ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study focuses on the extent how the mainland China tourists experience the Macau gastronomy. By adopting the experiential marketing model of Schmitt (1999), the experiences of the mainland China tourists towards Macau gastronomy could be explored. The main study was conducted in April 2013. There were 365 copies of questionnaires being used for data analysis. The findings revealed that three dimensions (sense, feel, and relate) of tourists’ experiences were positively and significantly correlation with their experiential value. Finally, it is hoped that the findings could provide evidences for Macau tourism government office for creating tourists a memorable experience and encouraging their return willing of gastronomy reasons.

Key Words: Macau gastronomy, experiential marketing model, experiential value, Mainland China tourists

**This article is part of research results from the main study ‘A study on food tourism of Macau by using the experience model’ sponsored by the Macau foundation (no.0252).
INTRODUCTION

The so-called "Monte Carlo of the Orient," Macau's economy relies heavily on gambling. Since the establishment of the Macau special administrative region (SAR), the economy in Macau has become increasingly strong. Various businesses relating to tourism have also benefited. However, the gambling industry is also a source of instability in the Macau economy, as the nature of gambling business is not susceptible to technological advancement or productivity growth. In recent years Macau has attempted to divert itself from the developing singles economy through gambling to focus more on culture and humanity.

The study of Boyne, Williams, & Hall (2002) showed that tourists spend almost 40% of their budget on food when traveling. According to a visitor expenditure survey by the Macau Government tourist office, each tourist spent on average 36% of their total expenditure on food in 2012. Essentially, the amount of tourists spent on their food and beverage has consisted of one third of their total expenditures. It can be interpreted that food and beverage can be an effective promotional and positioning tool of a destination (Telfer & Wall, 2000).

Culinary or gastronomical activities of a destination are also categorized as part of cultural tourism (Corigliano, 2002). Richards (1996) claimed that cultural tourism may include experiencing the cultural attractions as well as sampling the local food. Long (2004) emphasized that savoring the food of others is the way one can really experience and accept different culture. Food and cuisine is a potential in Macau and it has increasingly drawn tourists’ attention as Macanese unique food cannot be found elsewhere in the world. Over the centuries Macau developed a special, unique cuisine that combined elements of Portuguese, Chinese, Indian, and even Malay cooking. As a result, Food cannot only be a tourist attraction (Hudman, 1986), but it also provides an experience of food tasting for tourists (Henderson, 2009) and engages a different cultural phenomenon (Jones & Jenkins, 2002). That is, gastronomy tourism combines not only cuisine and tourism, but also cuisine and culture. While promoting the gastronomy tourism, it is necessary to use the unique local cuisine and food culture as the image of gastronomic destination in Macau.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gastronomy Tourism

Eating is one of the physiological needs of a human being. When tourists travelled to unfamiliar destinations, they firstly worried about food and beverage for basic human needs. This explains how the importance of the connection between food and
tourism cannot be ignored. Gastronomy tourism is related to food and eating experiences that occur when people travel. Therefore, gastronomy tourism is not only associated with eating and drinking, but also events ranging from food festivals to farm visits (Quan & Wang, 2004).

The term ‘gastronomy tourism’ can be recognized as ‘food tourism’, ‘tasting tourism’, or ‘culinary tourism’. Gillespie (2002) stated that the study of gastronomy is the understanding of the scope of production and preparation of food and drink as well as how, where, when and why they are consumed. Similarly, Long (2004) defined culinary tourism as experiencing and participating in the food ways of other people which include but are not limited to consumption, preparation, and presentation of food items. Hall and Mitchell (2005) also defined food tourism as ‘a visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions is the primary motivating factor for travel’ (p. 725).

Because food and beverage has increased tourists’ interests in local cuisine, more and more tourist destinations promote their local cuisine as a main core tourism product. For example, authentic and interesting food can attract visitors to a destination. Boyne et al. (2002) argued that one of the main reasons for most people desiring to visit Italy is because of its cuisine. Consequently, Italian cuisine and wine has boosted the Italian tourism industry (Johnson, 2000). Another example is that the number of tourists visiting Hong Kong has been increasing because of the growing number of restaurants that offer many varieties of cuisine. A major reason for tourists to visit was to experience and taste the food (Hall & Sharples 2003). Moreover, a study by Rimmington and Yuskel (1998) found that the major reason for travelers revisiting Turkey was because of its cuisine, contributing to travelers’ overall satisfaction.

Local eating habits and table manners can also affect the perception of tourists towards a destination (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). The study by Reynolds (1993) found that food and drink can help tourists to understand the social and economic lifestyle of a destination or a country. For example, food has blended into the Italian culture and connected to the lifestyle of its people and become its national identity (Corigliano, 2002). It cannot be denied that food plays an important role in attracting tourists to Italy because of its reflection of Italian culture and lifestyle. Therefore, the image of culinary tourism cannot be limited in unique cuisine, but also needs to take food culture into account.

2.2 Experiential Value

Gentile et al. (2007) suggested that experiential value can be created through consumption experience. As to consumption experiences such as contact fantasies, feeling and fun, Holbrook (2000) argued that it will create impacts toward the customer decision making process. Therefore, Holbrook (2000) proposed to incorporate three elements, such as extrinsic value/intrinsic value, active value/reactive value, self-oriented value / other oriented value in the traditional concept of experiential value. Similar as Lee and Overby (2004) argued, value is subjective and it is created based on the exchange of experience incurred in the process of transaction or individual perceptions. Furthermore, Kotler & Armstrong
(2000) suggested that creating special and innovation customer value is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage. As a result, customers’ perceptions of productions or services through direct use or indirect observation. Customer value can refer to experiential value (Mathwick, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001). Based on the experiential values theories suggested by Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon (2001), consumer return on investment (CROI), service excellence, aesthetics and playfulness are included in their model and would also applied in this study.

2.3. Experiential Marketing

Lee et al. (2011) defined experiential marketing as a memorable memory or experience that goes deeply into the customer’s mind. Holland (1998) considered ‘consumption has begun to be seen as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings and fun encompassed by what we call the ‘experiential view’ (p.132). In order to provide a satisfied tourism experience, customer experience needs to take into account. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) referred consumer experience as the consumer inputs and outputs associated with the experience. Schmitt (1999) defined experiential marketing as the customers’ recognition of and purchasing of goods or services from a company or brand after they experience activities and perceive stimulations. Schmitt (1999) further argued that these experiences enhance the value of a product, a brand, or a company. Hence, Schmitt (1999) proposes the concept of strategic experiential modules (SEMs) that aims to help the managers to create different types of customer experiences for their customers. The experiential model includes sensory experiences (SENSE); affective experiences (FEEL); creative cognitive experiences (THINK); physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles (ACT) and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE).

2.3.1 Sense Experience

Sensory experience mainly from the five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch) brings stimulation, resulting reactions, that is stimulated, process, response, so the human sensory experience basic reaction. Through stimulation from the outside world, the senses could to be an experience of pleasure. According to Yuan and Wu (2008), sense experience is a message that customers formed towards products or services based on their senses. Sensory marketing is through consumer sensory experience, so that they feel satisfied and joy and thus lead to the customer’s consumption motivation and increase product value. In short, McCole (2004) referred sense experience as the experience that customers gain from their sensory experiences.

2.3.2 Feel Experience

Feel experience is referred to the customer’s inner emotion, mood and feeling that customer derived from the consuming of products and services (Yang & He, 2011; Yuan & Wu, 2008). Under this circumstance, customers can produce a strong feeling to link with the products. In order to achieve the purpose of this experience marketing, markets need to understand what consumer really affected by stimulation which cause certain emotion. According to Yang & He (2011), the feel experience may take various forms, and usually ranges from temperate to intense mood. With the positive feelings that generated in the consumption process, consumer develops a positive emotion (Schmitt, 1999). Moreover, Mattila (2001) suggests that strong and positive emotion in the feel experience will bring positive effect and improve the relationship
between the customers and sellers.

2.3.3 Think Experience

Think experience emphasizes on the intelligence of the consumer in generating cognitive experience (Lee et al., 2008). Schmitt (1999) suggested that think experience can stimulates customers’ creative thinking in developing a new idea or thinking about a company or its products. As well as through the processing of creating a new idea or thinking, consumers form their own evaluation towards the company and its brand (Schmitt, 1999). Moreover, it is also necessary to understand which products or services customers are interested in, and added the sense of surprise, or inductive stimulus to products or services for achieving the goal of consumers’ participation in thinking.

2.3.4 Act Experience

Schmitt (1999) suggested that act experience enable consumers to develop experiences that deal with the consumer’s physical body, behavior and lifestyle and the experience gained from the social interaction with other people. Through act experience, consumers develop a relationship with the products or services which offered by companies (Schmitt, 1999).

2.3.5 Relate Experience

Relate experience allows consumers to build their connection with the social communities and social entities through the process of purchasing and consuming the products and services. This experience is beyond individual personality, emotions, and combined with their own experience so that it allows customers to interact with social and cultural environment (Lin et. al, 2007). Therefore, relate experience can be promoted through relate marketing campaign and enables consumers for self-improvement, being perceived positively by others and integrate individual to a social community (Schmitt, 1999).

2.4 Proposed Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

After reviewing the existing literature, this researcher developed the hypotheses in this research. The five tested hypotheses are:

H1: There is a positive relationship between sense experience and experiential
value.
H2: There is a positive relationship between feel experience and experiential value.
H3: There is a positive relationship between think experience and experiential value.
H4: There is a positive relationship between act experience and experiential value.
H5: There is a positive relationship between relate experience and experiential value.

METHOD

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed in this study to explore the tourists’ experiences on dining in Macau and their experiential value. A self-administered questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive literature review. Considering this study collect specialists’ subjective points of view so the insufficient information and high uncertainty could be observed, hence Delphi Method was applied. Through repeated feedback of questions and answers, a consistent conclusion was reached. This questionnaire consisted of three sections and 5 point Likert scale was used; first section was experiential model (five dimensions) and second section was tourists’ experiential value. Respondents were asked to rate the level of agreement that ranged from 1=strong disagree to 5= strong agree. The second section was travelers’ demographic characteristics. After conducting the pilot study, the main study was conducted in April 2013. Excluding 18 invalid copies, 365 copies of questionnaires are used for data analysis. Thus, the effective response rate was 92%.

The study adopted Cronbach’s α to measure the internal consistence reliability of the questionnaire. The results showed that Cronbach’s α of sense, feel, think, act, and relate were all between 0.77 and 0.83. The reliability indicator α values were all greater than 0.7, the reliability indicator α value at acceptance level. It indicates that the design of the questionnaire has a high internal consistence. The convergent validity factor loading β values were all greater than 0.5. The results showed that the survey questions were related to each other and valid.

FINDINGS

A total of 390 responses was collected in April 2013. Of these, 6 surveys were discarded due to incompleteness, resulting in 384 usable questionnaires for further analysis. Gender of the respondents was almost equally distributed with 53% female and 47% male. Around half of the respondents’ ages were 29 years old and under (46%), followed by 30-39 years old (32%), and 40 years old and above (22%). Close to half of the respondents (48%) had a college and university degree; 37% had a graduate/postgraduate degree; and the remaining 15% were high school graduates. About 35% of the respondents reported a monthly income of 5000 RMB and above. The next income group 3001-5000RMB consisted of 43% of the respondents. 22% of the respondents reported monthly income under 3000 RMB. About 28.3% of the respondents were in management positions, followed by self-employed (26.8%), staff (18.3%), students (15.2%), and professionals, such as a doctor or lawyer (11.4%).

The output of the factor analysis indicated that the factor analysis was appropriate because the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was 0.847 (between 0.5
and 1.0) and the statistical test for Bartlett test of sphericity was significant (p=0.000) for all the correlations within a correlational matrix. Based on the principal components analysis and VARIMAX procedure in orthogonal rotation that were adopted in the factor analysis, the results showed that the Eigenvalues for all the tested constructs were greater than 1.0. In term of convergent validity, the factor loadings for all items within the constructs were more than 0.50. According to this result, discriminant validity indicated that all items were allocated according to the different constructs. Therefore, the items were not overlapping and they supported respective constructs.

4.4 Regression Analysis

4.4.1 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is the appropriate technique to analyze the linear relationship between a dependent variable and multiple independent variables by estimating coefficients for the equation for a straight line (Hair et al., 2006). Multiple regression analysis would be carried out to test the five hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5) in this research. Based on the results, the Tolerance Value was ranged between 0.792-0.513 in which were all more than 0.10 and the VIF value ranges from 1.466-1.835 in which are all less than 5. Therefore, the findings showed that there was no multicollinearity problem among all the independent variables in this study. Moreover, the p-values for three independent variables were less than 0.05, indicating that sense experience, feel experience, and relate experience had significant relationship with experiential value. In other words, the findings from this research confirms that sense experience, feel experience, and relate experience of mainland China tourists were positively related to their experiential value on dining in Macau. In conclusion, three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H5) are supported. Finally, a regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between the tourist’s experience on Macau food and their experiential value on dining in Macau. Independent variable: five factors of experiential marketing representing the determinants of their experiential value (R= .736; R²= .541; Adjusted R² = .535; F = 89.513; P=0.000). This result shows that the predictive value of those five dimensions was 53.5%.

Table: Result of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std.Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>2.582</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense experience</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>2.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel experience</td>
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<td>.048</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>7.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think experience</td>
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<td>.049</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>0.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act experience</td>
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<td>.038</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>1.340</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relate experience</td>
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<td>.038</td>
<td>.383</td>
<td>9.100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent Variable: Composed Experiential Value; R=0.736; R Square = 0.541; Adjusted R Square = 0.535
Source: Develop for this study
CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings revealed that the Mainland Chinese tourists perceived their experiences on three dimensions, that is sense experience, feel experience, and relate experience were positively and significantly related to their experiential value. In other words, mainland China tourists evaluated their experiential value on dining in Macau tended to more on the presentation and tastes of food, the feeling towards food, and the relationship between food and culture in Macau. In this study, mainland China tourists have noticed the Macanese food involve special food style and culture as the findings showed that positively and significantly related to their experiential value. The presentation of food has stimulated their sensatory senses and experience Macanese multicultural through Macau cuisine. In particular, Macau developed a special, unique cuisine over the centuries and owned exotic style. It brings tourists enjoyment and excitement while dining in Macau. Moreover, Macau cuisine and the dining atmosphere of Macao restaurants provides information regarding the evolution of Macao from it colonial period and society, Macao’s dining culture and manners so that relate experience was also positively and significantly related to their experiential value. In conclusion, while promoting the gastronomy tourism, it is necessary to use the unique local cuisine and food culture in Macau. Exploring unique culture from tasting food and seeking for local food to experience Macanese culture, dietary manner are importantly to their experiential value. Therefore, gastronomy tourism obtains high potential to be promoted in Macau.

According to the findings of this study, this author attempted to provide some possible recommendation to Macau government tourist office. Firstly, Macau gastronomy possesses its unique characteristic as food has always played a major part in Macau society and is a good reflection of the community's long multicultural experience and present different types of food. The experiences of cuisine cannot be only limited in the taste of the Portuguese and Chinese cuisines in the restaurants, but also some local food sold by street vendors existing in the narrow streets in Macau which is in favor of gastronome. As Hegarty & O'Mahoney (2001) claimed, dinning habits help tourists understand differences between their own culture and a destination culture. In order to maximize the marketing efforts gastronomy destinations should provide better tourists’ satisfied experiences in different perspectives for increasing tourists’ experiential value while dining in Macau.

REFERENCES


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