. It is proposed here that to further advance the knowledge about travel satisfaction, it is necessary to explore and analyse tourists' own narratives and the significance of a destination's gastronomy and available dining out experiences; things that have so far been largely overlooked.

1.2.6 Semiotic approach to dining experiences when travelling.

Semiotics, also called semiotic studies, is the study of signs and sign processes, indication, designation, likeness, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication (Chandler, 2007). Echtner (1999) agreed that signs are used to create and convey meaning. Semiotics is also referred to as the study of the structure of meaning. It examined the communication of meaning in its direct, indirect, intentional and unintentional forms. Semiotics is concerned with examining a system of signs reveals in order to uncover the recurring patterns (determine structure) and the various layers of meaning (delve deeper). Therefore, the aim of a semiotic approach is to uncover the deep structure of meaning.

Recently, Bardhi et al. (2010) used a semiotic approach to examine how American visitors relate to food during their short-term visits to China. The researchers used Greimas' semiotic square to structure their analysis of how the informants divide food into different categories when they talk about their food experiences. The semiotic square is a visual representation of the relations which exist between the distinctive features constituting a given semantic category (Floch 1988). The categorizations are constructed from the analyses of the transcripts and are based on how the participants implicitly categorize their food consumption in their narrations. Such categorizations examined how both Chinese and domestic foods are actively filled with meaning in a manner that helps the consumer make sense of the world. The semiotic square is an analytical tool that enables us to tease out the meanings informants inscribe, in this case, on different types of food. The most important part of the semiotic process is to look at how respondents make one category meaningful in relation to another, how the different

types of food are placed in a system of signification, and how they acquire meaning through their relationships with each other.

Therefore, using a semiotic approach as the structural basis of this study, the examination of tourists' dining experiences and how these findings relate to their overall perceptions of the destination should include:

1. The observed dining out phenomena of tourists while visiting China;
2. The empirical evidence collected in order to illuminate the role food plays in tourists' travel experiences while visiting China.

1.2.7 The impact of Chinese food culture on travellers

It is often suggested that cultural values help to explain differences among individuals and their judgements and evaluations of different situations, including food traits (Briley, Morris and Simonson, 2000). For example, tourists' evaluations of Chinese gastronomy might be based on comparisons with their meal experiences at home leading to interesting interpretations about those experiences. Thus, a semiotic assessment of data provides evidence for theories around how food culture impacts visitors. Pizam and Ellis (1999) addressed similar issues, though not gastronomy related, through their demonstration of culture's impact on perception, problem solving and cognition and how it often leads to differences in satisfaction among travellers. Pires and Stanton (2000) and Richards (2002) argued that language barriers and tourist providers' difficulties in understanding foreign cultures have resulted in the failure of many

destination marketers' ability to fulfil travellers' expectations. Outside of these few studies of cultural differences, there is little research examining the influence of Chinese culture, including Chinese food culture, on tourists' perceptions of service and gastronomy quality and how visitors from a diverse array of countries evaluate dining experiences and service encounters while travelling in China. This study endeavours to close these gaps.

1.3 The significance of the study

While acknowledging that gastronomy has an impact on how tourists experience a destination, there is simply no reported work about how Chinese gastronomy impacts tourists' perceptions while they are travelling in China. This study intends to fill this gap by finding out more precisely the role gastronomy plays in tourists' experiences in China. Equally, while many gastronomy tourism studies have identified and addressed factors and issues that affect the development and management of gastronomy tourism destinations, to the author's best knowledge, no such studies have been conducted in China. In addition, while the relationship between gastronomy and tourism is, as noted, affirmed in selective social sciences literature, no studies in China have been reported in the hospitality literature that had specifically addressed the relationship between gastronomy and touristic activities in China.

The implications of this study are also based on the notion that gastronomy tourism is an interesting and a potentially very valuable product to add to a destination's tourist offerings and that like other tourists, gastronomy tourists spend at the destination

a sizeable portion of their travel budget on food. Additionally negative impacts on the destination's infrastructure are often temporary and generally minimal, unless the destination has unsustainable food sources. As noted in the literature, gastronomy tourism provides benefits to local food growers/makers, farmers, food importers and distributors, and foodservice businesses, and yet the focus in the literature has mainly centred on the benefits to travellers, rather than on the benefits to the tourism providers, such as the food growers and suppliers. The latter is an equally important issue when positioning the destination as a gastronomy tourism attraction (see Beer, Edwards, Fernandez, and Sampaio, 2002). In this context and in absence of any meaningful data from China, this study is therefore timely in narrowing the gap in the current knowledge.

1.4 The rationale of selecting tourists who are visiting China

This study focuses on examining tourists' experiences with gastronomy while travelling in China. Travellers from such destinations as North America, Oceania, European Union, and Asia (Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia and Japan) who are participating in all-inclusive package tours to China, as well as those who are independent travellers will be targeted. China's major tourist destination cities, such as Guilin, Hangzhou, and Shanghai were chosen for the study because: (a) Guilin and Hangzhou are China's oldest foreign tourist destinations and are renowned for their scenic beauty and indigenous culture which has been portrayed in much of China's landscape art and folklore over the centuries; Shanghai is China's premier city attraction as the site of both Dynastic and Modern-state China and because it hosted Expo 2010; (b) the researcher is invariably restricted by the geographical vastness of China, thus

making it quite unworkable to include other provinces/cities in China; (c) for many first-time travellers to China, “China is China” no matter what city/province they are visiting; and (d) nine in ten foreign visitors to China visit Shanghai, Guilin, or Hangzhou (China National Tourism Administration, 2010b). Because most meals for the tour groups tend to be pre-arranged by their travel agent, group tourists may have relatively little contact with the local food culture and people. On the other hand, independent travellers have greater opportunities to experience local gastronomy, and hence the balance in sampling by selecting group and independent travellers. In addition, due to different food preferences, local Chinese gastronomy has often been an impediment to those travellers who are less adventurous. In this context, it is important to investigate the eating behaviour of tour-group tourists and how their Chinese hosts respond to that behaviour. While partaking of local gastronomy is often considered to be a must-do travel activity for many travellers (Hjalager & Richards, 2002), anecdotal evidence suggests that inbound travel agencies in China are not always responsible for arranging local gastronomy for the visitors, and that such arrangements are often done on an *ad hoc* basis. Local gastronomy providers in China seem to be ill-equipped for travellers wishing to partake in local gastronomy and little information is available to tourists about local gastronomy.

1.5. Research questions and objectives

To sum up the preceding section, one can conclude that there is a lack of understanding about how travellers to China experience its gastronomy and how this

impacts their overall travel experience while visiting China. Further, it can be argued that there is a lack of knowledge about whether tourists perceive China's gastronomy as an attraction or an impediment to their travel to China. This study will endeavour to close these gaps by investigating the influence of Chinese food culture and gastronomy on visitor perceptions during intercultural service encounters. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the impact of Chinese food culture and gastronomy on tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China. By 2020, foreign exchange earnings from the tourism industry is expected to hit US\$58 billion and annual visitor numbers will reach 210 million a year, making such an investigation particularly timely and significant. (Business Monitor International Ltd, 2012). This study provides insights into in-bound tourists' behaviour which can assist China's tourism stakeholders in developing better marketing strategies for their respective destinations. Hence, the key research question for this study is as follows:

How did China's gastronomy contribute to the tourists' experiences while travelling in China?

This question provides greater insight into tourists' experiences, thus enabling the researcher to address the multi-faceted issues that will comprise a meaningful answer to this key question. Additional research questions are as follows:

- a. What were the attributes that affected tourists' evaluations of their dining experiences while visiting China?

- b. Do tourists perceive China's gastronomy as an attraction or an impediment to their travel experiences in China?
- c. Was China's gastronomy a positive or negative contributory factor in the way travellers perceived the destination?

Research objectives

In order to address the above research questions, the study's key objective is to investigate:

The impact of Chinese food culture and gastronomy on tourists' dining experiences and their perceptions of the destination while travelling in China.

Given the multi-directional and multi-disciplinary nature of the investigation, and the need to better understand and close the existing knowledge gap as to how China's gastronomy contributes to tourists' experiences, specifically the study will:

- a. Examine the empirical evidence collected in order to discern the role gastronomy plays in the tourists' travel experience while visiting China;
- b. Identify what attributes influence tourists' evaluations of their dining experiences while visiting China;

- c. Analyse if China's gastronomy was a negative or positive contributory factor in the way travellers perceived the destination;
- d. To advance relevant propositions in order to enhance the understanding of tourists' dining experience at a destination;
- e. To develop a model based on data collected and analyzed in order to depict tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter highlights the gaps in tourism and hospitality literature around the role that gastronomy plays in tourists' experiences in China, 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 explains the research approach and methods for the study. Chapter 4 presents the empirical findings about tourists' dining experiences in China. Furthermore, research findings are compared and contrasted with relevant theoretical concepts. Based on the discussion from the research findings, 15 propositions are explicated in this chapter as well. Chapter 5, the final chapter, addresses the conclusions of this study and the recommendations for both academic and industry stakeholders.

Chapter 2 Literature review

This study investigates the influence of Chinese food culture and gastronomy on tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China, as well as the contribution of local gastronomy and dining out activities to tourists' overall experience. This chapter provides an overview of gastronomy and examines its implications and contributions in relation to tourists' evaluations of their dining experiences in China.

First, this chapter provides a brief introduction of gastronomy and reviews the influence of gastronomy on the dining out experience in different contexts, including dining out in the cultural context, adaption to foreign gastronomy, and the role the media plays in dining marketing. Furthermore, this section also includes discussions of the different motivational factors influencing dining out behaviours and their respective implications for tourism. This is followed by a comparison of Chinese and Western dining-out traits, which includes a discussion of religious influences on diet, the relationship between food and lifestyle, and the role this plays in tourism.

In addition to tourists' dining behaviours, this chapter also examines how these behaviours relate to dining satisfaction. In doing so, customer satisfaction is conceptualised from a general perspective. Intercultural service encounters among tourists, service staff, and tour guides, tour guide's performance, and role theory are used to analyse tourists' dining satisfaction. Additionally, recent gastronomy tourism policy or strategy development and the benefits of gastronomy tourism to different tourism stakeholders are also reviewed.

Finally, the chapter examines different semiotic systems and their relevance to the analysis of tourists' signification systems, the semiotic language of food, and gastronomy travel narratives.

This literature review, which includes the contributions and limitations of previous studies, helps to assess the current level of knowledge about the influence of Chinese food culture and gastronomy on tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China. Hence, this chapter will facilitate a better understanding of how tourists experience Chinese gastronomy in China.

2.1 Gastronomy

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2012) defines gastronomy as the art of selecting, preparing, serving, and enjoying fine food. The earliest use of the word "gastronomy" was in ancient Greece, and etymologically, the word "gastronomy" is derived from Greek "gastros", meaning stomach, and "gnomos", knowledge or law (Kivela & Crotts, 2005, 2006).

The first formal study of gastronomy was an eloquent undertaking by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin [1755–1826] published in the *La Physiologie du gout* (1825), translated into English as *The Physiology of Taste* (1925, rev. Ed. 1971). Brillat-Savarin defined gastronomy as the reasoned understanding of everything that concerns us insofar as we sustain ourselves' (Santich, 1996:172, 2004:17). In his view, gastronomy

was a ‘science’ whose aim was the preservation of man by the best possible nourishment. This was to be achieved by giving guidance ‘to all who seek, provide or prepare substances which may be turned into food’ (Brillat-Savarin, 1994 cited in Santich, 2004:17). In addition, and more importantly, Brillat-Savarin added a justification for gastronomy: it enhances pleasure and enjoyment through the provision of knowledge and information. In the words of the learned judge: ‘some knowledge of gastronomy is necessary to all men, since it adds to the sum of useful pleasures; ... and it is indispensable to persons with considerable incomes ... they derive this special advantage from their knowledge’ (Brillat-Savarin, 1994:54 cited in Santich, 2004:17).

As stated by Scarpato (2002a:54), Brillat-Savarin linked his *science* to the enjoyment of good food and drink, reinforcing the association between gastronomy and excellence. He made clear that:

1. The aim of gastronomy is ‘to obtain the preservation of man by means of the best possible nourishment;
2. Its object is ‘giving guidance, according to certain principles, to all who seek, provide, or prepare substances which may be turned into food’;

3. These figures are ultimately economic industries: ‘Gastronomy, in fact, is the motive force behind farmers, winegrowers, fishermen, and huntsmen, not to mention the great family of cooks, under whatever title they may disguise their employment as preparers of food.’

(Brillat-Savarin 1994:52, cited in Scarpato, 2002a)

Brillat-Savarin paved the way for the subsequent studies about the relationship between the senses and food, and food and beverage consumption as a science.

As Scarpato (2002a) and Richards (2002) noted, the definition of gastronomy has been extended in recent years. Gastronomy can simply refer to the enjoyment of the very best in food and drink (Scarpato, 2002a; Santich, 2004; Kivela and Crotts, 2005, 2006, 2009) and is an interdisciplinary field of study that includes everything into which food is involved; in short, all things that we eat and drink (Scarpato, 2002b). In addition, Santich (2004:16) also defined gastronomy as relating to the history, cultural and environmental impacts on “how, where, when and why eating and drinking.” The how, where, when and why of eating and drinking is important to society and the importance and knowledge of appropriate combinations of food and drink are important to those experiencing the combinations as well as those designing and preparing them (Harrington, 2005). The following sections elaborate on gastronomy in different contexts.

2.1.1 Gastronomy - dining out in the cultural context

Taylor (1871) described culture as a complex whole that included knowledge, customs, beliefs, art, morals, law, and other capabilities and habits acquired by a person through their membership in a society. Often, the terms ‘culture’ and ‘society’ are used interchangeably; however, it is interesting to note that culture describes patterns of behaviour, and society refers to all the individuals who participate in the culture. As a result, culture is a group, not an individual, phenomenon that is passed on from one generation to the next. Applying this understanding to eating habits, including dining habits, we see that these are also passed on to the next generation. This means that dining and eating behaviours are part of one’s cultural and social development (Kivela, 2003). In the absence of socialisation processes, culture could not continue on its evolutionary course. Because people internalise their cultural traditions, these become an inseparable part of their identities (Giff, Washbon, & Harrison, 1972:11). Food consumption behaviour then becomes part of one’s identity and is tied to cultural traditions. Foster’s (1962) broad characterisation of culture and its application to dining out and eating habits is discussed next.

Each generation, although it learns the culture it is born into, is never identical to its predecessor. Learning and socialisation processes are therefore incomplete. Eating habits and dining are also a part of this dynamic process, and while they are generally predictable, eating habits and dining evolve over time and are subject to continuous changes. It could also be argued that whilst the elements of eating and dining behaviour may remain similar over time, the manner in which they are carried

out is modified from generation to generation (Bass, Wakefield, and Kolassa, 1979:4). For example, in the 1940s there were very few fast-food operations offering take-away and/or home delivery service, as we know them today. Yet globalised franchising and chaining of restaurants with take-away food service is the norm today, and is even expected. In particular, today's travelling consumers often consider these foodservice operations and dining in them as an "oasis" when away from home (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). In the context of this study, nearly 150 years of Western influence in Hong Kong SAR have melded Western concepts of dining with the Chinese notions of dining. However, traditional Chinese values, even in a modern city such as Hong Kong, position dining as an activity that is closely attuned to the biological and medical axiom, whereas Western values relating to dining out are predominantly based on sociality precepts (Tannahill, 1973; De Garine, 1976; Lowenberg et al, 1979; Lu, 1986).

It can also be said that culture is somewhat mechanical in the sense that culture is internalised so that habitual dining behaviours are accomplished without conscious thought, but simply because 'that's how things are done'. Because people internalise their cultural traditions, these have become an inseparable part of their personal identity (Giffit et al., 1972:11) and food consumption behaviour. In the framework of this study, in China, "foreign" or non-Chinese restaurants are yet to be internalised (Quan & Wong, 2004). It is particularly interesting to note here that many Western food outlets "Orientalise" their Western foods in the same way as the Chinese foods are "Westernised" in the U.S.A, Canada, the UK, Australia and elsewhere to "fit-in" with Western tastes and dining expectations (Kivela, 1997). This is because every culture resists change, particularly if the change is imposed on it by a more dominant

culture. This certainly applies to eating and dining habits (Finkelstein, 1989). Although reasonably fixed, eating habits resist change and are at times prone to lengthy adaptation processes. As noted earlier, the 150 years of Western influence in Hong Kong SAR have modified the indigenous dining habits, e.g., “Orientalised” Western menu items, but not at the expense of the prevailing forms and perceptions of taste. For example, the introduction of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) in Hong Kong SAR in the early 1980’s failed because local people did not accept the concept of Western fast-food. It took several years before local people (youngsters) were more aware of and receptive to Western-style fast-food and its taste. Only then—on its second attempt--was KFC successful in introducing its products into the market place. Similar fast-food rejection / adaptation / acceptance processes have been reported in other South East Asian countries, and more recently in India (Kivela, 1997).

Culture also determines food value. For example, there is considerable inconsistency in attitudes around what is “good” and “bad” food, that is, “good food” to one culture is “bad food” to another culture. Lowenberg et al. (1979) and Benderly (1989) suggest that each culture selects, among the many possibilities offered in all but the most meagre habitats, certain foods as good to eat. They also suggest that each culture prefers certain food preparation methods. For instance, Chinese people perceive Western food to be inferior to Chinese food, and Westerners think the opposite, irrespective of any rational judgements concerning the nutritional quality of either Western or Chinese foods (Kivela, 2003). Therefore, chicken’s feet, sea blubber, snake meat, pigs entrails, frogs, field rats, “1000 year-old” eggs, sea slugs and civet meat, to mention a few, that Westerners would encounter when travelling in China, may be

considered “bad” foods to these tourists. Yet for the Chinese, these menu items are highly praised delicacies. In addition, Kivela (2003) also reaffirmed Japanese sushi and sashimi have found acceptance in some Western cultures but not all. Wine (made from grapes as opposed to rice) has recently found considerable acceptance and prestige in the People’s Republic of China. Southern Indian fiery curries still present a formidable challenge to many Western diners. Squid, frog’s legs, haggis and snails have a tenuous acceptance in places such as the United States, and trading in horse flesh is prohibited by law in the United Kingdom but not in France and Germany. Therefore, each culture has particular foods that are often imbued with cultural symbolism, and these are brought by travellers to their destinations and influence their experience of local food culture. Although they might be understood by the group, these foods provide for interaction between disparate travellers in the group in a socially acceptable manner. Interestingly, marketing initiatives, gourmet publications, and travel guides such as the Lonely Planet often reinforce the food culture of different destinations. On the other hand, “foreign” or “bad” foods are often marked as bad foods, although over time they become accepted, such as Western fast-foods have in China’s major cities. Although accepted, some “foreign” foods will always remain low priority choices, compared to the foods already seen as the norm. It is possible that the acquisition of “new” or “bad” foods may become the norm over time. However, even these foods tend to be modified to suit the indigenous taste (Fathauer, 1960; Lowenberg et al, 1979; Williams, 1973).

During travel, tourists engage in numerous activities, such as sightseeing, shopping, visits to historic places, and sampling local food. The last is a particularly important travel activity because tourists consuming food and beverage are not only

fulfilling their physical needs, but are also experiencing the local culture. Food is regarded not only as a necessity for tourism consumption but also an essential element of regional culture (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Jones & Jenkins, 2002; Quan & Wong, 2004). Food is not just something to consume; it is an integral part of the culture of a community, region, or nation. Culture will further determine attitudes toward food regarding what to eat and not to eat, and with whom, where, and when to eat (den Hertog et al., 2006). Whether or not trying different kinds of food is one of the main incentives for travel, food can at least provide extra opportunities for tourists to be in a more memorable and enjoyable atmospheres than they expected. Gastronomy is thus seen as an important source of marketable images and experiences for tourists (Quan & Wong, 2004). However, often in the tourism context, art, music and history are commonly seen as cultural tourism resources, whilst gastronomy, together with religion, industrial heritage, events, festivals and architecture, are considered a 'grey zone' of cultural tourism (Prentice, 1993; Scarpatò, 2002a, 2002b).

Local culture is becoming an increasingly valuable source of new products and activities used to attract, amuse and enlighten visitors. Gastronomy has a particularly important role to play in this, not only because food is central to the tourist experience, but also because gastronomy has become a significant source of identity formation in postmodern societies. 'We are what we eat', not just in the physical sense, but also because we identify with certain types of cuisine that we encounter on holiday. However, food is also one of the important aspects of the 'environmental bubble' that surround most tourists on their travels. Many tourists eat the same food on holidays as they would do at home (Richards, 2002; Cohen and Avieli, 2004). On the other hand,

Cohen and Avieli (2004) analyzed customers in oriental restaurants and found out that Europeans found Asian cuisine appealing because it allows them to experience the exoticism of the imaginary orient without actual contact with the culture. Moreover, Fields (2002) found that cultural motivators suggested by McIntosh et al (1995) were strong push factors for the development of gastronomy and tourism. When experiencing new local cuisines, we are also experiencing a new culture. Cultural motivators lead the tourists into learning about, and experiencing, the culture of societies other than their own. The search for authenticity through food has been identified by many researchers as being central to tourism motivation, and gastronomy provides the opportunities for many 'authentic' encounters with different cultures. Haukeland and Jacobsen (2001) examined the potential of local food to be a contributor to cultural identity and create a positive image at peripheral tourism destinations. In several instances, local gastronomy and its traditions were often seen as an integral part of the local identity. Numerous tourists seem to think that the cooking traditions of an area may reveal some of its character and, to some extent, also the mentality of its population. Aroma and taste are literally adding to a sense of place that tourists often search for, and for some, tasting local food has become fashionable. Local food shared with visitors may act as a social link between disparate cultures. Some visitors also buy food and beverages as flavoursome souvenirs. This creates a connection between the holiday destination and the tourists' home. However, food in tourism is also a social marker, creating both distinction and similarities between the holidaymakers and the host. It is only recently that wine and food has played a role in attracting tourists to a destination. And this phenomenon has come to be explicitly recognized by governments, researchers and by the wine, food and tourism industries. Food is now seen as:

- part of the local culture which tourists consume
- part of tourism promotion
- a potential component of local agricultural and economic development
- something at the local level that is affected by the consumption patterns and perceived preferences of tourists

(Hall and Mitchell, 2001).

As noted by Hall and Mitchell (2005), tourism-food and tourism-wine relationships are found when people travel; they take their ‘taste buds and stomachs’ with them and, when they return home, some of the newly acquired tastes may then influence their food consumption in terms of choice of restaurant and selection of what is purchased to eat at home. Thus, food and wine play a role that may have a profound influence on visitors’ future lifestyles. Hwang, van Westering and Chen (2004) noted the linkages between gastronomy and heritage in Tainan city in Taiwan. The cooking traditions of Tainan city revealed the character of the society and the philosophy of its residents. These traditions were an obvious legacy of their ancestors, and they bear witness to previous eating habits. The distinctive taste of food recalls memories, brings up nostalgic feelings, and infuses heritage with a certain sense of realism. The culinary heritage is strongly linked to a peasant identity and includes a style of eating full of imaginary symbols. Traditional snacks were found to be intertwined with cultural heritage and attraction tourism. Certain dishes are regarded as cultural symbols and have been influenced by historical developments as Taiwan has moved through a succession of rulers, both foreign and of late, domestic. For visitors, the promotion of traditional snacks is increasing as their image has been expanded in order to convey

spirituality and nostalgia. Hence, gastronomic experiences can enhance tourists' understanding and appreciation of cultural and historical sites (Hwang et al., 2004)

2.1.2 *Adaptation to foreign gastronomy*

Adaptation is the process by which groups and individuals adapt to the values and norms of another culture (Kivela, 2003). For example, when Chinese immigrants arrive in a new country, their eating habits and food consumption aesthetics, and how food is prepared, do not change as quickly, if ever, and persist over time. However, over time they do change, particularly with the next generation. Even so, eating habits, dining and cuisines from other cultures have had an evolutionary impact on many host cuisines, and hence the now famous catch phrase “East-meets-West” used to describe *fusion* cuisine.

Gastronomy is also a term commonly used to express a culture's foods and style of cooking with its distinctive foods, preparation methods and modes of dining. It also categorises and distinguishes various cultures, such as Italian, Chinese, Greek, and so on. Gastronomy and restaurants are therefore more often than not synonymous with each other. A national cuisine is what is thought of as the normal or typical food of a particular country. Therefore, it assumes a group as opposed to individual identifies. However, the interpretation of foreign cuisines is often stereotypical and therefore misleading. For example, not everyone in Italy eats spaghetti and pizza all the time, nor do all Germans eat sauerkraut at every meal. On the other hand, Martin-Ibanez, cited in Lowenberg et al. (1979:120), suggested that “a society's cuisine reflects its

characteristics.” For example, English foods are plain and robust; Chinese foods are healthy; Italian foods are earthy; French foods are elegant and gastronomically inspired; and Japanese foods are aesthetically presented.

It can be difficult to define native gastronomy. What, for example, is an American or Canadian gastronomy? In these countries, the cuisine has been very strongly influenced and changed by many cultural groups that have emigrated there. For example, barbecuing steaks in the United States was first brought there by Spaniards, who in turn learned it from the Caribbean natives; and *chop suei* was introduced to the rest of the world by Chinese immigrants. While the acceptance of foreign cuisines in most Western countries has reached a certain level of incorporation into mainstream eating behaviours, the acceptance of “foreign” foods in China, is still in its evolutionary and experimental stage, despite the Western influence in the last twenty years, excepting Hong Kong and Macao (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). However, the number of “foreign” restaurants in China is on the rise and is “experimented with” by the indigenous people, who were predominantly brought up with Chinese cuisine. In China’s major cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, dining has become increasingly enlivened by popular ethnic restaurants such as Italian, French, and American. The acceptance of foreign foods and restaurants by Chinese diners in general, though, has some way to go before it is comparable to the United States, Canada or Australia.

2.1.3 *Gastronomy - dining and the role of media*

A major phase of social change in the last few decades has been in the communication and information fields. People in most developed and developing countries have instantaneous access to global events and information, which is distributed via a complex and technologically sophisticated communication system. Mass media such as television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet are powerful means of disseminating information quickly. Not surprisingly, therefore, destination marketers have identified the mass media as a potent vehicle for publicising the destination's dining activities.

The role of dining marketing via the mass media in shaping eating and dining habits is often a controversial one. It is often argued that an impersonal communication medium can be very effective when conveying dining information, but not as successful in affecting travel action, i.e. persuading the person to actually travel to a destination to savour its food. This implies that the traveller must be predisposed to going to a destination in the first place, although current research suggests that such marketing often influences the travel process (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Myers (1963) and Kotler, Bowen and Makens (1996) have also found that marketing and advertising is often credited with the ability to induce action. For example, these observations seem to have currency in the perceptions of fast-food restaurants, as indicated by the results of the study by Caspers-Baikie, Konell, and Totten (1994), where they suggested that fast food and popular chain restaurants' marketing strategies, on the whole, have not focused on the biological or nutritional value of their menu items. Rather, marketing appeals utilise the symbolic and abstract meanings of menu items and restaurants, so that what is being

sold is not just a food item, but a lifestyle, a dream, and an emotional and motivational fulfilment, and that dining satisfaction is often the underlying appeal message. This is unlike the kind of marketing used by gastronomy destinations (Kivela & Crofts, 2006).

2.1.4 Gastronomy - dining out - motivational dimensions

While it may appear that gastronomic choices can be couched within a single paradigm, Sanjur (1982) suggested that the factors that affect food and dining choice are multi-dimensional. Finkelstein (1989) and Auty (1992), on the other hand, have connected food choice with prior satisfaction, and have suggested that restaurant attributes, such as service, decor, price and location, coupled with the dining occasion, diners' income and occupation and other socio-demographic factors, not only influence food and restaurant choice, but also have an impact on diners' post-purchase behaviour. On the other hand, Kotler et al. (1996) suggested that dining motivation is dependent on various "push" and "pull" factors. The push factors of dining out are the socio-psychological motives that predispose the individual to dine out, and the pull factors characterise the specific appeal of the restaurant that influences the consumer to dine there. The pull factors (of the restaurant) are such things as the cuisine, food quality factors, service quality factors, ambience factors, location, price, and entertainment value, as identified in studies by Almanza, Jaffe and Lin (1994), Oh and Jeong (1996), and Qu (1997), who also suggested that diners consistently attach importance to pull factors when dining out.

The push factors are internal to the individual and usually represent the individual's relative status of deprivation, and a disorganisation of personal beliefs during the uncertainty stage (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1990); for example, pondering whether or not to go to restaurant A, and having a desire to go to restaurant B. According to Finkelstein (1989), dining out is often seen as offering temporary alleviation from the individual's status of deprivation by providing an opportunity, however limited, to experience pleasure. However, the motives for dining are not always "pushed" by the need for pleasure. For many people, travel represents a brief escape from the humdrum of their normal life, and dining out while away is often used as a reward (and a potential moment in which one can achieve satisfaction--if only briefly). For others, dining out motives, or the push factors, may be influenced by professional needs such as business meetings and entertainment; or the need for relaxation, and exotic experience; or facilitation of relationships; or peer identification, social intercourse, or alleviating boredom; or to try new foods. Finkelstein (1989) noted that desire and experience cause individuals to explore dining out activities in unfamiliar settings, such as travelling to a new destination.

Alternatively, pride and satisfaction in the knowledge of gastronomy may be a reflection of self-esteem. People enjoy being praised not only for the quality of the foods they prepare, but also for their choice of restaurant, one that prepares good food, and/or one with a well-known gourmet chef (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Interestingly, restaurants at famous gastronomy destinations can achieve great visibility in modern society. Cookbooks, television gourmet shows, talk radio programmes, epicurean magazines, food and restaurant critics, and good eating guides, reinforce a destination's

culinary excellence. Marketers of fine dining and authentic food manipulate these factors to draw potential travellers who are already interested in gastronomy, by reinforcing that they will have made a right choice, especially in the presence of their friends or peers.

Whilst self-esteem is reinforced through praise and satisfaction, self-actualisation is achieved by travellers who actively seek new culinary destinations and dining experiences, and who are prepared to experiment with their dining-out activities when travelling. Undoubtedly, self-confidence is related to self-actualisation needs; destination marketers are eager to satisfy these needs (Kivela et al., 2003). As noted, dining out and travelling have always been linked to social prestige and status (Finkelstein, 1989). For instance, some culinary destinations accord high status to the traveller while others assume high status because of the groups who habitually frequent these destinations e.g. Tuscany. For example, the discrepancy between the nobility and peasantry of Dynastic China was exemplified by the contrast in their eating habits and food intakes. Whilst the poor sustained themselves with unpolished rice, bean curd, crude protein and other simple fare, nobles and mandarins dined on sumptuous banquets consisting of a variety of exotic meats and seafood delicacies. These grand feasts had a socio-political purpose in that they symbolised the power that the “Son of Heaven” and his mandarins held over the common people (Tannahill, 1973). But is this also true in the modern world? Leisure travel and dining out are often used by people to assert social status, and social status is a strong motive for pursuing pleasure. Prestige and affluence are often attached to travel and dining or to the circumstances and manner in which it is pursued. Social distinctions can be subtly underlined through dining

behaviour, or can be overtly stated, for example, through social rules that dictate who can dine with whom, as in the case of exclusive private clubs. These rules may be linked with concepts of exclusivity, power and wealth: they determine who should be granted club membership and who therefore, once granted the exclusive privilege to “belong to the club”, is also subject to control. Another example of the way dining confers social status is the practice of excluding low-income people that many fine dining restaurants execute by keeping their prices high. These practices have a history in tribal customs that set peoples apart through group membership. Inevitably, this meant that some travel and dining practices have come to be regarded as superior, as have the people who practice them. Motives for gastronomy travel therefore often represent a desire to mark one’s social rank (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Kivela & Chu, 2001; Kivela & Johns, 2003). This persists today and is closely connected to the economic and social systems of society.

Impressing others through travel and fine dining is a common method of declaring status, and acts as a powerful motive for people who have a need to impress others. Eckstein (1980) suggested that status is conferred by the freedom to choose rare and costly menu items to impress others, e.g., sharks’ fins, abalone, garoupa, birds nest soup; the freedom to select expensive restaurants for personal gratification and status or *face*; and the freedom to pursue new and exotic gastronomic inventions. In both Western and Eastern societies, if a customer has a large array of menu-item choices then he/she has the ability to choose freely, which is linked closely to his/her economic position. A customer’s financial position is therefore a strong measure of status, and this is reflected in travel and restaurant selection and the selection of menu items at the restaurant.

Hence, fine restaurants, vintage wines, *objets d'art*, clothing and exotic holidays are traditionally perceived as symbols of wealth and status. Therefore, they function as powerful motives, and also emphasise the differences between those who have and those who do not. For high-status travellers, destination marketers make considerable efforts, and commit extensive resources in accommodating their guests' individual needs.

De Garine (1976:150) commented that only humans have a tendency to abstain from the consumption of nutritionally valuable foods because they are considered to be of low status. They will eat organoleptically mediocre or nutritionally poor foods in order to display economic prosperity. De Garine observed that "the more societies are able to free themselves from subsistence and have at their disposal surpluses, the more food is used in a prestigious way." For example, McDonald's and other Western fast-food operations in China are often perceived as luxury restaurants. On the other hand, dining out behaviour is often influenced by the fashionability of foods (Finklestein, 1989), for example, the Nouvelle and Californian cuisine styles, and more recently Mediterranean cuisine. Therefore, it could be argued that the importance, and prestige, of dining out significantly influences a person's motives which are driven by how much social recognition a dining experience will accord him/her. These examples highlight how dining out transcends its subconscious biological form to become an issue of status and fashion, and how it is often a powerful motive for the desire to increase the status of an individual.

2.1.5 *Gastronomy - Chinese and Western dining-out traits*

Compared with most Western restaurants and Western etiquette when dining out, all but the most high-priced fine dining Chinese restaurants are a natural extension of the home (Chang, 2007). Whilst most restaurants in the West are for adults only, with the exception family and fast-food operations, a typical Chinese restaurant is for the whole family. On Sundays, in particular, when most Chinese parents devote their entire attention to family life, their grandparents and even their youngest children crowd in with them in *dim sum* restaurants for family *yum cha*. While most Western diners follow the bistro-style of quiet dignity, in keeping with the characteristic Western need for social privacy, it is the opposite in Chinese restaurants (Chang et al., 2010). A typical Chinese restaurant in China is a place in which the ambience is measured in terms of the number of people who can be accommodated at any one time, the noise they make, the gusto with which the food is consumed, the number of children darting and laughing between the tables, and the number of wait staff trying to keep up. However, amid what would seem to be disorder, highly sober and conscientious dining decisions are made (Chang, 2007).

Western diners are free and independent when selecting items they like from a menu. Once selected and ordered, the menu items “belong” to the person who ordered them and are rarely shared with other diners at the table, including one’s own family members. For Chinese diners, this is a strange and anti-social practice. When dining in Chinese restaurants, friends, family and associates are expected to share in the range of menu items brought to the table. Menu items are ordered for everyone to share, not for any particular individual, hence, the upholding of collective harmony; another valued

Chinese social characteristic as opposed to Western individuality and personal happiness or satisfaction. For this reason, a Chinese host, or anyone in the dining party, would never order a menu item without first discussing it in some detail with everyone at the table, then the waiter, and with the manager if need be. A final combination of menu items is selected only as a result of group consensus, thereby assuring satisfaction of all, rather than a few. A feature of Chinese cuisine is its variety, but the cardinal rule is harmony: the right combination of foods, cooking methods and techniques, tastes, textures, aromas and colours that make up a perfectly composed fare that will satisfy and appease everyone at the table.

When Chinese people dine out, the selection of dishes is not only important from the nutritional point of view, ensuring that the correct proportion of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and vitamins are present. When dining out, for either an elaborate or a simple meal, Chinese diners also place considerable importance on making sure that the food satisfies both physical (well-being food according to Martin-Ibanez [1979]) and psychological criteria (Chang et al., 2010). There is a great deal of cultural, poetic and symbolic meaning implicit in Chinese food preparation and consumption, and the dining out experience (Shin Sheng-Han, 1959). The right balance foods (in accordance with the principles of *Yin* and *Yang*), in conjunction with the dining occasion, particularly if the occasion is special, such as a business dinner, are traditionally borne in mind. Chinese menu items are also interesting from a dietician's point of view because the method of ensuring a well-balanced diet is different from Western dietary concepts. The Chinese distinction between sources of essential nutrients is subtler. Westerners grow up with the idea that a main course should include meat for protein, potatoes for carbohydrates, and

vegetables for vitamins, roughage and trace elements. The Chinese may combine many, and sometimes most, of the elements needed for a balanced diet in every dish, and the same approach applies to the composition of an entire menu (Jia Sixie, 533-534_{B.C.}; Lu, 1986). While Westerners are used to having clear distinctions drawn between courses and between the type of dishes served for certain courses, the Chinese custom is to serve all or most of the dishes at the same time, and much more mixing of different types of food is practiced, e.g., meat or tofu or soy flour noodles will be combined with vegetables in one dish, while a dish in which the principal ingredient is meat may also include vegetables, fruit or vegetable broth. Chinese vegetarian dishes are often comprised of sprouts and beans and vegetables or fruit with high lipid contents, thus fulfilling the requirements for protein and fat. A revealing convention, showing just how much Western and Chinese attitudes to meals differ, is that of increasing the number of different dishes as the number of diners in a party increases. For example, one or two dishes, each a composite dish, will be served if there are only one or two people to be catered for. When the number increases, then so will the variety of dishes, four, five, six or eight (or more) different ones will be placed in front of the dining party. In the West one increase the quantities but still restrict oneself to one, two, three or at the most four courses.

In the West, a staple and one of the most symbolic foods has been bread, while in China it is rice (Southern China) and noodles (Northern China). These are also cheap, abundant, and filling. Although rice is only one of the cereals grown and consumed in China, and cultivated only in certain areas, it has, nevertheless, always been understood there as the synonym for food and nourishment, invested with an

almost sacred quality. Chang (2007) stated that *fan* is the Chinese (in Cantonese dialect) for rice but has also come to mean food and a meal. “Have you eaten your rice?” is a greeting to friends and acquaintances which also translates as “How are you?” or “Is all well with you?” “The lid has been taken off the rice dish”, is the announcement signalling that a meal is ready, and that guests are invited to sit down to dinner.

When dining with friends and acquaintances, Chinese people acquire a very strong feeling of intimacy and fellowship from the custom of those present helping themselves to food from a variety of dishes with their own chopsticks. A code of good manners has been developed. If a guest is present, (s)he will be invited to help her/himself first. It is considered bad manners to take one’s favourite item without considering the other people at the table, since each person must consider other people’s preferences; everyone can be sure of having at least some of the choicest foods. It is considered good form (within reason) to have a good appetite, as a sign of appreciation of the dishes that have been placed on the table. On such occasions when many people have been invited to a meal, the host or hostess wants to make a good impression and provide a pleasurable experience to everyone by making sure that a wide variety of foods is served. The dishes served on special occasions and for celebratory feasts will depend on the wealth of the hosts, the rank or position of the guests, and on whether the occasion is a very formal one or more of a friendly, informal affair. If relatives or friends are invited, then things will be kept simple, with a big dish of rice (or noodles) in the centre of the table with, perhaps, a large bowl of steaming soup (which those present will ladle into their bowls and drink to refresh themselves before, during and after the meal). Fairly simple dishes will add interest and variety to these basic items. At official

or ceremonial dinners, no rice, noodles, bread or buns await the diners as they take their seats at the table. At least eight (eight representing double good fortune and happiness) elaborate dishes will be served, and often twelve. On such occasions each guest has a full place setting laid out: cup, plate, bowl, spoon and chopsticks. Cold dishes and appetisers will have been arranged on the table ready for the banquet to begin. Soup may not be served at the beginning of the meal but most likely after each set of dishes. A round table is the favoured shape, often with a revolving stand in the centre to make it easy for the waiter to serve each guest initially, and then for each guest to take a selection of foods as they please (Kivela, 2003). The meal will get under way with toasts of warmed rice wine drunk to the health of the guests. Reciprocal toasts are given at various stages during the meal. At the end of the meal, the host will have a magnificent whole fish dish placed on each table, representing a superfluity of food: a subtle way of suggesting that there is no end to his generosity. Fish is also symbolic of prosperity and wealth (fish eggs, school of fish meaning plenty). Fried rice, noodles and steamed buns may be placed on the table with the fish or instead of it, to underline just how different from ordinary everyday food the preceding meal has been (Chang, 1977).

Kivela (2003) indicated that the division of menu items into appetisers, soups, entrees, main course and desserts would seem incomprehensibly arbitrary to Chinese people. As in Western gastronomy, the names of most menu items are synonymous with traditional celebrations, special occasions, and people and places; however, nowhere is this truer than in China. Most menu item names, certain foods, and therefore, the dining out occasions, are so highly symbolic and very closely linked to legends, myths and divine events, that it would be unthinkable to leave them off the

menu. Worse, their omission might bring bad luck. Here is an example of some of some well-known symbolic foods in China: the *nin ko* (progress and prosperity cakes) or the Chinese *tsin tui* cakes (round sesame cakes - as the cakes are rolled, the ‘house is filled with gold and silver’), served for Chinese New Year; *tong yuen* round sweet dumplings implying rounded sweetness and harmonious life together, and *yuet beng* or moon cakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The Chinese have also retained their conception of food as a sacrificial and proprietary offering to the dead, to their ancestors, and to the gods. For example, it is customary to eat bean curd with fish heads and tails during the *Ch’ing Ming* Festival. Serving fish indicates “profit”, and retaining the heads and tails suggests wholeness. The word *fu* as in *tao fu* (bean curd) also sounds like the word *wu* which means “to protect”. The hope is that the ancestors will protect their descendants’ harmony and prosperity. For most Chinese people, however practical, pragmatic and modernised, these votive offerings remain highly symbolic and are scrupulously followed (Chang, 1977).

Chinese wisdom maintains that “we are what we eat”, *ngo mun tsau tsi ngo, so he dik dong tsai*, This idea dates back thousands of years (Jia Sixie, 533-534_{B.C.}), and many menu items prepared and served in Chinese restaurants all over the world today are prepared according to ancient recipes reputed to furnish particular benefits for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of those who eat them, as well as induce a sense of balance and serenity, in accordance with the theory of *Yin* and *Yang* (Li Shih-Chen, 1578; Chang, 1977; Lu, 1986). Wisdom, sensuality, mysticism, wealth, status (*face*), prosperity and harmony are often personified by symbolic characters of Chinese mythology, to which legends attribute miraculous interventions and amazingly clever

solutions to problems that once upon a time vexed emperors and rulers, heroes and martyrs, lovers and poets. This also extends to food and menu planning and elaborates dinner arrangements. For example, this philosophy accounts for the skill with which Chinese chefs can shape any foodstuffs, be they rice, flour, vegetables or tofu, into phoenixes, dragons, serpents, tortoises, blossoms and birds, or highly abstract characters, all full of auspicious symbolism and meaning (Chang, 1977). The Chinese are people of the eye. To them characters are visual symbols, not always notating sounds as in the Western Roman alphabet. Also, all shapes and foodstuff preparations are meant to be experienced as symbolic, and their characteristic themes such as water, clouds, phoenixes, dragons and so on - betoken not only themselves, but also something beyond themselves; they mean something. There is virtually nothing in dining, Chinese menu writing or Chinese restaurant decor that is not imbued with symbolism (Eberhard, 1983). For example, in better Chinese restaurants, the elaborate gilded carving of a phoenix and dragon on a red and gold backdrop (wall) represents the newly-wed husband (dragon) and wife (phoenix) in readiness for wedding banquets. When someone's birthday is celebrated, menus are decorated with a painting of white-headed birds and peonies, symbolising or expressing the wish that the birthday person may have riches and honour till the end of his/her life. Carp is often a favoured dish for celebrating the beginning of a new business, (as is the roast pig). This is because the Chinese word for carp sounds the same as the word for advantage, *li*. So carp symbolises a wish for benefit or advantage in business. Therefore, the aesthetic dimensions of dining for Chinese people provide allusions to desirable virtues and moral strengths, at the same time as providing nourishment and promoting harmony and prosperity (Chang, 1977).

The options for dining out in China are vast and complicated-- even for Chinese residents. For many visitors, with no more than three or four days in which to find the best that there is on offer, the variety of dining out choices is so overwhelming that it can impede the decision making process, turning a once-in-a-lifetime culinary challenge into a retreat into the safe sanctuary of hotel restaurants. For most Chinese diners, dining out is more than just a social event or a pursuit of dining satisfaction; it is a doctrine (Yau and Lee, 1996). Belief in it is more than just sensation or indulgence. It is part of a general worship of well-being or *chi* (inner energy) in which the diet and certain health-promoting ingredients and tonics are combined with traditional herbal medicine, massage, acupuncture and muscular and breathing exercises to establish a regimen that goes back several thousand years in Chinese history. Those in the West are only now recognising these practices as the 'whole treatment' of the physical and mental condition (Lu, 1986).

2.1.6 *Gastronomy – religious influences on diet*

As an important aspect of cultural values, religion can influence an individual's behaviour in everyday life, including dietary habits (Yu, 1999). Religion and food are part of life and both include celebrations of major events in one's life. During an individual's lifetime, for instance, the birth of a child, marriage, or death are all events marked traditionally with a religious ceremony and often accompanied by a meal. Therefore, for some individuals and their respective communities, religion plays an essential part in the selection and consumption of food. Religious practices and teaching have promoted or prohibited various foods and drink. Some religious

ceremonies have incorporated alcohol while others discourage or forbid its use. There are two major categories of religion in the world: universalizing religion and ethnic religion. Universalizing religion refers to major religion that aim to convert all humankind and are keen to recruit new members. Ethnic religion is connected to a particular ethnic or tribal group, which is often not looking for converts. The three major universalizing religions are Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, and some influential religions include Judaism, Hinduism and Shintoism (Dugan, 1994; Yu, 1999). The following is a discussion of two universalizing and ethnic religions and their influence on dietary practice, included here because some respondents mentioned religion in the context of their dining experiences when travelling in China.

As noted by Dugan (1994) and Yu (1999), Judaism has very strict rules around food consumption, which are derived from the Law of Moses and other early Jewish writings. Jewish dietary laws forbid certain foods and regulate the cooking process of others. Food is either kosher (ritually fit) or nonkosher. The laws concerning kosher food are complicated, but three basic rules apply. First, pork, shellfish and their by-products are nonkosher and must never be consumed. Meat products must come from animals that have cloven hoofs and chew their cud. Thus, beef can be kosher if butchered properly, while pork can never be kosher. Second, meat and poultry must be slaughtered and processed in a special way. Acceptable meat must be processed according to the Jewish law; the animal must be killed in a humane manner by a butcher recognized by the Jewish community and according to a set process with specified equipment. After the slaughter, the animal must be examined to determine that it was healthy and that the slaughter was conducted correctly. Then the

blood is drained, and the cuts are salted to remove all traces of blood. Third, dairy products may not be served at the same meal with meat. For example, a cheeseburger in itself or serving broiled chicken with a glass of milk is not allowed. After eating meat, there must be a waiting period of seventy-two minutes to six hours before dairy products can be served. Eating meat is restricted to emphasize the hierarchical value of life itself. In the Jewish diet, all vegetables are kosher.

Fish must have fins and scales; shellfish is forbidden, as is the by-products of nonkosher fish. Any birds to be consumed must be domesticated; birds of prey and wild birds are forbidden. To ensure that it is domesticated, poultry must come from a certified kosher farm and are slaughtered according to set procedures and the meat is drained and salted. Any leavened grain products cannot be eaten during Passover. This is because, according to the Bible, during the Exodus the Hebrews had to prepare food at the last moment; the bread, therefore, was unleavened. Jews now eat unleavened bread (matzo) to signify liberation. Abstaining from any leavening agent (Chametz) became a central metaphor for escaping slavery. In daily life, methods of food preparation are regulated. Ritual hand washing and blessings precede eating. Two sets of cooking utensils and two sets of serving utensils are used so that meat items and dairy items can be cooked and served in different dishes. The use of utensils, particularly during holiday festivals, is strictly prescribed. Kosher food may of course be eaten by people who are not Jewish. In fact, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists also choose kosher foods because of the value of the Jewish sanitation and quality standards that meet the requirement of their own dietary laws (Dugan, 1994; Yu, 1999).

According to Islamic teaching, all food fall into two categories: halal (permitted) or haram (prohibited). Muslims are forbidden to consume alcohol and pork, and pork-derived foods, including lard and bacon, and the by-products made from pigs, such as marshmallows and gelatine products. Eating flesh and other products from carnivorous animals or from those that eat carrion is strictly prohibited in Islam. Meat is slaughtered according to special rules and the blood must be drained. Hence, beef and mutton are the main meats for Muslims. Fish is an allowable choice, too. Alcohol as a cooking ingredient is prohibited even though some may think that alcohol can evaporate during cooking. Utensils have to be clean and uncontaminated by haram substances. As mentioned above, some Muslims eat kosher products because the Jewish dietary laws are similar to their laws (Dugan, 1994; Yu, 1999; Scott & Jafari, 2011).

2.1.7 Gastronomy - food and lifestyles

Food plays various social roles in a society. As stated by den Hertog et al. (2006) the social roles of food can be categorized as follows:

- gastronomic meaning;
- expression of cultural identity;
- religious and magical meaning;
- means of communication;
- expression of status and distinction;
- means of influence and power (rich versus poor; haves versus have nots);
- means of exchange

Fields (2002) pointed out that meals taken on holiday can be a means of building new social relations and strengthening social bonds. Food and drink are one way to both increase and ease social interactions among strangers. Many events based on food and eating allow for the opportunity to come together and socialize in order to create a feeling of ‘community’. Companies such as Club Med take advantage of this by mixing groups during meals. The restaurant can function as a site for participants to gather food knowledge, collect gastronomic experiences, follow trends in cuisine, or become epicures. The individual is dining out for pleasure regardless of the nutritional value of the food and the possible deficits of the diet. When, what, and how we eat, then becomes a narrative which conveys aspects of biography and cultural knowledge. Our eating habits reflect a sense of social competency and ease with international propinquity. They synthesize what we understand or misunderstand to be interesting, urbane, civilized, and pleasurable (Finkelstein, 1998).

Tourists on a trip are frequently eager to have new experiences and are willing to take risks greater than they do in their day-to-day life. The trip may stimulate their adventurous tendencies, motivating them to try novel and strange dishes and beverages (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Quan and Wong (2004) suggested that food consumption can be considered a supporting consumer experience. Its role is either a means to meet the basic needs of the body, or to get a sense of the ontological comfort of home when they travel. Thus, food in tourism, as an extension of the ontological home comfort, constitutes the “psychological safe-house” for tourists, which helps to avoid culture shocks, such as that created by the “strange” food and dining practices at some destinations.

2.1.8 *Gastronomy – food’s role in tourism*

Scarpato (2002b) stated that gastronomy satisfies all the conventional requirements of contemporary cultural tourism products. It is a viable alternative or addition for new destinations that want to expand beyond the ‘sun, sand and sea’ experiences. It adds value to the tourist’s experience and - at many levels – is associated with quality tourism; it also fits into the contemporary pattern of consumption tourism, which is always in search of new products and experiences which will yield high satisfaction (for example: the booming of wine tourism in different wine producing countries). Finally it offers solutions to the increasing demand for more short breaks, and added value for the business travellers (the explosion of Bed & Breakfast accommodations, packaged gourmet escapes, and agri-tourism are good examples).

Hjalager and Corigliano (2000) suggest that food is related to the image of a tourist destination in the following ways:

1. Complementary. In this respect food is the theme of additional tourist activities in regions and enterprise whose core products are something else.
2. Inventory. Food is becoming the focal point of festivals and special events that attract tourists as well as local residents (Getz, 1991). For example, wine and food trails help tourists create their own experience while exploring ‘crawling’ through agricultural landscapes. The inventory regions may create a special atmosphere that appeals to guests whose main interest is the culture of food and eating.

3. Superficial. Travelling and local products means sharing the local culture. Tourism is synonymous with amusement and entertainment, but it is also a cultural act, a cognitive and participatory moment related to the specific environmental context. According to the materialistic concept 'food is culture', eating a typical dish and drinking local wine is a way of coming into contact with the local population (Antonioli, 1995 as cited in Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). When the connection is superficial, the evaluation of quality plays a minor role, while the context, the excuse for socializing, is more important thing.

4. Disconnected. All over the world, brand-name hamburgers and pizzas can be consumed. The products and eating styles have been globalized. The emerging fast-food sector does little to connect local culture to the act of eating. One might claim that the availability of food that does not require any particular interpretation leaves time for the fulfilment of other needs, for example, relaxation, sightseeing, etc.

The roots of food tourism lie in local agriculture, culture and tourism and all three components offer opportunities and activities to market and position food tourism as an attraction and experience. Agriculture provides the product, namely food; culture provides the history and authenticity; and tourism provides the infrastructure and services and integrates the three components into the food tourism experience (Du Rand & Heath, 2006). Local and regional food, as one of the key components of food tourism, has great potential to contribute to sustainable competitiveness in a destination, both

from a tourism development and a destination marketing perspective. The promotion of local and regional food is an effective way of supporting and strengthening the tourism and agricultural sectors of local economies by: preserving culinary heritage and adding value to the authenticity of the destination; broadening and enhancing the local and regional tourism resource base; and stimulating agricultural production (Du Rand & Heath, 2006).

An increased in tourist attention to local food and food produce may affect tourism development in directly because holidaymakers need food and beverage in the course of their journeys. Additionally, numerous tourists search for the identity or the spirit of the places they visit. Food and beverage have always been crucial elements of place-related tourism products: local flavour may literally represent a taste of the local culture. Local cuisine may contribute significantly to the diversity and richness of cultures and identities across different tourism regions, and provide an enhancement of the destination's cultural heritage. The tourists' consumption of food, which is produced and processed locally, may underpin the local economy and benefit local food producers. Thus, locally grown and produced food may be crucial for the diversification of and added value to the local economy, a benefit that is essential in the development of rural tourism (European Council for the Village and Small Town, 1994, 2006; Haukeland & Jacobsen, 2001).

Quan and Wong (2004) suggested that food consumption can also provide a peak touristic experience as demonstrated by newly emerging forms of tourism, in which the major, sometimes even sole, component of tourism is the taste of a greater

variety of foods, which provide more choices and a change for tourists from their regular food experiences.. This form of tourism includes gastronomic tourism, food festivals, wine tourism, agri-tourism and other food-related events. In these circumstances, food and beverage is the destination's main attraction, e.g. Tuscany. Foods either constitute an event attraction or act as the gastronomic part of the destination's attractions and are no less significant than other attractions such as landscapes, events, history or amusement parks. Thus the idea of partaking in interesting gastronomic experiences can be strong motivator for travel.

Gastronomy, as implied earlier, is a body of knowledge with its roots in all major classical civilizations. Despite this history, in the hospitality and tourism contexts, gastronomy is a new area of study. Our sensory perceptions play a major psychological and physiological role in our appraisal and appreciation of food, as they do for other experiences at a destination. Consumption of food especially when dining out is, or can be, a highly pleasurable sensory experience. Thus the pleasure factor or the 'feel-good' factor as a result of food consumption at a destination is a 'pull factor' and is a marketing and merchandising tool that must not be underestimated. For this reason, one can argue that tourists often place considerable emphasis on how they feel at a destination, and how they experience what the destination offers, by carefully selecting that special restaurant and/or food that might fulfil a particular personal desire (Richards, 2002).

Hall and Mitchell (2005) pointed out that food and wine historically tended to be in the background of the tourist experience as part of the overall hospitality

provided for travellers. Yet, increasingly, wine and food is becoming a focal point for travel decision-making and the hallmark attraction of a number of destinations around the world. However, it was not until the early mid-nineteenth century, with the invention of the restaurant and the commoditization of cuisines into regional and national categories and as a result of the medium of cookbooks and modification of cooking styles, that food and wine began to be seen as a potential travel product in its own right. Importantly, the curiosity about other cultures often initiates food-related tourism (Wolf, 2002). Food is regarded not only as a necessity for tourism consumption but also an essential element of regional culture (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Jones & Jenkins, 2002; Quan & Wong, 2004). Therefore, one can argue that food is a catalyst for discovery and experience; that is, it is not just something to consume, but is an integral part of the culture of a community, region, or nation, that may also enhance tourists' enjoyment of their holiday and the destination (Quan & Wong, 2004). In this context, food is also capable of signifying the identity of a particular social group via its distinctiveness and authenticity. Culture, however, also determines individual's feelings toward food and is manifest in decisions around what to eat and not to eat, where, and with whom. Different or "new" food experiences can add to a memorable and enjoyable holiday experience; or have an opposite effect (Quan & Wong, 2004). Thus, food can be a significant motivator in tourism lifestyles (Hall & Mitchell 2005). In this regard it can be argued that there are few other forms of tourism in which travel memories can be easily revisited just by opening a bottle of wine or recreating a special meal. Arguably, the sensuous nature of food consumption can provide substantial opportunities for visitor recollection of the tourism experience for many years after the initial visit.

As noted by Richards (2002), 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. Importantly, however, interest in gastronomy travel is not confined 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, and Hjalager and Richards (2002) proposed that dining out at a destination is often considered a pleasurable sensory experience used to fulfil an experiential part of tourists' holiday dreams. For this reason, some travellers are increasingly seeking a dining out experience to serve as a complement or as an alternative to other touristic activities.

A destination's gastronomy may be an important part of a traveller's activities and so it must include several essential qualities as a new product to attract tourists and to differentiate the destination from its competitors. In short, a destination's gastronomy can be used as a strategy for promoting the destination (Fields, 2002; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Evidence suggests that gastronomy has been used in marketing campaigns and promotions as an integral part of the tourism product (Sparks, Bowen & Klag, 2003). For example, Tuscany in Italy and Provence in France are singularly promoted as premier gastronomy destinations (Scarpato, 2002a). In the context of this study, tourism providers in China face some challenges in the

understanding and learning about non-Chinese food cultures and eating habits, and tourists' consumption traits, and how to respond to the needs of tourists. Equally, it can be argued that many tourists have limited knowledge of Chinese gastronomy and eating culture, thus facilitating chances for misunderstandings between the visitors and their Chinese hosts. In order to appease tourists' desires for gastronomic novelty and familiarity during their holidays in China, it is important for the tourism providers not only to provide regional gastronomy for tourists to explore, but also to understand food preferences and food consumption patterns of tourists and how they are likely to respond to "new" food sensations.

2.2 Tourists as food explorers

Many people, including chefs, have had a hard time defining gastronomy or culinary tourism. What does it mean to travel for the sake of good eating and drinking? In March 2001, the Canadian Tourism Commission released a report entitled "TAMS: The Travel Activities & Motivation Survey, Wine & Cuisine Report" which suggested that a large element of culinary travel is exploration; tourists search for new restaurants, new ingredients and different artistic presentations. Travel industry professionals recognize niche markets such as bird watching and youth sports, which are clearly defined. Until recently, gastronomy tourism was usually and understandably overlooked. Did the diner find his way to the restaurant because he was hungry, because he had heard about it and wanted to try it, or because of chance? There is scant research which would explain the motivations of diners or gastronomy tourists, and research is needed in this area.

For the gastronomy tourists, the act of eating or drinking fulfils their desire for a hands on, interactive experience. Dining is a form of interactive theatre. Interactions with the waiter and other diners serve as a kind of show or entertainment for visitors (Finkelstein, 1989). Furthermore, experiences that involve the five senses will be more memorable than those that do not. Interestingly, the culinary arts are the only art form that involves each of the five senses. Diners see their food, smell its aroma, feel the textures, hear the crackle of crisp food items, and taste the flavours.

2.3 The determinants of tourists' impressions of food consumption

The purpose of this section is to identify the concepts that relate to tourist dining satisfaction. Due to the fact that travel dining experiences often involve intercultural service encounters (Kivela & Crofts, 2006), the discussion also pays attention to the potential impacts of these interactions. Cohen and Avieli (2004) found that the tour guide could serve as a 'culinary broker', introducing indigenous food and local food culture to tourists in order to enhance visit satisfaction. This potential role of tour guide in the travel dining experience needs to be explored. The contribution of the tour guide to tourist dining satisfaction is investigated because many tourists rely on a tour guide's assistance in their dining experience at a destination (Yu, Weiler, & Ham, 2001).

2.3.1 *Intercultural service encounter*

Consumer behaviour and customer satisfaction research indicate that customer-employee interactions are important in the overall assessment of customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 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, 1992, Johns & Tyas, 1996, Oh & Jeong, 1996, Kivela & Chu, 2001). These studies have provided insights into the quality of service delivery to confirm the importance of the interactive dimensions of service encounter on customer satisfaction. Solomon and Anand (1985) define “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 ways which 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 experiences (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 tourist encounters, where the quality of a service provider’s manner and response is often a critical aspect of the traveller’s experience.

Previous studies have identified that customer satisfaction is affected by a range of antecedents, expectations, and performance. More broadly, Kivela, Inbakaran, & Reece (1999a, 1999b) suggested that customer satisfaction is an evaluation based on what was received and what was expected. They also argued that customer satisfaction

could be studied as an outcome of consumption experience that includes emotion, fulfilment, and state (Kivela, Inbakaran & Reece, 2000). Kivela and Chu (2001) also argued 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 travel experience is decided by the interaction between and among service staff and tourists. It seems therefore that dining activities facilitate and act as a main source of interaction between visitors and service providers and is therefore frequently a source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Thus dining experiences at a destination might have a significant impact on visitor satisfaction. Studies about customer satisfaction in food services (see Almanza, et al, 1994; Lee & Hing, 1995; Johns & Tyas, 1996; Kivela, et al.,1999a, 1999b, 2000; Johns & Kivela, 2001) have identified that both tangible attributes (i.e. food style, décor, and furnishing) and intangible attributes (i.e. atmosphere and dining environment) contribute to dining satisfaction. Despite the relevance of these studies, there is a scarcity of investigations about the attributes that might affect tourists' evaluations of their dining experience when the providers and the travellers do not share a common culture. This is an area that has yet to be fully addressed in the literature, and is the primary motive of this investigation into how tourists perceive their dining experiences during their holidays to China.

2.3.2 *The effect of tour guide's influence on tourists' dining impressions*

All-inclusive package tours are the preferred mode of outbound travel for many travellers, notably for families and older travellers. Within an all-inclusive

package tour, transportation, accommodations, and meal arrangements are all pre-arranged. There are, however, times when unforeseen problems affect the quality of such tours. In these circumstances, the tour guide often plays the role of a saviour. At no time is this more important than it is in a cross-cultural environment, where the tour guide plays the role of a cultural mediator between the tourists and the destination's hosts (Cohen, 1984; Yu, Weiler, and Ham, 2001). For those tourists who have limited cultural and language knowledge of the destination they are visiting, the tour guide serves as a critical information conduit to enhance tourists' understanding of the place they are visiting, which leads to greater satisfaction, and more importantly, provides a sense of safety and comfort, notably to elderly tourists. According to Cohen (1984), Ap and Wong (2001) and Yu et al. (2001), the main duties of a tour guide include: making sure the tour is conducted safely and effectively; offering interpretations of the destination's attractions and culture; mediating between tourists and hosts; and enlivening tourists' experiences. The successful tour guide should possess a variety of skills, such as knowledge, interpersonal and intercultural skills, more specifically, language skills and the ability to effectively and accurately convey information about tourist sites and attractions. By interpreting the cultural landscape and acting as a mediator between tourist and hosts, a tour guide can help tourists obtain greater insights into the customs, history, and artefacts of the destination. Tour guides also face challenges of interpersonal communication between themselves and the tour group members. For example, if there are disruptive behaviours or complaints, tour guide needs to keep all tour members content and ensure that all services are provided as contracted. As travel experience is comprised of different cross-cultural scenarios, many empirical studies have given attention to the intercultural ability of the tour guide as this

is a crucial factor in enhancing tourist satisfaction. Thus, a culturally inattentive tour guide could prevent tourists from experiencing authenticity at a destination and as a result ruin their entire travel experience. For tour groups, the group's tour guide is considered to be indispensable and is quite often instrumental in the way tourists experience their travel (Bowie and Chang, 2005). Cohen and Avieli (2004) found that many western tourists find it difficult to savour indigenous food at Asian destinations because travellers could not read the menus and that the tour guide simply did not assist in these endeavours because they themselves (tour guides) had little or any culinary knowledge of either Western or their own food culture. This prompted Cohen and Avieli (2004) to suggest that the tour guide is the "culinary broker" who can (or not) mediate between tourists and local gastronomy. This also applied to package tours where tourists rely heavily on the guide's expert advice and assistance when dining out. Therefore, it is argued, that one of the key duties for the guide is to have a sound knowledge of the local gastronomy and of their groups' food culture (Geva & Goldman, 1991), thus avoiding food-culture clashes and disappointments.

2.4 Tourists' satisfaction as the outcome of food consumption experience

While 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 to customer satisfaction has been directed at understanding the cognitive processes involved in evaluations of satisfaction. This approach is derived from the discrepancy theory (Porter, 1961) and a number of studies collectively form a basic research framework in studies about the effects of contrast. For example, Howard and Sheth (1969) used contrast theory to suggest that consumers would exaggerate any contrast between expectations and product evaluation. Anderson's (1973) assimilation-contrast theory was a further expansion of contrast theory. This theory asserts that people's tendency to overstate the disparity between expectations and perceptions is a typical example of contrasting effects.

2.5 Role theory

Biddle (1979: 11) defines role theory 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 prompted Broderick (1998) to apply role theory to the understanding of management of service encounters. 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 organisations and customers. Within the context of analysing service encounters, there is a similar emphasis on the continuity of interaction between the service provider and customer, and the interpretation of change within the encounter in terms of mutual expectation, reinforcement and interdependence. This means that both customers and service providers would normally behave according to

their role script inside their mind. In other words, the expectations of customers about the performance of service staff are rooted in how the established role script plays out during the service encounter. This concept creates interesting scenarios in cross-cultural encounters, and 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.

Role theory in a dining-out context

The emergence of role theory begins with the focus on social exchange within service encounters (Broderick, 1998). For people-based service, customers have clear role expectations of service providers, 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 customer engage in a mutually beneficial and appropriate role script may determine the overall benefits of the encounter as perceived by the customer (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), he can meet the role expectations of the customer, and encourage appropriate role involvement on the part of the customer (customer clearly indicates preferences and is ready to make decision). In this scenario, positive role evaluation should occur. What is of importance here, is that the encounter is a two-way process. That is, the service receiver and service provider play equally important roles. While the cultural background of the service receiver will affect the perceptions of service quality, collectively, this will also affect perceptions of the quality

of service to be provided/received (Hubbert, Sehorn & Brown, 1995). For example, in their study, Johns and Kivela (2001) discovered that customers instinctively felt that they were invading ‘territorial boundaries’ when they dined in unfamiliar places. They needed to be reassured that they were welcomed not only by the service provider, but by other customers as well. Thus, it could be asserted that some kind of welcome message or strategy is a critical attribute in creating a positive tourist experiences when dining out.

2.6 Novelty seeking

Cohen’s (1972) tourist typology was based on the degree tourists seek novelty or familiarity in their travel. He classifies different tourists into four different categories across the novelty-familiarity continuum: the organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the drifter. This classification depended on their preferences toward the experience of novelty and strangeness/familiarity (Keng & Cheng, 1999; Mo, Howard & Havitz, 1993). As stated by Cohen (1972), the organized mass tourists are the least adventurous and restrained mainly to their environmental bubble throughout the whole trip. Their trip itineraries are usually fixed in advance with guided stops. In such situation, familiarity is at a maximum and novelty at a minimum. As for the individual mass tourist, his/her tour is not totality preplanned, the tourist still have some degree of control over his/her time and itinerary and is not bound to a group. But all his/her major arrangements are still made through tourist agencies. His/her experience is from within the “environmental bubble” of his home country and venture out of it occasionally into well-charted territory. Familiarity is still dominant, but

somewhat less than preceding type; the experience of novelty is somewhat greater, though it is often of the routine kind. The explorer arranges his/her trip alone and tries get off the beaten track as much as possible. However, the explorer looks for comfortable accommodation and reliable means of transportation. He/she also tries to associate with the people he/she visited and to speak their language. Although the explorer ventures out much from his/her “environmental bubble” than the previous two types, he/she still careful to be able to step back into it when the situation becomes too rough. In this case, “novelty dominates, the tourists does not immerse himself completely in his host society, but retains some of the basic routines and comforts of his native way of life. The drifter ventures furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed ways of life of his/her home country. He/she completely immerse in the host culture by living and working among the locals. In such situation, novelty is at its highest and familiarity disappears almost completely (Cohen, 1972:167-168). In addition, Cohen (1972) suggests that the first two tourist types are called institutionalized tourist roles; they are dealt with in a routine way by tourist establishment that cater to the tourist trade. The last two types are called noninstitutionalized tourist roles, in that they are open roles and very loosely attached to the tourist establishment.

Moreover, Mo, Howard and Havitz (1993) develop a 20-item, three-dimensional scales instruments, which is named International Tourist Roles (ITR) Scale. The ITR scale captures the novelty construct associated with international pleasure travel that postulated by Cohen (1972). The first dimension is Destination-Oriented

Dimension (DOD), which represents an individual's preferences for novel or familiar when choosing an international tourist destination. It reflects the degree to which tourist choice motivated by the desire for new and different travel experiences in terms of culture, people, language, and tourist establishments. The second dimension is Travel Service Dimension (TSD), which measures the extent to which individuals prefer to patronize with or without institutionalized tourist services when travelling in a foreign country. In the context of this dimension, novelty is reflected by the extent to which international tourists accept or reject standardized, familiar travel support services. The third dimension is Social Contract Dimension (SCD), which displays individual's preferences regarding the extent and variety of social contacts with local people when travelling in a foreign country. Some tourists prefer to seek the excitement of complete novelty by engaging in direct contact with a wide variety of new and different people, but others prefer just to observe the lives of local people (Mo, Howard & Havitz, 1993). However, the tourist roles examined in Mo, Howard and Havitz's (1993) study were not identical to the four categories proposed by Cohen's (1972) study (Keng & Cheng, 1999).

On the other hand, Lee and Crompton (1992) develop another instrument to measure novelty. Their study defines the construct of novelty in the context of tourism, to conceptualize its role in the destination choice process. The novelty construct was comprised of four interrelated but distinctive dimensions: thrill, change from routine, boredom alleviation, and surprise. A 21-item instrument was used to measure the construct and its dimensions. The desire for novelty experiences among tourists would range along a continuum from novelty seekers to novelty avoiders (Lee & Crompton,

1992; Chang, 2011). By using Lee and Crompton's (1992) concept to examine food consumption while on holiday, sensation seekers would be more inclined to seek new types of food and to satisfy their need for variety and novel experiences. However, novelty avoider may prefer eating familiar food in order to reduce anxiety or discomfort during their travel to an unfamiliar country (Chang, 2011). In a more recent study by Chang (2011), the research examines how novelty-seeking and risk-taking characteristics influence holiday dining preferences and travel style. By applying international tourist role scale and the food activity preferences scale in combination with visual imagery to simulate different cultural food settings and restaurant situations, three distinct market segments: familiarity-seeking generalists, organized comfort-seekers and explorers were identified.

2.7 Psychology of travel

Plog (1974, 1987, 1991 & 2001) develops a psychographic scale using the personality theory of tourism (Jackson et al., n.d.). Plog's (2001) original research involves interviewing people earned above average incomes, who are flyer and non-flyer. Based on his initial research in 1967, he concluded that a constellation of three primary personality characteristics defines the non-flyer personality: generalized anxieties, sense of powerlessness and territory boundness. These persons do not travel much as adults but they did relatively little traveling as children. They make no attempt to expand their horizon and restricted their lives in a number of ways. Plog named these

non-flyers as 'Psychocentrics', to reflect the fact that they use sumptuous personal energy on small event in their lives. On the other hand, the personality on the opposite end of the spectrum labeled as 'Allocentric'. These individuals reach out explore the world in all of its diversity. They are self-confident and intellectually exploring, measure low on all measures of personal anxiety. They make quick decisions without worrying greatly if each choice is correct. They have varied interests and a strong intellectual curiosity that leads to a desire to explore the world of ideas and places (Plog, 2002). Later in Plog's research in mid-1990s, he changed the dimension labels to more user-friendly terms. Thus Psychocentrics became 'Dependables' and 'Allocentrics' changed to 'Venturers' (Plog, 1995, 2002).

After more than thirty years of relative research, Plog (2002) published some data to support his theoretical formulation. Since his first theoretical paper in 1974, all Plog's publication have been theoretical elaborations of the original concept (Plog, 1974, 1987, 1990, 2001, 2001; Jackson et al., n.d.). According to Plog (2002), a more complete definition of the personality profiles of 'Dependables' and 'Venturers' developed. Plog described 'Dependables' personality would be: (1) somewhat intellectually restricted in what they do not seek out new ideas and experiences on a daily basis. (2) Cautious and conservative in their daily lives preferring to avoid making important decisions rather than confront the choices that face everyone daily. (3) Restrictive in spending discretionary income. (4) Prefer popular, well-known brands of consumer products because the popularity of such items make them safe choices. (5) Face daily life with self-confidence and low activity levels. (5) Often look to authority

figures for guidance and direction in their lives. (7) Passive and non-demanding in their daily lives. (8) Like structure and routine in their relatively non-varying lifestyle. (9) Prefer to be surrounded by friends and families because the warm friendship and support provided in intimate circles make them feel comfortable and secure. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the archetypal Ventures. As their name implies, they are: (1) intellectually curious about and want to explore the world around them in all of its diversity. (2) Make decisions quickly and easily since they recognize that life involves risks, regardless of the choices made, and you learn to live with those choices. (3) Spend discretionary income more readily. (4) Like to choose new products shortly after introduction into the marketplace, rather than stick with the most popular brands. (5) Face everyday life full of self-confidence and personal energy. (6) Look to their own judgment, rather than authority figures, for guidance and direction in their lives. (7) Active and relatively assertive in their daily lives. (8) Prefer a day filled with varying activities and challenges, rather than routine tasks. (9) Often prefer to be alone and somewhat meditative, even though they may appear to be friendly and outgoing. Based on the findings (Plog, 2002), the dimensions of venturesomeness and dependability distribute on a normal curve, with a slight skew to venturesomeness. About 2.5 percent of the population can be classified as Dependables and slightly over 4 percent as Ventures. The rest of the population fall between the two groups, such as near-Dependables, near-Venturers, or the largest group, Centric, the extensive middle group comprising people who have a mixture of personality characteristics that may lead an individual one way to the other. These personality characteristics determine travel patterns and preferences. By examining the two groups at the opposite ends of the normal curve, it allows an easier explanation of the concept. Comparing with the people

in the mid-point of the curve, both the Dependables and Venturers demonstrate the travel characteristics as shown in following table.

Table 2.1 Travel characteristics of psychographic types

Dependables	Venturers
Travel less frequently	Travel more frequently
Stay for shorter period of time when they travel.	Take relative long trips
Spend less per capita at a destination.	Spend more each day per capita
Prefer to go by the family car, camper, or SUV, rather than by air, because they can take more things with them, and that makes the trip seem more homey and less anxiety.	Take to the air more often than other groups (although they use all modes of travel), because they will pay extra for the convenience of getting there sooner to enjoy a destination longer.
Prefer to stay in their mobile home, with friends and relatives, or in the lowest-cost hotels and motels.	Strongly prefer unusual, underdeveloped destinations that have retained their native charm. More important, they avoid crowded, touristy places.
Prefer highly developed 'touristy' spots, on the logic that the popularity of these sites means that they must be great places to visit or else so many people wouldn't go there. Also, heavy development supports fast-food restaurants and convenience stores, which offer the comfort and familiar feeling of what they experience back home.	Gladly accept inadequate or unconventional kinds of accommodations because these become an integral part of a unique vacation experience.
Tend to select recreational activities at these destinations that also are familiar – video games for teenagers, and movies and miniature golf for the family.	Prefer to participate in local customs and habits and tend to avoid those events that seem too common or familiar, or those staged for tourists.
Rate sun-and-fun spots high as destinations, because they offer the chance to relax and soak up the warmth on a beach or around a pool, consistent with a preference for low activity levels.	Prefer to be on their own (FIT travel) on international trips, even when they don't speak the language, rather than be part of a regimented escorted tour. Give them a car, and they'll get around. Their self-confidence and venturesome character makes them feel comfortable in a wide variety of situations.
Typically select well-defined, escorted tours to the best-known places for their infrequent international trips, rather than make independent travel arrangements.	Are active when travelling, spending most of their waking hours exploring and learning about the places they visit, rather than soaking up the sun (or tequila).
Purchase plenty of souvenirs, tee-shirts, decals, and other strong visual reminders of where they have been.	Purchase mostly authentic local arts and crafts, rather than souvenirs. They avoid traditional tourist traps that sell replicas of local cultural artifacts.
Are likely to return to a destination again and again once they try it because it was a good choice.	Tend to seek new destinations each year, rather than return to previously visited places, to add to their treasure of rich experiences. Their

	travel experiences enhance their feelings of self-confidence and self-worth, leading them to take even more unusual trips in future years.
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Adapted from Plog, 2002

In this study, Plog correlated income level and tourist personality type with various travel behaviours. However, the result was surprising, he reported that the relationship explained very little variance, and indicated that if a person's income level was known, then researcher could not predict personality type (Plog, 2002; Jackson et al., n.d). The main findings of Plog's (2002) were significant correlations between personality type and income with: total trips, total domestic trips, total international trips, total trip spending, and pervious twelve month spending. To sup up, psychographic higher correlations with travel behaviours (compare to income) and when income and personality type were combined, the correlations with tourist behaviors were strongest (Jackson et al., n.d.). As there was no statistical analysis, Plog (2002) provided descriptive data (totals) that indicated that on all travel activities (including shopping, fine dining, visiting historical sites, visiting nightclubs/theatre, hiking, backpacking, bicycle tours) Venturers were much more active than Dependables. In conclusion, Plog's original conceptualization demonstrated that psychographics was correlated with income and predicted a wide range of tourist activities (Jackson et al., n.d.).

2.8 Servicescapes

Bitner (1992) develops a typology of service organizations and a conceptual framework is advanced for exploring the impact of physical surroundings on the behaviors of both customers and employees. She integrates theories and empirical findings from diverse disciplines into a framework that described how the build environment (i.e. the manmade, physical surroundings as opposed to the natural or social environment), or what is referred to as the ‘servicescape’ affected both consumers and employees in service organization (Bitner, 1999). Firstly, she developed a typology of service organization that illuminates important variations in form and usage of the servicescape. Then, she used a conceptual framework for explaining environment-user relationship on service organizations. According to Bitner’s (1992) conceptual framework, it suggests that a variety of objective environmental factors are perceived by both customers and employees and both groups may respond cognitively, emotionally, and physiologically to the environment. Those internal responses to the environment influence the behavior of individual customers and employees in the servicescape and affect social interaction between and among customers and employees.

In Bitner’s servicescape design, she identified desirable customer and/or employee behaviors and the strategic goals that the organization hopes to advance through its physical facility. As stated by Bitner (1992) self-service firms will be most interested in predicting and understanding customer behaviors (e.g. coming in, exploration, staying) in the physical setting and the potential achievement of making objectives such as customer attraction, satisfaction, and retention. On the contrary,

firms that operate remote services will focus on employee behaviors (e.g. productivity, affiliation with coworkers) and the achievement of organizational goal such as, teamwork, productivity, and innovation. Organizations that are positioned in the interpersonal service cell will be concern with both customer and employee behaviors, and the effects of physical setting on the interactions between and among customers and employees.

By combining the typology of servicescapes with the conceptual understanding of the internal responses of customer and employees leads to insights for designing and managing the servicescape. Bitner (1992) illustrate her explanation by an example: a self-service firm enhances customer approach behaviors such as, attraction and staying longer can assess the environmental dimensions or cues that may elicit particular cognitive, emotional, or physiological responses. Attraction would most likely be facilitated by positive cognitive and emotional responses to the firm's exterior, whereas staying would depend more on positive emotional and psychological responses to the organization's interior space. In measuring the emotion-eliciting qualities of a particular servicescapes, attention might be given to emotional dimensions identified by Mehrabian and Russell (pleasure-displeasure and degree of arousal) and as well as to perceptions of control (Hui & Bateson, 1991 as cited in Bitner, 1992). For interpersonal services, an effective servicescape design anticipates the likely responses of employees and customers to environmental conditions and creates the proper setting for the service encounter. In such cases, different goals and behaviors will be identified for both customers and employees as well as for their interactions. The desired behaviors can be

linked directly to their internal response counterparts (Bitner, 1992). As elaborate services (e.g. banks, hospitals and restaurants) consist of many forms and spaces, planning for compatibility and coherence is a particularly challenging task. In lean environments, coherence would be easier to achieve and measure and nuisances easier to identify and eliminate. For remote and self-service firms, enhancing personal control is more straightforward than in interpersonal firms, where giving a sense control to both employees and customers simultaneously may be difficult (Bitner, 1992).

Furthermore, Bitner (1992) pointed out that people respond to environment in the ways described – cognitively, emotionally, and physiologically – and their responses influence how they behave in the environment. With all behavioral relationships, however, the strength and direction of the relation between variables is moderated by personal factors are referred to ‘response moderators’. The response moderators included both personality traits and situational factors. The personality traits include, such as, arousal-seeking tendencies and ability to screen environmental stimuli that moderate the relationship between the perceived service and international responses. Also, the situational factors include, such as, expectations, momentary mood, plans and purpose for being in the servicescape that moderate the relationship between the perceived servicescape and internal responses.

Whyte (1980 as cited in Bitner, 1992) asserts that subtle changes in design (e.g. adding plants and flowers, providing comfortable perches) led to a rather dramatic

increase in human activities and utilization in public spaces. Bitner (1992) supports Whyte's findings that similar results might be achieved by examining the direction and flow of activities in a particular servicescapes. Moreover, Bitner (1992) confirms that the importance of particular environmental dimensions vary across the typology of service organizations. The spatial layout and functionality dimension of servicescape is extremely important, whereas, clear directions and simple layout aid the customer in completing the transaction. On the other hand, for remove services, ambient conditions assume more important because employees tend to spend extended periods of time in the servicescape. Their physical comfort (temperature level, lighting) and responses to noise level and/or music affect productivity and overall satisfaction. Ambient conditions are similarly important to employee productivity in many interpersonal service businesses, such as, banks, hospitals and hotels, but those cases employee preferences must be balanced against customer needs. Hence, it is the total configuration of environmental dimensions that defines the servicescape rather than a single element (Bitner, 1992).

For the managerial implications, Bitner (1992) confirms that the servicescape provides a visual metaphor for an organization's total offering. The dimensions of the servicescape act as a package, similar to a product's package, by conveying a total image and suggesting the potential usage and relative quality of the service (Solomon, 1985 as cite in Bitner, 1992). The servicescape can assume a facilitator role by either aiding or hindering the ability of customers and employees to carry out their respective activities. The floor plan, layout of equipment, and equipment design can have a major

impact on the ability of users to complete their tasks and achieve service goals. As a facilitator, the servicescape also encourage and nurture particular forms of social interaction among and between employees and customers. Also, the physical environment serves as a differentiator in signaling the intended market segment, positioning the organization, and conveying distinctiveness form competitors (Bitner, 1992).

Bitner (1992) reaffirms that the typology of service organizations and the theoretical framework help to direct managers to gain strategic insights by examining how the servicescape is designed and managed in other industries that occupy the same cell in the typology and thus, share similar characteristics. In order to secure strategy advantages from the servicescape, the needs of ultimate user and the requirements of various functional units must be incorporated into environmental design decisions. A clear implication of the conceptual framework is the need for cross-functional cooperation in decision making about service environments. Thus, decision about the physical facility can have an impact on human resource goals (e.g. worker retention, worker productivity), operations goals (e.g. efficiency, cost reduction), and marketing goals (e.g. consumer attraction, consumer satisfaction). Hence changes in physical design or the planning of new environments should benefit from input form managers in all three areas, direct input form actual user-employees, and customers (Bitner, 1992). In addition, the typology, framework, and propositions provide numerous topics for future research, and invite application of the full range of consumer and organizational methods and theories to gain a better understanding of its impact (Bitner, 1992).

2.9 Cultural distance

According to Reisinger (2009) cultural distance (CD) refers to the extent to which national cultures differ or to which a cultural gap exists among different cultural systems. The CD construct can be applied in international tourism and defined as the extent to which national culture of the original culture of the originating region (tourists) differs from that of the receiving region (local hosts). The CD construct has implications for interactions between tourists from one culture and visiting another culture. The larger the CD between international tourists and hosts, the higher the probability tourists will experience difficulties in host culture (Reisinger, 2009). Crotts (2004) suggests that the CD construct has implications to the scale and essence of the interface of tourists visiting another culture. The higher the cultural distance between visitor and host cultures, the higher the likelihood that the international visitor will engage in more risk-reducing travel behaviors through their use of travel packages, tour operators, and travelling in large numbers on shorter trips to fewer destinations (Crotts, 2004). Furthermore, Reisinger (2009) confirms that the extent of CD between tourists and host national cultures may range from very small to extreme. When the national cultures of tourists and hosts are very different from one another, the CD between tourists and host is very large. On the contrary, the CD between tourists and hosts is very small or even not exist, when the national cultural cultures of tourists and hosts are very similar to one another. Apart from the above, Sutton (1967 cited as Reisinger, 2009) states when national cultures of tourists and hosts are different, and the differences are large and /or incompatible, the CD between tourists and hosts is large. In this case, tourists and hosts have no cultural commonalities, and experience

difficulties in their interaction. As the differences in national cultures increase, tourists and hosts can experience misunderstanding, friction, anxiety, and often conflicts.

Ng, Lee and Soutar (2007) assert that anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests culture influences people's destination of choice. Many tourists willing to travel to destinations that share same culture background, for example, Hong Kong nationals frequently travel to mainland China because of similarity in its cultural background (Ng et al., 2007; Reisinger, 2009). Pervious researches have suggested cultural similarity influences intention to visit destinations. Visiting culturally similar destinations with low cultural distance reduces the extent of cultural conflicts and increases the likelihood of positive experiences (Reisinger, 2009). Basala and Klenosky (2001) supports people were more likely to intend to visit a novel destination if their home language was spoken at the host countries. Similarly, Saudi tourists preferred to visit Muslim countries (Yavas, 1987) and the safest destinations for Muslims were Muslim countries, after the September 11, 2001 attacks in United States of America (Henderson, 2003). These researchers clearly reaffirm that the greater the cultural similarity between a destination and a tourist's home country, the more likely it was that a tourist would choose that destination (Reisinger, 2009).

Despite cultural similarities, cultural differences can also attract tourists to destinations. McKercher and du Cros (2003) agreed that people from more culturally distant places were more highly motivated to travel for cultural reasons and sought

deeper experience, while those from culturally proximate regions were less interested in cultural tourism sought superficial, entertainment orientated experiences. There is evidence that tourists may experience culture shock when visiting culturally distant destinations. Lee and Gibson (2003) confirm that risk perceptions of tourists were greater when they visited less familiar (or more culturally distant) destinations due to language barrier and unfamiliar with customs of host countries. If there is little consistency between a tourist's expectations and a host destination's attitude due to cultural differences, culturally based misunderstanding, stress, anxiety and uncertainty can develop and result in dissatisfaction. Hence, visiting culturally similar destinations reduces the extent of cultural shock and may result in a positive experience (Ng et al., 2007).

Jackson (2001) measure cultural distance between 50 countries, by summing the absolute ranked difference of each of Hofstede's (1980) four cultural value dimensions (i.e. power-distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism and masculinity-femininity). He ranked these countries these countries from 1 to 50, then calculated the absolute rank difference between each target country form the focal country (in this case, Australia) for each dimension. Finally, all four absolute rank differences (for four dimensions) were totaled to produce the cultural diversity index. The index ranged from very similar (4) to totally dissimilar (196). Despite the index is simple and easy to use, it is based on work-related values obtained between 1968 and 1972. Thus, it does not capture individual's perceptions of cultural differences today (Ng et al., 2007; Reisinger, 2009). Moreover, Jackson (2001) found that people form

highly individualist countries (such as, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States) visited more culturally similar destinations. On the other hand, people from highly collectivist countries (such as, Colombia, El Salvador, Ecuador and South Korea) visited more culturally distant destinations. Jackson explained that the people from highly individualist countries are less interdependent with their in-group and have greater need for affiliation. Culturally similar destinations provide an environment in which is easier to associate with host community (Ng et al., 2007).

2.10 Uncertainty avoidance

According to Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010), the term ‘uncertain avoidance’ has been borrowed from American organization sociology from the work of James G. March, which was recognized in American organizations. They claim that all people have to face that we do not know what will be happen tomorrow: the future is uncertain but we have to live with it. Per Hofstede et al. (2010) definition, *uncertainty avoidance as the extent to which the member of a culture feel threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them.*

Hofstede (1980) in his study identified four value dimensions that distinguished peoples from various nations: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity. Later in 2001, he added a fifth construct, the Confucian dynamic of long-term-short-term orientation. Through a

combination of 66 nations, creating index scores and ordinal rankings for each of his five constructs (Crotts, 2004). Similarly to the computation of the power distance index, the index value for each country was computed for the mean scores and percentage score for survey questions. The formula used is based on simple mathematics: adding or subtracting the three scores after multiplying each a fixed number, and finally adding another fixed number. The index value would range from around 0 for the country with the weakest uncertainty avoidance to around 100 for the strongest. After the formula had been developed, some more countries were added that produced scores greater than 100. Even within regions, there are large differences, which suggest different causes from those for power distance and individualism. High scores occur for Latin American, Latin European, and Mediterranean countries (from 112 for Greece to 67 for Ecuador). Also high are the scores of Japan and South Korea (92 and 85). Medium high are the scores of the German-speaking countries Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (70, 65 and 58). Medium to low are the scores of all Asian countries other than Japan and Korea (from 69 for Taiwan to 8 for Singapore). For the African countries, and for the Anglo and Nordic countries plus the Netherlands (from 59 for Finland to 23 for Denmark). West Germany scored 65 (rank 43-44) and Great Britain 35 (rank 68-69). This confirms a culture gap between these otherwise similar countries with regard to the avoidance of uncertainty (Hofstede et al., 2010).

As stated by Reisinger (2009) in high uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) cultures (such as, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, Japan, France, Peru), societies feel anxious in situations which they perceived as unstructured, unclear, and unpredictable; they

believe that such situations, and any other ambiguities in life, are threats that must be fought. Thus, they avoid conflict, disapprove competition, remain emotionally restrained, display nationalism and suspicion toward foreigners, reject strange behaviors and new ideas they are not familiar with and consider dangerous. People seek stability and security in life, desire law order. They have many formal, written rules, guidelines, and strict codes of behavior that dictate to them how to act in order to avoid risk. Societies are characterized by a high level of anxiety, loyalty, consensus, and group decisions, which help to reduce risk. Japan scored the highest among all Asian countries on the UAI dimension (92/100). The Japanese definitely avoid ambiguous and uncertain situations. In low UAI cultures (Singapore, Denmark, Sweden, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Ireland, India), societies accept the uncertainty inherent in life conflict, tolerate ambiguity, and take more risk. People accept foreigners with different ideas; new ideas are not threatening. People are more flexible, do not need many rules. They believe in common sense, less in expertise and less stressed. Societies focus on advancement and competition. Australia, the United States and Canada scored relatively low on the UAI dimension.

Specifically, high uncertainty avoidance cultures are not comfortable with unstructured situations. They prize structure; and feel threatened by the unknown and the ambiguous. However, low uncertainty avoidance cultures more willingly accept risk (Litvin, Crotts & Hefner, 2004; Money & Crotts, 2003). Risk is a major concern for international traveller, as a result, travellers typically engage in extensive external search behavior to minimize the different types of risk incumbent in their purchase decision.

According to Hofstede (1997), each nation has evolved to include its own norms as to its overall tolerance of risk and uncertainty as measured by the UAI. These norms or cultural values are not only evident in individuals but also the institutions and enterprise they create.

In Money and Crotts (2003) research, from a matched sample of 1042 German and Japanese visitors to the U.S., they explore the relationship between the cultural dimensions of uncertainty (or risk) avoidance with information search, trip planning time horizons, travel party characteristics (e.g. size of group) and trip characteristics (e.g. length of stay). Their result show that visitors from national cultures characterized by higher levels of uncertainty avoidances use information sources that are related to the channel (e.g. travel agent), instead of personal, destination marketing-related, or mass media sources; they also more frequently purchase prepackage tours, travel in larger groups and stay on average a shorter time and visit few number of destinations. This study provides tourism marketers some insights in appealing to consumers in three of the largest foreign travel markets. Marketers may best spend resources to communicate with potential customers, those in Germany seem to respond best to city or state destination marketing promotion, whereas Japanese consumer prefer talking with travel agents. Also, highly risk-avoidant Japanese do not plan their trips and make decision farther in advance than do the Germans. They may be waiting for more or better information with which to make a decision, something marketers may need to remember when designing the marketing mix for these countries or for countries with similar culture. Furthermore, a group-orientated message and product certainty appeals

more to the Japanese than to Germans. However, risk-averse cultures like Japan may present more of an opportunity for increasing length of stay, since they typically stay 5 nights and visit less than 2 places in U.S. per trip (Money & Crofts, 2003).

As Crofts (2004) suggests visitors travel to destinations with their own unique norms and culture values, which influence their preferred patterns of interactions with individual and firms within the host culture. When these visitors' tolerance for risk and uncertainty is less than that of the host culture, it is reasonable to assume that they will engage in risk reducing travel behaviors by (1) spending more time in planning their trips, (2) use of travel package, (3) use of tour operators, (4) travelling in large number, and (5) involving shorter trips, (6) to fewer destinations. On the other hand, when their tolerance for risk and uncertainty is greater than the host culture, they will likely engage in more fee and independent travel behaviors involving trips of longer duration. The linkage of visitors' national cultural tolerances for risk and uncertainty and risk-reducing travel behaviors are consistent with the findings of Money and Crofts (2003). The findings of Crofts (2004) reveal that U.S. residents who are travelling overseas for the first time to countries characterized as having higher aversion to risk and uncertainty were on average more likely to be travelling alone and not as a part of a tour group, with more prepackaged components including airfares, rental cars, and lodging. Also, respondents travelling to countries similar to the United States on the UAI index (low cultural distance) reported travelling alone more often, on longer trips visiting more destinations, and were less likely to involve tour escorts. Moreover, respondents travelling to countries that are characterized as less risk adverse than their own were a

third less likely to travel alone, in travel parties containing more adults, and were 11.8 times more likely to have included a rental car in their package as compared to those travelling to more risk-adverse societies (Crotts, 2004).

Similarity, in the study done by Litvin et al. (2004), they replicated and extend Money and Crotts (2003) research across a representative sample of first time leisure visitors to the U.S.A representing 58 nations. It was found that visitors from high uncertainty avoidance cultures exhibited behaviors consistent with those of Japanese in Money and Crotts research, whereas visitors from low uncertainty avoidance cultures behaved similarly to their German subjects. Litvin et al. (2004) assert culture has played a significant role in consumers' external vacation information search and also has been shown to influence travel pattern once a purchase decision has been made. These findings are important to practitioners of international tourism, who is facing the dilemma of standardization of their product and message versus tailoring these for individual markets. Sufficient differences were noted to suggest that it may be wise to forego the cost savings, content control and uniform brand image of standardization for adapted approaches sensitive to the culturally ingrained risk aversion tendencies of travellers from culturally diverse markets. However, culture does not begin and end at national borders, and although language and cultural symbols may differ between nations, the travellers may otherwise exhibit quite similar traits and tendencies on the dimensions of importance. In this study, subjects from high uncertainty avoidance nations were remarkably similar in their external search, trip

planning, travel party and trip characteristics, thus, suggesting the appropriateness of an unvarying approach to the markets (Litvin et al., 2004).

2.11 Recent gastronomy tourism policy/strategy developments

The Australian Tourist Commission (ATC) was one of the first destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to make a commitment to culinary tourism. Creativity, human and financial resources, uniqueness, and its remote geography have contributed to moulding the ATC into one of the world's leading destination marketing organizations, and its strategic tourism planners and marketers are arguably among the world's best. For example, in addition to the brief questionnaires found on the back of the Australian immigration forms that visitors receive upon arrival in the country, the ATC conducts regular research. Its extensive market research fuels the development of solid marketing and product development strategies.

One of ATC's important findings, in the context of this study, was issued in a formal press release in March 2000: "Tourism statistics showed experiencing Australian food and visiting wine regions were two of the top five factors influencing international visitors' decision to come to Australia." Since then, regional DMOs in Australia have begun to follow the ATC's lead and are developing their own regional culinary tourism strategies. The Canadians have also demonstrated a similar level of commitment to gastronomy tourism. In March 2001, the Canadian Tourist Commission received the results from a major research project on behavioural motivation of food and

wine tourists. The results showed that culinary tourists were high spenders and enjoyed other cultural activities such as theatre, music festivals and shopping in addition to experiencing noteworthy local food and drink. This report led to a culinary tourism strategy for the province of Ontario, which was then followed by national culinary tourism development strategy (Economic Planning Group of Canada & Swaine, 2001).

In July 2003, Nestle, South Africa acknowledged that food tourism is increasingly becoming an important niche market when they initiated a project to develop and promote South African cuisine. A combination of South African wines and fresh seafood, underscored by multiple cultures, has set the stage for a gastronomy strategy that could make South Africa a serious player at the international culinary tourism table. Other destinations such as France's Burgundy region and Italy's Tuscany have been gastronomy leaders for hundreds of years, welcoming a large number of visitors for culinary reasons: perhaps to see how truffles are foraged, or to learn regional Italian cooking techniques. While cuisine is an integral part of the tourist's experience in France and Italy, DMOs in these countries have not specially focused on strategies to develop, refine, and capitalize on interest in gastronomy (Kivela & Crotts, 2006).

Hjalager and Corigliano (2000) compared Denmark and Italy in order to illustrate core elements in food cultures. They concluded that 'gastronomic' tourism has grown significantly in Italy, thus improving the economics and social growth of weaker areas. Both private operators, such as restaurants and hotels, and also rural resorts, tour operators and other agencies that organize events, visits, excursions, and entertainment activities – and public operators, who promote gastronomic tourism by creating wine

routes, investing in tourism structure/infrastructures, and protecting rural tourism at both central and local levels, have played a major role in this process. In Italy the protection of trademarks for some typical agricultural and food products proved to be very successful in requalifying gastronomic tourism. The Italian experience – like experiences in France and Spain – has shown that areas with ‘strong’ image, quality and well-structured products were crucial for local development. It is not just a question of wine and food, but also of a suitable infrastructure, such as ‘Relais and Chateaux’, or simple rural villages together with other onsite tourists (e.g. horse riding, sports activities, and cultural initiatives) and other entertainment events and activities (cooking and pottery lessons, fitness sessions, etc.).

The use of food and wine tourism to drive local economic development has started in many rural regions and is often encouraged through state intervention in the development of business networks, for instance, through the support of various Australian governments, or through the European Union’s LEADER programme. The Australian Bureau of Industry Economics (BIE) identified potential roles for government in the development of networks:

- disseminating information on the opportunities created by networks;
- encouraging cooperation within industries through industry associations;
- improving existing networks between the private and public sector agencies involved in research and development, education and training; and
- examination of the effects of the existing legislative and regulatory framework on the formation, maintenance and breakup of networks relative to other forms of organization, such as markets and firms. (Hall, 2004:168)

The Australian government has directly utilized the first of the three roles as they have created specific organizations and/or the provision of funding for research, education, cooperative strategies and mechanisms, and information provision. In Australia, innovation and the creation of networks has occurred more widely at the regional level because of government involvement. Whereas in New Zealand, innovation has come from local interest and involvement (Hall, 2004).

2.12 Benefits of gastronomy in tourism

The implications of this study are also based on the notion that gastronomy tourism is an interesting and potentially valuable product to add to a destination's product mix and that, like other tourists, gastronomic tourists spend a sizeable portion of their travel budget on food. This provides positive economic effects with very few downsides. Even negative impacts on the destination's infrastructure are often temporary and generally minimal, unless the destination has unsustainable food sources. As Kivela and Crofts (2006) noted, gastronomy tourism provides benefits to local food growers/makers, farmers, food importers and distributors, foodservice businesses, and yet the focus in the literature has mainly centred on the benefit to the traveller. It is necessary to focus on the benefits to the food growers and suppliers, in order to position a destination as a gastronomy tourism attraction. The potential benefits to food/beverage providers are:

- More sales, more profits, more capital to reinvest
- Proactive in placing tourism-supporting businesses "on the map"

- Cooperative marketing opportunities which offer greater potential impact than businesses can afford individually
- Participation at the ground level of new niche opportunities, ability to capitalize on a trend
- Helping raise the quality of nearby business products and services
- Fostering additional business opportunities: cellar door sales, customized wine labels, product shipping centres, additional restaurants.

The potential benefits to China's travel industry include:

- Help filling hotel rooms and restaurant tables that otherwise remain empty
- Fostering new DMO memberships from "hidden" businesses
- Taking advantage of the recent trends toward local/regional tourism
- Developing new, largely unexplored markets with great development potential
- Effecting positive, differentiating selling points for convention/meeting business
- Fostering additional business opportunities: lodging, bread & beds, attractions.

The benefits to residents and communities could mean:

- Additional jobs, many in suburban and rural areas
- Helping residents to see and understand the economic impact of tourism
- Promoting cross-cultural awareness and understanding

- Greater economic prosperity
- Growing tax base
- Neighbouring/en route communities that benefit from overflow and transient business
- Helping to unify disjointed communities
- Fostering additional business opportunities: support services.

And for the tourists, the possible benefits are:

- Better access to unique products that are not available beyond the destination (region)
- Exclusive product sampling, purchase offers and club memberships
- Higher quality food and gastronomy experience due to higher standards and greater competition
- The status of being a trend-setter and participating in a cutting-edge niche

(Kivela & Crofts, 2006)

2.13 Tourists' narratives of gastronomy when travelling

Wolf (2002) coined the phrase “Culinary tourists are explorers.” The appearance of this statement in a tourism-related context is not over-exaggerated, nor is the connection between tourists and “explorers” new to travellers or to readers of travel and lifestyle magazines. Travelling is often presented as an opportunity to explore new destinations and as an adventure, imbuing the traveller with knowledge and a stronger sense of identity. In contrast to other tourists, the culinary tourist is motivated to travel

by an interest in food and drink, food culture, and eating and drinking. This type of tourist “travels in order to search for, and enjoy, prepared food and drink” and includes “all unique and memorable gastronomic experiences” (Wolf, 2002:5). According to Richards (2002), culinary tourism in the 1980s was likely to mean dining in haute cuisine restaurants in France. However, today culinary tourism is considered a sub-set of cultural tourism that focuses on the experience of participating in another culture and relating to people and places through food. According to the recent Canadian Tourism Commission tourism strategy policy (and similar to the Australian Tourism Commission’s tourism strategy), a destination’s cuisine and gastronomy are elements that significantly add to the cultural tourism experience (Economic Planning Group of Canada & Swaine, 2001).

Within cultural tourism, with its emphasis on ‘exploring’, ‘participating in’ and ‘relating to’ a culture and environment that is different from the ‘home’ culture and environment, culinary tourism can take the form of a farm-working holiday, a live-in cooking school, experiencing traditional culinary feasts and celebrations, helping with a grape harvest, and visiting regional cheese and wine makers and food producers. Therefore, culinary tourists want an experience that goes beyond dining. These experiences often include participating in a variety of cuisine and agricultural activities that are developed specifically for visitors. These can range from food festivals to farm stays, and to whole regional tours involving the cultural exploration of the region’s unique culinaria. In this context, Richards (2002) offered a succinct summary by saying that “gastronomic holidays are therefore an important aspect of the emerging creative tourism sector, as tourists can learn to cook, and learn about the ingredients used, the

way in which they are grown and appreciate how culinary traditions have come into existence” (Richards, 2002:16–17).

Having said this, many find it difficult to define culinary tourism. What does it mean to travel for the joy of eating and drinking? As noted, an element of culinary travel is exploration, and adventure, as culinary tourists search for new restaurants, new tastes, and new food experiences (Wolf, 2002). Travel industry professionals readily identify niche markets such as adventure tourism and spa holidays and these are fairly well-defined. And yet, until recently, culinary tourism was overlooked, and there remains little research that would explain the motivations of culinary tourists. This study will seek to gain an understanding of this phenomenon by regarding the traveller as a narrator, and the culinary experience as a narrative. It will describe acts as well as tales of culinary travel and experiences as meaningful symbols with which travellers make statements about their culinary ‘explorations.’ ‘Explorations’ and culinary experiences are not regarded as fixed states which may or may not manifest within a person, e.g. waiting to be (re-)told, but rather as continuous constructs describing ongoing experiences, life-processes which are multifaceted and changeable. This is closely related to Barthes’ (1973) and Johns and Clarke’s (2001) ‘life-story’ concepts, encompassing not only an individual’s biographical ordering of events, but also all the related experiences which are a part of a story and are connected through self-narratives. Johns and Clarke (2001) have argued for mythology as a means of studying travellers’ experiences, and their own study was based upon holiday experiences. The phenomenological nature of destination quality has been much discussed but it is unclear from the literature whether the essence of ‘destination quality’ is the

interpersonal exchange, situational factors, food, culture, or a holistic combination of all of these. For this study ‘food experience situations’ will be collected in order to get at gastronomy experiences ‘head-on’ and at a deeper and more personal level. Although this may be so in restaurant situations, food experiences transcend restaurants and that these were more likely to be the case of the experience of the holiday as a whole, which may also offer richer opportunities for the development of travellers’ experiential narratives. The argument here is that narratives of food and/or dining out experiences while travelling used as claims for culinary travel can be understood as manifestations of a dominant narrative of culinary travel in which journeying to places described as ‘experiencing local culture through food’, ‘participating – in food-type experiences’, ‘exploring for authentic food and drink’, or ‘savouring unique and memorable gastronomic experiences’, are seen as both pleasurable and enlightening (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). This narrative will be linked to its historical roots of dining out experiences as well as to the importance of mythology and social construction for experience narratives. From a constructivistic approach, pleasure through food is sometimes nothing more than social or cultural construction (Finklestein, 1989; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997), with the conscious or unconscious purpose of maintaining a cultural structure. Although savouring unique and memorable gastronomic experiences when travelling is at times ‘factual’, in relation to, for instance, authentic regional cooking, this study is focused on ‘experiences of gastronomy’ not as a concrete physical facts but rather as tools used to construct a travellers’ story. The main purpose here is to examine the travellers’ experiences as they relate to local gastronomy. The literature is abundant with different traveller types and purposes. However, these issues will not be addressed in this study. The focus of this study is how the narratives of gastronomy

experiences are manifested and expressed within the travel community. This investigation is timely because it increases the knowledge about the many interesting yet simple acts through which individuals express food, culture, and beliefs. Interviews will be used to make connection among places, food customs and gastronomy, dining out, food stuff, indigenous people, participation, and dining aesthetics will be discussed, revealing the complexity with which gastronomy narratives are constructed.

Bourdieu's (1984) work has strongly influenced tourism research. For example, Finkelstein (1989), and more recently Richards (2002), illustrated how the eating habits of the well-to-do have changed in order to make a distinction between the ones "who have" and the ones "who have not." As Finkelstein suggests, consumption includes experiencing a restaurant's décor, life-style, sociability, prestige, snobbery, as well as food. Bourdieu's work has influenced tourism research insofar as that it provides a platform for studying tourist lifestyles which Cohen (1984), in his phenomenology of tourist experiences, categorized as 'experience modes', namely, recreational, existential, diversionary and experimental tourists; categories which fit well with Bourdieu's earlier framework. Because food consumption patterns are decisive indicators of values, food products, and particularly restaurants, are often used to send signals and to tell stories. In modern societies, food consumption operates as an important mediator in relations between people and cultures. In other words, food consumption, when examined alongside tourist behaviour, also reveals what makes sense in life.

Tourism researchers have often drawn parallels between holiday making and consumption. Richards (2002) identified a strong convergence between experiential

consumption (e.g. food) and travel experience. Hjalager's (2004) précis about what tourists eat and why, and Wolf's (2002) work on culinary tourists. On the other hand, Arnould, Price, and Tierney (1998) similarly treated river-rafting holidays as 'service encounters'. For these authors, white water rafting provides extreme experiences which invoke rich and complex emotions in consumer/participants, amounting to excitement, in much the same way as Finkelstein (1989) talks about extreme dining-out experiences. Their analysis parallels the narrative arguments discussed above; however, Arnould, Price, and Tierney did not specifically investigate narratives as a basis for understanding travellers' experiences with food. Finkelstein (1989) and Hjalager (2004), however, did. Their subject of study - white-water rafting is arguably an extreme example of a consumption experience. This study, however, will focus upon the relatively sedate, although not always, experiences of gastronomy tourists have while on holidays in China. They must be of sufficient strength to allow for the development of rich narratives, but at the same time cannot be regarded *a priori* as wild or extreme in the manner suggested by Arnould, Price, and Tierney's rafting holidays.

2.14 Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of sign, codes and culture, and a qualitative methodology for reading soft data. The word "semiotics" is derived from the Greek words for sign or signal (Echtner, 1999; White, 2008). Semioticians classify signs or sign systems in relation to the way they are transmitted. This process of carrying meaning depends on the use of codes that may be the individual sounds or letters that humans use to form words, the body movements they make to show attitude or emotion,

or even something as general as the clothes they wear. To coin a word to refer to a *thing* (see lexical words), the community must agree on a simple meaning (a denotative meaning) within their language. But that word can transmit that meaning only within the language's grammatical structures and codes. Codes also represent the values of the culture and are able to add new shades of connotation to every aspect of life (Barthes, 1973; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993; Chandler, 2007).

According to Mick (1986), the roots of semiotics first appeared in the pre-Socratic era, when Hippocrates recognized body movements exhibited symptoms (signs) as conveyors of messages about physical and mental states. It was not until the 20th century that the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce introduced the identity of 'modern' semiotics through their respective work. Saussure is considered to be the founder of 'modern' semiotics. He defined the term 'semiology', as 'a science that studies signs within society' (Echtner, 1999:48). Furthermore, he characterized a sign as the relationship between a signifier (word) and the signified (object/concept), illustrated in the following equation:

$$\text{SIGN} = \text{SIGNIFIER} \rightleftarrows \text{SIGNIFIED}$$

(Echtner, 1999:48)

For instance, a sign may consist of a physical object, such as a bowl of stir-fried rice (signified), plus the associated signifier, the word 'Chinese food'. Echtner (1999) stated that Saussure explained that meaning is generated and communicated through the association between the signifier and signified in the sign system. He also emphasized

that language is a complex, humanly created sign structure. The choice of particular words or pattern of words to convey meaning is arbitrary and established by social conventions. Therefore, systems of signs and their associated meanings must be learnt through a process of semiotic socialization (Echtner, 1999). White (2008) further explained that the signifier and the signified are divided for the purposes of analysis but are like two sides of a coin. There is no logical association between the signifier and the signified as the relationship between them is arbitrary. There is always a constant interaction between the signifier and the signified, and together they comprise what is known as the sign.

Charles Sanders Peirce had a much broader interpretation of sign system. He referred to semiotics as not only verbal, but also nonverbal systems of signification. He also included an interpretant in the sign system, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (Peirce, 1934:302, cited in Echtner, 1999).

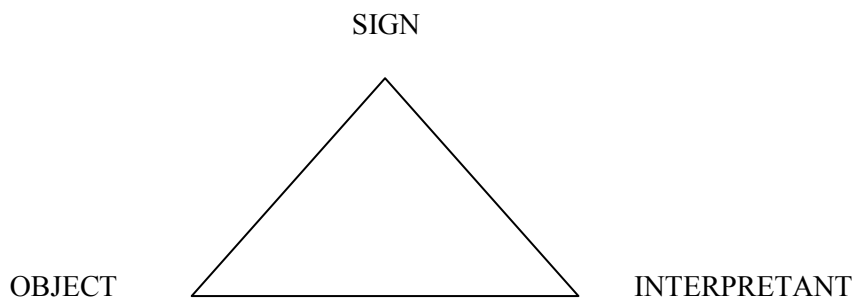


Figure 2.1 Peirce's semiotics triangle.

(Echtner, 1999:48)

Peirce's semiotics triangle suggests that meaning emanates from a triadic relationship between the object (or concept signified), the sign (the signifier used to represent the object), and the interpretant (the one interpreting the sign). Each point of this semiotics triangle interacts with the other two. The system of signification can only be understood by examining all of the possible relationships created around the periphery of the triangle: (1) object/sign – what is the nature of the relationship between the object or concept signified and the signifier, (2) sign/interpretant – what is the nature of the relationship between the signifier and interpretant, and (3) interpretant/object – what is the nature of the relationship between the interpretant and the object or concept signified (Fiske, 1990 as cited in Echtner, 1999).

Figure 2.2 further explains Peirce's semiotics triangle. For instance, the Chinese food item (a bowl of stir-fried rice) would be the sign that was produced by the tourist, who saw the item on the table or a picture of it on the menu card (signifier) and thought of a mental picture of stir fried rice (signified). Other tourists might interpret the item to be another kind of or specific type of stir fried rice dish or even to have a negative connotation. Peirce referred to this relationship as between a representamen (sign), object (signifier), and interpretant (signified).

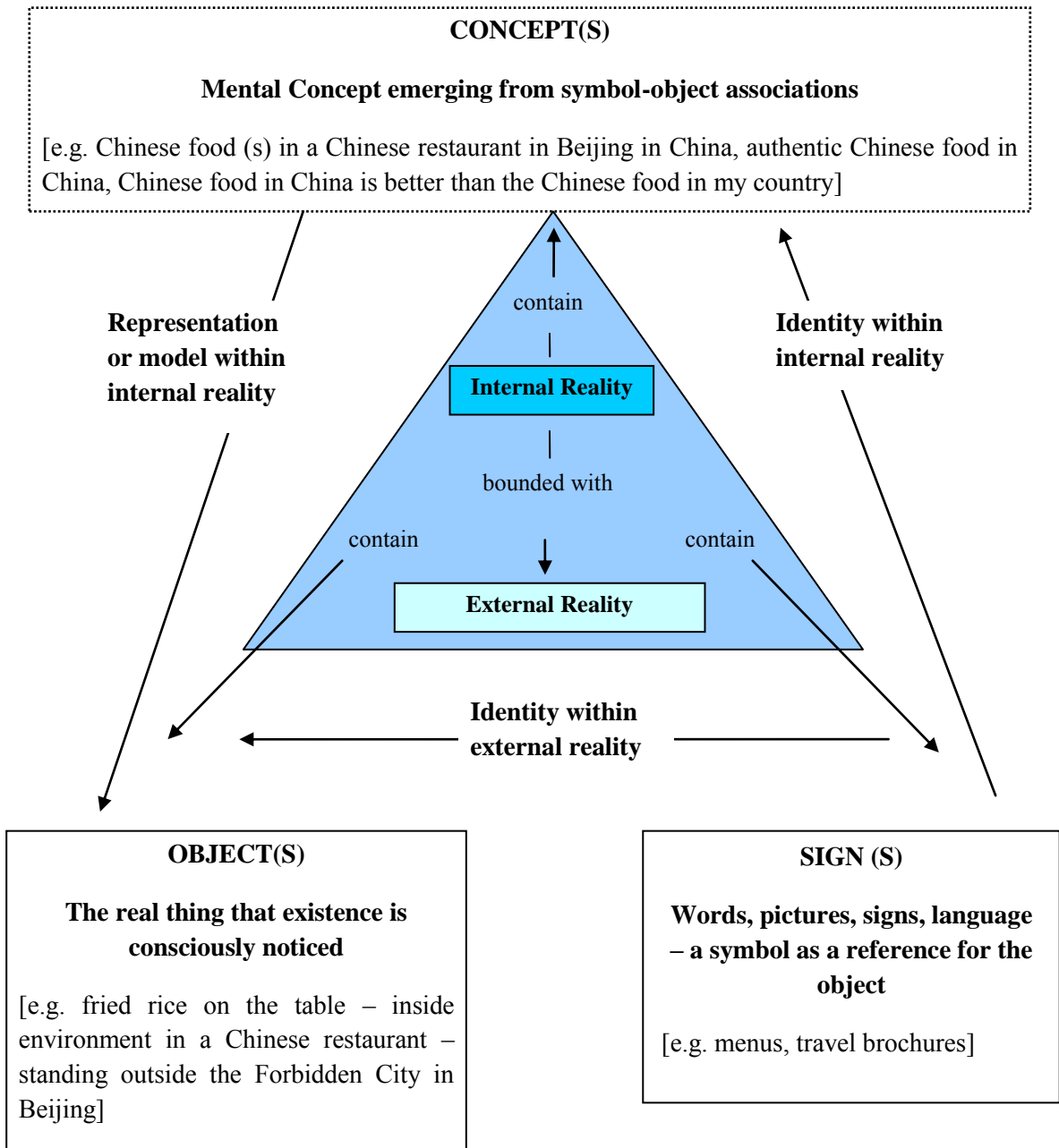


Figure 2.2 Peirce's semiotics triangle

Semiotics is used to examine a system of signs for recurring patterns, and to uncover the deeper structures and the various layers of meaning (Echtner, 1999). The work of Saussure and Peirce has formed the foundations of the modern semiotic approach. Subsequently, many scholars from various disciplines have contributed to

and shaped modern semiotics. Roland Barthes's (1984) discussion of secondary signification and myth was one of them.

Roland Barthes (1915–1980) was a French literary theorist and semiotician. He emphasized that language is not only used in the literal, denotative sense, but also symbolic, figurative or connotative manners. Developed from Saussure's sign systems, Barthes' theory linked denotative and connotative sign systems together. According to Barthes' concept, the semiology system is divided into a two-order structure. The first-order structure relates to the linguistic or language structure, that is denotative level. The second-order is at the connotative level and labelled as 'myth'. He explains that 'myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semologic chain which exists before it. Whereas a sign (namely, the total of a concept and an image) in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second' (Barthes, 1984:114; Echtner 1999:49).

Barthes would often critique pieces of cultural material to expose how bourgeois society used them to impose its values upon others. For instance, the portrayal of wine drinking in French society as a robust and healthy habit would be a bourgeois ideal perception contradicted by certain realities (i.e. that wine can be unhealthy and inebriating). He found semiotics useful in conducting these critiques. Barthes explained that these bourgeois cultural myths were second-order signs, or connotations. A picture of a full, dark bottle is a sign, a signifier relating to a signified: a fermented, alcoholic beverage – wine. However, the bourgeois take this signified and apply their own emphasis to it, making 'wine' a new signifier, this time relating to a new signified: the idea of healthy, robust, and relaxing wine experience. Motivations for such semantic

interpretations vary from a desire to sell products to a simpler desire for maintaining the status quo (Barthes, 1973).

Semiotics serves as a methodology for the analysis of texts regardless of modality. Following Barthes, "text" is any message preserved in a form whose existence is independent of both sender and receiver. It can improve the ergonomic design in situations where it is important to ensure that human beings can interact more effectively with their environments, whether it is on a large scale, as in architecture, or on a small scale, such as the configuration of instrumentation for human use. Semiotics is only slowly establishing itself as a discipline to be respected. In some countries, its role is limited to literary criticism and an appreciation of audio and visual media, but this narrow focus can inhibit a more general study of the social and political forces, shaping how different media are used and their dynamic status within modern culture.

The semiotic language of food

Food has been one traditional topic to which a semiotic analysis can be applied because food is extremely accessible and easily relatable to the average individual's life. Food is said to be semiotic because its meaning is so variable depending on the situation. Food that is eaten by a wild animal raw off of a carcass is obviously different in meaning when compared to food that is prepared by humans in a kitchen as part of a cultural process of tradition. Food can also be symbolic of certain social codes. "If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of

hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries” (Douglas, 1971:72). Whether food is prepared with precision in a fine dining restaurant, picked from a dumpster, plucked, devoured, or even consumed by a wild animal, meaning can always be extracted from the way a certain food has been prepared and the context in which it is served (Douglas, 1971; Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993).

Throughout the world, food serves a complex social function. It has physical and psychological uses, and can provide sensual pleasure. The collision of these intricate purposes makes food a popular and common source of semiotic insight. Because its meaning changes based on preparation and circumstance, food has a valuable, distinguishing function in the hospitality and tourism research narrative. For example, in Kivela, Jones and Chu (2003), food was the central vehicle for exploring the dialectic exchange of “known” and “unknown”; “satisfaction” and “dissatisfaction”; “pleasure” and “displeasure”; “like to eat” and “will not eat”; “strange” and “familiar”; “favourable” and “unfavourable”; “exciting” and “boring”; “authentic” and “fake”; “disgusting” and “attractive”; “new” and “old”, etc. Using food narratives, author(s) relate stories of culture, commerce, hospitality, disparities, and more. Despite similar social uses, the symbolic intent of food differs in each narrative. A semiotic analysis, connotative and denotative, of food reveals different dialectic positions. The implicative, referential meaning of food alludes to a larger, ‘subject’ and ‘object’ challenge. That is, the key challenge of distinguishing “known” and “unknown”; “satisfaction” and “dissatisfaction”; “pleasure” and “displeasure”; “like to eat” and “will not eat”; “strange” and “familiar”; “favourable” and “unfavourable”; “exciting” and “boring”;

“authentic” and “fake”; “disgusting” and “attractive,” etc., revolves around the interaction of “travellers” and “local” (Kivela, Johns & Chu, 2003:)

Chang et al. (2010; 2011), Kivela and Crofts (2009) and Kivela, Johns and Chu (2003) suggested in their research, they identify food as being both an object of inner temptation and inward emotion, and an exportable subject or outward emotion. This dichotomy illustrates travellers’ various approaches to food experiences when travelling away from their homeland.

Because semiotics spans cultural, anthropological, and historical dimensions, it is a useful methodology for travel analysis. Broken down further, semiotics rotates around semantics and pragmatics--word context. Both can be used to analyse transmission and intention. As noted in Finkelstein (1989) and Kivela and Crofts (2009), food holds an inherent meaning and its ambiguities are explained by semiotics; time, place, person, reason, and occupation can be seen in sentences and words. We can derive meaning from travel narratives (Kivela and Crofts, 2009) through a semiotic analysis of common things like food. Food, therefore, can construct identities, satisfy curiosity, offer experience, negotiate response to difference, and represent what’s beyond ‘ordinary’ or ‘mundane’ (Finkelstein, 1989). This exploratory aspect is derived from the perception of ‘other,’ or what is outside of the socially or culturally accepted known (food), and filtered through unique perceptions and experiences. The dynamism of this cultural construct derives from the two-way interface of food – from both the subject and the object. This exchange occurs through different activities: travelling, reading (travel and food guides), searching for a restaurant, going to markets and food

shops, partaking in local festivities, partaking in culinary experiences, sampling street foods, and eating local foods. In all of these encounters, travellers tend to reveal distinct notions of ‘other,’ as well as ‘other’s’ influence on the subject-object dialectic; a travel narrative which engages in the semiotics of food through episodic encounters. At moments of want and need, food’s potency surpasses other desires, and as a result, food becomes a symbol of temptation (Kivela and Crotts, 2009). Although celebrations, feasts, and festivals may offer familiarity for the traveller, (e.g. Oktober fest), these occasions represent additional experiences to the ones already experienced and, as such, may not be an implicative symbol. However, when these activities precede or follow a new travel experience, they serve as a valuable point of comparison. Specialty foods and beverages occupy these settings, in contrast to a wide range of ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary’ food experiences (Chang et al., 2011).

Recently, Tresidder (2010) used a social semiotic methodology to analyse how the consumer interprets food promotion texts or the semiotic codes that are utilized within these. In order to illustrate the consumption and production process, Tresidder presents a social semiotics reading of the images utilised within food campaigns by Marks & Spencer (M&S). Using this model, he can explore the interpretation process, and the conceptual framework in which the experience of food is located. He has adopted Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2001) social semiotic approach as its key structural influences. The model consists of three layers of meaning and analysis (see Figure 2.3):

(1) Layer 1: The outside circle or layer of the model in Figure 2.2 illustrates how the external factors of the marketing process (the campaign, social and cultural pressures, segmentation, demographics, consensus constructs) transmit a semiotic language or discourse of food. The analysis of these attributes reveals how the reader is influenced by the social, cultural and ideological embedding of food and M&S within contemporary marketing practices, and the message being generated and transmitted by marketing campaigns. These practices, although informed by external factors, also draw their semiotic codes from the discourse or language of food that is identified in layer two of the model.

(2) Layer 2: Layer two identifies the various social and cultural discourses of food. Discourses inform the content and structure of marketed initiated communication, and the individual's interpretation of food marketing. The discourse or language of food is socially and culturally constructed by weaving together the historical significance of food, its representation (in television programmes, cook books, food writing, etc.), how a society or culture embraces food as a material representation of itself, how food is used to define identity, and how food plays a role in the power relations. At this level of analysis, the language of food is revealed and defined. This process directly informs layers one and three.

(3) Layer 3: Layer three represents how the individual interprets, resists and negotiates the messages being generated in layers one and two to create their own understanding and acceptance of food marketing campaigns. The reader

negotiates the first and second layers of significance of food marketing by recognising marketing practices, their effects and the embedded definitions of food within them. However, the interpretation of the materials is tempered by the reader's own cognitive reflexivity and their social, cultural and experiential knowledge and experiences. Elements of the marketing message are accepted, but the individual's relationship to the other layers in the model results in a subjective process that will lead to multiple readings and interpretations of marketing texts. Thus this layer reflects where the reader/consumer negotiates these semiotic expressions and definitions found in food discourse to create their own understanding of the consumption experience of food.

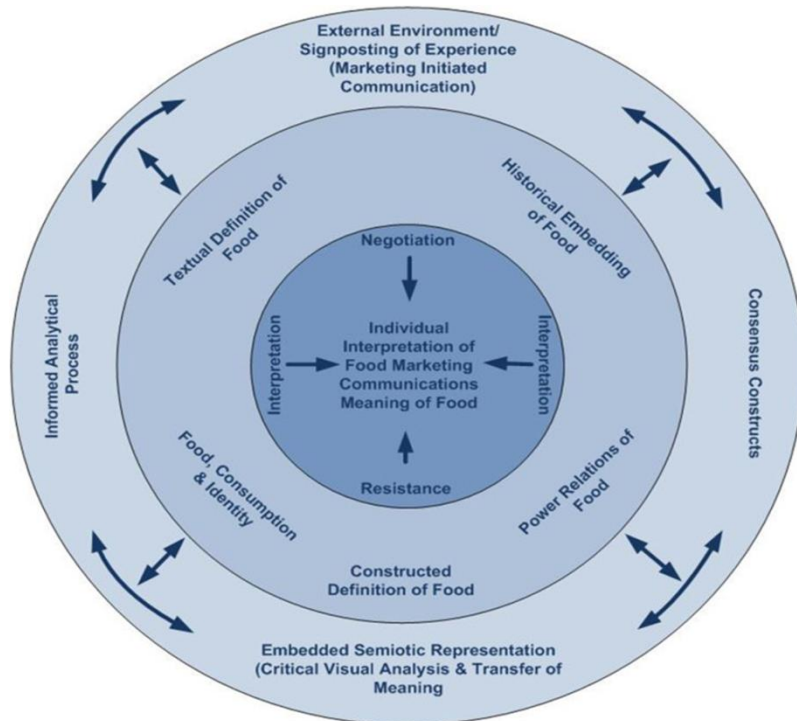


Figure 2.3. Charting the semiotic interpretation process of Marks & Spencer food campaign (Tresidder, 2010)

Tresidder (2010) found that the food industry uses a set of semiotic codes that are part of the semiotics of food, and that these codes are strengthened by the ritualistic nature of food production and service, and these ritualistic elements elevate M&S's visual representations making them extraordinary. Images used by M&S represent the iconic or mythical embedding of food within the contemporary society. This myth defines food as a refuge or experience that acts as a counterbalance to the world of fast food and the uncertainty of postmodern society. The food industry adopts these codes or language to create a semiotic liminal consumption space, in which consumers are released from their normal social constraints; the images used by M&S offer a representation of food that is removed from our normal experiences. The use of natural or authentic representation invites consumers as 'interactive participants' to vicariously find escape or even social therapy through the semiotic consumption of the site by offering an authentic experience of food. For example, one of S&M's marketing images showed food being placed on a rough wooden platter, connoting the authentic, organic or original (Tresidder, 2010).

Tresidder (2010) further explained that the semiotic representations of food in M&S advertisements were a form of gastronomy, because they presented a hideaway from fast food culture. The semiotic consumption of the M&S advertisements creates a 'pleasure zone' in which consumers can escape into 'utopian gastronomy space', which bounds their past and memory creating a sense of belonging by making use of the embedded definitions of food and gastronomy. The images used in the campaign create "authentic environments" of food, offering an empty gastronomic space in which we can

search for the authentic. These images provide a space in which the “reader” can contemplate taste and gastronomy, drawing on understanding of food and dining’s preparation, social character, philosophy, and aesthetics. These images present food as art, and emphasise the meaning of food by juxtaposing the images in such a way that they connote the homogenisation of taste in contemporary society. The advertisement is imbued with symbolism, linking food to the past, while differentiating the M&S food experience from everyday eating experiences (Dawkins, 2009; Fantasia, 1995; John & Pine, 2002; Tresidder 2010).

To summarize Tresidder’s research, the exploration of the complex layers of discourses and influences that socially and culturally embed the language of food and gastronomy within the contemporary society is needed for understanding the production and consumption of the images used in food marketing campaigns. The interpretation of M&S campaigns by the consumer is an individual, hermeneutic and reflexive process in which the individual negotiates the social and cultural embedding of signs and images. As a result, the semiotic construction of the M&S food advertisement represents a specific ideology and construction of food that is embedded and strengthened by a number of social and cultural influences that elevate the notion of food and gastronomy.

As noted earlier, Pierce’s semiotic triangle applied semiotics not only to verbal but nonverbal systems of signification. He suggested that the semiotic approach move beyond the denotative surface layer of the contents to patterns of meaning that lie at a deeper symbolic and connotative level (Echtner, 1999). This study is based on the

analyses of tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China, in which the tourists are presented as narrators and their dining experiences as narratives. The narratives provided a pragmatic view of tourists' dining experiences in China and offered insights into how tourists evaluated their dining experiences. Peirce's semiotic triangle was useful in unravelling the meaning behind tourists' dining experiences. Used to analyse the tourists' narratives, it provided a more comprehensive interpretation of tourists' dining experience and the semiotics behind those experiences.

Chapter review

This chapter is a review of the current literature about gastronomy and its influence on dining out experiences, focusing on a variety of cultural and social factors. The definitions of gastronomy have been critically reviewed along with the potential effects on tourists' evaluations of their dining experiences. Examining dining out experiences from a cultural context shows how eating habits are passed from one generation to the next. In addition, each culture has particular foods that are imbued with cultural symbolism and associated with travel destinations. Thus, when experiencing a new cuisine, tourists are also experience a new culture. Hence, gastronomy provides an opportunity for tourists to have an authentic encounter with a different culture. Adaptation of foreign gastronomy signifies the acceptance of foreign food in China, but it is still in an early and experimental stage. Moreover, the influence of various media, motivational dimension of dining out, such as, push and pull factors, self-esteem and self-actualisation affect tourists' motives of dining out while travelling. Chinese and Western dining out traits, religious influences on diet, and lifestyle also influence the dining behaviour of tourists. Particular attention was given to the role of food in tourism: food is regarded not only as a necessity for tourism consumption but also an essential element of a destination's culture that may enhance tourists' enjoyment of their travels and the destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Jones & Jenkins, 2002; Quan & Wong, 2004). The review proceeds with an examination of tourists as food explorers and the determinants of tourists' impressions of food consumption. In order to investigate how tourists' behaviours leads to satisfaction, we must gain an understanding of the intercultural service encounter, the effect of a tour guide's influence on tourists' dining impressions, and the role theory were reviewed. The server-customer interaction

is critical when evaluating dining satisfaction, however, there is a lack of research into the attributes that might affect tourists' evaluations of their dining experiences when service providers and travellers do not share a common culture. Customer satisfaction also could be addressed through the concept of the outcome of consumption experiences or a process of evaluation. In this respect, satisfaction is addressed as the result of the discrepancy between the expectations and perceptions of performance.

Furthermore, recent gastronomy tourism policy and strategy developments and the benefits of gastronomy to tourism are reviewed, in order to examine how gastronomy drove the local economy in other countries and the benefits that gastronomy brings to the traveller, and as well as the tourism stakeholders of a destination. Finally, tourists' narratives of gastronomy are discussed to explain how the tourists' dining experiences are expressed when travelling. Different semiotic approaches were discussed as ways to interpret the tourists' narratives of dining experiences. One such approach was Pierce's (1934) semiotic triangle, used to provide a comprehensive interpretation of tourists dining experiences and the semiotics behind those experiences.

Gastronomy in tourism is a subject in previous studies but they failed to show the effect of tourists' own culture and the impact of Chinese food on the tourists' dining out experiences when travelling in China. As yet no attempt has been made to probe the role of tourists' dining experiences when travelling and its influences on tourists' perceptions towards destinations. Therefore, aforementioned discussions concerning the contribution of different motivating factors to dining out, especially the effect of culture on food choice, and the tourists' dining behaviour all attempt to clarify

how the tourists' dining experiences are affected by their own food culture. Furthermore, there is a lack of in-depth analysis about tourists' actual dining experiences at destinations and to what extent their dining experiences contribute to their overall travel experience. Thus, this study attempts to fill that gap by finding out what role gastronomy plays in tourists' dining experiences in China and how this impacts their overall travel experiences while visiting China.

This research employs ethnography as a methodology, an inductive research approach (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The aim of the literature review is to identify the gaps within the extant literature and clarify the research focus. The research project examines only tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China. Although the findings of this research may not be applicable to other cultures, the theoretical context derived from this research can be utilised in other studies related to the issue of dining experiences while travelling. The next chapter discusses in detail the methodology employed for this research.

Chapter 3 Methodology

As noted in the previous chapter, this study aims to understand international visitors' dining experience while travelling in China and find the connections and explanations for each situation. This study is descriptive rather than to test hypotheses based on existing theory. Hence, an exploratory research approach and qualitative methodology are more appropriate to for this study. In order to have an in-depth understanding about tourists' experiences with gastronomy in China, ethnography was used. Also included in this chapter is an evaluation of the qualitative and ethnographic approach used in this study and the justifications for doing so.

This chapter also includes a description of the methods employed in the selection of sample tourists and tourism stakeholders, and the specific ways the sample was obtained. The different data collection methods, including focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations are outlined as well.

3.1 Research design

There are two research philosophies that dominate the extant literature, positivism and phenomenology. Kumar (1996) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested that a positivist research approach involves the uncovering of facts through the formulation and testing of hypotheses that 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 is associated with quantitative data collection methods such as experiments, surveys, and structured interviews. The phenomenological approach tends to employ more qualitative methods such as observations, in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews. 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 clear and distinct. Some of the differences between these two philosophies are summarised in the Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Disparate approaches to research

Features	Positivism	Phenomenology
Beliefs	-The world is external and objective -Science is value-free	-The world is socially constructed and subjective -The research is part of what is observed -Science is driven by human interests and motives
What the researcher does	-The observer is independent -Focus on facts -Look for causality and fundamental laws -Reduce phenomena to simplest elements -Formulate and test hypotheses	-Focus on meaning -Try to understand what is happening -Look at the totality of each situation -Develop ideas through induction from data
Research design	-Structured, formal and detailed plans	-Evolving and flexible
Role of Researcher	-The researcher remains distanced from the material being researched -Short-term contact	-The researcher gets involved with the phenomena being researched -Emphasis on trust and empathy and long-term contact
Sample selection	-Large and representative	-Small samples investigated in depth or over time
Collection of data	-Experiments, surveys, and structured interviews	-Observation, documentation, open-ended and semi-structured interviews
Research instruments	-Questionnaires, scales, test scores and Experimentation	-Researcher

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Researcher retains control of research process -Clear theoretical focus -Clarity about object of investigation means 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 existing knowledge is limited -Ability to 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 in the analysis of data -Harder for the researcher to control the research process -Reliability problem with findings

Adapted from Kumar (1996) and Denzin & Lincoln (2000)

A positivist research approach relies on fairly exact quantitative techniques and statistically-backed investigations in order to reduce bias and enhance the rigour of findings. It may also produce simple and sterile results which often only superficially explain the research problems because they do not account for “soft” or intangible factors such as observations, feelings, and emotions. Phenomenological research has its limitations as well; most notably, findings might be subjective or unreliable. However, qualitative methodologies afford a holistic understanding of the phenomenon researched. There will never be an end to the heated debates about the pros and cons of quantitative versus qualitative approaches. Walle (1997) opted for an ‘eclectic’ methodology to try to avoid the quantitative versus qualitative debate; albeit with little success. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2000) suggested that both positivism and phenomenology have advantages and disadvantages and that the two approaches should be complementary to each other. They further suggested that the choice of research methodology should correspond to the nature of phenomena being studied. In addition, the choice of research strategy is dependent on the extent of the existing knowledge in the field, the research

question, the 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 impact of tourism activities upon people and regions. As a result, because of its strength in explaining the lifestyle, attitude, motives, and personality of specific populations, qualitative research has become more accepted for use in studies of consumer behaviour and the connection to culture (Simpson, 1993). As noted earlier, there is a knowledge gap in the understanding how tourists experience dining in China and how this experience contributes to their trip. 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 based on existing theory. Hence, the decision was made to use methodologies anchored in the phenomenological research philosophy.

Studies in tourism and hospitality have extensively explored a range of attributes that supposedly have an effect on dining satisfaction. Thus, it would seem appropriate to adopt a positivist and quantitative research approach, for example by using questionnaire surveys to capture tourists' perception of satisfaction. However, the quantitative approach often misses the more subtle meanings that are often present in tourists' dining out experiences. Quantitative data can provide detailed and reliable outcomes, which can, for example, allow restaurateurs and other stakeholders to decide whether a particular action would be worthwhile. Despite this 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). A positivist

research philosophy arguably is better suited to addressing categorical and correlational questions; for example those associated with a destination's gastronomy during holidays. However, it is often unable to generate detailed insights into the nature of consumer experience which in this case, the tourists' dining experiences (Bowen, 2001).

The phenomenological research philosophy requires an inductive approach because existing theories are inadequate and incomplete. This study attempts to uncover new theoretical insights about tourists' dining experiences. Since this research will also investigate the impact of travellers' own food culture on their eating behaviour while on holiday in China and explore the role of their dining experiences at a destination, an ethnographic strategy has been adopted. This provides both flexibility and the ability to be responsive to new patterns of thought that may arise from observed phenomenon (Saunders, et al., 2000). As stated by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2004), if the research question requires an in-depth understanding of the social context, in particular the culture which individuals engaged in a particular set of behaviours is familiar, ethnography is an important method for getting at this understanding because of its use of direct observation of behaviour and through interaction with others in the research setting. Participants are engaged in on-going, naturally occurring social interactions. In other words, the research participants are engaged in their daily activities regardless of whether or not the study is being conducted. Observation, interviewing, and participation are all techniques employed by ethnographers. While observation is a necessary component of ethnography, the extent to which researchers will interact with participants through formal or informal interviewing and/ or participating in the

activities the researched are engaged in is context dependent (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The inductive process (see Table 3.2 below), is divided into three major phases. The first phase of the research aims to systematically appraise previous literature, thus allowing the researcher to carefully review the associations and assumptions that are central to the research questions posed (McCracken, 1988). The second phase of the study involves the discovery of tourists' accounts of their travel dining experiences through focus group interviews and observations. The third phase of the research deals with the analysis of their dining experiences while travelling in China and the explanation of observed phenomena.

Table 3.2 Inductive processes associated with phenomenological research philosophy

1	Information gathering, review and analysis from current relevant literature
	↓
2	Formulation of research direction and research questions
	↓
	Formulation of research subjects (planning sample population)
3	Collecting of relevant data
	↓
	Analysis of data - seeking commonalities, disparities, and patterns
	↓
	Comparing findings with extant literature and formulation of theoretical constructs

3.2 Sample selection and gaining access

This study was designed to generate an understanding of tourists' dining experiences in China, rather than to generalise the findings to a larger population, and hence, purposive sampling was used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although purposive sampling can reflect a feature or phenomenon of the research at hand, purposive sampling also needs to fit into the theoretical proposition(s) of the study. That is, purposive sampling is based on theoretical, rather than statistical considerations (Bryman, 1993). Thus, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, the sample population in this study were selected not because of their representativeness of the target population, but for the insights that they could provide about what is being investigated. As alluded to earlier, the target samples for this study were:

1. In-bound tour groups who are on holiday in China;
2. In-bound independent travellers who are on holiday in China

In this context, investigating tourists would allow for the exploration, discovery and in-depth understanding of tourists' experiences with China's gastronomy. Although others have argued that tour group travellers may not have the opportunity to select their own dining experiences since meal arrangements for tour groups are often made by travel agents, it is still possible to examine how Chinese food culture affects their experiences. However, to ameliorate possible group-bias, this study also targeted independent travellers who were visiting China. This is because tourists' food preferences and the evaluation criteria of the meal are ultimately influenced by their food cultural traits (Finklestein, 1989; Warde & Martens, 2000). A study of the meal

arrangements for tour groups produces knowledge of group perceptions about what kinds of foods they see as gastronomic delights or disasters according to their collective food cultural traits. Because independent travellers are responsible for their own experiences of gastronomy, no 'blame' can be assigned to the travel agent. In addition, as Bowie and Chang (2005) suggested, group-travel tourists often exert some influence on their travel agents for arranging preferred meals during their visit. It would seem that such arrangements reflect the agent's understanding that a satisfactory tour does not entirely depend on experiences derived from attractions and accommodation, but must be supplemented by gastronomy experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004).

Since access restrictions can often limit the facilitation of fieldwork (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991), the researcher attempted to obtain access agreements prior to data collection. Some researchers have suggested that sample selection and gaining access to the desired population should be flexible and opportunistic when doing qualitative research. For instance, Buchanan, Boddy, and McCalman (1988) recommended using friends and contacts wherever possible, while Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) suggested that access is much easier if the researcher has a ready contact. Following this advice, access to tour groups was facilitated by support from group-tour agents in China. Independent travellers, however, were approached in major hotels and attractions. It must be noted that even though the selection of sample is convenient in nature, the appropriateness of sample selection has to be theoretically appropriate (Maxwell, 1996), since control of the setting, events, and process are critical to avoid bias in qualitative research. Hence, independent travellers (and members of group tours) were targeted in an attempt to find a range within nationality, gender, age,

occupation, and travel history. Although the participants in this study were limited to those willing to participate, conformity to the rules of the purposive sampling method were maintained as suggested by McCracken (1988). In other words, the sample selection emerges at the intersection of what is theoretically desirable and practically possible.

The data gathering processing was conducted in Hangzhou, Guilin and Shanghai respectively. The in-bound tour groups who were on holidays in China were subdivided by the nationalities, North America, Oceania, European Union, and Asia. From each group four participants were used, the same nationality grouping was used for individual travellers, with two individual travellers being interviewed rather than four. Table 3.3 provides an overview of the characteristics of the participants.

Table 3.3 Overview of participants' characteristics

Participants	Descriptions of Personal Characteristics
Interviews in Guilin	
G1	Married male from Australia, mid-50s, businessman, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G2	Single male from USA, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G3	Single male from USA, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G4	Married female from USA, mid-40s, housewife, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G5	Married male from Holland, early 60s, retired, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G6	Single male from Algeria, early 30s, lawyer, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G7	Married male from Belgium, early 50s, retired, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G8	Single female from Australia, mid-20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.

G9	Single female from Australia, mid-20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G10	Single female from Israel, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G11	Single female from Israel, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G12	Married female from Malaysia, early 50s, retired, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G13	Single female from USA, mid-30s, administration clerk, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G14	Single male from USA, mid-30s, university lecturer, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G15	Married male from Switzerland, mid-50s, businessman, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G16	Single female from USA, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G17	Married male from Malaysia, mid-50s, retired, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G18	Single male from France, mid-30s, assistant professor, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G19	Married male from Australia, late 50s, retired, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G20	Single male from Mexico, mid-20s, student, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G21	Married female from USA, mid-30s, IT specialist, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G22	Married male from USA, mid-30s, engineer, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G23	Single male from Germany, early 30s, business executive, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G24	Single female from Australia, mid-40s, university lecturer, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G25	Married male from Italy, late 40s, business executive, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G26	Single male from USA, early 30s, administration clerk, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G27	Single male from Spain, mid-20s, businessman, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
G28	Single female from UK, mid-20s, high school teacher, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G29	Single female from Czech Republic, late 20s, administration clerk, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G30	Single male from Canada, mid-20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G31	Single female from Panama, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
G32	Married female from Spain, early 30s, housewife, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
G33	Single female from UK, early 40s, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.

G34	Married female from Australia, early 40s, housewife, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
Interviews in Hangzhou	
H1	Single male from Sweden, early 20s, student, first-time traveller, tour group traveller.
H2	Married male from Sweden, early 30s, businessman, first-time traveller, individual traveller.
H3	Married male from Sweden, mid-40s, business executive, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
H4	Married male from Malaysia, mid-30s, business executive, experienced traveller, tour group traveller.
H5	Married male from Germany, late 50s, engineer, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
H6	Married male from Taiwan, mid-40s, associate professor, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
H7	Married male from Malaysia, mid-30s, business executive, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
H8	Married male from Malaysia, late 30s, business executive, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
H9	Married male from Malaysia, mid-30s, business executive, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
H10	Single male from USA, mid-50s, businessman, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
H11	Married female from Malaysia, early 40s, travel agency manager, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
H12	Married male from Iran, mid-40s, tour manager, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
Interviews in Shanghai	
S1	Married female from USA, late 50s, associate professor, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S2	Single female from USA, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
S3	Single female from Australia, mid-30s, unemployed, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S4	Single female from Spain, mid-20s, designer, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S5	Married male from Polynesia, early 50s, customer service officer, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
S6	Married male from Austria, mid-40s, CEO, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S7	Single female from UK, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S8	Single female from UK, early 20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S9	Married male from USA, early 50s, IT technician, first-time traveller to China, tour group traveller.
S10	Single male from Finland, mid-30s, engineer, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S11	Married male from Germany, mid-40s, engineer, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.

S12	Single female from Denmark, mid-20s, student, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S13	Married male from Canada, early 40s, marketing manager, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S14	Married male from Mozambique, late 50s, businessman, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S15	Single male from Mexico, early 30s, businessman, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S16	Single male from Tanzania, mid-20s, student, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S17	Married male from USA, late 30s, associate professor, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.
S18	Married male from Sweden, early 60s, businessman, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S19	Married male from Italy, late 50s, businessman, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S20	Single male from Italy, early 30s, businessman, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S21	Married male from Brazil, early 60s, businessman, first-time traveller to China, individual traveller.
S22	Married female from Mexico, early 60s, businesswoman, experienced traveller to China, individual traveller.
S23	Married male from USA, early 70s, retired professor, experienced traveller to China, tour group traveller.

As stated perviously and the proposed sample frame, the sample sizes for the group tours, individual travellers were determined by theoretical saturation. Agar (1996) noted that if a researcher finds that the results are the same for a group of individuals and if she or he learns nothing new by sampling again from this population, then a point of theoretical saturation has been reached. The researcher may then opt to interview another group to see if different results emerge. By seeking multiple perspectives, one enhances one's understanding of the issue. Hence, the samples sizes of each proposed target group were kept small.

3.3 Data gathering

Data was collected from June to July 2009 and June to July 2010. Focus groups interviews, observations and individual interviews were used to gather data. As noted, these research methods are considered appropriate strategies for obtaining in-depth, context-specific information about a phenomenon (Yin, 1994).

A tour group often consists of a variety of tourists, providing an opportunity to explore differences in views about their dining experiences even in such a small sample. Focus groups were utilised to enable tourists to present their own views and to discuss their dining experiences in China. The interviews with independent travellers produce an independent appraisal, as opposed to collective, of their gastronomy experiences. Focus group interviews also have the benefit of allowing participants to react to the responses of members. In this setting, a synergistic view or position may be reached (Wilkinson, 2004). Moreover, focus groups offer the opportunity to see how ideas and meanings emerge in a more naturalistic setting and lead to the generation of more detailed accounts. A relatively unencumbered flow of conversation with independent participants will reflect the non-normative influences and meanings that they perceive, experience and understand, e.g. their individual experiences of gastronomy in China. Therefore, while the main advantage of the focus groups is the rapport that arises from the social contextuality (Finch & Lewis, 2003), independent traveller narratives are more unencumbered by the sociality of a group setting. Because subjects in a group tend to listen to other participants during the discussion, they will be able to more readily relate and reveal their own views on their dining experiences.

However, such contributions tend to be embellished, and hence the need to balance the sample through the use of independent traveller responses.

Focus group and independent interviews were held after each day's dining activities but did not begin until participants were halfway through their trips. For example, for a three-day tour, the researcher conducted focus group interviews on the second night and third (final) nights of the trip. This ensured that tour group members had sufficient dining experiences to reflect on. For practical reasons, focus group and independent interviews (and recordings) were mostly undertaken at attraction sites or in hotels' public areas. Some interviews were carried out during meal times, as some of the interviewees wanted more time to explore the city soon after they checked in or after their meals.

Given that data from focus groups are often broader in scope than in-depth interviews (Finch & Lewis, 2003), a small group discussion approach (3-4 participants) was adopted to ensure rich narratives. The expected duration (about 40 minutes) of the discussion was explained to the participants ahead of time.

Among the three selected locations, 34 participants were interviewed in Guilin, 12 participants were interviewed in Hangzhou and 23 participants were interviewed in Shanghai. Based on the interview questions list (see Appendix 1), the expected duration (40 minutes) of the discussion was provided to the participants followed by a list of warm-up questions on participants' travel experiences.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the use of self-exposure to reduce power distance between the moderator and the participants. In this context, the researcher travelled with the tour groups in order to minimise the power distance gap between the two parties. This allowed participants to familiarise themselves with each other and provided contextual information to the researcher so that issues, situations, and events referenced during group discussions could be better understood. [For obvious reasons, this strategy was not possible with independent travellers who participated.] Focus group interviews started with participants sharing their travel experiences.

3.4 Observation

Several scholars have agreed that observation is an ideal approach to ascertain rich data from the qualitative research. Observation can yield rich details about context-specific behaviours which often reveal tourists' real feelings about their experiences (Saunders, et al., 2000). 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. But Seaton (2002) found that observation presents both a different set of problems and opportunities for the researcher. Regarding the latter observations can be used to validate and further explore information obtained from the participants (Schein, 1992). In addition, participant observation is an ideal approach for developing a holistic understanding of the dining experience from an insider's perspective (Silverman, 2000). Observation also helps the researcher gain a better understanding of the underlying influences that shape tourists' perceptions of gastronomy in China, and the

characteristics of tourists and their eating behaviours. Therefore, observation was used to complement interview data.

Observation was done throughout the entirety of the group trips with each meal being observed. An observation dairy (see Appendix-2) was kept as suggested by Saunders et al. (2000) which helped in understanding, recalling, and explaining what was going on when writing up the research findings. Hence, a record of unanticipated phenomena, including 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 were recorded. Observations of independent travellers were done in the same manner.

3.5 Privacy and ethical issues

To safeguard privacy and in order to conduct the data gathering process in an ethically responsible manner, the researcher briefed the participants about the nature of the study and assured participants that they had the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or to withdraw from the study at any time. Also, participants were told that their identities would remain confidential and that all information obtained would only be used for academic purposes.

3.6 Data analysis

This study, as noted, adopted an exploratory and inductive data analysis approach to explore issues related to tourists' experiences of gastronomy in China in order to narrow the current knowledge gap in this area. The inductive-oriented approach to the analysis of data is supported by the relevant literature. Lincoln and Guba (1985), McCracken (1988) and Maxwell (1996) note that there are three fundamental steps in the process of analysing qualitative data:

1. Unitising the data;
2. Categorising the data; and
3. Contextualising the data

While some may argue that this framework cannot be viewed as a rigid structure due to different research objectives, it does serve as a basis for further modifications or adjustments to suit other qualitative research (Maxwell, 1996).

3.6.1 Unitising the data

Qualitative data analysis is messy work, particularly in the early stages, with many loose ends and unconnected ideas and pieces of information (Saunders, et al., 2000). In order to capture and reflect all verbal and non-verbal messages that emerge during interviews and observations, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested that raw data from qualitative methods needs to be analysed as soon as possible. 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).

During the interviews, the researcher noted all interview content, as well as the facial expressions and emotions of the interviewees. The researcher reviewed all audio recordings, fieldnotes, interviews transcripts and observation diaries several times before transcribing the data.

In total, 163 pages of transcribed data were analyzed for content. The initial coding process was guided by the literature review and research questions of this study. For example, the influences of tourists' dining experiences were coded into (1) personal experiences and food-related values; (2) personal food preferences and taboos; (3) food-related environments, and sub-categorizes which included different attributes that might affect participants' evaluations of their dining experiences in China.

3.6.2 Categorising the data

The second step in data analysis begins with the labelling and categorising of phenomena as identified in the first step. The coding process is used to make connections or relationships between each category and develop sub-categories where necessary. The researcher is then able to examine what conditions caused the categories or the consequences that arise from the categories. This is followed by categorising the materials are integrated into a stable and meaningful category set used to explain the phenomena being investigated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, NUD.IST, qualitative data analysis software, was used to place the data into discrete units and construct a tree structure of the participants' experiences of gastronomy in China.

According to Rouse and Dick (1994), NUD.IST can reliably help the researcher track seemingly disparate pieces of data, reflect on the emerging concepts, and generate hypotheses.

Figure 3.1 provides one example of the coding structure used in this study and includes the relationship between each category. As shown in Figure 3.1 personal experiences and food related values, food related environments, and personal food preferences and taboos influenced tourists' dining experiences during their travels in China. Based on participants' accounts, the sub-categories "culture," "authentic location," and "novelty or adventure seeking" were added to explain what participants look for in a dining experience. The following structure was created for the purpose of analysing tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China. The analysis of raw data could be undertaken concurrently to facilitate a complementary description of dining experiences among all participants.

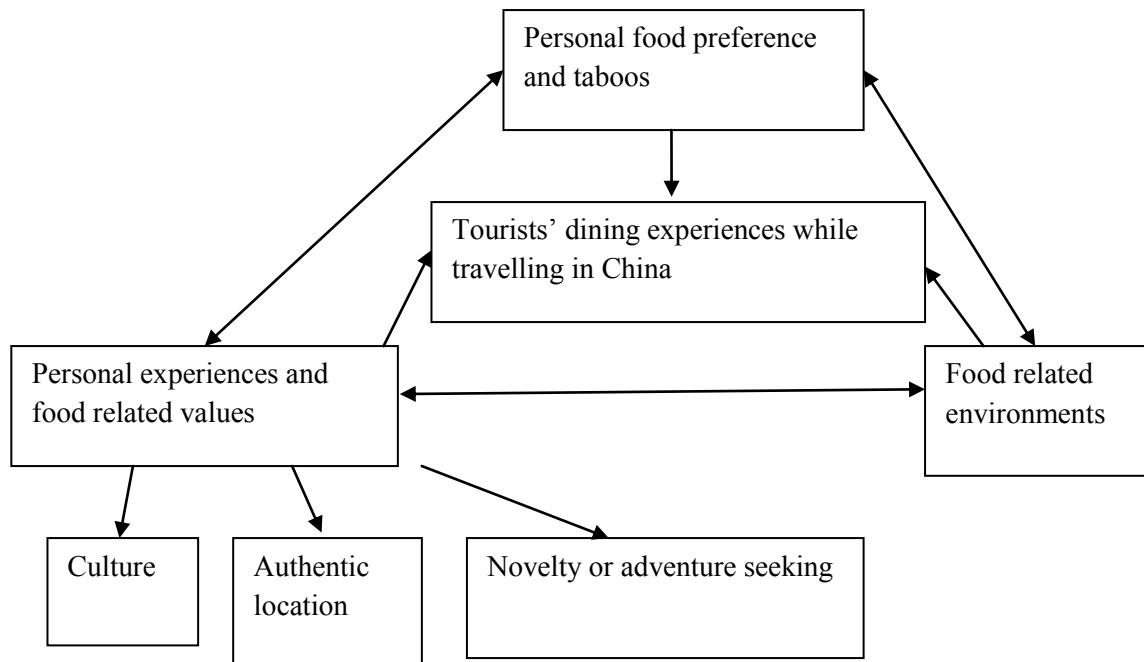


Figure 3.1 Sample coding structure

3.6.3 Contextualising the data

Sociologists have undertaken extensive analyses of narratives based on first-person accounts of experiences provided during interviews. For example, Elsrud (2001) conducted in-depth interviews with backpackers and used their narratives to study the risk-taking behaviours and adventures in travelling. Stern, Thompson, and Arnould (1998) utilised narrative analysis to study a marketing relationship from a phenomenological interview. Johns and Clarke (2001) analysed the narratives of tourists taking Norfolk Broads boating holidays. Kivela and Johns (2001) examined the narratives of first-time restaurant customers. All of these studies have justified the use of narrative in the interpretive paradigm for the purpose of better understanding participants' experiences. Importantly, both Elsrud (2001) and McQuillan (2000) noted

that narrative is present in every society and used by all human groups to express their cultural norms. That is to say, cultural patterns can be detected through narratives, and to some extent, narratives serve the function of conveying and constructing social norms. In this study, narrative analysis is utilised to unravel the meaning behind the stories of tourists' dining experiences. For example, in focus group interviews, participants reflect and give meanings to their travel experiences. These enable the researcher to interpret how these experiences are described and understood by the participants (Riessman, 1993). Hence, these narratives provide a pragmatic view of the participants' gastronomy experiences while travelling in China, thus offering insights about how these events and encounters were actually experienced. By retelling the story, narratives provide data on what specifically is important to visitors.

The narratives analysis can be viewed as a way of recounting someone's experience, and also as a way to reveal one's relationship with others and the motivations for these relationships in a more holistic way (Stern, et al., 1998). The researcher could broaden an interpretation by including context, conditions and consequences, and the dimensional properties that contribute to a more holistic understanding of consumer motivations and actions (Shankar and Goulding, 2001). Similarly, Stern et al. (1998) suggested that by identifying standard narrative elements such as plot (the action), character (the players), structural pattern (the organisation), and language (the verbal expression) in their study of consumption behaviours, the researcher could examine narratives which express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with service providers. In this study, the participants are the central characters (the narrators)

sharing their dining experiences while travelling in China. The underlying motives for their travel dining behaviour and the factors that might affect their evaluation of the dining experience will form the plot (the what). And their language will reveal the metaphorical and structural systems (the how and why) that they imposed on the plot. For example, if participants express that they preferred to have a variety of Chinese food options (the what), these accounts might suggest that cultural appreciation might be the underlying motive for the demand, and the concept of fashionability and diversity may be utilised to articulate why such a motive emerged (the how and why). In order to provide detailed interpretations, findings based on observations will enhance participants' explanations.

3.7 Trustworthiness of data

Proponents of quantitative research often dismiss qualitative methods as subjective and lacking in reliability and validity. Hence, the trustworthiness of data is important in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four 'tests' by which to enhance 'trustworthiness' in qualitative research,

1. Credibility,
2. Transferability,
3. Dependability, and
4. Confirmability.

As noted earlier, in quantitative research, the data analysis procedure is often divided into the discrete stages of data collection, data processing, and data analysis. Yet, in qualitative work, data collection and data analysis are not easily placed into chronological stages because the qualitative researcher begins the process of analysing the information when the first pieces of data are collected. However, ‘trustworthy’ research requires systematic data collection, a justifiable research procedure, and *post-hoc* evaluation by others of the research process and findings.

3.7.1 *Credibility*

Credibility in qualitative research is similar to a finding of internal validity in quantitative research as it speaks to the truth of the findings. Credible results in qualitative research include an interpretation of findings that is congruent with the minds of the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested several techniques be used to establish a study’s credibility. These include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer evaluation, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and following-through of responses. In this study, triangulation (the use of different data collection methods), peer evaluation, and following-through of responses are used to ensure findings and interpretations are credible. The major strategy to ensure credibility in this study is the triangulation of data collection. Essentially, triangulation requires the use of different methods to avoid researcher and methodological bias. There are four modes of triangulation: the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories (Decrop, 1999). In this study, data triangulation and methods triangulation are utilised. Focus group interviews, independent traveller interviews, tourism

stakeholder interviews and observations are used to complement each other. For example, the dining experiences recounted by the tourists are validated by observation and narratives from tourism providers.

Peer evaluation (of data) is the second method adopted for enhancing the credibility of this study's results. The researcher sought assistance from other research students at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University to serve as peer evaluators in interpreting the data. This strategy allows for a more complete analysis of the data and helps prevent bias. The third measure to ensure credibility is a follow-through of responses. This is where the researcher asks the participant a relevant probing question in order to assess whether the participant's meaning has been interpreted correctly. For example, if a participant stated that he/she was interested in trying some food at the local market because he/she was curious, the researcher would accordingly probe into the 'curiosity' variable by asking why he/she was curious about eating at the local market. This iterative process of on-site interpretation allows the researcher to ensure the credibility of her interpretations of interview data.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is analogous to applicability in the quantitative research process. It refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other research contexts or with other participants. 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, similar to other qualitative

studies, utilises a small sample chosen based on participants' personal in-depth involvement in the studied phenomena. In other words, the issue of transferability is addressed by collecting sufficiently robust descriptions of the phenomena being studied and presenting data in a precise way to allow the reader a better understanding of the phenomena being described. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), applicability should be determined by future researchers who would like to apply the information in a different context. Hence, the results from this study would be relevant to the travel experiences in China and may not readily be applicable for further research concerning other destinations. However, the more general theme of this study – experiences of gastronomy at a destination – could be applied in future research to different destinations.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability means that any qualitative study should provide its reader with evidence that if it were replicated in a similar research context, the findings would be also be similar. In other words, dependability is measured based on the consistency of the findings. As noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), an audit trail is the key strategy employed to maintain the dependability of qualitative research. Consequently, every aspect of the information collected, such as who, where, when, and how, regarding the conduct of the study can be found in the appendix section of the thesis to confirm that the findings were dependable.

3.7.4 *Confirmability*

Confirmability ensures that findings are the product of participants' perspectives, rather than the bias of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmable findings 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 an iterative process, which requires the researcher to move 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 tourists' perceptions of gastronomy experiences in China are monitored and confirmed throughout the entire data gathering and analysing process.

3.8 Limitation of the study

The limitation in this study emerges from the fact that research was carried out in only three cities in China, hence, tourists' experiences of gastronomy in other parts of China may differ from those of the sample used in this study. In addition, this study was carried out in China, the tourists' dining experiences in other destinations may differ. The findings are therefore limited to a study about the dining-out experiences of tourists at select locations while on holiday in China. Hence, the results from this

study would be relevant to the travel experience in China and may not be readily be applicable to other destination. However, the more general theme of this study – experience of gastronomy at a destination – could be applied in future research to different destinations.

Furthermore, with the qualitative methodology is used for data collection, a small sample size is selected for interviews. Thus, the current results were not representative of the 135 million of visitors to China and should not generalize to all visitors to China. Therefore, in future research, a quantitative mean with a large and more representative sample should be employed. With such a large sample which would be able to quantify the proportion of the visitors to China and would provide a clearer picture on China's gastronomy offerings in terms of their strengths, weakness, and opportunities to capitalize on international tourism arrivals.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussions

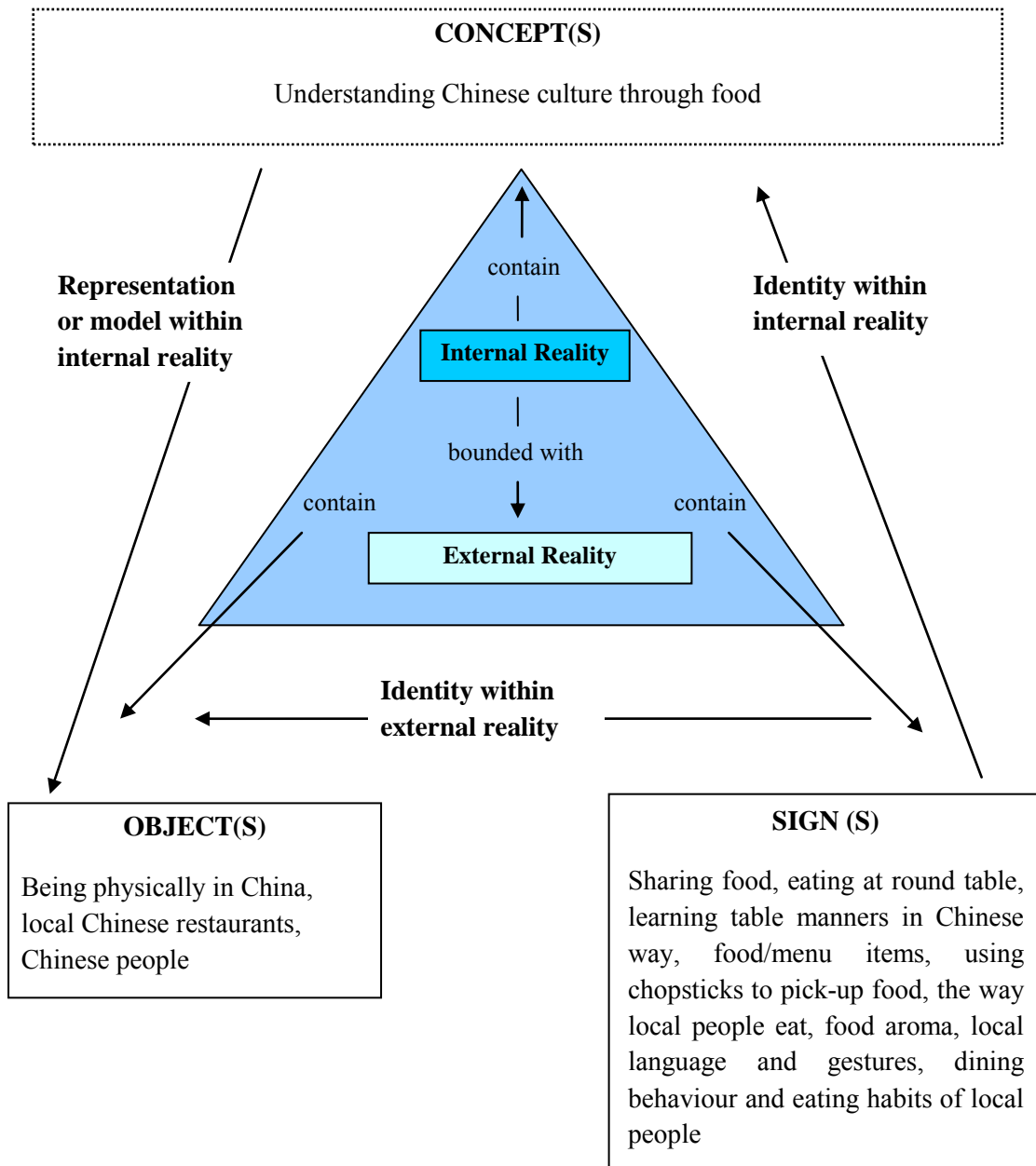
This chapter explores and analyses tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China and how these experiences affected their perceptions of the destination.

Peirce's semiotics triangle was used for the analysis because it allows for a more comprehensive interpretation of tourists' dining experiences and the semiotics behind those experiences. As noted earlier, Peirce included not only verbal, but also nonverbal systems of signification in his definition of semiotics. He also included an interpretant in the sign system, suggesting that meaning emanated from a triadic relationship between the object (concept signified), the sign (the signifier used to represent the object), and the interpretant (the one interpreting the sign). Each point of this semiotics triangle interacted with the other two points. Hence, the system of signification can only be understood by examining all of the possible relationships created around the periphery of the triangle.

The following example further explains Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics triangle (see below): the Other's **CONCEPT(S)** [Understanding Chinese culture through food] would be the concept construed in the travellers' mind; he sees **SIGN (S) or signifier(s)** [sharing food, eating at a round table, learning table manners in Chinese way, food/menu items, using chopsticks, the way local people eat, food aroma, local language and gestures, dining behaviour and eating habits of local people], and

OBJECT(S) (signified). [Being physically in China, local Chinese restaurants, Chinese people]

Figure 4.1 Peirce's semiotics triangle



Based on the survey of 69 respondents, the findings about the tourists' dining behaviors were classified into three major categories: 'personal experiences and food related values', 'personal food preferences and taboos' and 'food related environments'.

(1) Personal experiences and food related values include culture, authentic location, novelty or adventure seeking. (2) Personal food preferences and taboos include indigenous food, special travelling needs. While (3) food related environments consisted of hygiene and health, menu, and the physical and spatial environment. Quotes are identified by respondent numbers, as show in Table 3.3 which provides an overview of participants' characteristics.

4.1 Personal experiences and food related values

Consuming local foods and beverages on trips is an essential part of travel experience since it serves as both a cultural activity and form of entertainment (Hjalager and Richards, 2002). Local food and drink also play an important role in introducing tourists to the traditions and culture at a destination (Chang et al, 2011; Fields, 2002; Ryu & Jang, 2006; Sparks, 2007; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009). Tourists have different motives for partaking in the local food and drinks of destinations including the desire to cultivate an appreciation of the host culture, a quest for an authentic experience, and to find exciting and thrilling experiences through local food and beverages.

4.1.1 Culture

Nearly all respondents thought that eating local Chinese food was a way to learn and understand the local Chinese culture. As such many respondents perceived partaking in local food as an opportunity to learn and encounter the local culture and community. According to Bessi re (1998), traditional food and cuisine could be major tourist attractions at travel destinations because the consumption of food serves a dual role: it is both a form of entertainment and a cultural activity. The following two respondents best illustrated this:

“This is an ancient country, lots of people I [learned] [about] the Chinese culture [by] partaking [of] local Chinese food. I ate in local restaurants and saw people eating and learn[ed] their culture, e.g. the different ways they ate their meals, their dining behaviour and eating habits...”(S3)²

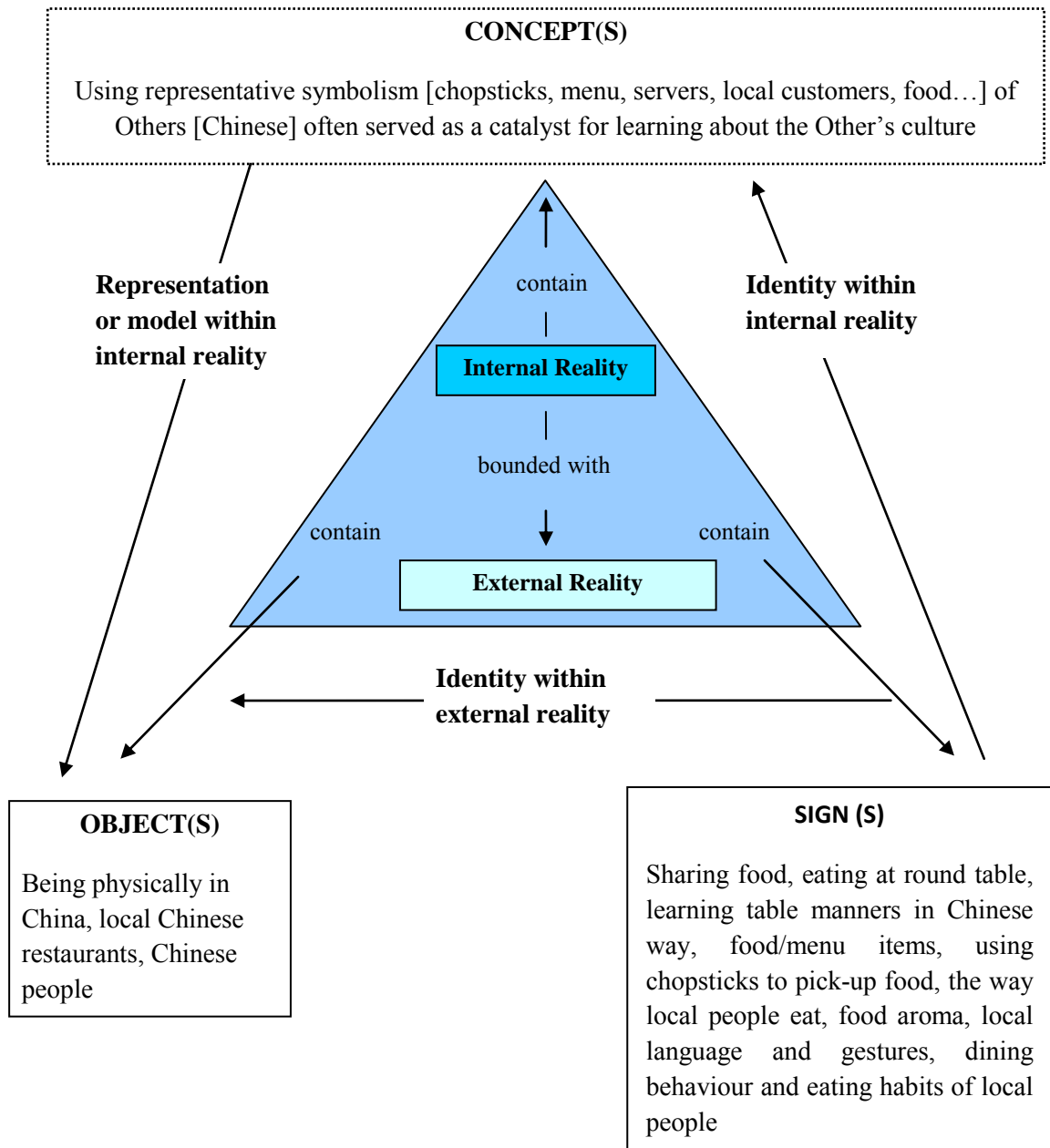
“I have[learned] [about]Chinese culture through my food experiences in local Chinese restaurants, I [learned] from the local people, e.g. sharing food with others, eating at a round table, learning the table [manners] in the Chinese way, using chopsticks, picking food from plates, all these were [about the]Chinese culture.” (S17)³

In order to further explain the semiotic meaning of the respondents’ narratives (S3 & S17), Peirce’s semiotics triangle (Figure 4.1.1.a) was used to analyse the meaning of their thoughts.

² Respondent (S3): Female tourist from Australia, mid-30s, currently unemployed, 1st time to China, travels alone.

³ Respondent (S17): Male tourist from USA, late 30s, Associate Professor, travels to China many times, travel with 20 students from USA.

Figure 4.1.1.a. Peirce's semiotics triangle



The respondent (S3) ate local Chinese food at a local Chinese restaurant, “local Chinese food” and “local Chinese restaurants” were the ‘object’, while “the way local people ate”, and “their dining behaviour and eating habits” were the ‘sign’. The

'object' together with the 'sign' symbolized the local culture. Hence, the use of representative symbols such as the chopsticks, the way people ate, servers, patrons, food...] of the Other's [Chinese] culture, served as a catalyst for learning about the Other's culture. Also, the respondent (S3) merged these images of how the local people eat (their dining behaviors and eating habits), together with the physical place, i.e. the local Chinese restaurants in China. This allowed her to view her dining experiences in the local restaurants filled with the local people as a way to get a little closer to the culture. Similarly, another respondent (S17) also had dining experiences with local people in local Chinese restaurants. In this example, respondent (S17) used "sharing food with others", "eating at a round table", "learning the Chinese table manners or etiquette", "using chopsticks..." as an allegory for representing what must be the way of Chinese culture. Interestingly, during his dining experiences in the local Chinese restaurants, the respondent (S17) adopted the same eating customs as the local people, thus fostering a sense of belonging and affirmation, to himself, that he too can be a part of this culture, albeit while travelling in China.

By experiencing the similar dining experiences like the local people, the respondents (S3 & S17) were not only consuming the local Chinese food, but also developing a sense of belonging or at least the pretense of being one of the locals during this period of travel in China. These respondents travelled a long way to experience the 'real' Chinese culture, by doing things that the local Chinese people did. Arguably, in this way, they were actually getting closer to the daily life of the local people and culture (Kivela & Johns, 2003). Both of the respondents came from Western countries,

and thus had very different cultural backgrounds from the locals. For them eating local food during travelling was not just motivated by physical need (i.e. hunger), but it also served as the lens through which tourists got a glimpse of and appreciation for the destination's culture (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Ondimu, 2002). Similar to the research done by Bardhi et al. (2010), the informants from the USA also perceived consuming Chinese food was a way of crossing cultural boundaries while learning about the culture of the Other. In this sense, the experiencing of the local cuisine was transformational in experiencing a culture from within, hence, cultural symbolism through food in an authentic setting proved to be strong motivators that led the tourists to learning and experiencing the culture of societies other than their own. Put in another way, by using representative symbols such as the chopsticks, menus, servers, patrons, food and such, one can get a glimpse of the Other's [Chinese] culture.

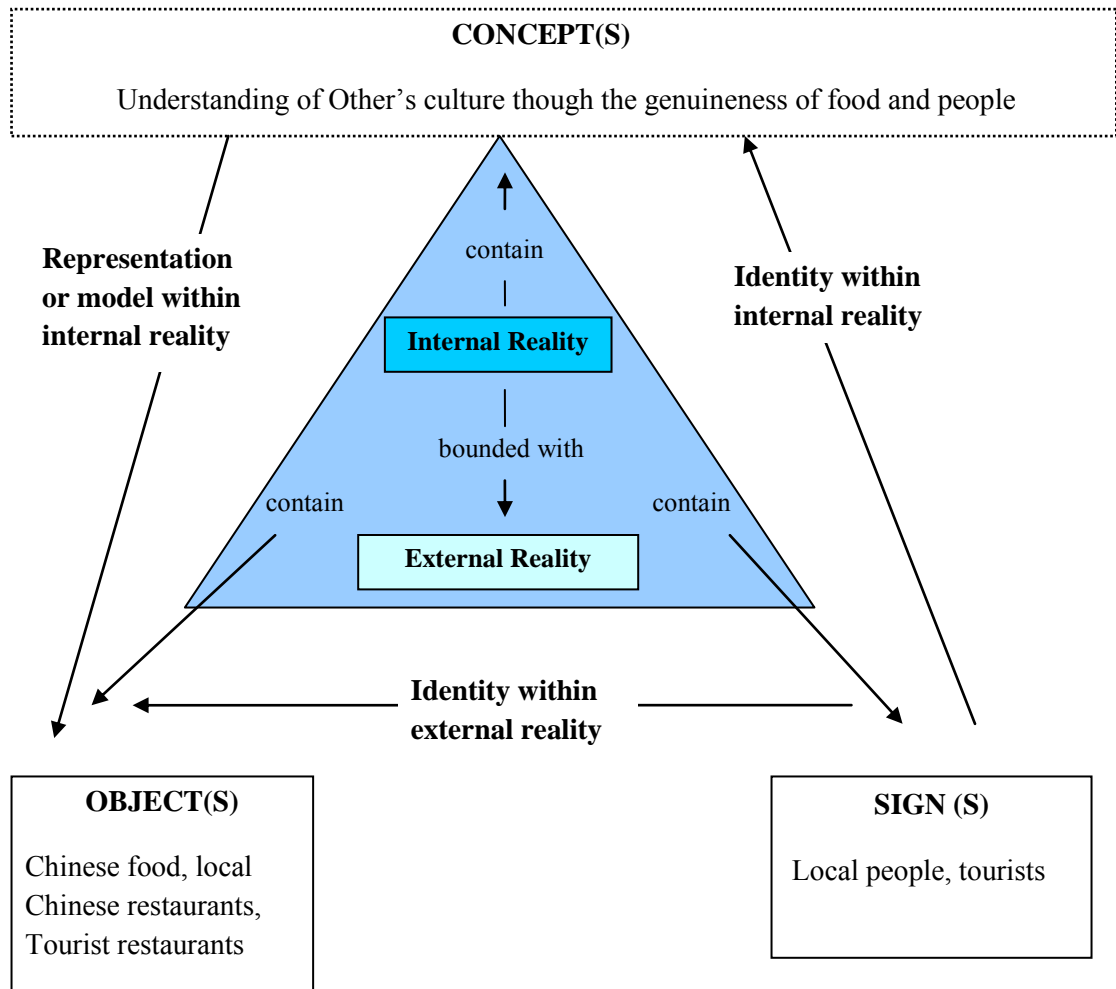
In addition some respondents thought that by eating in local restaurants and being with the local community, was another way to learn about the destination's culture and habits in a more direct way. They were able to have personal contact alongside a food experience that seemed to be more authentic if it took place in a sympathetic environment, i.e. the local restaurant full of local people (Sims, 2009).

“We [select] the restaurants while walking around, and [go] into restaurants [that have] lots of local Chinese people [in them]. We don't like to go to places with lots of tourists, we... look for [local] experiences.” (G8, G9)⁴

⁴ Respondent (G8 & G9): Both female tourists from Australia, Student, mid-20s, 1st time to China, they are friends and travelled together.

Peirce's semiotics triangle (Figure 4.1.1.b) was used to analyse the meaning of the above example.

Figure 4.1.1.b. Peirce's semiotics triangle



The narratives of the respondents (G8 & G9) revealed that the search for genuineness in their travels was something very important to them. The statement “We don't like to go to places with lots of tourists”, was cleverly used as a metaphor for signifying that restaurants which catered to tourists were somehow not the ‘real thing’ not genuinely Chinese because they did not cater for the local people. Also implied in

this statement was the belief that, because the food had to be altered to appease non-local tastes, it was hardly worth experiencing; they might as well stay at home. Interestingly, during their meals in the local restaurants, the respondents did not talk with the local people from the tables around them, or eat with the local people at the same tables; however, the respondents perceived that partaking in local food under the same roof as the local people was a way to get closer to their lives and culture.

As noted, these respondents avoided patronizing restaurants filled with tourists. By using these words “places with lots of tourists” the respondents were convinced that the places with lots of tourists were places especially tailor-made for the tourists. Hence, the interpretation that these places might not be the ‘real places’ to have ‘real Chinese food’, or if they patronized such ‘unreal places’, they were not actually having or living the ‘real Chinese food’ experience like the local people had in local Chinese restaurants. The respondents believed that eating in local restaurants with local people was not just for the purposes of experiencing ‘real Chinese food’, but also presented an opportunity get closer to the everyday lives of local people while playing an active part in the Chinese community.

According to Fields (2002), holiday meals have the potential to build new social relations and strengthen social bonds. Food and drink are a means to increase and ease social interactions, especially among people who have only recently been introduced to one another. For example, Club Med used the power of food and drink to

create a feeling of ‘community’ and company by mixing groups during meals. Some respondents (G8 & G9) partook of the Chinese food inside the local restaurants, and the activities of local people inside the restaurants (such as: communication between local people, eating habits and behaviour of local people) all helped to create, albeit temporarily, the illusion that they were having ‘real’ Chinese cultural experiences during their stay in China. Other respondents did not have this view, rather they felt that communication with the local people was a better way to learn about the local culture:

“...it’s hard to know the Chinese culture [in] just one or two meals. [I] need more time to communicate with local people.”
(G17)⁵

“I don’t think we [can] learn Chinese culture through food, not [really]. We need to talk with local people, to communicate and to know and understand them...” (G21)⁶

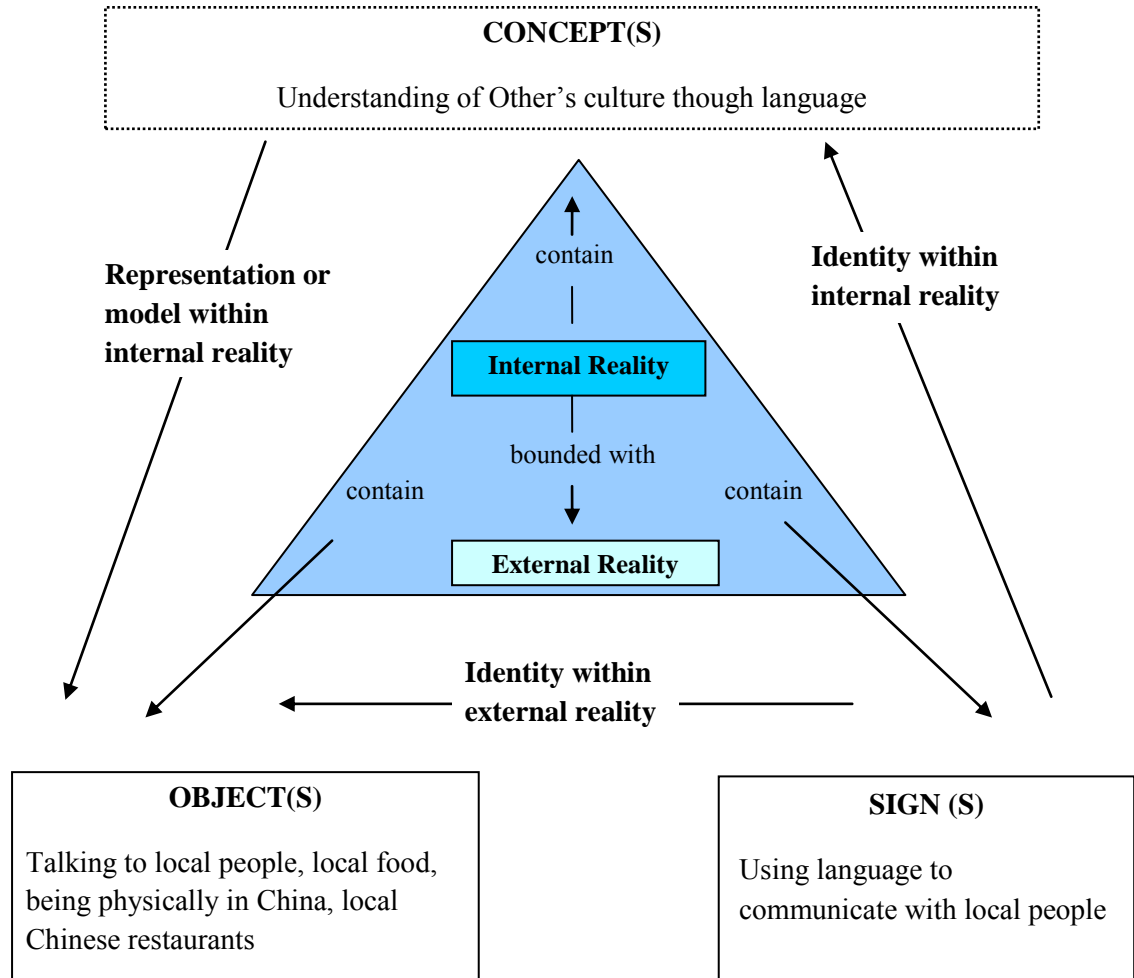
To conclude, it can be argued that for many travellers, representative food symbolism and rituals often served as a catalyst for learning and understanding the destination’s culture, reinforcing the notion that they have made the right choice in deciding to visit that destination. On the other hand, others used a more personal contact by way of communication with the local population, was the way to get to know the culture and the destination.

⁵ Respondent (G17): Male tourist from Malaysia, mid-50s, retired, 1st to China, travels alone

⁶ Respondent (G21): Female tourist from USA, mid-30s, IT specialist, 2nd time to China, travelled with husband

Figure 4.1.1.c. shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (G17 & G22).

Figure 4.1.1.c. Peirce's semiotics triangle



By saying "...it's hard to know the Chinese culture in just one or two meals...", "I don't think we learn Chinese culture through food...", the respondents (G17, G21) suggested that culture cannot be learned by simply partaking of local food. Instead they made comments, such as, "...I need more time to communicate with local people", "...we need to talk with local people to know and understand them...". Their narratives revealed that to learn about a culture one needs to do more than just taste its

food. Their interpretations suggested that the notion of learning about culture through food was a very narrow and often misleading view and that they considered experiencing the local culture to be a more profound issue. Partaking of local food in local restaurants, they felt, was only a small part of this ritual which they did not completely associate with the culture. Instead, direct communication with local people would be a better opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions with the locals, and develop a better depth of understanding of the destination's culture, according to these respondents.

While communicating with local people might be one of the more effective and direct ways to get in touch with the local culture, this can only be achieved if the tourist and local people can actually communicate without impediments, i.e. language. However, given that most tourists from other countries did have an acute language barrier, (e.g. they could not speak Chinese and the hosts could not speak English), there existed an impenetrable communication wall. During the interviews, respondents (G17 & G21) also mentioned that they were familiar with Chinese food and that they always had Chinese food in their home countries. Respondent (G17), who was Malaysian Chinese, was especially familiar with the cuisine because nearly all his daily meals were Chinese. Thus, for him eating Chinese food in China or in Malaysia was not much different. Consuming Chinese food for two respondents (G17 & G21) was just a meal. Food was used to fulfill hunger, no matter where they traveled. Therefore these respondents (G17 & G21) felt that learning the local culture was not done through partaking in local food, rather it could be done through various channels, such as,

communicating or talking with local people directly, visiting museums to appreciate artifacts, visiting historical sites and watching cultural shows featuring traditional music and dance, etc.

4.1.2 *Authentic location*

Other than exploring local culture, another important reason respondents gave for tasting local food was the quest for authentic experiences. Some respondents (S7, S8 & S14) believed that the authentic experiences were new and unique experiences during their travelling. The respondents reported that the Chinese food in China tasted more authentic, with traditional aromas and better flavour than their host countries.

“The Chinese food is rice and noodle based, with traditional [aroma], [spicier], better flavour. Every country has special food that you miss....” (S7, S8)⁷

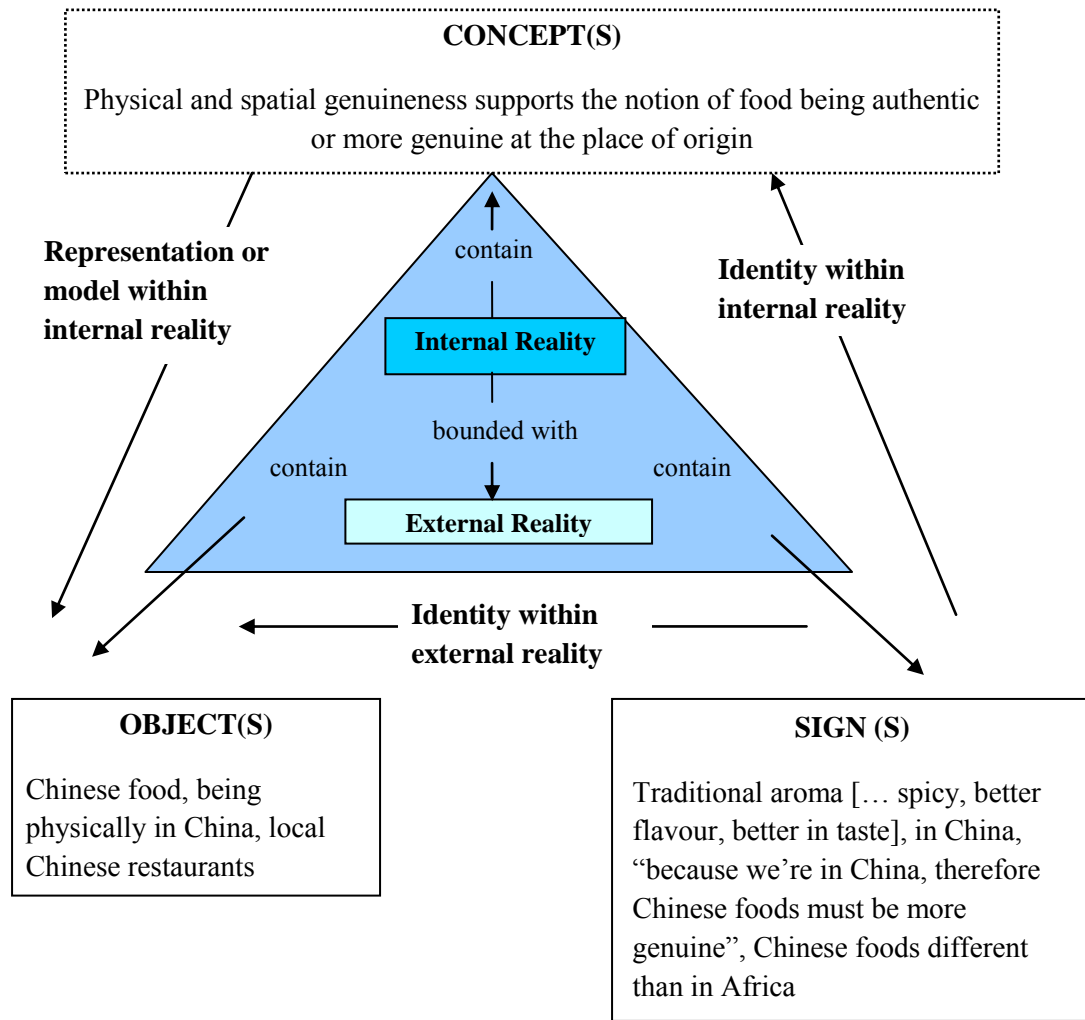
“In China, the Chinese foods are more genuine, better in taste ... and types of foods are different from Africa.” (S14)⁸

Figure 4.1.2.a shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (S7, S8 & S14).

⁷ Respondent (S7, S8): Both female tourists from UK, early 20s, students, 1st time to China, travelled together

⁸ Respondent (S14): Married male from Mozambique, late 50s, businessman, experienced traveller to China.

Figure 4.1.2.a. Peirce's semiotics triangle



The respondents (S7, S8 and S14) perceived that the Chinese food they had in China was the 'real' Chinese food, signified by "in China, the Chinese foods are more genuine, better in taste" than the Chinese foods in Africa. By using these words, the respondents actually suggested that because they were physically in China, they must be having real Chinese food. This was further explained by such signs as "traditional aroma, spicier, and better flavour" even though respondents could not recall what a traditional aroma actually is or in what ways "it tasted better." This exemplified

how semiotics and metaphors are used by travelers to explain and often justify their experiences at a destination. This was highlighted by another respondent (S14) who suggested that the Chinese food in his home country (Mozambique) was not ‘real’ Chinese food, but a localized version of Chinese food modified to transform local ingredients and traditional recipes to meet the tastes of the locals.

Respondents (S7 and S8) went on to say that “...every country has its special foods that you miss.” For these respondents, sampling local foods helps them recall the places they have travelled once they return home. Sims (2009) found that 60% of the tourists interviewed said that they had deliberately chosen to consume food or drinks that they considered “local” while on holiday. This suggested that, rather than just looking for something different, tourists were seeking products that they felt that would give them some insight into the nature of a place and its people.

In both cases, these respondents perceived that the local Chinese food in China was ‘the real’ Chinese food, and through its consumption that they could enrich their travel experiences. One can argue then, that the physical and spatial genuineness e.g. being in the country, supports the notion of food being authentic or more genuine at the place of origin. It is also plausible to suggest that this notion is very pervasive in being ingrained in travellers’ minds, which also acts as a further prop that the traveler has made ‘the right’ destination choice, by being able to recall when they returned to their home countries, that they had genuine or real experiences while in China; a connotation based on perceived genuineness of the destination.

Further, it appears that local food contributes to the experience of existential authenticity. The following two utterances from respondent (H6) illustrate how tourists are often on a quest for authentic experiences that may be manifest in destination's myths and legends.

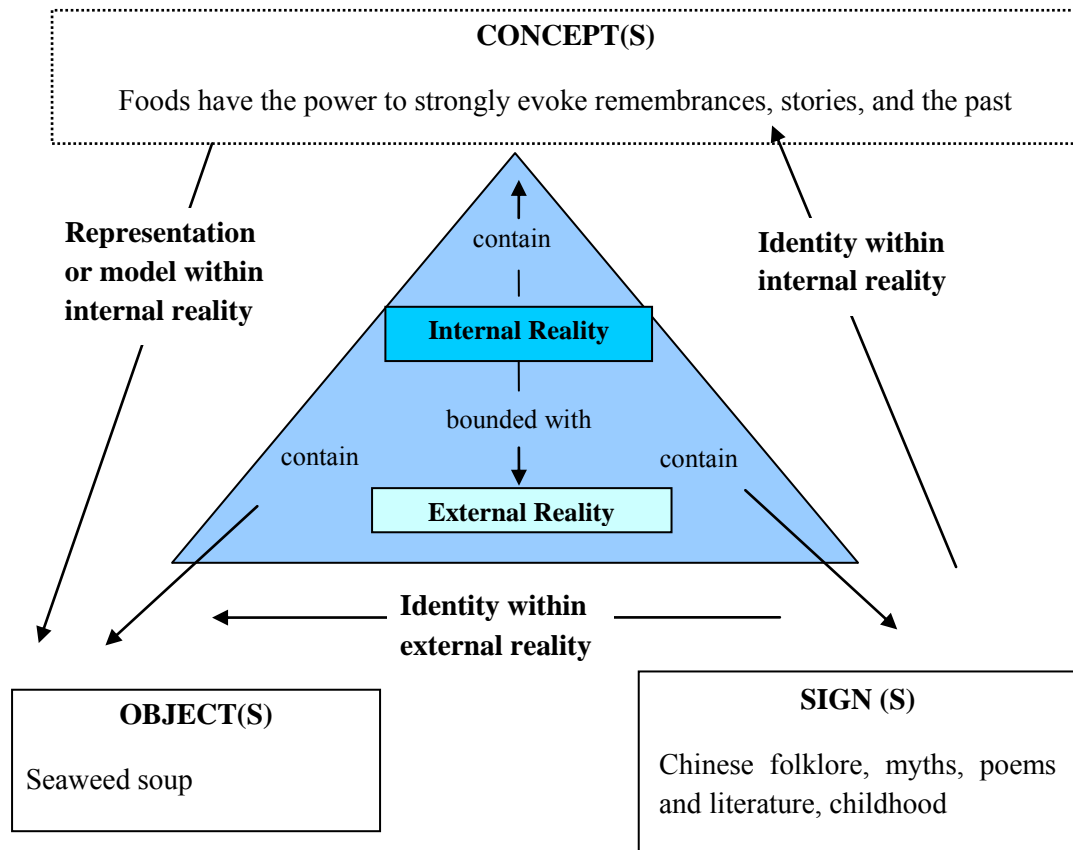
“In Hangzhou, I ate a soup made of seaweed grown in [the] West Lake, [this] soup was mentioned in the Chinese poems and literature. I like stories about foods and dishes [because] I teach Chinese literature [at] a university in Taiwan.” (H6)⁹

“... I had a fish dish that tasted like the one that I had twenty years ago in Taiwan. I was very happy that the fish dish had the same taste like twenty year ago.” (H6)

Figure 4.1.2.b. shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondent (H6)

⁹ Respondent (H6): Male tourist from Taiwan, mid-40s, Associate Professor, 1st time to China, travelled with wife in a group tour

Figure 4.1.2.b. Peirce's semiotics triangle



These two narratives revealed that his dining experience went beyond the actual food experience. Seaweed was a signifier for history, legends and myths: “the soup was mentioned in the Chinese poems and literature.” West Lake was well-known in ancient China and is associated with legends and mythical powers. West Lake seaweed, therefore, becomes imbued with legends and symbolism, like most of ancient Chinese recipes. One can argue that the traveller’s imagination got the better of him, but it is not surprising given of his knowledge of Chinese poetry. Chinese poetry and literature is amply sprinkled with ‘magical’ foods and potions.

It was interesting to note how the respondent transcended reality by elevating food (seaweed) to a mythological level (Bathes, 1973; Johns & Clarke, 2001) by suggesting that this seaweed was imbued in the myths of ancient Chinese poetry. This is a classic example of how some foods are elevated beyond their routine status. Every culture has its own lore or ‘mythical’ foods. For example, even today people will reference “God’s food”, which refers to foods that are necessarily unique but which have a special significance and meaning to people; foods that trigger special and deep emotions, but are often only perceived as such by that person, e.g. grandma’s food.

Eating local foods might also trigger emotions on a much deeper level than one might think, creating a deeper sense of self and meaning from the experience. This is because local products often have a story and a meaning behind them related to the place and culture (Sims, 2009). For respondent (H6) instead of consuming the local food only for the taste, he was also enjoying the metaphysical: the lore and meaning behind it. Thus, eating and drinking can become a multi-dimensional experience that enables the travellers to connect with the place and its culture (Sims, 2009:333).

In the second example, this food experience brought the respondent (H4) back to his youth. Whether or not the actual aroma or taste were exactly the same as they were twenty years ago is not important; they probably were not. What is very important is that these created strong emotions for the traveler. These were real enough for him to recall and reach back to when he was young. They obviously had special

meaning for him, so much so, that the taste seemed to have transcended time: "...tasted like the one that I had twenty years ago in Taiwan."

During the interview, the respondent (H6) told the author that this trip was his first leisure trip to China, and also a trip for him to rediscover his 'roots' in China, to return to his motherland. He was eager to learn more about his Chinese culture and was not just seeking existential authenticity. By partaking of local food, he consumed not only the local food, but also the history and lore behind it. Thus, the local dining experiences also triggered his emotions at a much deeper level.

No doubt for the respondent (H6), the food (West Lake seaweed soup and fish) had a profound impact on the way he experienced the destination; an emotional and moving recollection of his childhood and a rediscovery of his roots.

4.1.3 Novelty or adventure seeking

Respondents felt that trying new foods that they have never tried before while traveling was an exciting and often a daring experience. Previous research (Sparks et al., 2003, Kivela & Crofts, 2006, Kim et al., 2009) supported this notion that trying new foods while traveling is an important catalyst for letting go of one's fears and taboos. It also affords the respondents a glimpse of the culture and customs, most

notably during festivals and celebrations. The following three respondents alluded to this:

“We have tried some food that we’ve never tried before in USA, such as beef tendon and fish maw, steamed whole fish (with head and tail), sticky rice dumplings...eating local food is a way to get in touch with local culture.”(S1)¹⁰

“I have tried roasted duck in Nanjing, which I have never tried before...” (S2)¹¹

“In China the Chinese food is different: steamed whole fish, roasted whole duck with head, red bean paste sticky rice are more [authentic]. But we cannot find Mochu pork and fortune cookies in China.”(S23)¹²

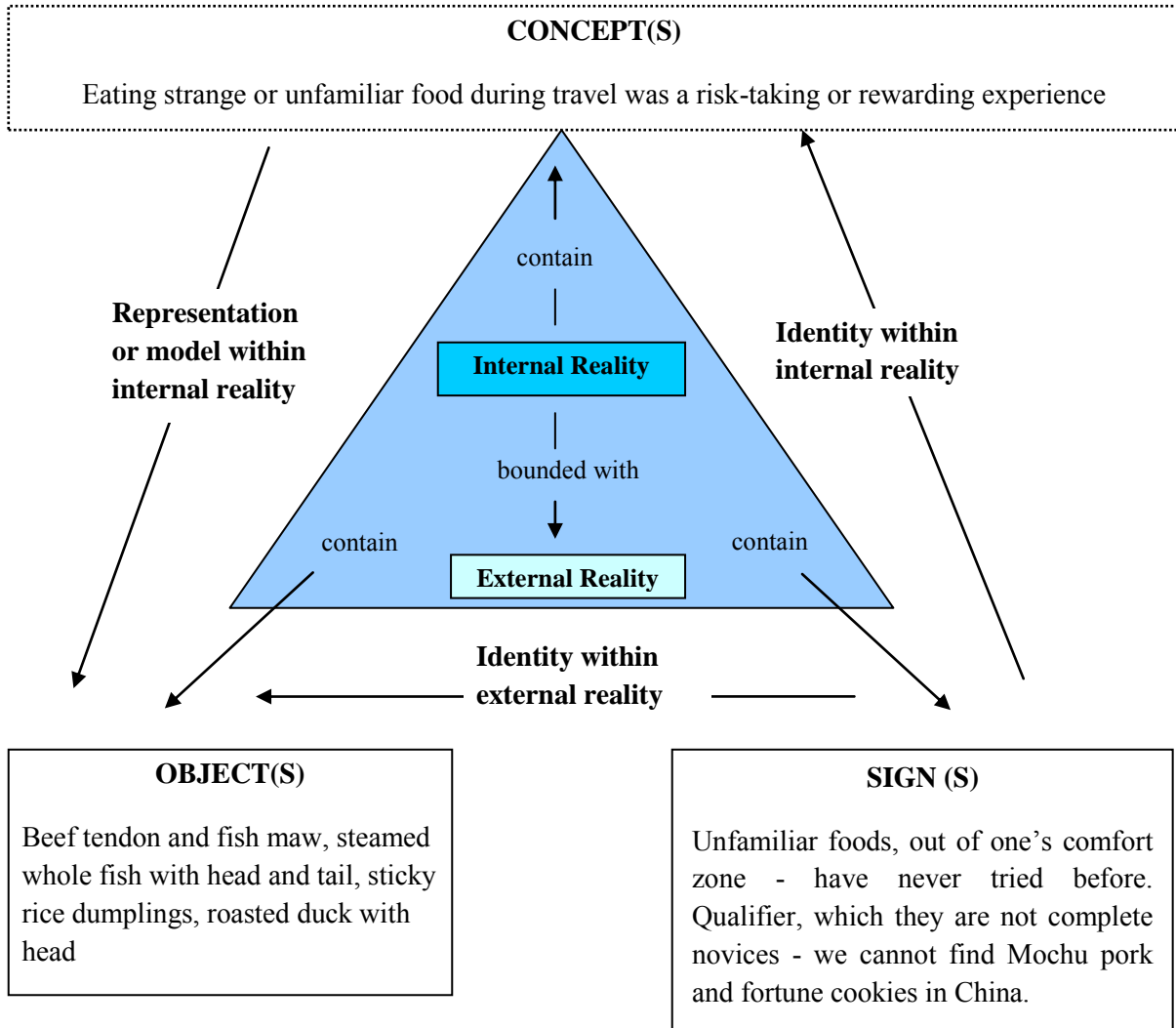
Figure 4.1.3.a shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (S1, S2 & S23).

¹⁰ Respondent (S1): Female tourist from USA, late 50s, Associate Professor, 1st to China, travelled with her husband

¹¹ Respondent (S2): Female tourist from USA, early 20s, Student, 1st to China, travelled with 30 schoolmates for a study tour to China.

¹² Respondent (S23): Male tourist from USA, late 70s, Retired professor, 2nd time to China, travelled with his wife in a group tour

Figure 4.1.3.a Peirce's semiotics triangle



These narratives (S1, S2 & S23) suggested a quest for novelty where the reward might outweigh the risk and comments. “We have tried some food that we’ve never tried before in USA, such as beef tendon...” suggested that the respondent (S1) was not averse to having food that she had not tried before in her home country. Interestingly, the respondent did not interpret taking unknown food as being a risk

factor to her health, rather she was a risk taker who anticipated and desired a new experience during her travel.

On the other hand, another respondent (S23) let it be known that new foods are not that 'new' to him, and that he was used to having ethnic foods in his home country. He also qualified that an authentic setting is more likely to produce authentic foods, e.g. "In China the Chinese food is different... steamed whole fish.... they are more authentic..." However, not being able to find "Mochu pork and fortune cookies in China" together with "Chinese food is different in China" was also used to convey to other that as a metaphor for saying "I am not a novice when it comes to Chinese foods." This is also a mechanism that people use to minimize the internal risk factor whilst encouraging new experiences and willingness to be daring (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). For these travelers, the trip often stimulated their neophilic tendency, motivated them to try novel and strange food and beverages (Chang et al, 2011). Hence, in the respondent's mind "Mochu pork and fortune cookies", were not just Chinese foods, but were the 'ice-breakers' to try new Chinese foods.

As described by Bardhi et al. (2010), these respondents (S1, S2 & S23) were curious about Chinese food which might not be always available in their home countries. Consuming the Chinese food was a way crossing food-culture boundaries and an opportunity to learn about local food and culture in China. These respondents also typify the novelty-seeking behaviour in food consumption as suggested by Quan &

Wang (2004). According to Quan & Wang (2004), novelty-seeking refers to situations in which people might get up the courage to eat foods that they have never tried before. With such an adventurous behaviour they demonstrate a greater propensity for searching out local restaurants that are not recommended by the guide books or that are hidden in out-of-the-way places or known only to the local people. By doing so, they perceive that they are part of the local community. Once their holidays are over, fond memories remain and can be revisited at will (Fields, 2002:41), and put to practice during their next trip out of their countries. Therefore, some of their enjoyable or less enjoyable dining experiences during travel might be regarded as amusement, and some experiences might be regarded as status enhancing e.g. personal status gained from the dining experiences with strange food or knowing the hidden locations of the local restaurants (Fields, 2002).

Previous research (Kim et al., 2009; Ritchey et al., 2003) suggested that people exhibiting food neophilia, which is the tendency to taste something new, were better able to discriminate amongst food items in relation to taste and hedonic ratings, and tended to seek something new as a means of increasing sensation and pleasure. In addition, Kim et al. (2010) stated that food neophilics seemed to be more inclined towards new food experiences and likely possessed a different taste physiology, which enabled them to experience food with more pleasure.

In addition, as stated by Kivela and Crotts (2006), a pleasurable and interesting gastronomy experience is an important part of travellers' confidence levels when faced with "strange" foods at the destination. The tourist will evaluate this experience, whether positively or negatively, and this colours their overall perception of the destination. The following respondents exemplified this:

"I bought two buns this morning from a local shop. One of them had a red filling and the other a green filling. I don't know what is inside these buns? I just tried my luck. I ate both buns but disliked the one with green filling which was meat and vegetables." (S3)¹³

"...in Shanghai [food] was fine with me, I could find the things that I liked to eat. But in Tsing Tao it was hard to find something that I liked to eat. There was strange thing, e.g. chicken head. It was challenge for me to eat in China every day." (S12)¹⁴

"...I had the deep-fried jelly fish which I had never tried before in my home country. However, I'll not order it again in future." (S13)¹⁵

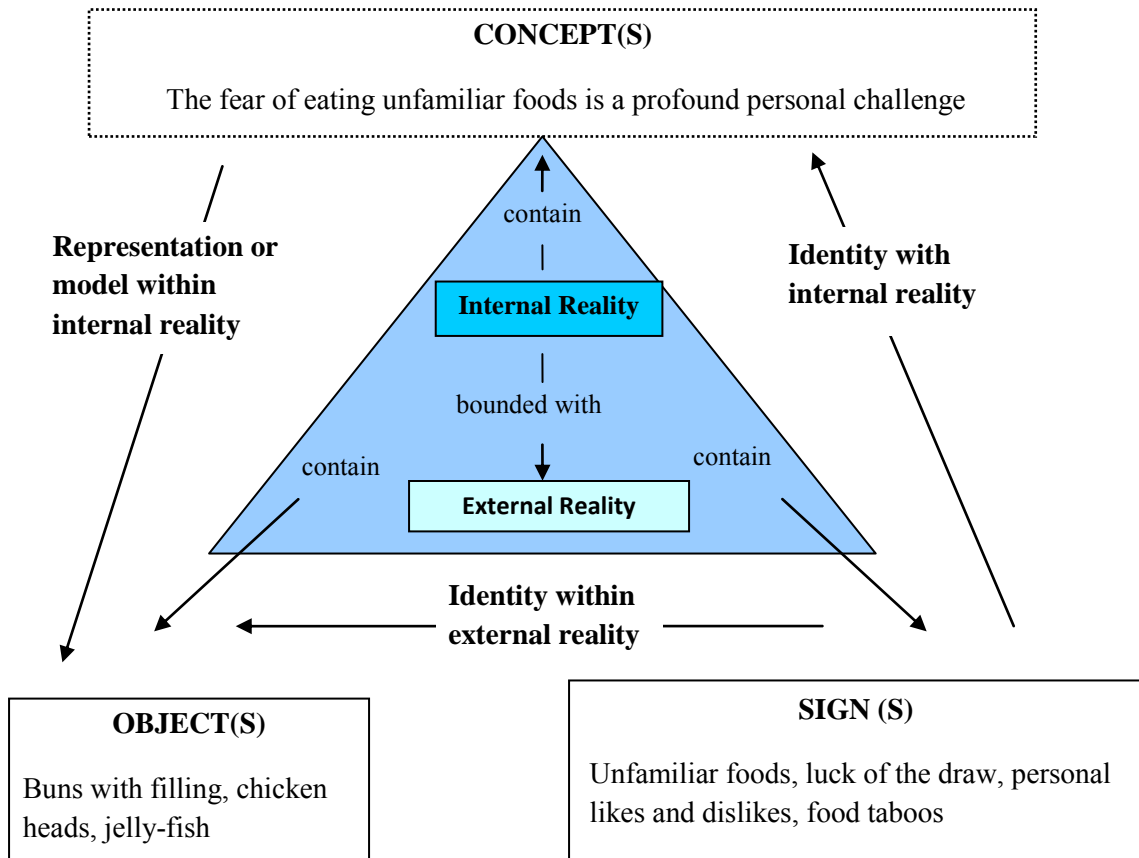
Figure 4.1.3.b shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (S3, S12 & S13)

¹³ Respondent (S3): Female tourist from Australia, mid-30s, currently unemployed, 1st time to China, travelled alone.

¹⁴ Respondent (S12): Female tourist from Denmark, mid-20s, student, 2nd time to China, travelled alone

¹⁵ Respondent (S13): Male tourist from Canada, early 40s, Marketing Manager, 2nd time to China, travelled with a 10-year old son.

Figure 4.1.3.b Peirce's semiotics triangle



These respondents (S3, S12 & S13) noted: “in Tsing Tao it was hard to find something that I liked to eat”, “there was strange thing, e.g. chicken head”, to signify their personal food challenges which they have tried to overcome for the sake of novelty and experience. Since eating involves actual body involvement with an unfamiliar aspect of the destination, for some travelers, the sampling of these foods triggers their neophobic tendencies to become more prominent. Therefore, tourists are generally reluctant to taste or eat “strange” foods whose ingredients are unknown or unfamiliar to them (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

Moreover, the respondents (S3 & S12) used phrases such as “I don’t know what is inside these buns? I just tried my luck”, “it was hard to find something that I liked to eat.... It was challenge for me to eat in China every day”, suggesting that they had negative feelings about unfamiliar foods, which caused them distress because of the disruption of their daily food regimens, and also fear that they might not be able to find familiar foods which they liked.

This is manifest in the notion that each culture has some learned practices and experiences that impose control over one’s food regimens that define what is and is not edible. These regimens are organized according to one’s social conventions, but are also formed via personal inclination and dispositions, which then become an essential part of self-identity (Bardhi et al., 2010). Therefore, the respondents were struggling to uphold their eating habits while travelling in China, especially after they had enjoyed various Chinese foods during the first couple of days. One can argue that for these travelers, food had a profound effect on how they experienced the destination e.g. “It was challenge for me to eat in China every day.”

Similarly, as expressed by respondent (S13) “...I’ll not order it again”, the respondent (S13) was able to discriminate between what was good food and bad food by bravely employing a trial and error methodology, deciding that he will not have the strange food (deep-fried jelly fish) again in future. As was defined by Pliner and Hobden (1992) food neophobia is the extent to which consumers are reluctant to try

novelty foods, including food products, dishes and cuisines. They found that food neophobia positively correlated with fear and anxiety measures and negatively correlated with foreign food familiarity and sensation seeking, which also impacted their experience of the destination as a whole.

Discussion

This section provides a discussion of how respondents perceived their food encounters in China. The emergent findings revealed that respondents considered that their dining experiences with local people in local restaurants during their travel in China, was one way of getting closer to the destination's culture., whilst the representative symbolism (chopsticks, local customers and food, etc.) served as catalysts which enhanced the respondents' awareness of the Other's culture. The findings also revealed that many respondents were searching for genuineness in their travels in China; thus, they refused to patronize touristy places and sought out local food and eating with the local people. This suggests that by participating in dining experiences similar to those of the local people, respondents got a glimpse of the daily lives of the local people. Metaphorically, it is fair to postulate that many respondents thought of themselves as part of the local scene; or just one of the locals. This notion is supported by Getz (2000) and Fields (2002), who say that local food experiences can lead to a better understanding and a chance to learn about the local culture of a

destination, and by doing so, appreciate the destination more fully. Thus the first and second propositions are put forth:

Proposition 1: Representative symbolism is often a catalyst which triggers travellers' desire to learn about the Other's culture.

Proposition 2: Indigenous food and dining environments at the destination activate travellers' desire for wanting to be closer to the Other's culture while travelling.

Proposition one and two postulate that for some travelers, experiences with authentic indigenous foods, in local settings, was a way of getting closer to the destination's culture, even though more personal contact by way of direct communication was a better way to get to know the local culture. This implies that the respondents knew that partaking of indigenous foods was not necessarily a stand-in for knowing the local culture. Despite the language barrier, the respondents believed that direct communication with local people might be a better opportunity to explore and gain a better understanding of the destination's culture, hence the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Communicating with the local people at a destination allows the traveller to have a richer experience of the destination's culture.

Kim et al. (2009) suggested that travellers believed that authentic experiences and being in contact and communicating with the local people was a new and unique experience during their travels. The respondents' narratives convey this position rather clearly: they perceived that local Chinese food in China was genuine Chinese food not what they got at home and their unique travel experiences can be enriched through partaking of the 'real' local food and talking to 'real' local people. The desire for physical and spatial genuineness, language included, supports the notion of food being authentic or more genuine at the place of origin, and that these parameters begin to unmask the destination's real culture. Importantly for many travellers, positive experiences of these parameters confirm that they have made the 'right' destination choice. These genuine experiences prove this, which leads to the fourth proposition:

Proposition 4: Partaking of indigenous foods at the place of origin can activate travellers' desires for a genuine travel experience.

Sims (2009:333) contended that local indigenous food products had a story and a meaning behind them that could be related to a place and culture, and often a time period in the local history. Every culture has its own traditional stories and histories about food that hold special significance and meaning for the local people. This means that respondents' food consumption was not only to satisfy their physical needs, but very much a 'consumption' and enjoyment of the stories and meanings behind the food and the related destination's culture. This creates an emotional experience of the

destination at a much private and deeper level. Hence, one can argue, that the consumption of indigenous food has a deep impact on the way that travellers experience China as a destination. This leads to the fifth proposition:

Proposition 5: Indigenous foods have the power to evoke remembrances, stories and history that can create a profound impact on the way travellers experience the destination's culture.

Adventurous travellers, who are eager to take greater risk than in their ordinary lives, often seek out novel and strange foods (Chang et al., 2011; Cohen & Avieli, 2004). In this study, it is suggested that the respondents were willing to try unfamiliar foods when travelling and that this quest for novelty overcame the fear and taboos related to foreign foods that they might have had in their everyday lives. This implies that the adventurous behaviour of respondents heightened their desire to seek something new as a means of increasing sensation and pleasure of their trip, which leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 6: For travellers whose dining purpose is seeking an exciting experience, partaking of unfamiliar foods during travel is a risk-taking and rewarding experience.

Importantly, these travellers evaluate their food experiences positively or negatively, which in turn affects their overall perceptions of the destination. For instance in Kivela and Crofts (2006), it was found that some respondents had negative feelings about unfamiliar foods and were distressed and fearful that they might not be able to find familiar foods that they liked during their travels in China, suggesting that unfamiliar foods can constitute a potential risk to the respondents which becomes a challenge to their travel experiences. Hence, one can argue that food has a profound impact on the respondents' perception of the destination. Thus the seventh proposition:

Proposition 7: Travellers fear of unfamiliar foods when travelling creates challenges which often influence how they experience the destination.

4.2 Personal food preferences and taboos

In this section, findings about personal food preferences and taboos among the tourists are presented. In order to explain the motivational factors behind tourists' dining behaviors, focus has been placed on behavioural intentions rather than the taxonomy of food preferences. Findings revealed that some of the respondents had difficulty in finding suitable local Chinese food to accommodate their needs due to health reasons. Similarly, other respondents had great difficulties in identifying local Chinese foods that did not conflict with their religious-based food restrictions. On the

other hand, some respondents were excited to experience different tastes and food varieties in their dining experiences with local Chinese food. The reasons for the personal food preferences and taboos are broken down in the following sections

4.2.1 Special travel needs

Some people view their daily food as sacred and holding special meaning to them and their communities. For example, for Muslims food is considered to be a gift from God. For some Christians, praying and thanking God for the granting of the daily meal and the blessing of food is ritualised in a prayer before each meal. During the Christian ritual of Communion, bread is considered to be the body of Christ and the wine is His blood (den Hortog, van Staveren & Brouwer, 2006). For some individuals, and their respective communities, religion plays a key role in the selection, preparation and consumption of food and, as such, food plays a key role in their daily lives. Religious practices and teaching have promoted or prohibited various foods. For example, some religious ceremonies incorporate alcohol while others discourage or forbid its use.

Some tourists are often concerned more about their religious-based dietary needs when traveling than the travel itself, notably when partaking of local foods. These concerns were observed among the travellers in this study. From the outset, the results showed that for these travelers the availability of “clean” food that was fit for their

religious dietary needs and rituals translated into how friendly or unfriendly and suitable or unsuitable the destination was to these travelers. In this context, the availability of “clean” food was a key destinational attribute which made the destination a pleasant or unpleasant experience and, in some cases, an anxious and fearful one, as the following examples suggest:

(In this session, clean food in Judaism refers to foods prepared according to Kosherite laws while clean foods in Islam refer to, in the main, in the way animals are slaughtered – by cutting the jugular vein in order to bleed the animal quickly.)

ANXIOUSLY “...however, there is no kosher food.....in the local Chinese restaurants to serve our needs.” (G10, G11)¹⁶

FEARFULLY “The local restaurants need to be smarter, to know more about the customers’ needs. The restaurateurs are not familiar with the eating habits of [Muslims by] not providing Halal food.”(H4)¹⁷

For many travelers, lack of information about the ingredients on the menu (description of the dish), often created a fair amount of distrust in local Chinese foods and handling techniques. One respondent (H12) noted that:

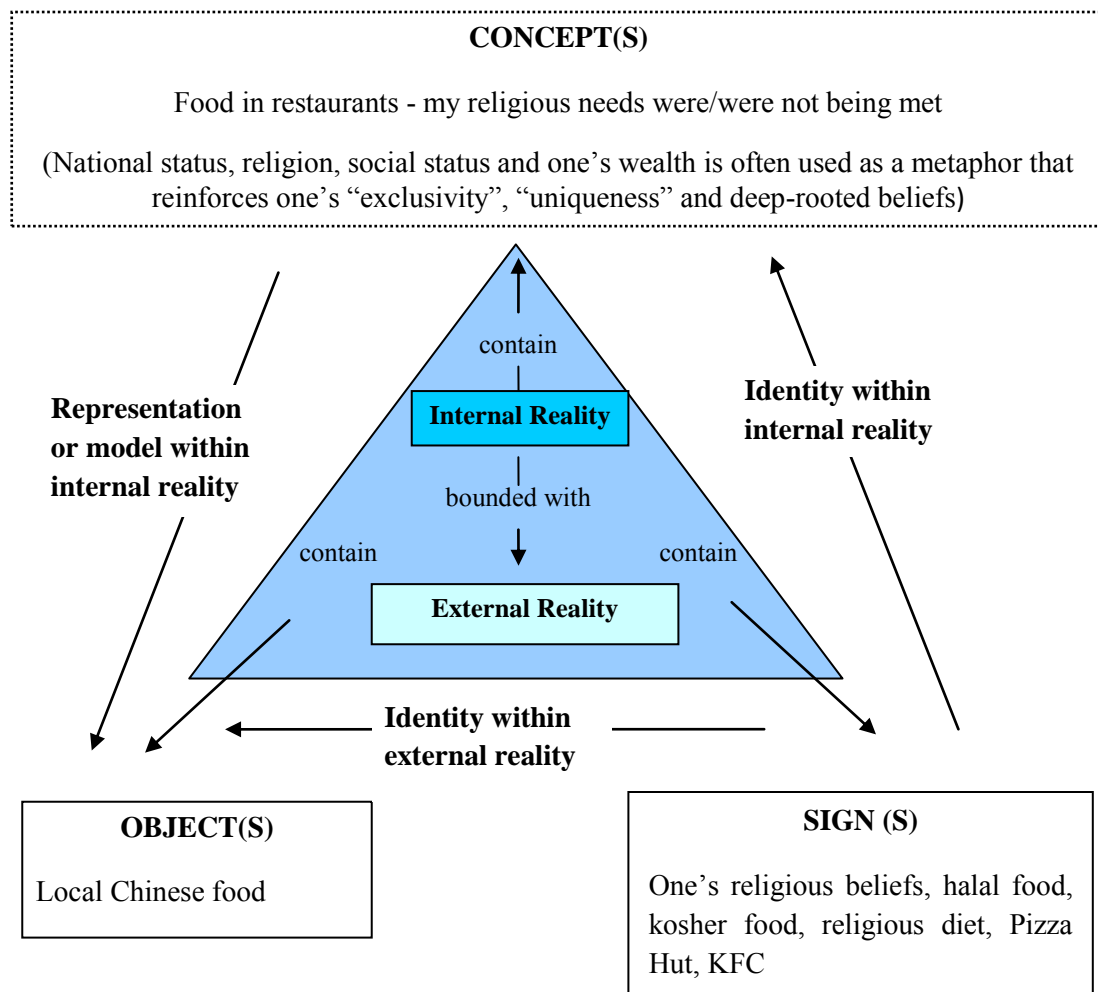
¹⁶ Respondent (G10, G11): Female tourists from Israel, early 20s, students, 1st time to China, travel together.

¹⁷ Respondent (H4): Male tourists from Malaysia, mid-30s, business executives, travelled many times to China, travelled with a Malaysian incentive group with 25 colleagues.

“Most of the Iranian tourists are Muslim, they don’t eat pork, and are not allowed to [consume] alcohol...and [are] forbidden to use oil made from pork in cooking. [We are] concerned about the way [they] slaughter animals [for] food [they need to be]halal... Some [of us] ...prefer to go to Pizza Hut and KFC for meals but not to local Chinese restaurants ... [because] Western restaurants do not use oil made form pork.” (H12)¹⁸

Figure 4.2.1.a shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (G10, G11, H4 & H12)

Figure 4.2.1.a Peirce’s semiotics triangle



¹⁸ Respondent (H12): Male tourist from Iran, mid-40s, tour manager, travelled to China many times, travelled with an Iranian group tour.

The narratives of these respondents (G10, G11) revealed that they could not have kosher food in local Chinese restaurants in order to accommodate their religious needs. This single aspect alone had a significant negative impact on their perceptions of the destination as a whole because they could not uphold their religious dietary needs and/or maintain their daily food rituals. One respondent (H4) complained that restaurateurs are not familiar with Muslim eating by not providing halal food. This signified to him that local restaurateurs were not really prepared to serve customers that had the special religious dietary needs.

Because these respondents (G10, G11, & H4) were bound by their religious dietary laws, they were very cautious and often apprehensive about local foods in China. For instance, they found it very difficult to identify what food was edible or inedible according to their rituals. For example, two respondents (G10, G11) said that they had difficulties ordering food from menus because they did not know how the food was prepared and what was in the dishes. Even the respondent (H4) who understood Chinese on the menus was not able to tell what the ingredients were in many dishes.

Similar to these respondents (G10 & G11), the Iranian tourists mentioned (noted by H12), that they also had difficulties in understanding the Chinese wording on the menus. They were afraid to order any foods for fear of eating something that was prohibited by their religious dietary laws. Furthermore, Chinese culinary methods obscured even the common and familiar ingredients, which made the Iranian tourists

feel very uncertain and suspicious about what they had eaten. Even if some of these common and familiar ingredients were permitted by their religious dietary laws, after cooking, were transformed into potentially inedible dishes. This prompted Iranian tourists to prefer to go to Pizza Hut and KFC for meals instead of the local Chinese restaurants. They believed that these Western restaurants did not use lard in their cooking. They also expressed that they simply did not trust the local Chinese restaurants.

Obviously, Iranian tourists were familiar with the food provided by these international restaurant chains and felt that these were more reliable than the local Chinese restaurants. Consequently, for the Iranian tourists, food in China was a daily impediment to them while travelling in China.

Although there is a sizeable Muslim minority in China (Xinjiang, Ningxia and Gansu), most restaurants and hotels do not offer halal food. There were only one or two restaurants in Guilin and Hangzhou, where respondents travelled that had restaurants which served halal food and these were mostly located within hotels. Exacerbated by the lack of recommendations from travel guide books and indifferent hotel and restaurant staff, most of these individual travellers had great difficulties at meal times throughout their trip. Furthermore, in China, kosher food is virtually unknown. In the worse-case scenarios, most travellers resorted to eating fruit and raw vegetable for their meals during their whole time in China, and when the sacred borders of their religious dietary needs were trespassed, they felt threatened, insecure and frustrated. Instead of experimenting with the exotic Chinese foods during their trip in

China, these respondents tried very hard to maintain their food boundaries. Religion is often used to convey one's tribalism, uniqueness and deep-rooted beliefs to others, much in the same way as some people may use national status, social status and one's wealth to illustrate one's exclusivity and uniqueness or 'betterness' to others (Finklestein, 1989).

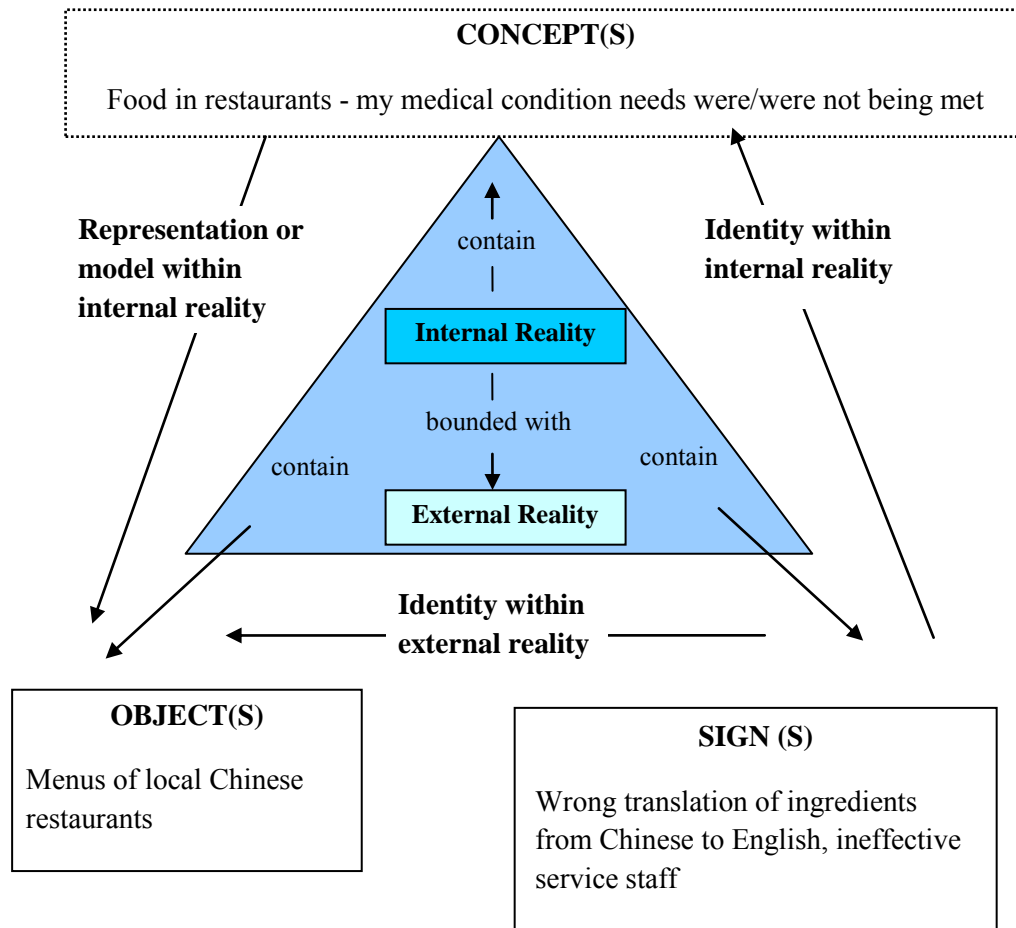
Some travelers were also concerned about their health while they were visiting China. One respondent (S23) emphasized that:

"I have diabetes [and I] cannot eat MSG... It's very difficult to explain to the restaurant [staff]. Menu items' descriptions are in Chinese but the English translation is wrong....Finally, I just left [the restaurant] without eating anything." (S23)¹⁹

Figure 4.2.1.b shows the analysis of the semiotic narrative of respondent (S23).

¹⁹ Respondent (S23): Male tourist from USA, early 70s, Retired Professor, 2nd time to China, travelled with wife in a group tour.

Figure 4.2.1.b Peirce's semiotics triangle



For this respondent (S23), incorrect translations brought on anxiety and mistrust at mealtimes. Due to his medical condition, he was required to be very careful with food consumption every day, and when he wanted to confirm the details of the ingredients on the menu descriptions, incorrect translations and the language barrier caused severe problems at meal times. Without any clear and correct descriptions, the respondent could not find food that was suitable for him. Furthermore, the incorrect translation from Chinese to English created a feeling of deep distrust in local restaurants. As a result, the respondent refused to patronize local restaurants altogether. For a

traveller like this respondent (S23), China was a difficult and challenging destination which he would not undertake again.

In summary, the communication gap was the common reason why tourists avoided patronizing local restaurants in China. Almost all of the tourists had difficulties in identifying and ordering local dishes because they were not familiar with the ingredients and dish names on the menu, and importantly, most staff could not be bothered to assist them. The aggravation of situation escalated when the tourists simply could not read the menu (in Chinese) and did not understand the explanations offered by the restaurant staff. In this context, many travellers resorted to the tried and tested strategy of either bringing their own food along and/or they sought out the safety and comfort of home by patronizing restaurants that were familiar and that seemed to be reliable to them, such as McDonald's, KFC, and other international chains. For some travellers the fear of becoming ill from the food in China was the main reason for being suspicious of local foods. As one respondent commented, his overseas trips were relatively short and expensive, and he wanted to make the most of it and did not want the experience to be spoiled by food poisoning, hence he stayed away from local food.

4.2.2 Indigenous foods

Seeking different tastes and flavours was another influence on tourists' dining experiences. Respondents conveyed that, when dining out, they were seeking

different flavours and cuisines and wanted to avoid familiar and similar food. Even in their home country, they sought variety in their meals, and this predisposition continued while they travelled in China.

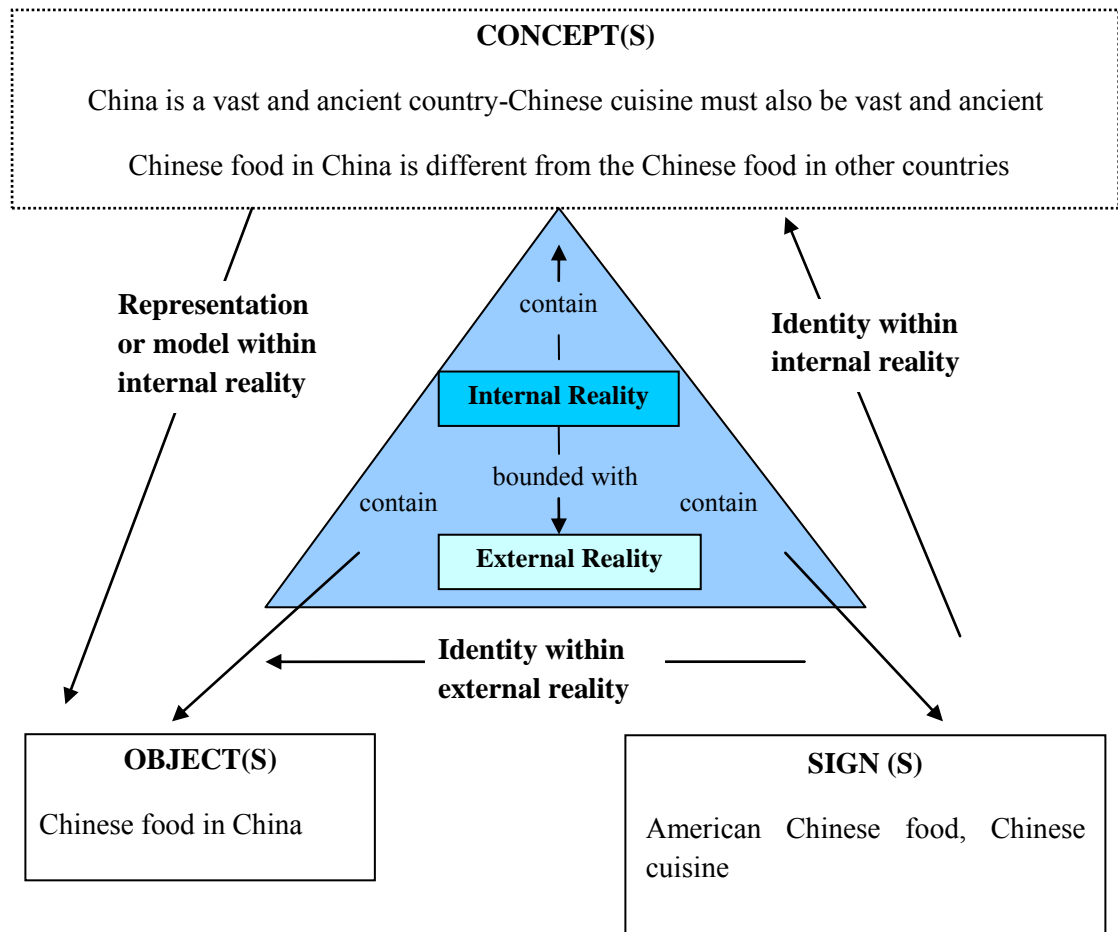
Some respondents contended that “China is a vast and ancient country and that Chinese cuisine must also be as vast and ancient; great many varieties, different tastes and cooking methods, serving styles, and textures, quite different than the Chinese food at home.” Others were able to note and compare the differences between Chinese food in China and the Chinese food at home (USA), For instance:

“Here [in China] is a vast and ancient country with lots of Chinese food. We have lots of Chinese food in the USA which [really] is American Chinese food... [but] Chinese food in China [does not] taste [the same as it does in the] USA. Here the taste of Chinese food is much spicier and sweeter.....”(G2, G3)²⁰

Figure 4.2.2.a shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (G2, & G3).

²⁰ Respondents (G2 & G3): Males tourists from USA, early 20s, students, 1st time to China, travelled with their parents.

Figure 4.2.2.a Peirce's semiotics triangle



These respondents (G2 & G3) revealed that they had experienced Chinese food in their home countries by qualifying that Chinese food in the USA is American Chinese food and that Chinese food in China does not have the same taste. Here, they used the terms 'spicier and sweeter' as a metaphor of the context; being physically in China, the food must be the real Chinese food; food which is sourced and prepared in China. Whether or not the taste of the local Chinese food was really different or better from the Chinese food in USA is of little importance here. What is important is that respondents perceived this to be the case; that Chinese food in China is the real Chinese food and should be different and thus better than the Chinese food in the USA.

These two respondents (G2 & G3) indicated that once they had eaten local Chinese food in China they discovered that the Chinese food in China was not the same as the Chinese food in the USA. The respondents' previous Chinese food experiences mainly came from the Chinese restaurants in USA. These Chinese restaurants in the USA provided Chinese food that was modified to suit the palates of Americans. Moreover, these 'American Chinese foods' were often a simplified version of the original 'iconic' dishes from various regional cuisines of China, and ones with which Americans have become familiar. Thus, when American travellers were in China, their preferred dishes were sweet and sour pork, spring rolls, and corn soup; which are widely available in Chinese restaurants abroad, but were not necessarily popular among the locals in China. In addition, Bardhi et al. (2010) suggested that tourists' previous dining experiences with Chinese food at home had shaped their tastes and expectations of what constitutes Chinese foods, eating practices and etiquette. The tourists in this study were quite surprised at the differences between the Chinese-Chinese and American-Chinese foods.

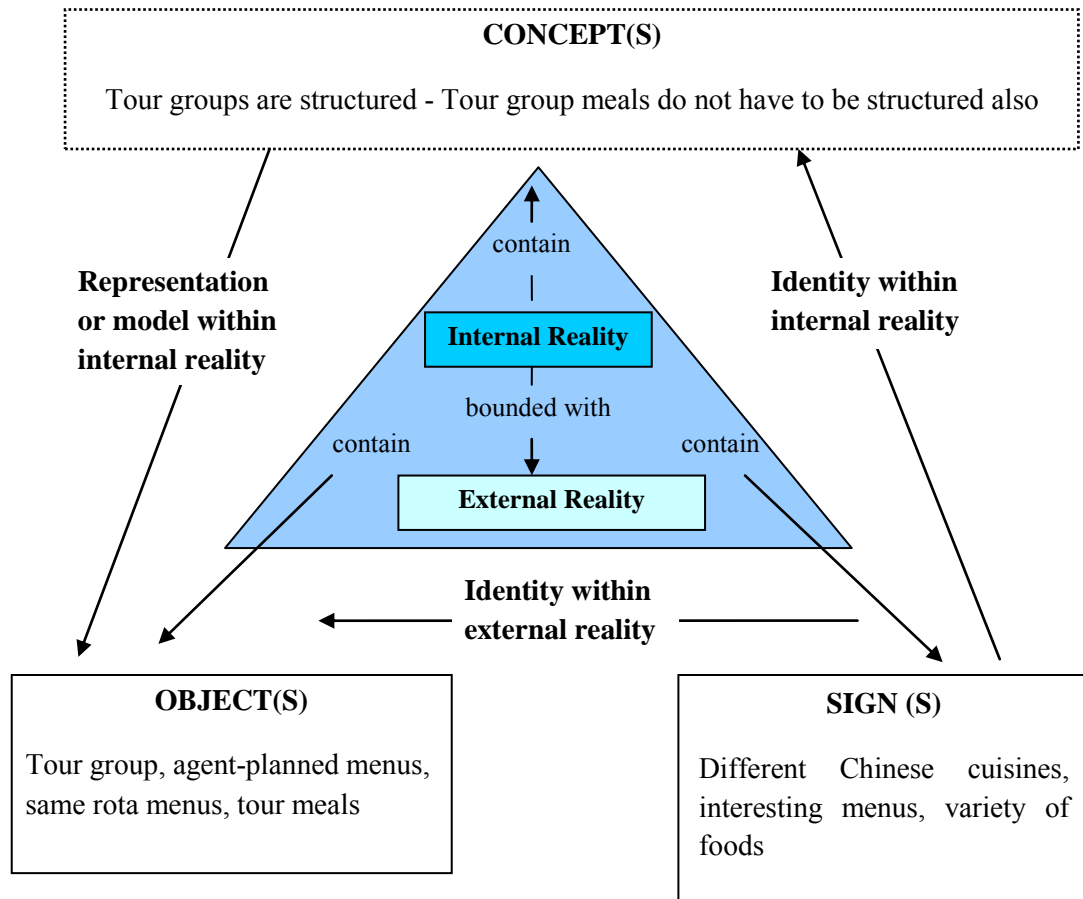
On the other hand, some of the respondents expressed that they sought variety and more choices in their meals. As one of respondent said:

"I like Chinese food with mild flavour and in different cooking styles. In Hangzhou and Shanghai the meals [planned] by the tour agency, [were based on the same] set menu. The six dishes provided by different restaurants were the same! I was satisfied with the quality of food but would like to have [had] more choices and variety on the menu." (H4)²¹

²¹ Respondent (H4): Male tourists from Malaysia, mid-30s, business executives, travel many times to China, travelled with a Malaysian incentive group with 25 colleagues.

Figure 4.2.2 b shows the analysis of the semiotic narrative of respondent (H4).

Figure 4.2.2.b Peirce's semiotics triangle



This respondent (H4) was rather exasperated that tour group meals were so rigidly structured that they offered no variety at all from one eating place to the next. Because he travelled as a group tour member, all his meal arrangements during his travel were organized by the travel agency. This meant he did not have the option of choosing from the menu as he would have liked. He could only order the menu items that were already pre-set by the travel agency and the local restaurants, no doubt with the agency taking a sizeable commission from the restaurant. The respondent (H4) experienced travel boredom due to the monotony of food items at every meal break

during his travel in China. Similar to some other respondents, he showed little interest in returning to China in the future. These unsatisfying encounters with food negatively coloured his perception of China as being a hardship destination which he did not desire to experience again. Findings by Bardhi et al. (2010) also suggested that many travellers in China perceived Chinese food to be monotonous after they had it for a while and that this negative perception escalated over time. Although Chinese cuisine is quite diverse, offering a range of different foods for different occasions, the repetition of tour group set menus overexposed the respondents to similar foods and were underwhelmed by the lack of options.

Discussion

In this section, the findings revealed that respondents had great difficulties finding local Chinese food that met with their religious dietary needs (kosher and halal food). Obviously, respondents were reluctant to depart from their ingrained eating behaviours and so retained their daily food rituals while travelling. As a result, it appears that negative perceptions of the destination ensued because local restaurants and hotels were not able to accommodate their special food needs. Exacerbating the situation was the fact that many respondents had difficulties understanding the Chinese wording on the menus and could not identify what food was edible or inedible according to their rituals. Feeling uncertain and suspicious about what they had eaten, the respondents were prompted to patronize global restaurant chains such as

MacDonald's and KFC because they believed that these global restaurant chains would accommodate their religious dietary needs. The implication here is that the respondents did not trust the local Chinese restaurants and hotels. To some extent, respondents' fears about the local Chinese food were also due to the strong influence of unfamiliar food on their ingrained eating behaviour. Therefore, it could be assumed that the religious dietary needs create a profound impact on their perceptions of the destination. It is likely that this will eventually influence their decisions when choosing a destination to visit. Another possibility, suggested by, Finklestein (1989), is that religion is used to strengthen one's exclusivity and uniqueness, and deep-rooted beliefs and convey them to others, in a similar way that some people may use their national status, social status and one's wealth, to strengthen one's superiority and uniqueness to others. This leads to the formation of the eighth proposition:

Proposition 8: Travellers' destination choice decision is often affected negatively by their religious dietary needs if and/or when those needs cannot be met at the destination.

In this study, findings revealed that incorrect or incomplete translations of menu item descriptions and language barriers caused tremendous anxiety for respondents at mealtimes, especially when the respondents were searching for appropriate foods to suit their needs. Thus, a feeling of distrust in local restaurants,

hotels, and staff developed due to a lack of appropriate information on the menu or from the staff. Because of this, respondents refused to patronize local restaurants.

It was also found that some respondents were noticeably surprised at the difference between the Chinese food in China and the Chinese food in the USA. These findings show that the respondents used their previous experiences with the Chinese food at home as the basis of their expectations. For example, respondents (G2 & G3) were able to distinguish between the tastes of Chinese food in China because of their experiences in the USA. This finding suggests that tourists' previous dining experiences with Chinese food in their home countries had shaped their taste and expectations of what Chinese food were (Bardhi et al, 2010). Respondents' perceptions of China, a vast and ancient country, included beliefs that it offered a vast and ancient cuisine with great varieties of foods, tastes, and cooking methods. In this respect, it appears that the respondents' perceptions about Chinese food in China were the real Chinese foods and that it should be different (i.e. better) from the Chinese food in the USA. Thus, the ninth proposition:

Proposition 9: Travellers' expectations and evaluations of their dining experiences when travelling are affected by their perceptions of the destination.

Chang et al. (2011) suggested that the evaluation of tourists' dining experiences is affected by the variety of foods and the diversity of meal arrangements. In this study some respondents expressed exasperation with the tour group meal arrangements, which were rigid and offered little variety during their stay in China. These respondents experienced travel boredom due to the monotony of the food items at every meal during their trip in China. The finding substantiates the notion that tourists perceived that the Chinese food in China was monotonous and their negative perceptions escalated as they continued to be exposed to the same dishes throughout their stay (Bardhi et al., 2010). This suggests that the variety of food and diversity of meal arrangements does affect tourists' evaluations of their travel experiences. The respondents' judgments about food extend to judgments about the culture of the destination. If it is perceived as being limiting, some travellers might not have any interest in returning to that destination in the future. To this end, the above discussion yields the following proposition:

Proposition 10: Better food choice and diversified meal arrangements for tour groups is a catalyst for generating memorable dining experiences while travelling.

4.3 Food related environment

Findings about the food related environment are presented in this section. Characteristics of the food related environment include: food safety and hygiene, operation's cleanliness, menus, décor, staff practices, and ambience. As stated by Fields (2002), for tourists the entire experience of dining out, particularly in good restaurants, is composed of many elements. It is not just about the food on plate, but includes such dimensions as service, cleanliness and hygiene, décor, lighting, air conditioning, furnishing, acoustics, size and shape of the space, other clients, and ambience. All of these combined or separate contribute to the dining experience.

4.3.1 Hygiene and health

For most of the tourists their trips were relatively short and expensive, and they wanted to get the most out of them. Thus, they tended to be cautious about crime, weather and illness, all of which could disrupt and spoil their holidays. Fear of illness has a direct correlation to the consumption of local foods and would be one of the main reasons for tourists might avoid local food; i.e. it might make them sick (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

Based on the results of the interviews, some respondents reported that they would only go to restaurants that looked clean and hygienic. The following statement highlights this further:

“I eat in local restaurants and choose ones that [at least look] hygienic or [are] full of local people. [I guess there is safety in numbers].” (G29)²²

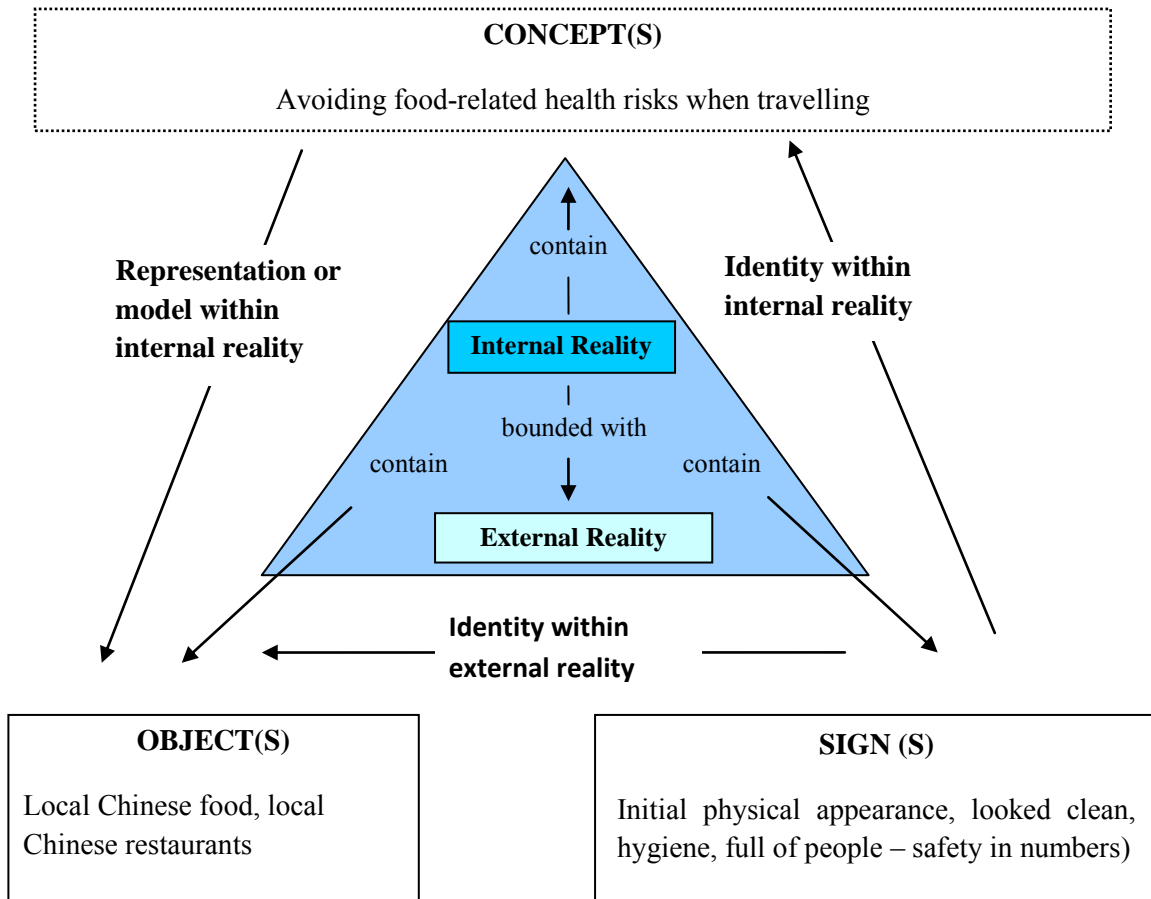
“We [chose] restaurants randomly, [but] we always picked the ones that look clean, I didn’t want to get sick in China.” (S19, S20)²³

Figure 4.3.1.a shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (G29, S19, S20 & G24).

²² Respondent (G29): Female tourist from Czech Republic, late 20s, Administration Clerk, 1st time to China.

²³ Respondent (S19 & S20): Male tourists from Italy, late 50s and early 30s respectively, both are businessmen, 1st time to China, travelled together

Figure 4.3.1 a Peirce's semiotics triangle



These narratives revealed that these travelers were cautious about patronizing local restaurants. They used the phrases “looked clean” and “full of people”, to confirm that the restaurants might be clean, that is, the food was clean and safe to eat. The nonchalant use of the metaphor “I guess there is safety in numbers”, it is suggested, was a re-confirmation in the respondent’s mind that she made the right assessment and choice, otherwise ‘why would the restaurant be so popular if the food was bad’! Hence, one can argue that many travelers make very similar judgments based on the in-situ observation about the cleanliness and hygiene of the shop front and how busy the place is. Even though these are arbitrary and highly subjective assessments, for these

respondents, and many other travelers, such a positive outcome goes a long way in alleviating their food-hygiene anxieties, and can ultimately make the travel experience very pleasurable (Liu and Jang, 2009). Therefore the “looks clean” shop front and “full of people” were visual signifiers that helped to generate trust and encouraged the respondents to take a calculated risk, despite the fact that they really had no proof that the restaurants’ food was prepared in a hygienic manner. Nevertheless, this finding confirms Liu and Jang’s research (2009) about how American customers perceived Chinese restaurants in the USA, where food safety and environmental cleanliness were the two most salient prerequisites when choosing a Chinese restaurant. In this case, the respondents indicated that they preferred to travel in an “environmental safety bubble” of familiar foods in clean environments, which outweighed their desire for novelty-seeking or partaking of unfamiliar local food. Furthermore, according to Knight, Worosz and Todd (2009), customers who believed they became ill after eating at a restaurant, associated the illness with the appearance and taste of the meal, the cleanliness of the restaurant, and the meal itself, (e.g. being spicy and greasy, eating foods that they did not usually eat, and personal hygiene of servers). In this study, respondents also perceived that eating in an unfamiliar restaurant in an unfamiliar place in China, posed a potential health risk to them, thus they tended to be cautious and suspicious about the cleanliness of the local restaurants and food handling practices during their travels in China. In addition, warnings from health professionals, travel warnings found in guidebooks, and travel websites about food dangers tended to intensify these health concerns before their China trip. These coupled with travellers’ stories and blogs about unfortunate dining experiences, exacerbated the respondents’ apprehensions regarding the safety of food in China, and extended to beliefs about

how safe China really was as a destination, prompting two Italian travelers to comment that they didn't want to get sick in China.

Closely related to food safety, and often more sensitive, was the issue of drinking water, or the safety of it. Quite a sizeable number of respondents avoided local tap water as well as bottled water, as the first line of defense in not getting ill while traveling. As this respondent expressed:

"...is this tap water? How is gin and tonic served...is it in a can?... I asked the waiter about the tap water and food because I'm concerned about my health. I am [just] cautious not [only] because I'm travelling in China."(G24)²⁴

This respondent revealed that tap water was a potential risk to her health, and she was cautious when consuming local drinks including the quality of bottled water in China, prompting the questions about how gin and tonic was served. Similar to other respondents (G29, S19 & S20), she (G24) also perceived that drinking water in China posed a potential health risk to her. Cohen and Avieli (2004) reported that tap water and often fake bottled water at many destinations are unfit for consumption. Locals often boiled their drinking water. In the study's sample, most respondents were more than a little paranoid about the dangers of drinking water which led to suspicions and fear and resulted in the avoidance of consuming water but also local food as well.

²⁴ Respondent (G24): Female tourist from Australia, mid-40s, Lecturer, travelled to China many times, travelled with 2 girlfriends

To some respondents, this fear strongly influenced how they perceived China as a travel destination. It became a hardship destination.

4.3.2 *Menu*

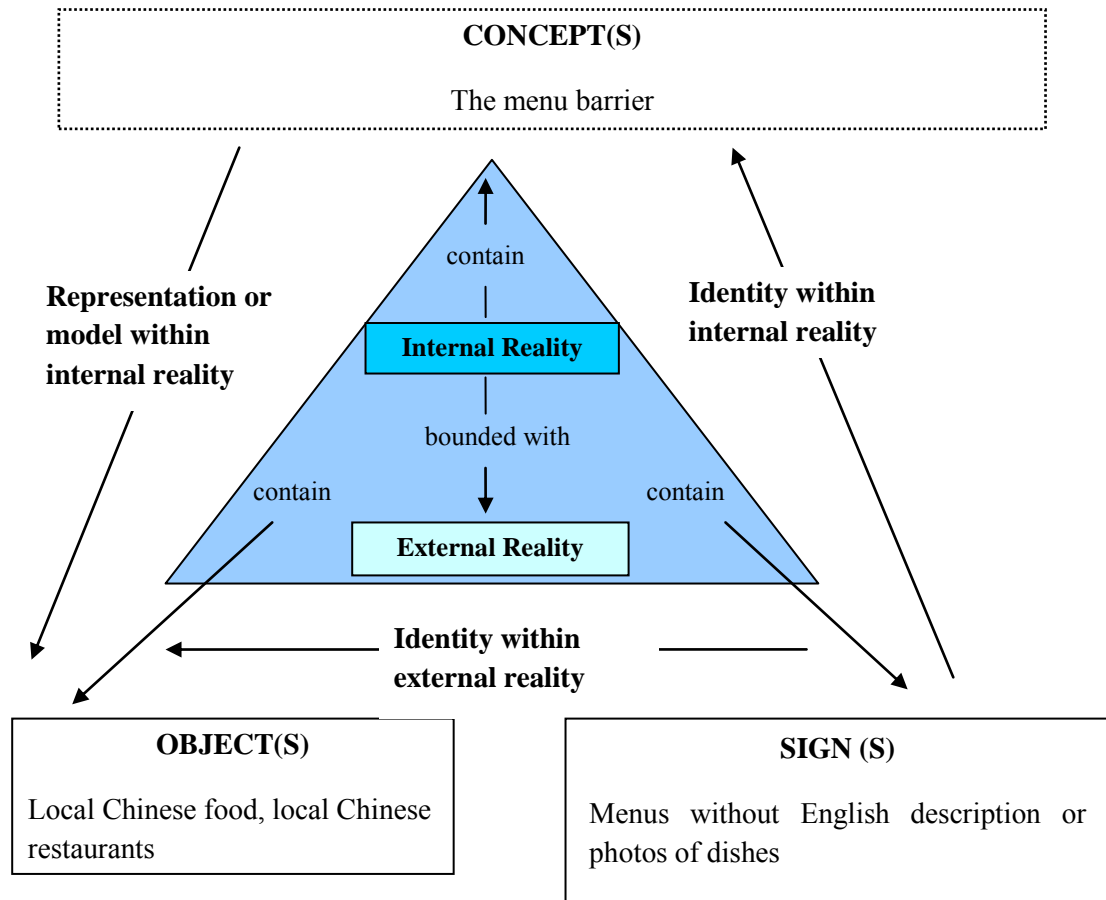
Curiously, some respondents who had travelled to China before refused to eat in restaurants when they could not read or understand menu, or if menus were without photos of food items, for instance:

“....I will point at the photos on the menus... if the menu is written in Chinese and without any photo, I will not go inside that restaurant. I will look at the menu before I go inside the restaurants....if no photos of the food and no English.... I don't go inside (S17)²⁵

Figure 4.3.2.a shows the analysis of the semiotic narratives of respondents (S17).

²⁵ Respondent (S17): Male tourist from USA, late 30s, Associate Professor, travels to China many time, travel with 20 students from USA.

Figure 4.3.2.a Peirce's semiotics triangle



The narrative revealed that, in many instances, the restaurants' menu was the initial barrier which, because of fear and uncertainty, prompted some respondents to not even enter into the restaurant. Whilst the language barrier, for most, was the barrier which they could not overcome, the lack of pictures on the menu was in most instances the final deciding factor – to go in or not to go in. This finding corroborates the findings of Cohen and Avieli (2004), who suggested that even when travelers are curious and reasonably adventurous in their pursuit of tasting local food, they are not likely to try a restaurant if there is an absence of pictures of menu items. One can argue therefore that photos of menu items were the signifiers which greatly reduced the uncertainty and

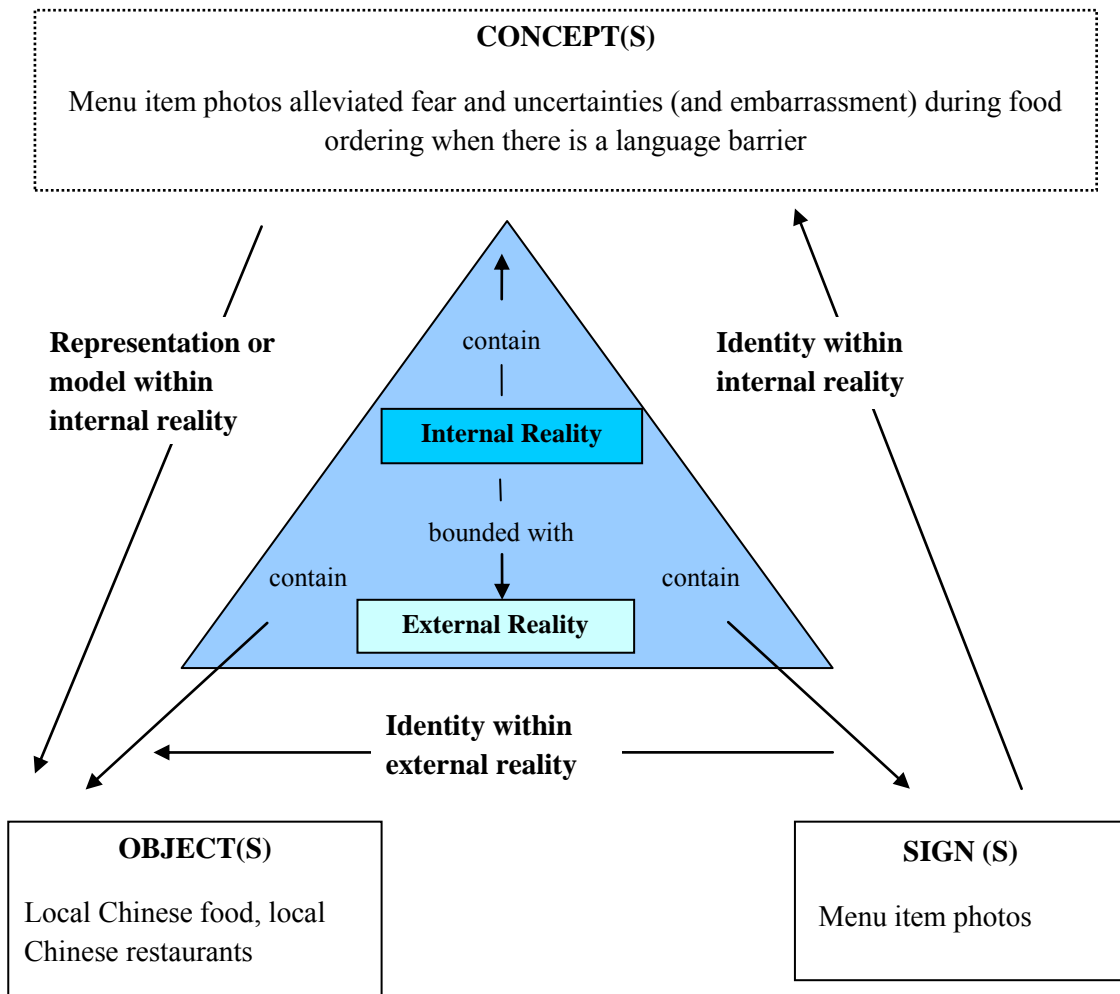
anxiety when respondents ordered food in local restaurants while travelling in China. Furthermore, pictures of the food items encouraged many respondents to go to local restaurants to try the local foods. In this context, photos of food can be used as an alternative form of communication to help alleviate tourists' uncertainties and anxieties about foods and ordering foods during travel. The following respondent mentioned how she made use of photos when ordering food:

“I show the servers a book full of different food photos and sometimes I use body language as well. Most of the time I can order food items successfully. It makes me appreciate the destination even more” (G34)²⁶

Figure 4.3.2.b shows the analysis of the semiotic narrative of the respondent (G34).

²⁶ Respondent (G34): Female tourists from Australia, early 40s, housewife, 2nd time to China, travelled with her husband

Figure 4.3.2.b Peirce's semiotics triangle

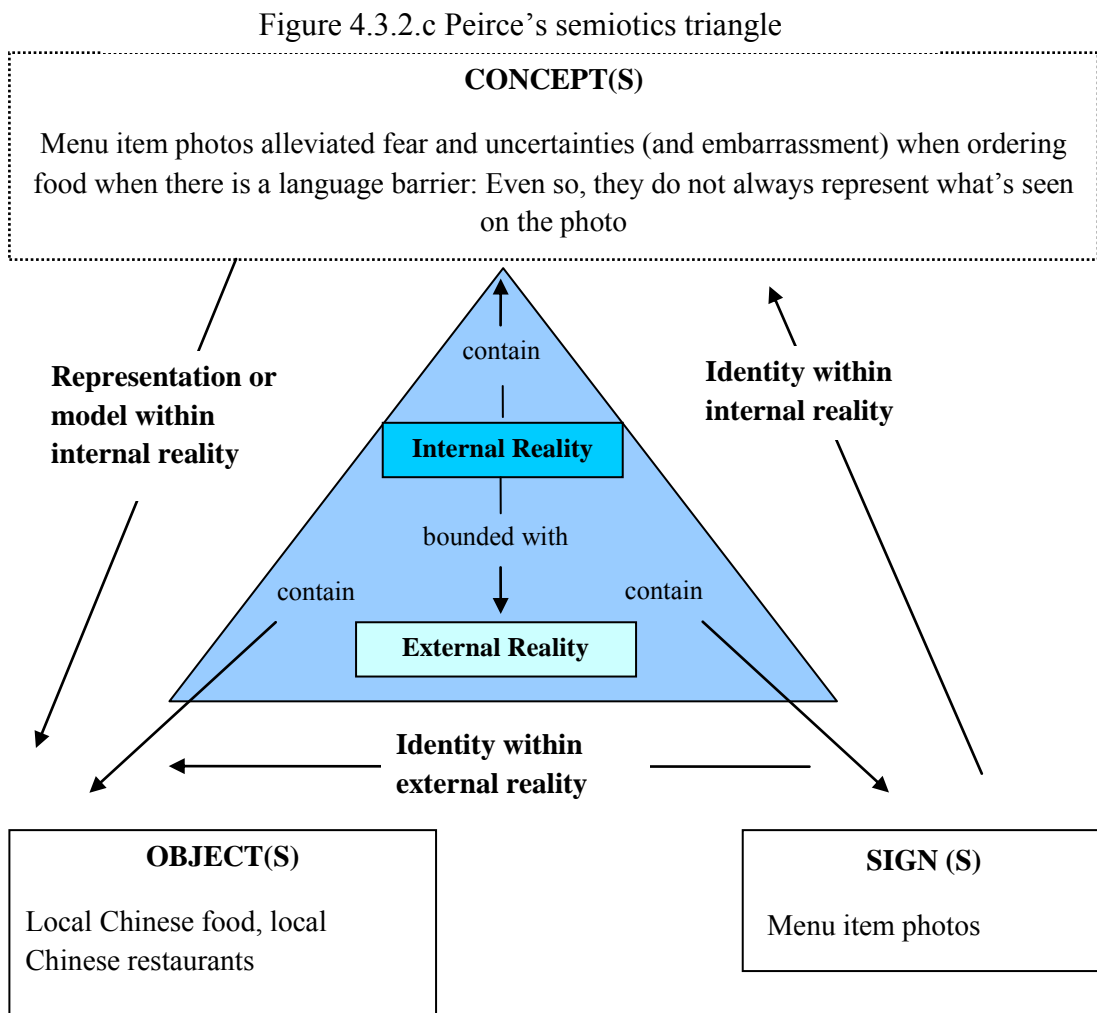


These narratives have clearly revealed that by being a little more resourceful, this respondent was able to successfully overcome a major travel impediment, a language barrier when ordering food in restaurants, by showing photos of food to the staff. Importantly, food photos, and even body language, were the key signifiers that helped to overcome the communications barrier between the respondent and restaurant staff. However, by using this strategy, the respondent could only show to the servers the

kind of foods she wanted to order and not the preparation or cooking method which might have still led to misunderstanding, for example:

“The other day I ordered a dish after I saw photos of it on the menu. It looked like some meat and it looked very good. [The dish was pork and taro... [but] it was very greasy with lots of fat. [as a result]I was sick the whole night. It’s an unpleasant experience in China.” (G7)²⁷

Figure 4.3.2.c shows the analysis of the semiotic narrative of respondent (G7).



²⁷ Respondent (G7): Male tourist from Belgium, early 50s, retired, 1st time to China

Therefore, it can be suggested that the sign, a photograph of the real object, (the menu item) may not always be faithful to the object, and in this case, the respondent did not really know what he actually ordered, because of essential items of information were not available from the sign, namely ingredients, the quality of ingredients and the cooking method. This misalignment between the sign and object and created a risk of illness. And in fact the respondent was sick because of the greasy pork. In this case, the signifier, which was meant to alleviate uncertainty of the unfamiliar menu item failed. Arguably, if the menu provided not only the photos of the dish, but also the English description of ingredients and the cooking method, the respondent could have made a more informed decision and thus reduced risk. Thus, as alluded to earlier, the photo was a catalyst which was meant to elevate the level of trust of the respondent and assure him that the dish was good and safe to eat. However, as far as the respondent was concerned, he soon realized that the photo was just that, a representation or an illusion, of the real dish.

4.3.3 Physical and spatial environment

The physical environment of the restaurant is one of the most influential factors affecting customers' psychological states and behavior in a restaurant setting (Ryu & Jang, 2007; 2008a; 2008b). Ryu and Jang (2008a) created a dining specific atmospheric scale, DINESCAPE, which evaluates how a restaurant's internal dining environment influences customers' perceptions of the experience. They analysed the

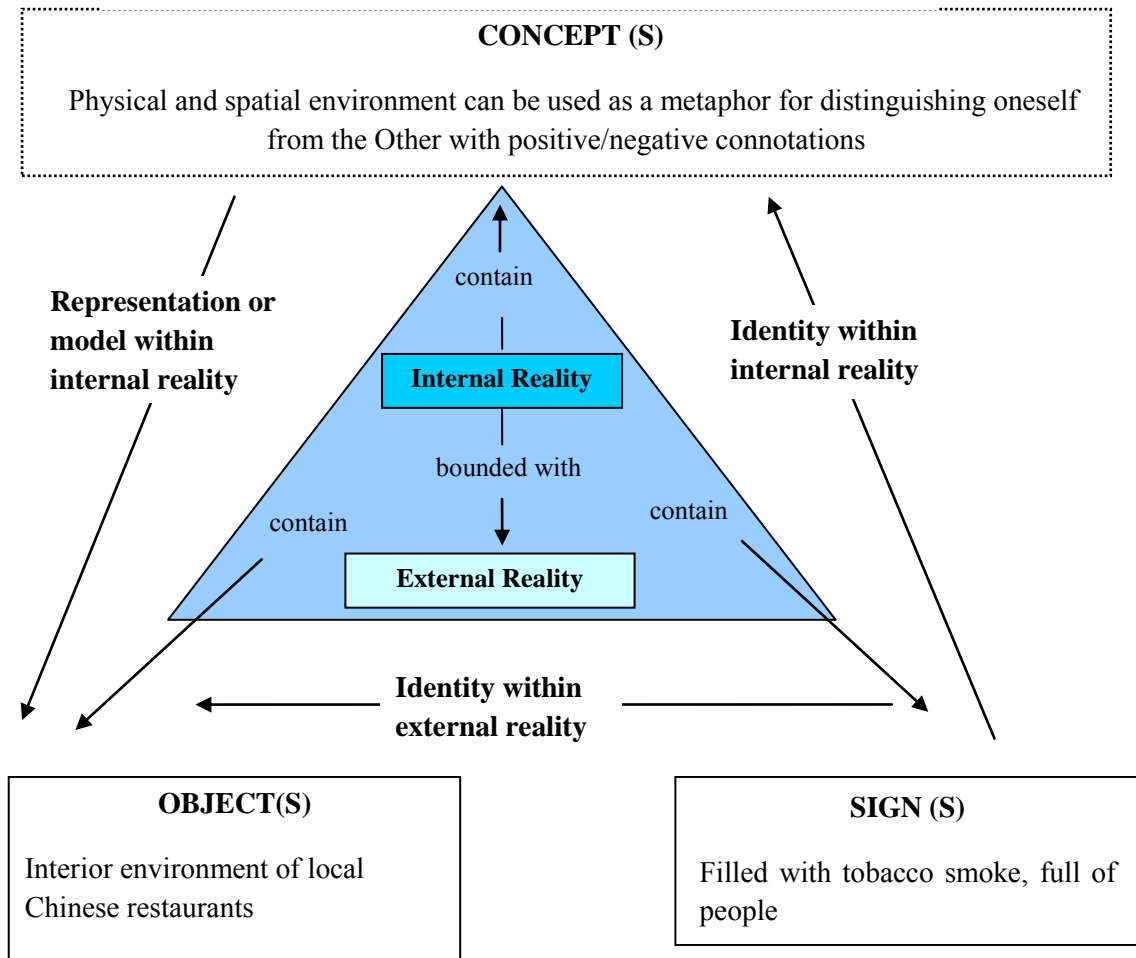
impacts of dining environments on behavioral intentions through emotions. Their studies have found that positive beliefs about the organisation and its services and products result in positive emotions produced by the positive perceptions of the operation's atmospherics (Ha and Jang, 2010). Importantly, what Ha and Jang's (2010) study found was that environmental elements had a profound ability to influence customers' perceptions before they actually experienced the services and products. Furthermore, related literature also supports this view, emphasizing that physical environment is a key factor in attracting or repelling customers to the restaurant, and can serve as either a key deterrent or an attraction to revisit (Kim et al., 2009; Kivela et al., 2000; Meiselman et al., 2000; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2002). The results of the interviews in this study also show that key elements associated with the physical environment of restaurants in China, including appearance, interior design and décor, lighting, ambience, and cleanliness, acted as a key deterrent or attraction for respondents to patronize or not patronize the restaurant. For example:

“Sometimes when we [just took a look inside] the restaurants... and if the inside was filled with smoke or was full of people, then we would go to another restaurant... some seemed to be good...food looked good...but all that smoke and noise...we could not stand it. We probably missed many good restaurants ... [maybe] they should have smoking and non-smoking zones... this is China! [They] should completely ban smoking inside restaurants... just like in the USA.” (G21)²⁸

Figure 4.3.3.a shows the analysis of the semiotic narrative of the respondent (G21).

²⁸ Respondent (G21): Female tourist from USA, mid-30s, IT specialist, 2nd time to China, travelled with husband

Figure 4.3.3.a Peirce's semiotics triangle



This respondent (G21) had concerns similar to those of other respondents (G29, S9 & S20). One respondent (G21) was concerned about the effect of smoke on her health; however, a restaurant “full of people” and “this is China”, were metaphors for distinguishing herself from the Others with negative connotations (Finkelstein, 1989). Arguably, this respondent felt that she was somewhat superior to all the other patrons who smoked and who were noisy; something which does not happen in restaurants in the USA, hence her aversion to these local restaurants in China.

While some respondents were eager to seek out local delicacies and have seen this pursuit as a salient part of their travel experiences, for others (G21) restaurants and food experiences were merely an extension of their normal daily routine or experience back home. The respondent's (G21) preoccupation in visiting local Chinese restaurants was to look for the 'ontological comfort of home', "ban smoking inside restaurants just like in the USA", was one way to overcome personal anxieties, but also to elevate oneself in comparison to the locals (Quan and Wong, 2004:301). Moreover, the respondent (G21) also has concern on her health risk as the second-hand smoke is harmful to her health. Nevertheless, the unpleasant environments of restaurants and risk avoidance discourage tourists from patronizing them. Yüksel and Yüksel (2002) proposed that: "customers like to spend time and money in pleasant dining environments which prompts deep feelings of pleasure, which on the account of, they would avoid unpleasant dining environments." As already noted, Ha and Jang's (2010) findings showed that the environmental elements of a restaurant strongly influenced customers' perceptions long before they actually experienced the restaurant. This also explains why this respondent (G21) rather forewent the local food than being in a restaurant with an unpleasant environment.

On the other hand one can argue that the respondent's prior experiences with Chinese restaurants in the USA, which are very different from those in China, created a shock when she encountered local restaurants. She emphasized and contrasted the spatial environment (people) to that of the USA "full of people" and "this is China", which furthers the notion that China is not a familiar destination. Although she also

wanted to venture out from her ‘environmental bubble’, the situation of the restaurant in China became too rough for her. Hence, she step back into her ‘environmental bubble’, thus respondent (G21) is a typical example of explorer describe by Cohen (1972).

Here, she used “full of people” and “this is China” as signifiers to distinguish herself from the ‘exotic Other’ and suggests that other travellers might be different from, or better than, or superior to the locals. Importantly, what might appear as the search for a sense of security in the context of food consumption during travel in China was in fact a creation of a boundary to maintain a distance between herself and the Chinese Others (Bardhi et al., 2010).

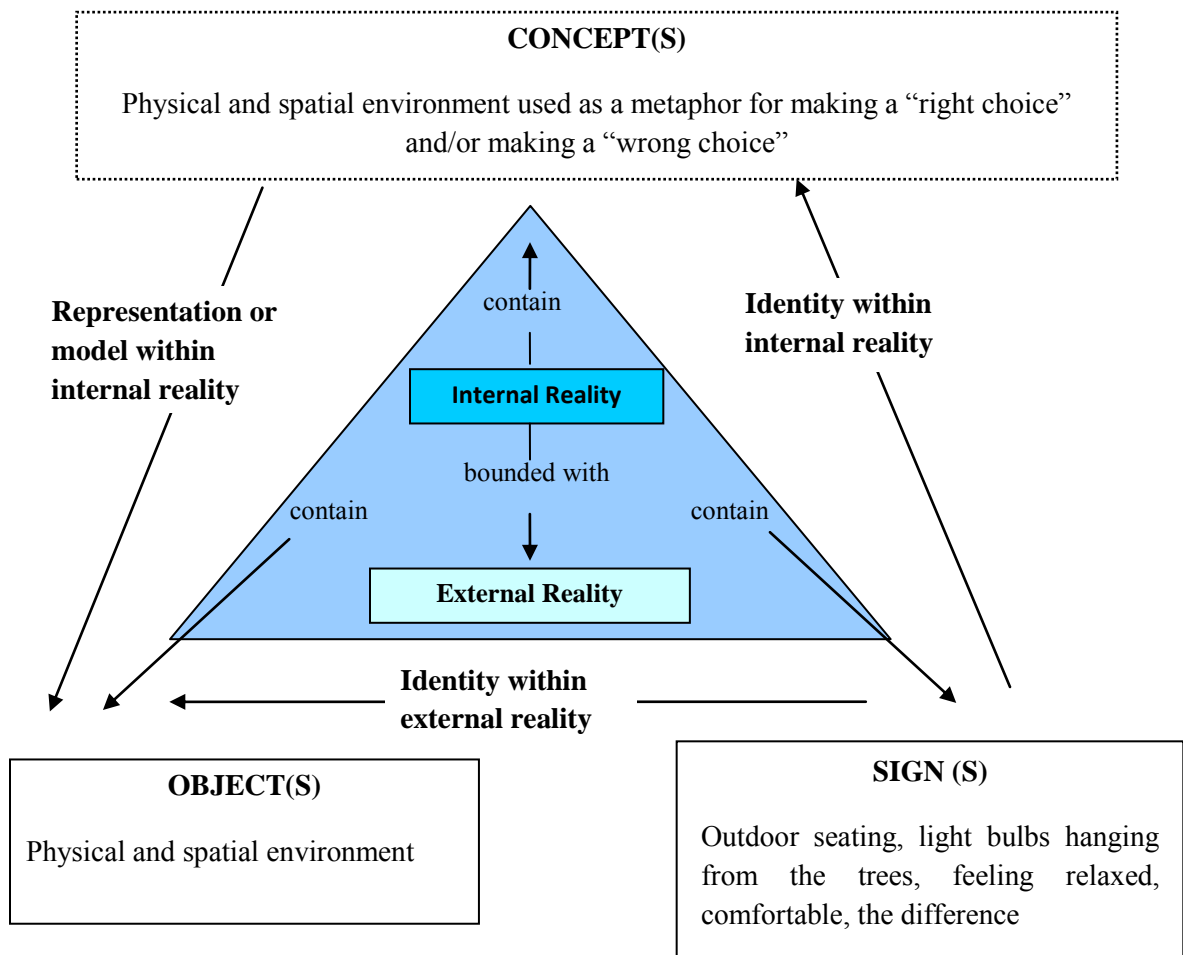
On the other hand, a pleasant physical environment in a restaurant can play a key role in creating a memorable dining experience and positive perceptions of the destination, for example:

“...I went into a local restaurant with outdoor seating in the evening. There were lots of light bulbs hanging from the trees, it was so beautiful. Although the food was kind of average, the light bulbs made me feel very relaxed and comfortable. My friend and I talked and talked and hours just went by....a restaurant like this makes all the difference... I am really enjoying this trip ...great destination!” (G18)²⁹

Figure 4.3.3 b shows the analysis of the semiotic narrative of respondent (G18).

²⁹Respondent (G18): Male tourist from USA, mid-30s, assistant professor, experienced traveller to China

Figure 4.3.3.b Peirce's semiotics triangle



For this respondent (G18) the restaurant's atmosphere made all the difference, a metaphor for having made the right destination ("I am really enjoying this trip ...great destination!"), and restaurant. The food itself, which was described as average, did not play a great role as the signifier or the object. Rather, the respondent's emotions were shaped by the very relaxed and comfortable dining experience. This finding corroborates with the theoretical model proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) who postulated that the physical environment does influence customers' deeper

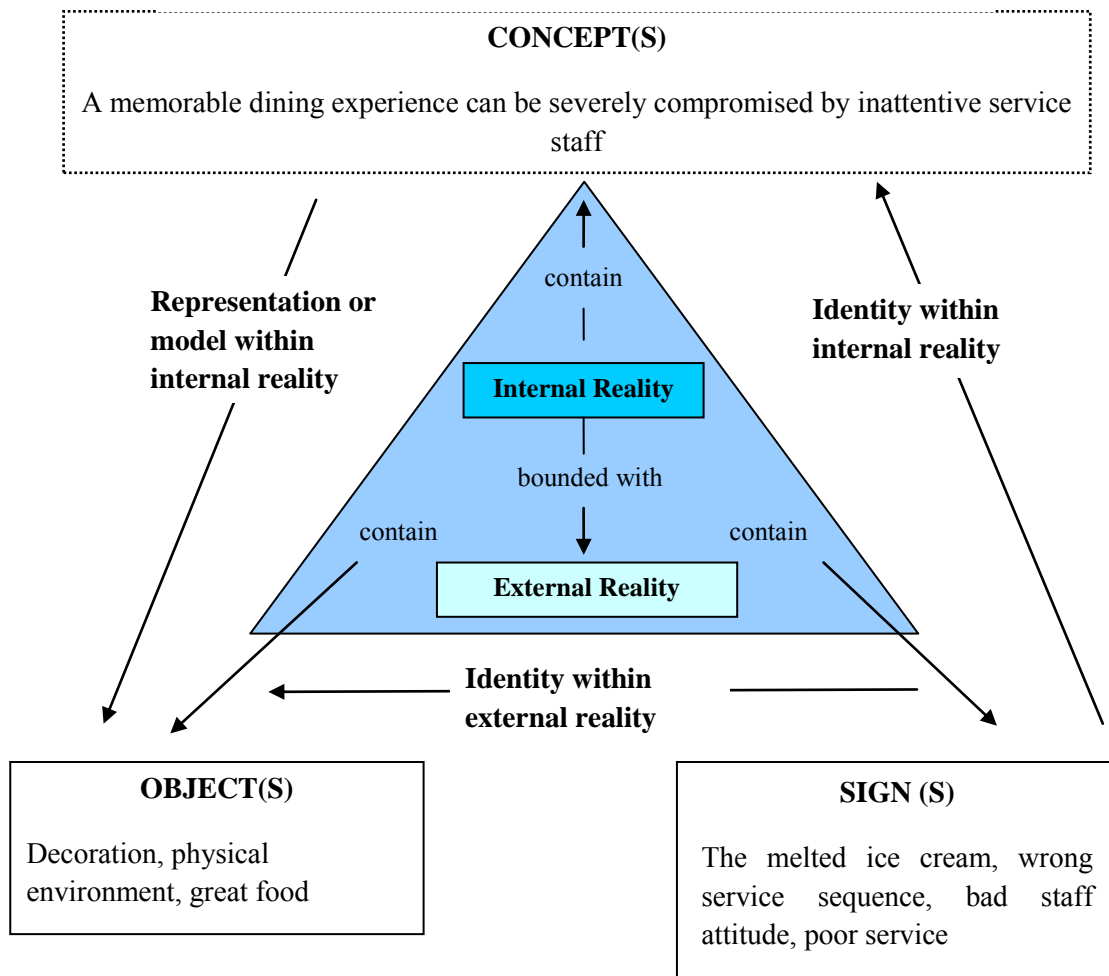
emotional responses, such as intense pleasure and arousal, which in turn trigger either acceptance or avoidance behavior. They go on to say that acceptance behavior included a desire to stay, to look around and to explore the environment, and to communicate with others in the environment. Avoidance consists of the opposite behaviors (Jang & Namkung, 2009; Liu & Jang, 2009). As Ha and Jung (2010) suggested, apart from physical environment, providing quality service and food is critical to induce customer satisfaction and loyalty, for example:

“My friend and I were attracted by the decorations and the environment of the restaurant ...we went in and ordered two dinner sets. After 10 minutes, the dessert was delivered to us before the soup and main courses. It was an ice-cream and it melted very quickly. Eventually, I asked the waiter to take it back into the kitchen and bring it out again after we’ve finished the main courses. When we finished the main courses, we asked for the dessert again, however, the waiter told us that the dessert was already sold out...he really wasn’t interested... and just walked off.... Although the food was delicious, the waiter had a bad attitude and the service was not up to standard. We had a very bad dining experience and would not return to that place in the future.”(S4)³⁰

Figure 4.3.3.c shows the analysis of the semiotic narrative of the respondent (S4).

³⁰ Respondent (S4): Female tourist from Spain, mid-20s, designer, 1st time to China.

Figure 4.3.3.c Peirce's semiotics triangle



This respondent's (S4) narrative revealed what seems to be a common finding in similar studies, that it only takes one bad attribute to negatively affect all the other good attributes in a restaurant setting. A plethora of similar studies have suggested that physical environment plays a vital role in influencing customer intention to visit the restaurant (Kim et al., 2009; Meiselman et al., 2000; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2003). In this study, both the respondent and her friend were positively influenced by the physical environment. Jang and Namkung (2010) warned, though that product quality (food) alone might not be sufficient enough to create an overall positive emotion. Rather, customer-staff relationships seemed to be the key element that greatly helped in creating

positive emotions for the customer. The resultant behaviour in this example typifies the findings of Jang and Namkung (2010), where factors such as food, ambiance, but most notably, service quality, play a key role in creating either positive or negative dining experiences or customer emotions.

Discussion

It should be noted that previous literature has suggested that tourists are afraid of being sick during travelling, which leads to their suspicion of local foods (Bardhi et al., 2010; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Lee & Gibson, 2003; Povey, 2011). The findings here suggest that many of the respondents patronized local restaurants that 'looked clean' and were 'full of local people'. This implies that the respondents made judgments based on observations of the cleanliness and hygiene of the eatery and how busy the place was, to deduce that the restaurant in question might be clean, and that the food was safe to eat. It further suggests that the respondents made a correct assessment and choice about the restaurants. Although there was no proof that the restaurants' food was actually prepared in a hygienic manner, the subjective assessment based on physical cues made by the respondents did alleviate their anxiety about food hygiene issues. Therefore it could be assumed the cleanliness of the physical environment and the activity level of the restaurants might generate trust about the restaurants that helps overcome the food-hygiene risk perceived by the respondents. The findings also revealed that some respondents perceived that tap water might be a risk to their health

and were cautious when consuming local drinks, including the quality of bottled water in China. This suggests that the respondents were anxious about the dangers of drinking water. This led to suspicions about and avoidance of not only the drinking water, but also the local food.

Furthermore, the warnings about food danger from health professionals, in guidebooks, and on travel websites, together with the stories of unfortunate dining experiences from other travellers' stories and blogs intensified tourists' concerns about food safety before their trip to China. Consequently, travellers were reluctant to patronize the local restaurants, or even sample local food and beverages, because of their food-hygiene worries or how safe the destination was. Thus, by implication, the tourists' misgivings regarding the food safety during travelling in China constitute a critical impediment to their travel dining experiences. These findings lead to the following proposition:

Proposition 11: Travellers aversion to food related health risks results in avoidance in partaking of indigenous foods at the destination, which in turn lessens their desire for seeking novel dining experiences.

Furthermore, these findings suggest that many respondents were hesitant to enter local eateries due to the language barrier and lack of comprehension about the menu. This corroborates the notion that tourists avoid patronizing local restaurants due to an inability to understand the menus and not being able to communicate with restaurant staff (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Povey, 2011). This implies that the respondents were fearful and uncertain about the menu items, which lead to an avoidance of the local restaurants, despite the respondents being interested in tasting the indigenous foods. They forewent to enter into the local restaurants in absence of pictures of menu items. Thus, the following proposition is suggested:

Proposition 12: The menu is often a barrier for the travellers entering into local restaurants.

Some respondents overcame menu barriers in rather resourceful ways: by using body language and showing photos of foods when ordering food in local restaurants while travelling in China. The pictures of foods and menu items were another form of communication, which could lessen travellers' uncertainties and fear about the foods in local restaurants, and also facilitated ordering during their travel. In this respect, travellers found ways to taste the local food with a degree of confidence which enabled them to seek out exciting dining experiences. These findings lead to the following proposition:

Proposition 13: Graphic representations of menu items alleviate travellers' fears, uncertainties, and embarrassment when ordering indigenous foods at the destination.

Nevertheless, using menu items photos can still potentially lead to misunderstandings, as the respondents can only show the restaurant staff the kind of foods they want to order, but neither the preparation nor cooking methods can be conveyed through pictures. Even when using graphic representation (photos), some of the respondents were not really sure what they actually ordered, although they were more confident in their selection. This was because of a photo of the real object (the menu item) was an image of real subject that could not really represented all essential information of that menu item, such as, the ingredients and their quality of the ingredients and the cooking methods. The photo of the menu item is only one mean of served as a catalyst to intensify the trust level of the respondents on the menu item was good and safe to consume. In this respect, photos of food were just that, a representation or an illusion of the real menu item.

Respondents' accounts suggest that the physical environment of the eatery is an influential factor affecting their choice of local restaurants during their travels. In earlier accounts, respondents have expressed that they would rather forego many good restaurants rather than enter local restaurants filled with smoke, noise, and full of local people. Respondents confronted with these aspects of the Other's culture didn't quite know what to make of it. To some extent, they were 'intruding' into someone else's place. Restaurants "full of people" and "noisy" were metaphors to indicating that they

felt perhaps that they were more superior to the local people who smoke and were noisy, which did not happen in the restaurants in the USA. Hence, they distinguished themselves from the Others, local people, and developed a negative impression about local restaurants in China. In this respect, one could argue that the respondents were somewhat shocked by the local restaurants in China because their prior experiences with Chinese restaurants in the USA were quite different. They contrasted aspects of the spatial environment namely the people to that in the USA, which furthered the notion that that China is not a familiar destination. Although she also wanted to venture out from her 'environmental bubble', the situation of the restaurant in China became too rough for her. Hence, she step back into her 'environmental bubble', thus respondent (G21) is a typical example of explorer describe by Cohen (1972). Therefore, one could assume that tourists tend to distinguish themselves from the 'exotic Other' seeing themselves as different, or even better and superior to the local people. This notion is similar to the one put forth by Bardhi et al. (2010) that travellers created a boundary to maintain a distance between themselves and the 'exotic Other'. Thus, by implication, travellers searched for a sense of security via food consumption during travels in China. And so they avoided entering into restaurants that were full of local people, and without the presence of other travelers, leading to this proposition:

Proposition 14: Physical and spatial environmental cues are often used as metaphors for travellers to distinguish themselves from the Other's culture, creating positive or negative connotations about the local restaurants when travelling.

A pleasant physical environment in a restaurant contributes to a memorable dining experience for the tourists and leads to a positive perception of the destination, as well. The findings of this study revealed that despite the average quality of the food, the respondents' emotions were shaped by relaxing and comfortable dining experiences. This supports the theoretical model proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) who posited that the physical environment influenced an individual's emotional state (pleasure and arousal), which in turn affected acceptance or avoidance behaviour. The acceptance behaviour included a desire to stay, to look around and explore the environment, and to communicate with others in the environment; avoidance is comprised of the opposite behaviours (Jang & Namkung, 2009; Liu & Jang, 2009). The physical environment of restaurants clearly influences how travellers experience dining, which leads to an assessment of whether they made the right choice in picking the destination in the first place. Thus the following proposition is derived as:

Proposition 15: Physical and spatial environment are often used as metaphors by some travellers for either have make a 'right' or 'wrong' destination choice.

Previous literature suggested that the physical environment, together with quality service and food, is important to induce customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ha & Jang, 2010). In the realm of tourists' dining experiences, one bad attribute might negatively affect all the other good attributes in a restaurant setting. The findings of this

study revealed that respondents were positively influenced by the physical environment of local restaurants, however, that alone was often not sufficient in creating an overall positive emotion. Service quality too seemed to be a key element in creating a positive customer emotion, also. These supports the notion that food, ambiance, and service quality all complement each other and lead to either positive or negative dining experiences, and create corresponding customer emotions (Ha & Jang, 2010; Jang & Namkung, 2010).

4.4 Attributes which affected travellers' dining experiences while travelling in China

Arising from the discussion of the analysis of the semiotic narratives of the travellers dining experiences, a model (Figure 4.4) was developed in order to show some of the key attributes that travellers employed in evaluating their travel dining experiences while visiting China. A total of 16 key attributes which affected the respondents' evaluations of their dining experiences were identified. They were classified in the following eight categories:

1. Culture
2. Authentic location
3. Novelty or adventure seeking
4. Special travel needs
5. Indigenous foods
6. Hygiene and health

7. Menus
8. Physical and spatial environment

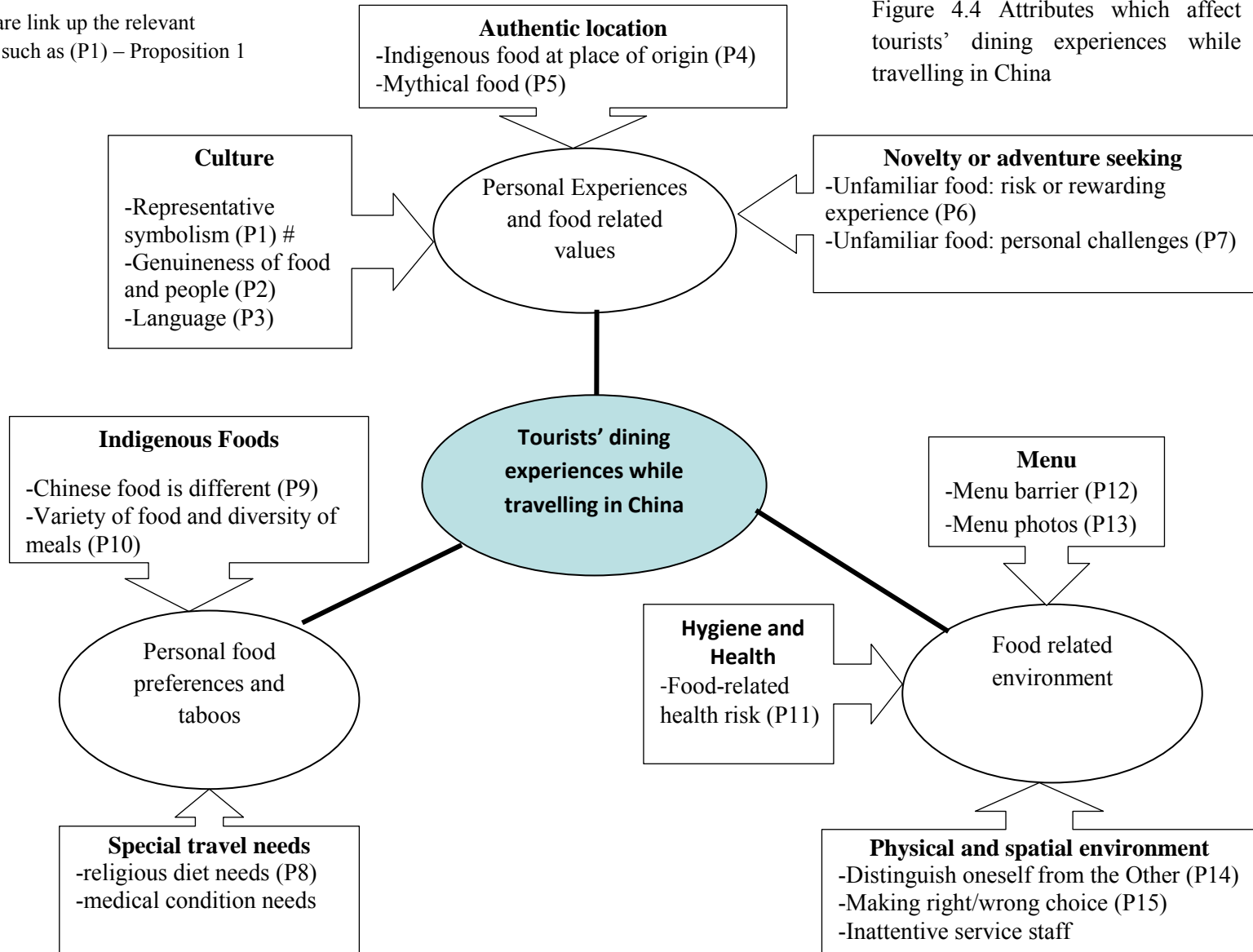
Dining at local restaurants at the destination is one means of learning about the local culture at the destination. This model suggests that the travellers used representative symbolism, dined on genuine local food, and came in contact with local people, as some of the ways of appreciating the Other's culture, in China. While knowing the language in order to directly communicate with the locals might be an advantage for some in understanding the culture at deeper level, for most travellers, this is not possible. In this study, the perception of an authentic location was facilitated by dining on indigenous foods at the place of origin. For some, the experience transcended to a mythical level invoked understanding through history and lore, and the poetic meaning behind some foods, enabling the travellers to connect to the destinations' culture, and their own past. Equally, for other travellers, it was found that consuming local food not eaten before was one of the most exciting experiences during their travel in China. The model also attempts to show that travellers can be quite suspicious when it comes to unfamiliar foods. These foods represent a potential health risk to them, and/or a violation of a religious law and at times became a severe challenge to their day to day eating arrangements and travel experience in general. Equally though, it has to be said that for many travellers dining on strange or unfamiliar foods was a rewarding experience. These travellers were adventurous in their behaviour and desirous of a new eating experience before travelling to China.

The model also shows that tourists' previous dining experiences in their home countries shaped their tastes and expectations toward the indigenous foods in China. For instance, some of the tourists expected Chinese food to be different than in their home countries. Moreover, many tourists, especially the ones with tour groups, wanted more food variety and diversity of meal arrangements because they felt these things were essential to their experience of the destination. This model also indicates that the menu itself was one of the major barriers preventing tourists from dining in local restaurants. They could not read the menu in the absence of graphic depictions of the food.

Importantly, there are several underlying factors which influence how the physical environment influences tourists' perceptions positively or negatively towards of their dining experiences. Tourists want to be able to distinguish themselves from the Other and be able to assess whether they the right decision when choosing the destination. Although the model may only be applicable in the context of this study, these insights could contribute to a better understanding of how Western travellers experience dining out in China and how this influences their perceptions of China as a destination.

#Attributes are link up the relevant proposition, such as (P1) – Proposition 1

Figure 4.4 Attributes which affect tourists’ dining experiences while travelling in China



4.5 Synthesis of the research findings

The aim of this section is to synthesize the phenomenological insights that were generated as a result of this study. The synthesis reveals the presence of two major themes. The first theme is about the role played by tourists' dining experiences and their perceptions of the destination. The second theme is based on the semiotics or mythologies travelers used to narrate their dining experiences while travelling in China.

4.5.1 *The role of tourists' dining experiences and their perceptions towards the destination*

The results of this study, and those of previous studies, strongly suggests that indigenous foods can provide a tremendous role, and are often seen as a necessity, to identifying with and getting in contact with the local culture and customs at a destination. This is an ingredient which is readily consumable by the travelers (Kim & Eves, 2012; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Thus, dining out and consuming local foods while on holiday plays an essential role in introducing visitors to the different flavours and traditions that the destination offers (Fields, 2002; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Kim et al, 2009; Kim & Eves, 2012; Ryu & Jang, 2006). In this context, the tourists' dining experiences in China helped them learn about the Chinese culture and were one of the primary motivators for exploring the Chinese culture. Hence, dining experiences can contribute significantly to the overall travel experiences which positively influenced travellers perception of the destination.

The following sections include summaries of the findings organized from motivational, attitudinal and behavioural perspectives in order to explain whether tourists' dining experiences in China contributed positively or negatively to their perceptions of the destination.

Motivation

Many travellers felt that dining out experience at a destination was a 'must do' travel activity. Dining on indigenous foods can provide additional destination experiences opportunities which often lead to a more memorable and enjoyable holiday atmosphere than they expected (Quan & Wang, 2004). The findings from this study suggested that although the primary motivation to visit China was not Chinese gastronomy, many respondents were keen in pursuing memorable dining experiences which they could retain as a mental souvenir of their trip to be shared with their family and friends. Moreover, some of the respondents found that their dining experiences enabled them to have greater insights into the nature of a place and its people. Essentially, the respondents' travel dining experiences in this study gratified their visual, sensual and spiritual desires. Therefore, one can argue that the respondents' dining experiences did enrich their travel experiences and was a positive contributory influence on how these travelers perceived China.

Attitude toward dining experience

Some studies have supported that learning and understanding of foreign culture when travelling is one of the key highlights when visiting a destination (Fields, 2002; Getz, 2000; Kim et al, 2009). The findings revealed that the tourists' dining experiences provided a learning experience which not only enabled the respondents to enrich their taste buds but also their intellectual needs about Chinese culture. This finding supports the notion that experiencing indigenous foods, provides an opportunity to learn about the local culture and how to eat and socialize as the local people do (Getz, 2000). For instance, a number of respondents indicated that partaking of local food with the locals got them closer to the daily life of local people and Chinese culture. Importantly, some of the respondents expressed that their trip would not be 'genuine' without eating local food, which provide new and unique travel experiences. Hence, dining on local food is an important activity that cannot be divorced from the travel experience. In this respect, the travellers' dining experiences became an integral element in their travel experiences, which often played a key role by positively contributing to how the travellers perceived China.

Dining behaviour

Respondents had conveyed that they sought tasting different flavours and cuisine when travelling in China and avoided having familiar and similar foods. The variety of food and diversity of meals provided the respondents with novel experiences

which were in sharp contrast to their own food culture. Thus, the variety of foods boosted the opportunity for the respondents to encounter and appreciate the Chinese culture (Warde & Martens, 2000). These findings substantiate the notion that most travellers desire new experiences while travelling and they tend to look for a wide range of activities including indigenous foods experiences (Richards, 2002; Chang et al., 2011). Hence, a variety of destinations cuisine is seen as an essential element that can turn travel actives into pleasurable and memorable experiences. Such memorable experiences not only enrich tourists' travel experiences, but they also help in developing a positive perception of China as an interesting destination.

More adventurous and seasoned travellers actively sought out taste adventures via unfamiliar foods that they had not eaten before. This provided pleasure through sensation and by satiating their adventurous spirits (Kim et al, 2009). This behaviour was driven by novelty-seeking desires (Kim et al, 2010). At the same time, these pleasurable and interesting experiences raised tourists' confidence levels when faced with unfamiliar foods, and the destination itself. On the contrary, some respondents were very reluctant to dine on unfamiliar foods often triggering neophobic tendencies which were manifest in negative feelings not only about the unfamiliar food, but also about the destination. This situation often caused distress because of the disruption to their daily food regimes. Importantly, food neophobia is often correlated with fear and anxiety, which has a profound effect on how the tourists experience the destination. Other respondents had great difficulties in identifying local Chinese food that met their religious dietary needs. For these respondents, the lack of food that met

their religious dietary needs and rituals resulted in perceptions of China as being a very difficult destination, which, consequently, they would not visit in the future. These travellers harboured negative feelings towards China. The findings also revealed that some respondents had great concerns about the food-related health risks when travelling. They tended to be greatly suspicious about the cleanliness of the local restaurants and food handling practices when travelling in China.

A pleasant physical environment in restaurants plays a key role in creating memorable experiences. As Ha and Jang (2010) stated, environmental elements of a restaurant strongly influenced customers' perceptions even before they actually patronized it. This was supported by respondents who expressed that food quality alone might not be sufficient enough to create an overall positive perception of their dining experiences, rather customer-staff relationship is essential in creating positive customer emotions. This supports the notion that food, ambiance, and especially service quality, play an essential role in creating positive or negative dining experiences and perceptions of the destination (Jang & Namkung, 2010). The findings revealed that despite the food quality, the respondents had bad dining experiences due to poor service and indifferent staff.

To conclude, the abovementioned observations validate that the travel dining experience can be either positive or negative contributory factor in tourists' perceptions of a destination. From the motivational perspective, cultural motives induced respondents to seek memorable and enjoyable dining experience to enrich their travel

experiences, which was a positive contributory factor towards how they perceived the destination. From the attitudinal perspective, the dining experience was perceived as a learning experience and was an effective way to gain knowledge about Chinese culture. Thus, the dining experience is an integral element in their travel experiences. From the dining behaviour perspective, it is interesting to note that both positive and negative perceptions of the destination existed, often simultaneously, but for different reasons, such as: variety of food, partaking of unfamiliar food due to novelty-seeking behavior. On the other hand, avoiding unfamiliar food due to neophobic behaviour, food-related health risks, lack of suitable food to meet religious dietary or medical needs, were negative contributory factors in how respondents perceived the destination.

4.5.2 Tourists' mythologies of their dining experiences while travelling in China

A summary of the semiotics used by the respondents to describe their dining experiences while travelling to China (Table 4.1) is presented here in order to better understand the semiotic narratives of the respondents. For the summary of the respondents' dining experiences, Pierce's (1934) semiotics triangle was used to analyse the narratives of the respondents because it provided a more lucid and comprehensive interpretation of their experiences and the semiotics behind those experiences. The meaning behind the narratives emanated from a triadic relationship between the object, the sign, and the concept. Hence, through an examination of all possible relationships created around the periphery of the triangle signification can be understood. The

underlying narratives of the respondents about their dining experiences while travelling in China represented both a cultural and adventure encounter (Fields, 2002; Hjalager, 2003). It exemplified how tourists' dining experiences offered a rich alternative perspective through which to understand what contributes to tourists' perception of the destination.

This study exemplified how mythology, vis-à-vis narratives, offered a new perspective through which we can better understand tourists' dining experiences when travelling in China. These narratives of the cultural encounters during dining out experiences affect tourists' perceptions of China. By adopting the same eating customs as those of the local Chinese people, one respondent (S17) was able to create a sense of belonging and affirmation. He felt part of the culture while travelling in China. He said "... I learned from the local people, e.g. sharing food with others, eating at a round table, learning the table manners in the Chinese way, using chopsticks, picking food from plates, all these were about the Chinese culture." Some respondents linked their physical presence in China to an authentic experience of the culture. Because they were in China, they must be having real Chinese food with better flavours, different from the ones at home. For example, this respondent (S14) noted that "In China, the Chinese foods are more genuine, better in taste ... and types of foods are different from Africa." A semiotic analysis illustrates that he used these experiences to justify his travel experience. He suggested that the Chinese food in his home country was not 'real' Chinese food.

Moreover, many respondents, especially those who were adventurous and seasoned travellers, actively sought out unfamiliar food to enrich their culinary experiences and explore the destination's culture. For example, one respondent (S23) said "In China the Chinese food is different: steamed whole fish ...are more authentic. But we cannot find Mochu pork and fortune cookies in China." The respondent used the phrase as a metaphor for saying that he was used to having ethnic food in his home country and he was not a novice. This allowed him to minimize the internal risk factor and motives in seeking novel and strange foods. He also use "Mochu pork and fortune cookies" to suggest that they were 'ice-breakers' enabling others to try new Chinese food in China.

On the other hand, some of the tourists were more concerned that their religious dietary needs were met when travelling than with the travel itself. For example, two respondents (G10 and G11) claimed that "...however, there is no kosher food.....in the local Chinese restaurants to serve our needs." The respondents complained that they could not have kosher food in local restaurants to accommodate their religious dietary needs. This lack of kosher food leads to tourists' negative perceptions in which China is seen as a hardship destination rather than a place in which they can maintain their daily food rituals. It should be noted, however that religious customs beliefs are often used to convey one's exclusivity, uniqueness and deep-rooted beliefs. Similarly, the implication behind the respondents' (G10 & G11) narratives was that the destination should respect their religious rites and that the local restaurants should be well-prepared to accommodate their religious dietary needs.

Aside from these issues, a pleasant physical environment in a restaurant can influence tourists' dining experiences, as a result, affects tourists' decisions whether they have made the right choice or wrong choice to choose the destination in the first place. For example, respondent (G18) said: "...I went into a local restaurant with outdoor seating... There were lots of light bulbs hanging from the trees, it was so beautiful...the light bulbs made me feel very relaxed and comfortable. My friend and I talked and talked and hours just went by....a restaurant like this makes all the difference... I am really enjoying this trip ...great destination!" The respondent's positive emotion was shaped by the relaxing and comfortable dining experience. Hence, he used the physical and spatial environment as a metaphor for having made the right choice, in both the restaurant and the destination.

The above mentioned examples were just a few from this study to exemplify that respondents' narratives, and the meaning behind them, can provide rich information about how tourists experienced the destination through their dining experiences. Furthermore, the impressions of the indigenous food present in the respondents' perceptions of their dining experiences provide a rich data source for destination marketers. Table 4.1 offers more details about the semiotics used by the respondents to describe their dining experiences while travelling to China.

Table 4.1 A summary of semiotics and mythologies in respondents' narratives while describing their dining experiences while travelling in China

	SIGN	OBJECT	CONCEPT (Respondent's interpretation of reality or situation)	NARRATIVES	SEMIOTICS/ METHODOLOGY BEHIND NARRATIVES
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sharing food -Eating at round tables, learning table manner in Chinese way -Using chopsticks to pick up food, -The way local people did -Local language -Dining behaviour and eating habits of local people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Being physical in China -Local Chinese restaurant -Chinese people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Using representative symbolism of Other's serve as a catalyst for learning about the Other's culture. 	<p>“This is an ancient country, lots of people ... I [learned] [about] the Chinese culture [by] partaking [of] local Chinese food. I ate in local restaurants and saw people eating and learn[ed] their culture, e.g. the different ways they ate their meals, their dining behaviour and eating habits...”(S3)</p> <p>“I have[learned] [about]Chinese culture through my food experiences in local Chinese restaurants, I [learned] from the local people, e.g. sharing food with others, eating at a round table, learning the table [manners] in the Chinese way, using chopsticks, picking food from plates, all these were [about the]Chinese culture.” (S17)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Respondent (S3) used ‘eat in local restaurant and saw people eating’ and interpreted her dining experience was a way to get closer to the culture. -Respondent (S17) used ‘sharing food with others’, ‘eating at a round table’, ‘learning the table manners in the Chinese way’, ‘using chopsticks, picking food from plates’, for representing what must be the way of Chinese culture

	<p>-Tourists -Local people</p> <p>-Using language to communicate with local people</p>	<p>-Chinese food -Local Chinese restaurants -Tourist restaurants</p> <p>-Talking to local people -Local food -Being physically in China -Local Chinese restaurants</p>	<p>-Understanding of Other's culture through the genuineness of food and people</p> <p>-Understanding of Other's culture through language</p>	<p>"We [select] the restaurants while walking around, and [go] into restaurants [that have] lots of local Chinese people [in them]. We don't like to go to places with lots of tourists, we... look for [local] experiences." (G8, G9)</p> <p>"...it's hard to know the Chinese culture [in] just one or two meals. [I] need more time to communicate with local people." (G17)</p> <p>"I don't think we [can] learn Chinese culture through food, not [really]. We need to talk with local people, to communicate and to know and understand them..." (G21)</p>	<p>-Respondents (G8, G9) used 'We don't like to go to places with lots of tourists' as a metaphor for restaurants which are not genuine Chinese restaurants.</p> <p>-Respondents (G17, G21) used "it's hard to know the Chinese culture in just one or two meals", "I don't think we can learn Chinese culture through food" to suggest that culture cannot be learned by simply partaking of local food.</p> <p>-They also used "I need more time to communicate with local people", "We need to talk with local people, to communicate and to know and understand them..." to suggest the notion that partaking of food was a small part of ritual, not really associated with culture.</p> <p>-Direct communication with local people is more direct way to understand the locals.</p>
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<p>Authentic location</p>	<p>-Tradition aroma (spicy, better in flavour, better in taste), -In China, -“because we are in China therefore Chinese foods must be genuine” -Chinese food different in China</p>	<p>-Chinese food -Being physical in China -Local Chinese restaurant</p>	<p>-Physical and spatial genuineness supports the notion of food being authentic or more genuine at the place of origin.</p>	<p>-“The Chinese food is rice and noodle based, with traditional aromas, spicier, better flavour. Every country has special food that you miss....” (S7, S8) -“In China, the Chinese foods are more genuine, better in taste ... and types of foods are different from Africa.” (S14)</p>	<p>-Respondent (S14) used “in China, the Chinese foods are more genuine”, signified that the Chinese food in China was ‘real’ Chinese food. The respondent (S14) suggested that because he was already physically in China that he must have real Chinese food. -Respondents (S7, S8) used “with traditional aroma, spicier, better flavour” as a metaphors to explain and justify their travel experience of the destination. -Respondent (S14) used “types of foods are different from Africa.” to suggested that the Chinese food is his home country was not ‘real’ Chinese food, but a localized version of Chinese food. -Respondents (S7, S8) used “Every country has special food that you miss...” meaning that having sampled local food helped to recall places that they have travelled.</p>
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	<p>-Chinese folklore, myths, poems and literature, childhood</p>	<p>-Seaweed soup</p>	<p>-Foods have the power to strongly evoke remembrances, stories, and the past.</p>	<p>- “In Hangzhou, I ate a soup made of seaweed grown in [the] West Lake, [this] soup was mentioned in the Chinese poems and literature. I like stories about foods and dishes [because] I teach Chinese literature [at] a university in Taiwan.” (H6)</p> <p>“... I had a fish dish that tasted like the one that I had twenty years ago in Taiwan. I was very happy that the fish dish had the same taste like twenty year ago.” (H6)</p>	<p>-Respondent (H6) used the wordings “seaweed grown in [the] West Lake, [this] soup was mentioned in the Chinese poems and literature” to signify the seaweed was a signifier for history, legends and myth and that West Lake was well-known in ancient China and associated with legends and mythical power.</p> <p>-Respondent (H6) elevated seaweed to a mythological level, suggested that the seaweed was imbued in the myths of ancient Chinese poetry, beyond its real day-to-day status. Respondent (H6) consumed the local food not only for physical tastes but to enjoy the metaphysical, the lore and meaning behind the food</p> <p>-Whether the taste of the fish was exactly the same as twenty years ago is not important. Respondent (H4) had a very strong emotional arousal and was real enough for him to recall and reach back to when he was young, which had special meaning for him. Thus, the taste transcended the time interval, “...tasted like the one that I had</p>
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					twenty years ago in Taiwan”.
Novelty and adventure seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unfamiliar food -Out of one’s comfort zone – have never tried before -Qualifier, which they are not complete novice – we cannot find Mochu pork and fortune cookies in China 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Beef tendon and fish maw -Steamed whole fish with head and tail -Sticky rice dumplings -Roast duck with head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eating strange or unfamiliar food during travel was a risk taking or rewarding experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“We have tried some food that we’ve never tried before in USA, such as beef tendon and fish maw, steamed whole fish (with head and tail), sticky rice dumplings..., eating local food is a way to get in touch with local culture.”(S1) “I have tried roasted duck in Nanjing, which I have never tried before...” (S2) “In China the Chinese food is different: steamed whole fish, roasted whole duck with head, red bean paste sticky rice are more [authentic]. But we cannot find Mochu pork and fortune cookies in China.”(S23) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Respondent (S1) used “we have tried some food that we’ve never tried before in USA, such as beef tendon...”, suggesting that she was not averse to having food that she had not tried before in her home country. Rather she did not interpret taking unknown food being a risk factor to her health. -Respondent (S2) was same as respondent (S1), did not avoid taking unknown food, rather as a risk taker she had anticipated a new experience during her travel. -Respondent (S23)’s narrative suggested that he was used to having ethnic foods in his home country, ‘new’ foods are not new to him. -Respondent (S23) could not find “Mochu pork and fortune cookies in China”, and “in China the Chinese food is different” was used as a metaphor for saying that he was not a novice when it comes to Chinese food. Here, “Mochu pork and fortune cookies in China” were the ‘ice-breaker’ to try new Chinese

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unfamiliar food -Luck of draw -Personal likes or dislikes -Food taboos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Buns with filling -Chicken head -Jelly-fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The fear of eating unfamiliar foods is a profound personal challenge 	<p>“I bought two buns this morning from a local shop. One of them had a red filling and the other a green filling. I don’t know what is inside these buns? I just tried my luck. I ate both buns but disliked the one with green filling which was meat and vegetables.” (S3)</p> <p>“...in Shanghai [food] was fine with me, I could find the things that I liked to eat. But in Tsing Tao it was hard to find something that I liked to eat. There was strange thing, e.g. chicken head. It was challenge for me to eat in China every day.” (S12)</p>	<p>food.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Respondent (S3) used the phrase “I don’t know what is inside these buns? I just tried my luck”, suggesting that she had negative feelings about unfamiliar food, which caused distress and fear that she would not be able to find familiar foods that she liked. -Respondent (S12) used the phrase “... it was hard to find something that I liked to eat..., it was a challenge for me to eat in China every day”, suggesting that she had negative feelings about unfamiliar food and was distressed due to the disruption of her daily food regimes. -Respondent (S12) used the remarks “But in Tsing Tao it was hard to find something that I liked to eat”, “There was strange thing, e.g. chicken head”, to signify that her she had personal food challenges which she tried to overcome for the novelty and experience.
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				<p>“...I had the deep-fried jelly fish which I had never tried before in my home country. However, I’ll not order it again in future.”(S13)</p>	<p>-Respondent (S13) expressed “I’ll not order it again in future”, he bravely tried the jelly-fish (strange food), found that jelly-fish was a bad food to him, and thus he decided that he would not have it in future.</p>
Special travel needs	<p>-One’s religious beliefs -Halal food -Kosher food -Religious diet -Pizza Hut, KFC</p>	<p>-Local Chinese food</p>	<p>-Food in restaurant – my religious needs were/were not being met (National status, religion, social status and one’s wealth is often used as a metaphor that reinforce one’s “exclusivity”, “uniqueness’ and deep-rooted beliefs</p>	<p>-“...however, there is no kosher food....in the local Chinese restaurants to serve our needs.” (G10, G11)</p> <p>-“...The restaurateurs are not familiar with the eating habits of [Muslims by] not providing Halal food.”(H4)</p> <p>“Most of the Iranian tourists are Muslim, they don’t eat pork, and are not allowed to [consume] alcohol...and [are] forbidden to use oil made from pork in cooking. [We are] concerned about the way [they] slaughter animals [for] food [they need to be]halal... Some [of us] ...prefer to go to Pizza Hut</p>	<p>-Respondents (G10, G11) were anxious that they could not have kosher food in local Chinese restaurants. This single factor negatively impacted their perception of the destination.</p> <p>-Respondent (H14) complained that restaurants were not familiar with Muslim eating and so did not provide halal food, reaffirming that local restaurants were not really prepared to meet the religious dietary needs of customers.</p> <p>-Respondent (H12) expressed that the Iranian tourists felt that they were uncertain and suspicious about what they had eaten in local restaurants as they had difficulties in understanding Chinese wording on the menus. Rather they preferred to patronize Pizza Hut and KFC because they believed that these</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wrong translation of ingredients from Chinese to English -Ineffective service staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Menus of local Chinese restaurants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Food in restaurant – my medical condition needs were/were not met. 	<p>and KFC for meals but not to local Chinese restaurants ..., because] Western restaurants do not use oil made from pork.” (H12)</p> <p>“I have diabetes [and I] cannot eat MSG... It’s very difficult to explain to the restaurant [staff]. Menu items’ descriptions are in Chinese but the English translation is wrong....Finally, I just left [the restaurant] without eating anything.” (S23)</p>	<p>Western restaurants did not use lard in their cooking. They distrusted the local Chinese restaurants.</p> <p>-Respondent (S23) could not make an order in a local restaurant due to incorrect translation of menu descriptions and a language barrier. The incorrect translation caused him to distrust the local restaurants; eventually, he refused to patronize the local restaurants.</p>
Indigenous foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -American Chinese food -Chinese cuisine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Chinese food -Different Chinese cuisine -Interesting menus Variety of foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Chinese food in China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tour group -Agent-planned meals -Same rota menu -Tour meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -China is a vast and ancient country – Chinese cuisine must also be vast and ancient (Chinese food in China is different from the Chinese food in other countries) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tour groups are structured – tour group’s meals do not have to be structured also 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“Here, [in China] is a vast and ancient country with lots of Chinese food. We have lots of Chinese food in USA which [really] is American Chinese food... [but] Chinese food in China does not taste [the same as it does in the] USA. Here the taste of Chinese food is much spicier and sweeter.....”(G2, G3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I like Chinese food with mild flavour and in different cooking styles. In Hangzhou and Shanghai the meals planned by the tour agency, [were based on the same] set menu. The six dishes provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Respondents (G2, G3) used the terms “spicier and sweeter” as a metaphor to signify being physically in China, and that therefore, food here must be the real Chinese food; the food is sourced and prepared in China. Respondents perceived that Chinese food in China is the real Chinese food and should be different (better) from the Chinese food in the USA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Respondent (H4) was exasperated that tour group meals were rigidly structured without any variety within meals and during the trip. -Respondent (H4) experienced

				by different restaurants were the same! I was satisfied with the quality of food but would like to have had more choices and variety on the menu.” (H4)	travel boredom due to the monotony of food items at every meal break during his travel in China, thus, he showed little interest in returning to China in the future. His dining experience had negatively coloured his perception of China and turned it into a hardship destination.
Hygiene and Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Initial physical appearance -Looked clean -Hygiene -Full of people – safety in number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Local Chinese food -Local Chinese restaurants 	-Avoiding food –related risks when travelling	<p>-“I eat in local restaurants and choose ones that [at least look] hygienic or [are] full of local people. [I guess there is safety in numbers].” (G29)</p> <p>-“We chose restaurants randomly, [but] we always picked the ones that look clean, I didn’t want to get sick in China.” (S19, S20)</p>	<p>-Both narrative revealed that respondents used “look clean”, “look hygienic”, and “full of people” to confirm the restaurant is clean safe to eat.</p> <p>-“I guess there is safety in numbers” was a nonchalant metaphor to reconfirm the respondents that she made right choice, because the restaurant was full of local people who patronize that restaurant.</p> <p>-“look clean” and “full of people” were signifiers that helped to generate trust and encourage respondents to take a calculated risk, despite that they did not know if the restaurant prepared food in a hygienic way.</p>

				<p>-“...is this tap water? How gin and tonic served...is it in a can?... I asked the waiter about the tap water and food because I’m concerned about my health. I am [just] cautious not [only] because I’m travelling in China.”(G24)</p>	<p>-Respondent (G24) felt tap water was a risk to her health and she was cautious when consuming local drinks and questioned the quality of bottled water in China; this also prompted the question regarding how the gin and tonic was served.</p> <p>-She perceived that drinking water in China posed a potential risk to her. This fear strongly influenced perception of China as hardship destination.</p>
Menu	<p>-Menus without English description or photos of dishes</p> <p>-Menu item photos</p>	<p>-Local Chinese food</p> <p>-Local Chinese restaurants</p> <p>-Local Chinese food</p> <p>-Local Chinese restaurant</p>	<p>-The menu barriers</p> <p>-Menu item photos alleviate fear and uncertainties (and embarrassment) during food ordering when there is a language barrier.</p>	<p>-“...I will point at the photos on the menus... if the menu is written in Chinese and without any photo, I will not go inside that restaurant. I will look at the menu before I go inside the restaurants...if no photos of the food and no English.... I don’t go inside (S17)</p> <p>-“I show the servers a book full of different food photos and sometimes I use body language as well. Most of the time I can order food items successfully. It makes me appreciate the destination even more.” (G34)</p>	<p>-Respondent (S17) revealed that the restaurants’ menus were the first-line barrier which, because of fear and uncertainty, prompted the respondent not even to enter into the restaurant.</p> <p>-The language barrier, which the respondent could not overcome, plus lack of pictures on the menu influenced his decision to go in or not.</p> <p>-Respondent (G34) successfully overcame the language barrier when ordering food in restaurants, by showing photos of food to the restaurant staff.</p> <p>-Food photos, and even body language, were the key signifiers that helped to overcome the</p>

			<p>-Menu item photos alleviate fear and uncertainties (and embarrassment) during food ordering when there is a language barrier: Even so, they do not always represent what's seen on the photo</p>	<p>-“The other day I ordered a dish after I saw photos of it on the menu. It looked like some meat and it looked very good. The dish was pork and taro...[but] it was very greasy with lots of fat. [As a result], I was sick the whole night. It's an unpleasant experience in China.” (G7)</p>	<p>communication barrier between the respondent and restaurant staff.</p> <p>- The sign (the menu item) was a photograph of the real object, but may not always be faithful to the object, and in this case, the respondent (G7) did not really know what he actually ordered, because other essential information was not obvious within the sign, namely ingredients, the quality of ingredients and the cooking method.</p> <p>-This misalignment between the sign and object exacerbated, therefore, a calculated risk (the respondent was sick because of the greasy pork).</p> <p>-In this context, the signifier (the photos of menu items) failed to alleviate uncertainty of the unfamiliar, the menu item.</p>
Physical and spatial environment	<p>-Filled with tobacco smoke -Full of people</p>	<p>-Interior environment of local Chinese restaurants</p>	<p>-Physical and spatial environment can be used as a metaphor for distinguishing oneself from the Other with positive or negative connotations</p>	<p>“Sometimes when we [just took a look inside] the restaurants... and if the inside was filled with smoke or was full of people, then we would go to another restaurant... some seemed to be good...food looked good...but all that smoke</p>	<p>-Respondent (G21) was concerned about the effect of smoke on her health, however, restaurants “full of people” and “this is China”, were metaphors that distinguished her from the Others with negative</p>

				<p>and noise...we could not stand it. We probably missed many good restaurants ... [may be] they should have smoking and non-smoking zones... this is China! [They] should completely ban smoking inside restaurants... just like in the USA.” (G21)</p>	<p>connotations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She felt that she was somewhat superior to all the other patrons who smoked and who were noisy; something which does not happen in restaurants in the USA, hence her aversion to these local restaurants in China. -Her purpose in visiting local Chinese restaurants was to look for the ‘ontological comfort of home’, “ban smoking inside restaurants just like in the USA”, was one way to overcome personal anxieties, but also to elevate oneself above the locals. - The environmental elements of a restaurant strongly influenced customers’ perceptions long before they actually experienced the restaurant. Thus, it explained why respondent (G21) rather forewent the local food in favor of being in a restaurant with a more pleasant environment. - Respondent’s (G24) prior experiences with Chinese restaurants in the USA, were very different from those in China, which became a shock. She emphasized and contrasted the spatial environment (people) to that of USA “full of people”
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Outdoor seating -Light bulbs hanging from the trees -Feeling relaxed -Comfortable -The difference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Physical and spatial environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Physical and spatial environment can be used as a metaphor for making a “right choice” and/or “wrong choice”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“...I went into a local restaurant with outdoor seating in the evening. There were lots of light bulbs hanging from the trees ... Although the food was kind of average, the light bulbs made me feel very relaxed and comfortable. My friend and I talked and talked and hours just went by....a restaurant like this makes all the difference... I am really enjoying this trip ...great destination!” (G18) 	<p>and “this is China”, which furthers the notion that China is not a familiar destination. Although she also wanted to venture out from her ‘environmental bubble’, the situation of the restaurant in China became too rough for her. Hence, she steps back into her ‘environmental bubble’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respondent (G18) used the expression “I am really enjoying this trip ...great destination!” as a metaphor for having made the right destination and restaurant. -The respondent’s emotions were shaped by the very relaxed and comfortable dining experience.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The melted ice-cream -Wrong service sequence -Bad staff attitude -Poor service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Decoration -Physical environment -Great food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A memorable dining experience can be severely compromised by inattentive service staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “My friend and I were attracted by the decorations and the environment of the restaurant ...we went in and ordered two dinner sets. After 10 minutes, the dessert was delivered to us before the soup and main courses. It was an ice-cream and it melted very 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Respondent (S4) revealed that it only took one bad attribute to negatively affect all the other good attributes in a restaurant setting. - Both the respondent and her friend were positively influenced by the physical environment,

			<p>quickly... I asked the waiter to take it back into the kitchen and bring it out again after we've finished the main courses. When we finished the main courses, we asked for the dessert again ... the waiter told us that the dessert was already sold out...he really wasn't interested... and just walked off... Although the food was delicious, the waiter had a bad attitude and the service was not up to standard. We had a very bad dining experience and would not return to that place in the future."(S4)</p>	<p>however, food quality alone might not be sufficient enough to create an overall positive emotion.</p> <p>-The resultant behaviour of this respondent (S4) exemplified that factors such as food, ambiance, but most notably, service quality, play a key role in creating either positive or negative dining experiences or customer emotions.</p>
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Chapter review

This chapter identified several findings based on the respondents' dining experiences while travelling in China. Many tourists feel that exploring the local culture is the predominant underlying motivation for travelling (Fields, 2002). Findings reveal that dining at local restaurants is a means to getting closer to a destination's culture. The respondents used representative symbolism as a catalyst to enhance their awareness of the destination's culture. Meanwhile, some respondents dined on genuine local food and came into contact with local people in ways that allowed them to appreciate the Other's culture. While knowing the language to directly communicate with local people can be an advantage in enriching their understanding of the destination's culture. On the other hand, some respondents perceived partaking of indigenous food at the place of origin was an equally genuine and unique travel experience. This corroborates the theory that having an authentic experience and communicating with local people is regarded as a new and unique travel experience by tourists (Kim et al, 2009). Some respondents' dining experiences transcended reality when food consumption invoked history and lore, and poetics enabling tourists to connect with the destination's culture and their own past.

Findings also suggested that, for some tourists, consuming new and local foods was one of most exciting experiences during their travels in China. Respondents were willing to eat unfamiliar foods when travelling, and their quest for novelty overcame any food fears and taboos that they may have had. Other respondents were suspicious and felt uncertain when it came to unfamiliar foods. The potential health

risks or adherence to religious dietary customs caused tremendous anxiety for the tourists at mealtimes and became a severe challenge to the daily meal arrangements. Consequently this had a profound impact on their perceptions of the destination. Still, many respondents were adventurous travellers and perceived that partaking of strange or unfamiliar foods was a rewarding experience, and they tended to seek new dining experiences during their travels.

In addition, findings revealed that tourists' previous dining experiences in their home countries shaped their tastes as well as their expectations of the local foods in China (Bardhi et al, 2010). In this respect, respondents' perceptions about Chinese food in China was genuine and to be different in China from those in their home countries. Many tourists, especially those in group tours, wanted food variety and diverse meal arrangements as they felt these things were necessary them to truly experience the destination. The findings also show that respondents were reluctant to patronize local restaurants due to language barriers and difficulties in understanding the menu. Hence, the menu itself became a barrier for tourists wishing to patronize the local restaurants, especially when the menus were without any graphic representations of the food and provided no English translations. Finally, the physical and spatial environment was seen to have an effect on tourists' perceptions positively or negatively towards their dining experiences. Findings reveal that tourists tended to distinguish themselves from the Other, and avoided entering into restaurants that were full of local people because they were seeking a sense of security in the context of food consumption during travelling in China. The findings also reveal that respondents' emotions were shaped

by relaxing and comfortable dining experiences. Thus, the physical environment of a restaurant can influence how tourists experience dining, and leads to whether they have make right or wrong destination choice.

In the final part of this chapter, the discussion focused on the synthesis of the phenomenological insights generated from this study. Based on the emergent findings, this study proposes that the travel dining experience could be a positive or negative contributory factor towards tourists' perception of a destination. From the motivational and attitudinal perspective, the respondents' dining experiences could be proven to be a positive contributory factor that influences tourists' perceptions towards China. While, from the dining behaviour perspective, both positive and negative perceptions towards the destination are existed in diffident aspects. This study also analysed the narratives of the respondents in order to show how tourists' dining experiences offer a rich and alternative perspective for understanding the influences on tourists' perceptions of a destination.

This chapter has explored different aspects of tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China and investigated the underlying motives and attributes that might affect tourists' perceptions of a destination. In addition, there are fifteen propositions derived from the discussion of the research findings. 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 conclusions could be drawn for this study.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter summarizes the research findings by presenting the propositions named in the last chapter and connecting them to the research objectives of this study. This is followed by a discussion of the contributions made by this research. Finally, future research and recommendations for destination marketers are proposed.

5.1 Revisiting the research objectives

This study analysed tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China. The role indigenous food played in tourists' travel experiences was examined along with: attributes that influenced the tourists' evaluations of their dining experience, and the influence of dining experiences on travellers' perceptions of the destination. Based on the research findings, fifteen propositions are postulated. They are revisited in the following sections along with corresponding arguments about how they correspond to this study's research objectives.

5.1.1 To investigate the role gastronomy plays in international tourists' travel experiences while travelling in China

The role gastronomy plays in tourists' travel experiences while travelling in China is illuminated by the following observations:

- Travellers' dining experiences with local people in local restaurants during travel in China, was one way of being closer with the destination's culture, of which the representative symbolism (chopsticks, local customers and food, etc.) served as a catalyst which enhanced the respondents' awareness of the Other's culture.

Proposition 1: Representative symbolism is often a catalyst which triggers the travellers' desire to learn about the Other's culture.

- Most respondents ate in local restaurants with local people not just to experience the 'real Chinese food', but also for an opportunity to get closer to the everyday lives of local people in China.

Proposition 2: Indigenous food and the dining environment at the destination, activates travellers' desire for wanting to be closer to the Other's culture while they are travelling.

- Tourists believed that direct communication with local people might be a better opportunity to explore the destination's culture.

Proposition 3: Communicating with the local people at a destination, allows the traveller to have a richer experience of the destination's culture.

- Respondents perceived that the local Chinese food in China was genuine Chinese food and that through its consumption and communicating with genuine local people that they could enrich their travel experiences.

Proposition 4: Partaking of indigenous foods at the place of origin can activate travellers' desires for a genuine travel experience.

- Local indigenous food products often have stories and meanings behind them related to the place and culture, and oftentimes a specific period in history (Sims, 2009). Respondents' food consumption, then, not only satisfied their physical needs. They were also able to "consume" and enjoy these stories and meanings, and the lore behind the food.

Proposition 5: Indigenous foods have the power to evoke remembrances, stories and history that can create a profound impact on the way travellers experience the destination's culture.

5.1.2 *To identify what attributes influence tourists' evaluations of their dining experiences while travelling China*

The emergent findings of this study identify six attributes that would affect tourists' evaluations of their travel dining experience, subsequently, these influenced their perceptions of the destination. These attributes were: novelty or adventure seeking behaviour, partaking of indigenous food, special travel needs, hygiene and health, menu, and physical and spatial environments. Their respective influences are outlined as follows.

- In general, travellers tend to take greater risks when they are on holidays than in their everyday lives. In the case of this study, this was a motivator for them to try novel and strange foods (Chang et al., 2011; Cohen & Avieli, 2004). This suggests that the respondents were willing to try strange or unfamiliar foods during their travels, and that the quest for novelty overcame the fear and taboos that they might have had in their daily lives.

Proposition 6: For travellers whose dining purpose is seeking an exciting experience, partaking of unfamiliar foods during travel is a risk-taking and rewarding experience.

- Some respondents had negative feelings about unfamiliar foods and were distressed and afraid that they might not be able to find familiar foods that they liked during their travels in China, suggesting that unfamiliar foods have a tendency to constitute a potential risk for the respondents which then represents a challenge to their travel experiences.

Proposition 7: Travellers' fears of unfamiliar foods when travelling creates challenges which often influence how they experience the destination.

- Respondents had great difficulties finding local Chinese food that conformed to their religious dietary needs (kosher and halal food) when travelling in China. Fear about the local Chinese food derives from the strong reaction to unfamiliar foods on their ingrained eating behaviours. It can be said that the religious dietary needs create a profound impact on the perceptions of a destination, which eventually affects tourists' decisions when choosing a destination to visit.

Proposition 8: Travellers' destination choice decision is often affected negatively by their religious dietary needs if and/or when those needs cannot be met at the destination.

- Respondents used their previous experiences with the Chinese food at home as their basis for their evaluations of the Chinese food in China. In addition, respondents' perceptions of China as a vast and ancient country, produced corresponding beliefs that the cuisine would also be vast and ancient and include great varieties of foods, tastes, and cooking methods.

Proposition 9: Travellers' expectations and evaluations of their dining experiences when travelling are affected by their perceptions of the destination.

- Respondents were exasperated by the tour group meal arrangements, which were rigid and offered no variety during their stay in China. They experienced travel boredom due to the monotony of food items at every meal during their trip. Thus, the variety of food and diversity of meal arrangements does affect tourists' evaluations of their travel experiences.

Proposition 10: Better food choice and diversified meal arrangements for tour groups is a catalyst for generating memorable dining experiences while travelling.

- Tourists are often afraid of contracting food and water poisoning during travel. Respondents were anxious about the food hygiene when travelling in China which led to suspicions and avoidance of consuming not only the drinking water but also the local food.

Proposition 11: Travellers aversion to food related health risks results in avoidance in partaking of indigenous foods at the destination, which in turn lessens their desire for seeking novel dining experiences.

- Despite the respondents being interested in tasting the indigenous foods, they were hesitant in entering into local eateries due to the language barrier and lack of menu understanding.

Proposition 12: The menu is often a barrier for the travellers entering into local restaurants.

- Respondents showed photos of foods to restaurant staff as way of overcoming the language barrier when ordering food in local restaurants while travelling in China. Thus, pictures of foods and menu items were another form of communication which could lessen travellers' uncertainties and fears about the foods in local restaurants, and also facilitated ordering during their travel.

Proposition 13: Graphic representations of menu items alleviate travellers' fears, uncertainties, and embarrassment, when ordering indigenous foods at the destination.

- Travellers create a boundary to maintain a distance between themselves and the 'exotic Other' (Bardhi et al., 2010). Respondents searched for a sense of security in the context of food consumption during travel in China and avoided entering restaurants that were full of local people, and without the presence of other travelers.

Proposition 14: Physical and spatial environmental cues are often used as metaphors for travellers to distinguish themselves from the Other's culture, creating positive or negative connotations about the local restaurants when travelling.

- Despite the average quality of the food, the respondents' emotions were shaped by relaxing and comfortable dining experiences. Therefore, the physical environment of restaurants can influence how travellers experience dining. This, in turn, leads to an assessment of whether they have made the right choice or wrong choice in choosing the destination in the first place.

Proposition 15: Physical and spatial environment are often used as metaphors by some travellers for either have make a 'right' or 'wrong' destination choice.

5.1.3 To analyse if China's gastronomy is a negative or positive contributory factor in the way tourists perceived a destination

This study also asked whether China's gastronomy was a negative or positive contributory factor in the way tourists perceive a destination. The following situations are recognized as a positive contributory factor in the way tourists perceived China.

- Respondents expressed that during their dining experiences in which they partook of indigenous food in a local setting enabled them to get closer to the destination's culture while also enriching their culinary experiences because they were exposed to new food and beverages. Hence, the respondents' dining experiences enriched their

travel experiences making them a positive contributory factor to their perceptions of China.

- Every culture has traditional stories and histories about food that hold special significance and meaning for the local people. Respondents' consumption of indigenous food not only satisfied their physical needs, but provided enjoyment via the stories and meanings behind the indigenous food, which provided insight into the local culture. This provided an emotional experience of the destination at a more private and deeper level. Hence, the consumption of indigenous food had a deep impact on the way that travellers experienced China as a destination.

- The variety of food and diversity of meals provide respondents with novel experiences which contrast their own food culture. This finding substantiates the notion that tourists are curious about new experiences while travelling and that they tend to look for a wide range of activities including a variety of travel dining experiences (Richards, 2002; Chang et al., 2011). Hence, the variety of dining experiences not only enriches tourists' travel experiences but also aid in the development of a positive perception of China.

- Some respondents were willing to taste unfamiliar or strange foods in China that they have not eaten before, suggesting that their dining behaviour was novelty-seeking rather than sustain their ingrained eating behaviours at their own countries. Tourists are more inclined to try new food in a destination and experience a different taste physiology; this enables them to experience food with more pleasure (Kim et al., 2010). This pleasurable and interesting dining experience intensified tourists' confident level when faced with unfamiliar food at a destination, and evaluated their dining experience as a positive contributory factor to their overall perception of the destination.

- Tourists' previous dining experiences with Chinese food in their home countries shaped their taste and expectations of what Chinese food were (Bardhi et al., 2010). The findings revealed that the respondents' perceptions of China, which is a vast and ancient country, corresponded to expectations of a vast and ancient cuisine with great varieties of food, tastes, and cooking methods. Thus, the respondents' expectations of Chinese food in China included the belief that it was "real" Chinese food and that it should be different (better) from the Chinese food in the USA. Eventually, their memorable dining experiences, resulting from these expectations, did help to develop a positive perception towards the destination.

- Tourists were reluctant to patronize the local restaurants, or even sample local food and beverages when travelling in China, out of their food-hygiene worries, or how safe the destination was. Thus, tourists' suspicions regarding the safety of the food during travelling in China constitute a critical impediment to their travel dining experiences.

- A pleasant physical environment within the restaurants plays a key role in creating a memorable dining experience. The findings revealed that respondents' emotions were shaped by relaxed and comfortable dining experiences. Even when the food quality was average, the pleasant environment in the restaurant positively affected respondents' emotional responses, and triggered acceptance behaviours. Such memorable dining experiences did enhance the respondents' positive perceptions of China.

On the other hand, the following situations were identified as negative contributory factors influencing tourists' perceptions of the destination.

- Respondents in this study had great difficulties in finding local Chinese food that met their religious dietary needs (kosher and halal food). The respondents were reluctant to depart from their ingrained eating behaviour and retained their daily food rituals while travelling. Particularly, they had difficulties in understanding the Chinese wording on the menus and could not identify what food was edible or

inedible according to their rituals. Uncertainty and suspicion about what they had eaten resulted in an avoidance of indigenous food in local restaurants. Because local restaurants and hotels were not able to provide for their special food needs, a negative perception of the destination formed.

- The findings revealed that the respondents had negative feelings about unfamiliar foods, which caused them distress because of the disruption to their daily food regimes, as well as creating a fear of not being able to find familiar foods that they liked. The respondents struggled to maintain their eating habits while travelling in China, especially after they had enjoyed various Chinese foods during the first couple of days. Hence, for these travellers, food was challenge for them in China, and had a profound effect on how they experienced the destination.

- Respondents were reluctant to patronize the local restaurants, or even sample local food and beverages because of food-hygiene worries or how safe the destination was. Thus, the tourists' misgivings regarding food safety during travel in China constituted a very real impediment to their travel dining experiences. Due to anxiety over food safety issues, some travelers came to see China as a hardship destination, with corresponding negative perceptions of the destination.

- The findings revealed that food quality alone was not sufficient enough to create an overall positive emotion toward the dining experience. The customer-staff relationship seems to be a key element that greatly helps in creating positive customer emotions. This example typifies the findings of Jang and Namkung (2010), who noted that factors such as food, ambiance, but most notably, service quality, played a key role in creating either positive or negative dining experiences or customer emotions. A respondent's memorable dining experience can easily be spoiled by poor service and inattentive service staff. For travellers who have this experience, that negative dining experience leads to a negative perception of the destination.

5.2 Proposed contribution to knowledge

New theories, ideas and methods of investigation are all considered new knowledge that can be contributed by a doctoral dissertation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991). The contributions of this study are presented below.

5.2.1 New knowledge about gastronomy in tourism

Indigenous gastronomy is an important attribute in the development of niche travel and niche destinations (Fields, 2002; Okumus, Okumus & McKercher, 2007). Although, there is evidence which suggests that there is a connection between

tourism and gastronomy, there has been little examination of tourists' dining experiences in China. A dining experience is more than just an opportunity to satiate physical hunger; it can also serve as a unique and original attraction during travel. This study provides new insights into tourists' dining experiences in China which can serve as a reference for both industry practitioners and academic scholars. This study examined tourists' food consumption motives when travelling in China and acknowledged their influence on perceptions of the travel experience. From the food culture approach, this study provides empirical information that shows how dining experiences may be significant contributory factors to the overall travel experiences and thus can further influence tourists' perceptions of a destination.

5.2.2 New knowledge about tourist's dining out patterns when travelling in China

Tourists' dining experiences in China are the major focus of the study. Previous studies are mainly concerned with Western travellers who visit destinations in East and Southeast Asia, and how Western countries have been promoted as gastronomic destinations. But few studies about travellers and their experiences of gastronomy in China have been conducted. China is among the world's leading tourism destinations, ranking third in international tourist arrivals in 2011, with 135 million (World Tourism Organization, 2012). However, there is a lack of in-depth analysis about tourists' actual dining-out experiences in the country, and to what extent their dining experiences contribute to their overall perceptions of the destination. From the food culture perspective, this study investigates the real life processes of tourists' dining

experiences in China. Findings from this study contribute to an understanding of tourists' eating behaviours when travelling in China, and will assist the industry practitioners in catering to the needs of tourists. The results of this study would help the Chinese tourism industry in segmenting tourism markets and developing new marketing strategies which are appropriate for different in-bound tourist markets.

5.2.3 *New method of investigation*

This study employs qualitative research methods to investigate the real life experiences of tourists' dining experiences at a destination. This study sought to understand what was happening during the dining experience, and tried to find connections among and explanations for each situation rather than to test the hypotheses based on existing theories. Hence, the phenomenological approach was the most appropriate methodology. In terms of contribution to the study of travel experience, it was especially important to use qualitative research methods to uncover new and detailed insights about tourists' dining experiences. This study used both focus group interviews and individual interviews, together with participant observation for data collection. In focus group interviews, tourists could present their views and discuss them with fellow travellers, while interviews with individual travellers allowed for an unbiased, independent appraisal of their experiences as opposite to agreement or disagreement with the collective. In this study participant observation enabled the researcher to develop a holistic understanding of the dining experiences from an insider's perspective. Because the researcher was already immersed in the tourists'

dining experiences, observations served as validations of the findings from the focus group and individual travellers' interviews. Observations also identified any aspects of the tourists' dining behaviour that did not come up in interviews. Despite the fact that qualitative research methodologies may involve some uncertainty and a higher level of risk, this method can assist researchers in understanding real life experiences of tourists' dining experience at a destination.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

The following four research suggestions offer possible directions for extending the knowledge of the travel dining experience.

- Although this study explored several attributes that might affect tourists' travel dining experiences, there is a need to confirm whether the findings from this study can be applied to a large group of tourists. Future research is need to further explore how the attributes that affect tourists' dining experiences (while travelling in China) related to positive or negative perception of (the destination). By adapting the logistical regression analysis model of dining satisfaction and return (Kivela, Inbakaran & Reece, 1999a) to further expand into an empirical model of probability of positive travel perceptions or negative travel perceptions.

- This study investigated tourists' dining experiences by analysing the narratives of the tourists' dining experience with Peirce's semiotics triangle. Future research could use storytelling to examine first-person stories which the tourists being back from travel and destination visits. A story that the tourist in the story report to himself or herself and possibly to others, that is an emic interpretation of how, why, who, when and where events unfold with what immediate and long-term consequences (Hsu, Dehuang & Woodside, 2008). Tourists own storytelling about their own travel experiences often describe myths uniquely relevant to specific destinations and the stories that offer clues of how they interpret and enact the myths that these destinations enable. Hence, learning stories enable researcher to understand how tourists interpret the places, people and situations that they experience while travelling in a destination.

- Furthermore, the future research could consider using blog analytics with sentiment measure to examine the in-depth meaning behind the tourists' experience of a destination. Sentiment analysis is a field in computational linguistics involving identification, extraction, and classification of opinions, sentiments and emotions expressed in natural language (Mishne, 2007). As the blogspace provides a platform for people to express his or her personal experiences and thoughts. Hence, by using blog analytics to analysis the opinions of the tourists' experiences of a destination on blogs, researcher can identify tourists' perceptions on a destination. However, the results from the blog analytic analysis are more than positive or negative polarity classification, emotions and moods can also be analyzed.

- As this study examine the tourists' dining behaviour while travelling in China, that the tourists' own culture and the destination's culture is a large difference. By using means-end theory hierarchical value map to investigate the underlying values driving tourists' dining behaviour, the researcher can explore the reasons why the behaviour of tourists coming from different countries has been so divergent despite they have similar attitudes about the China's gastronomy. Such cultural differences will cause tourists from different countries to seek different value-goal combination in making decision to sampling China' gastronomy (Baker, 2002).
- Due to time and logistical constraints, this study investigated only tourists' dining behaviour during their travel period. Further research could take a longitudinal approach, examining whether tourists' dining behaviours change when they return home, due to their encounter with a foreign food culture.
- This study emphasised tourists' dining behaviour while travelling in China, however, tourists may behave differently when they travel to different destinations. Therefore, further research could consider examining tourists' eating behaviour at different destinations in order to improve the generalisability of the findings.
- Due to time and travel constraints, this study only took place in three cities (Guilin, Hangzhou and Shanghai) in China which are all major tourist destinations. As China is known for the diversity of its gastronomy, and because different provinces and cities have different types of gastronomy and cuisines, tourists may exhibit

different eating behaviours when they are in various regions within China. Thus, future research could examine and compare tourists' eating behaviours when travelling in different parts of the country; for example: the cities of northern China versus those in the south; or urban cities versus rural cities.

5.4 Recommendations for practitioners

Findings from the study have revealed several insights helpful to destination marketers as they develop their gastronomy products as a mean of enhancing tourists' enjoyment during their trips. The recommendations are as follows.

- This study revealed that tourists, especially tour group tourists, would like to have more variety of food and diversified meal arrangements during their travels. As most of the travel agencies have pre-set all meal arrangements before departure, there is little flexibility and little effort to identify tourists' particular gastronomic interests. Therefore, it is recommended that travel agencies distribute questionnaires with meal arrangement choices, before embarking on the tour in order to facilitate an optimal combination of indigenous food, other kinds of food (e.g. western food) and/or free eating activities according to tourists' preferences. In this respect, the meal arrangement can be more diversified and flexible in order to satisfy tourists' needs and wants.

- Findings from this study suggest that some tourists were keen to experience novel or unfamiliar foods when travelling because they considered this to be an opportunity to escape from their ordinary lives. Thus, travel agencies should consider incorporating some free eating activities into the meal arrangement as one of the highlighted activities within travel itineraries. Furthermore, travel agencies should give guidance and suggestions, even provide translations and pictures of some of the popular indigenous food in order to reduce the communication problems that result from the language barrier. This would facilitate the ordering of food and alleviate the fear of and anxiety around unknown food. In addition, travel agencies could also arrange travel programmes that would give tourists an opportunity to learn about the indigenous culture's food in alternative ways, such as traditional cooking classes, and attendance at local food events and festivals to meet local people who have similar interests in local food.

- The findings revealed that most of the tourists' expectations and evaluations of their dining experiences are affected by their perceptions of the destination. In effect, this perception strongly impacts tourists' motivation to visit the destination and affects their evaluation of the overall travel experience. This suggests that destination marketers need to develop a unique gastronomy identity which can represent the destination's culture.

- In addition, the destination marketer may collaborate with the local restaurant industry and related culinary associations to encourage cooks and chefs to develop kitchen skills to produce better tastes, smells and appearance of local foods in order to reinforce the unique gastronomic identity of the destination and emphasise the authenticity of local cuisine. Furthermore, destination marketers may promote the traditions and customs of the local food. For example, in 2009, the Hong Kong Tourism Board, with support from local restaurants, hotels, food experts and celebrity chefs, launched the “Hong Kong Food and Wine Year” campaign to promote the local delicacies and international cuisines available in Hong Kong. Linking gastronomy to special events at the destination can induce tourists’ interest in the authentic food of the destination.

- This study has revealed that travellers’ lack of knowledge about local foods made it difficult for them to sample them and savour the authenticity of Chinese food. Therefore, it is essential that destination marketers ‘educate’ visitors on how to enjoy the authentic food at the destination. The destination marketers can make use of websites to provide user-friendly, guided information about the local gastronomy. Such information may include a history of the destination’s food culture, interesting stories and meanings behind the local food, table etiquette and methods of food preparation. Furthermore, information about local restaurants, food related events, cooking classes and visits to food production places may be posted to facilitate an appreciation of the local food and food culture.

- Some of the tourists revealed that they were anxious and fearful about food hygiene in local restaurants and, as a result, avoided patronizing local restaurants. It is necessary for destination marketers to set up a quality assurance mechanism. For example, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has introduced the Quality Tourism Services (QTS) scheme (HKTB, 2012) that ensures that accredited restaurants pass a stringent annual assessment. They must meet high standards of product quality and service, such as, providing quality food in clean and hygienic premises, a clear and precise menu for food and beverages, and superb custom service. With this scheme, tourists are assured, by destination marketers that sampling the local food are safe.

- The findings revealed that travellers often encountered poor service and inattentive staff. Thus, destination marketers need to provide training for service staff to satisfy the different needs of tourists from different cultural backgrounds. The training should include language skills, service skills and knowledge of the different cultural values and eating behaviours of tourists. In addition, the restaurants should provide correct English translations of menu items and pictures of the menu items need to be displayed on the menus to ensure that tourists can order the food they want.

This study had provided some useful insights into how tourists evaluate their dining experiences when travelling and its influence on their perceptions of the destination. It is believed that destination marketers could capitalize on the findings of this study to make tourists' travel dining experiences more memorable and enjoyable.

Appendix -1

Focus Group Topic Guide

Date:			
Places:			
Name	Age	Occupation	Travel history (No. of travel)

1. Introduction
 - a. Introduction of moderator and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University conducting the research
 - b. Background information about the research

2. Discuss procedure

I will be taking note 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.

- Is this trip your first trip to China? If not, including this trip, how many times you've travelled to China? For business or pleasure?
- Why have you chosen to visit Guilin/Hangzhou/Shanghai?
- Are you familiar with Chinese food?
 - Where and how have you had experiences with Chinese foods?
 - What do you know about Chinese culture?
 - What do you know about Chinese culture?

4. Warm up (5 min.)

Could each of you talk to me about your food habit?

- What are your favorite foods and why are they your favorites?
We're going to go around the room so you can share your choices.

Can you talk to me about your food habits when you travel?

- What are your food preferences when you travel and why?

5. Group discussion (25 min.)

- Before visiting China (this time) have you read-up about its foods? (Why? What source? What specific foods did you read about? What specific foods did you want to try out and why during this trip?)
 - What were your meal arrangements like so far during this trip?
 - What input (if any) did you have in these arrangements?
 - During this trip to China, can you talk about your experiences with food?
- What foods have you consumed that you had not had before during the trip? What was your experience of these?
- Through your food experiences so far, what did you learn about China?
 - Through your food experiences so far, what did you learn about Chinese people?

- What part did food play in your overall travel experience in China?
 - If you were to visit China in the future, what influence would your prior food experiences in China have on your decision to re-visit?

6. Closure (5 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 Dairy**

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

Dear Respondent:

My name is Lancy Tsang and I am a PhD student from Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I am working on a research entitled: An examination of the tourists' dining experiences while travelling in China and its influences on their visit satisfaction.

This focus group discussion or individual interview 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 China and its influences on their 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 me and my supervising professors.

Excerpt 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 further questions about this study after the interview, I can be contact at:
Tel: (852) 3746-
Email: cclancy@

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that I have informed you of its contents, and that you agreed to them.

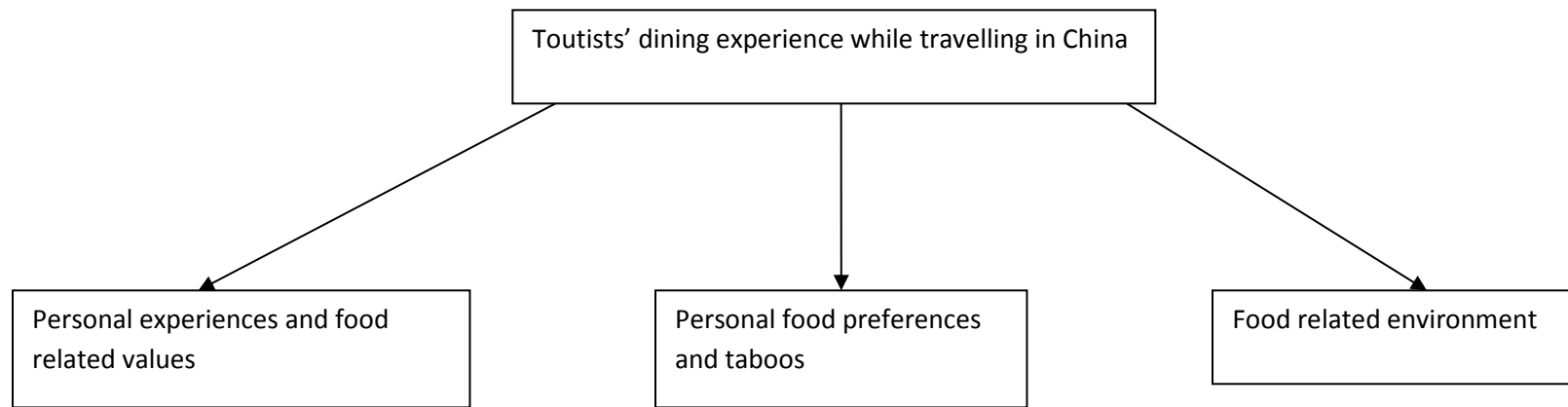
Signature: _____

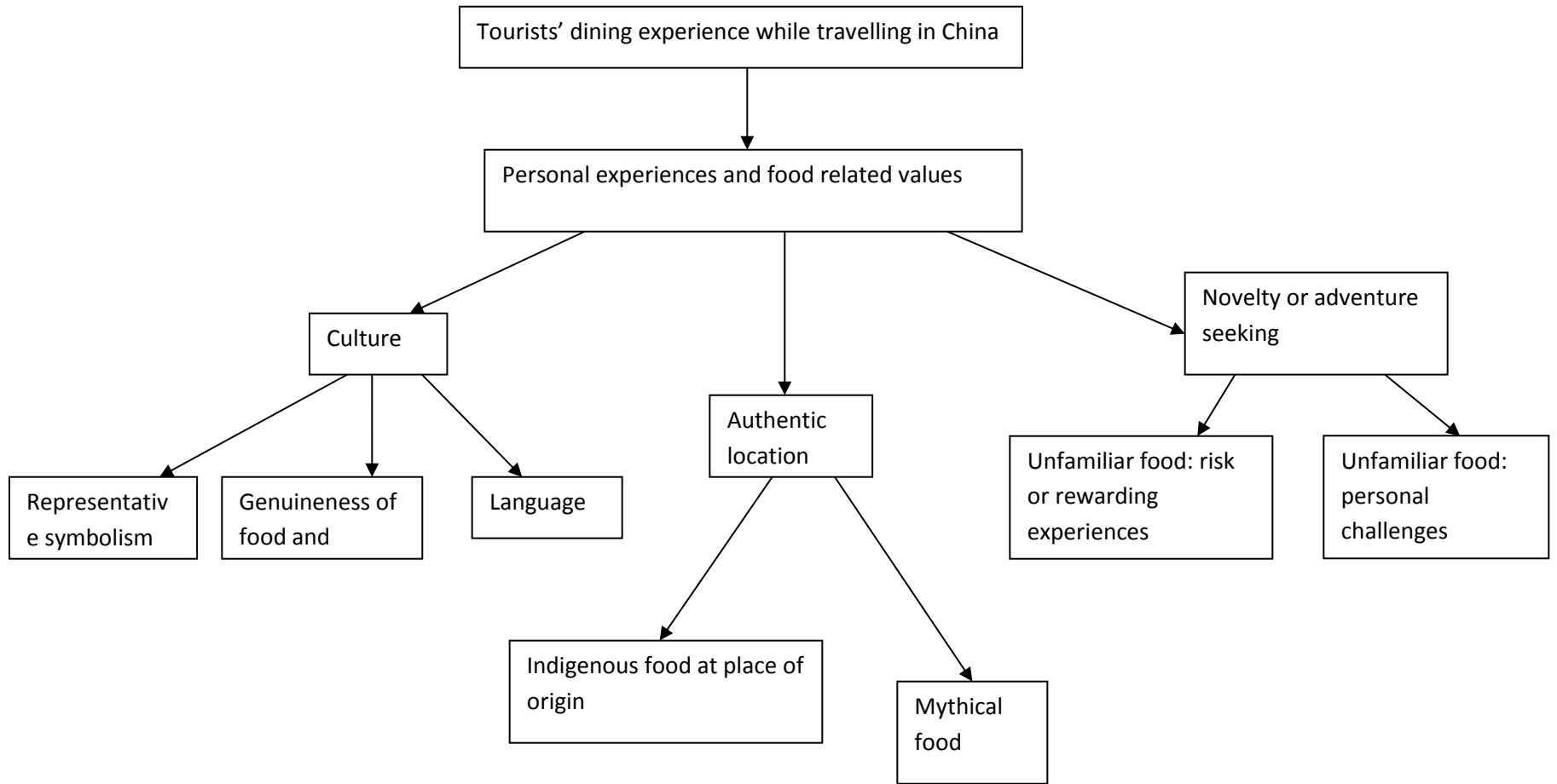
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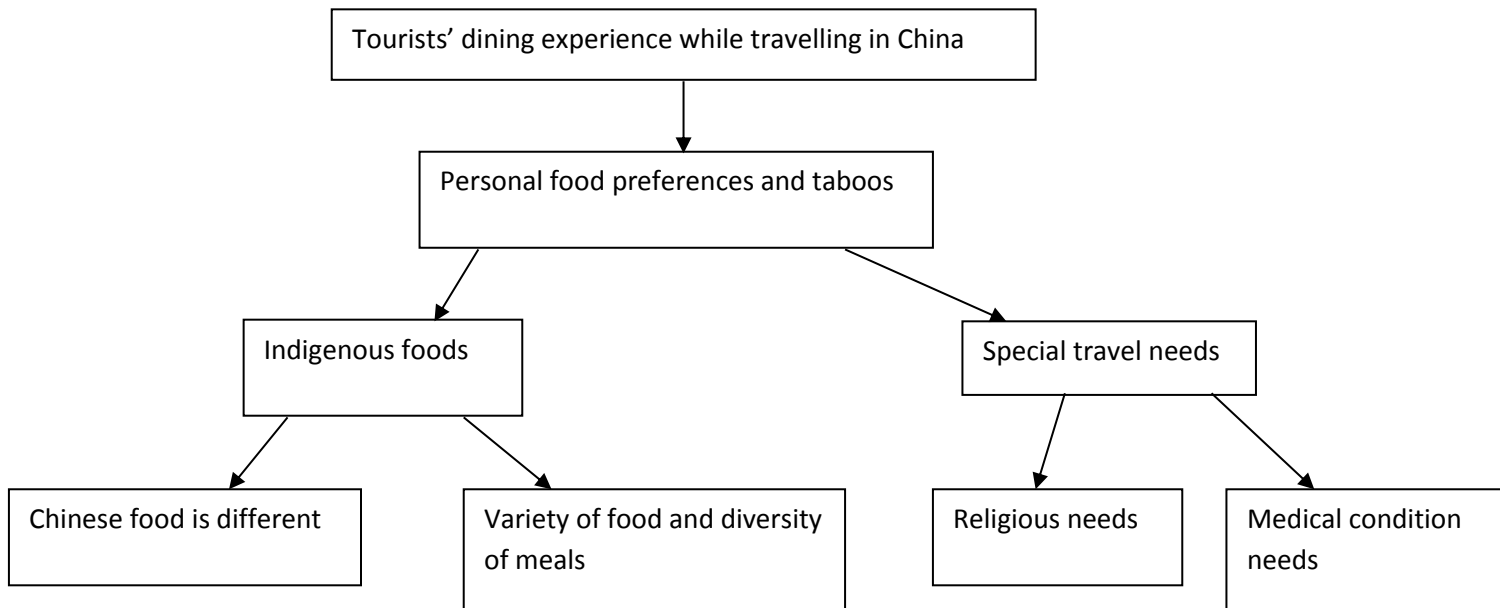
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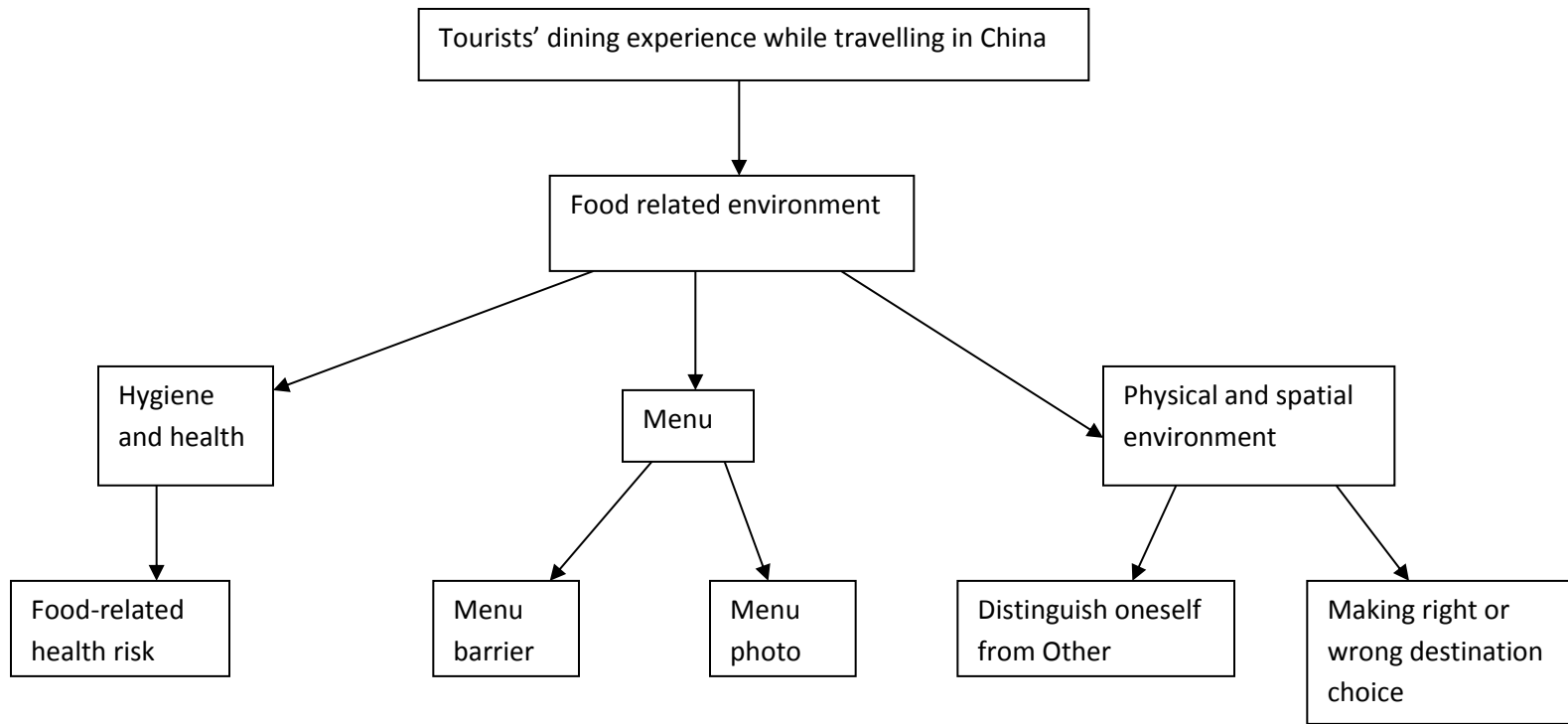
Appendix – 4

Coding structure of the data analysis









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