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Integrating priori and posteriori approaches to segment types of food tourists: Food tourist segmentation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study employs both a priori and posteriori approaches to classify food tourists based on their daily food exploration behaviors and investigates the differences between their daily dining behaviors and travel dining behaviors. Data were collected from 744 tourists who visited four Hakka traditional cultural areas online. The cluster analysis results indicate that tourists can be divided into two groups: those who love diverse food and those who prefer familiar food. The t-test results indicated that those who love diverse food place more importance on maintaining a balanced daily diet than those who prefer familiar food. Those who love diverse food and are more willing to try various new and novel foods would avoid the potential risks of trying new foods while traveling, refrain from indulging in random food, and pay attention to preparing health products when traveling. However, there was no difference between the two types of tourists in choosing familiar foods or cooking methods while traveling. Culinary tourism requires service design to align with tourist values. Promoting Hakka cuisine through marketing and modern health-conscious practices can enhance its appeal. Encouraging sustainable culinary experiences helps preserve traditions while addressing industry challenges in adapting to change.

Contribution/Originality: This study uniquely categorizes tourists based on their daily and travel dining behaviors in Hakka traditional cultural areas, bridging the gap between a priori and a posteriori approaches. Its findings provide valuable insights for developing effective marketing strategies in food tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tasting local cuisine is a beloved activity for tourists during their travels (De Jong & Varley, 2017; Luković, Kostić, & Dajić Stevanović, 2024). This makes food a powerful influence for many stakeholders, such as farmers, food producers, local businesses, and tourism marketing organizations (Levitt, Zhang, DiPietro, & Meng, 2019; Madaleno, Eusébio, & Varum, 2019). Based on the important role food plays in tourists' decision-making behavior (Derinalp Çanakçı & Birdir, 2020; Prayag, Gannon, Muskat, & Taheri, 2020) it has become a important factor in tourists' decisions to visit tourism destination (Kim & Eves, 2016; Robinson, Getz, & Dolnicar, 2018; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020; Seo, Yun, & Kim, 2017; Tsai & Wang, 2017).

The importance of culinary tourism has sparked interest among many researchers to discuss tourists' dining behaviors at destinations. Studies have explored various aspects such as the profile and satisfaction or motivations of food tourists (Lin & Chen, 2014) the relationship between tourists' psychological characteristics and food involvement

or motivations (Levitt et al., 2019) cognition and attitudes (Mynttinen, Logren, Särkkä-Tirkkonen, & Rautiainen, 2015) travel lifestyle and preferences (Donald Getz & Robinson, 2014; Sohn & Yuan, 2013) product and experience development (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2013) tourists' attitudes and destination-specific food-related consumption (Cheng & Huang, 2015) how food and dining habits influence place image and create expectations about the destination before a holiday (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016) and the impact of tourists' own dining culture on perceived value of food consumption at the destination (Choe & Kim, 2018).

On top of that, tourism operators need to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourists' dietary behaviors to develop appropriate strategies to attract tourists, both in their daily lives and during travel (Getz, Robinson, Andersson, & Vujicic, 2014; Nie & Zepeda, 2011; Pérez-Gálvez, Medina-Viruel, Jara-Alba, & López-Guzmán, 2021). In recent years, scholars (Robinson et al., 2018) have pointed out that previous studies argued to have segmented the potential food tourism market, but they often provided only conceptual categories, typologies, or descriptive profiles. Levitt et al. (2019) further argued that few empirical studies use food-related travel behaviors (FRTB) as a basis for segmentation. Therefore, it is important to develop a comprehensive classification method to segment food tourists and examine what key variables exist to understand the actual behavior of food tourists. This study aims to further segment types of food tourists and investigate their daily dining behaviors and travel-dining behaviors based on a priori/posteriori approach (Ying, Wen, Law, Wang, & Norman, 2018). In tourist areas with traditional culture, this study views tourists' daily food exploration behaviors as their regular participation in food-related activities (a priori approach) and uses this as a segmentation criterion. Subsequently, it examines the daily dining behaviors (a priori approach) and travel eating behaviors (posteriori approach) of each type of tourist. The study provides recommendations for culinary tourism managers on how to effectively introduce local foods and marketing promotion strategies based on research findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of Food Tourism

Hall and Sharples (2003) describe food tourism as "encompassing various activities, such as visiting primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific locations where tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions is the main motivating factor for travel." First, from a motivational perspective, the desire of tourists to taste specific destination foods or engage in food experiences is a crucial motivation for their choice of destination (Bertella, 2011; Lee, Alexander, & Kim, 2014; Su, 2013).

Presenza and Iocca (2012) described food tourism as travel behavior driven by the desire to experience certain foods. Ellis, Park, Kim, and Yeoman (2018) argue that motivation is a key factor in designing and creating food tourism. Motivation encompasses needs ranging from physical to physiological, from safety to cultural and social needs. This includes personal needs such as a sense of belonging, the need for prestige (e.g., gourmet and luxury foods), status, and self-actualization.

Next, from an activity-based perspective, scholars define food tourism as tourists engaging in food experiences (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Teixeira & Ribeiro, 2013). Presenza and Del Chiappa (2013) argue that food tourism encompasses any experience related to a destination's culinary resources. Therefore, food tourism can "involve the physical experience of food or broader food-related activities, including visits to food producers, food festivals and fairs, events, farmers' markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, food tastings, or other food-based tourism activities" (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Lastly, from a cultural perspective, food serves as a cultural reference point that introduces unique information about its place of origin, production methods, local culture, and geography (Montanari, 2009; Teixeira & Ribeiro, 2013; Timothy & Ron, 2013). Food can be seen as telling the story of a destination's culinary culture and heritage, representing an experience of local cultural history or, more simply, a symbol of culture (Avieli, 2013; Bessière, 2013).For example, in Japanese noodle tourism, food production sites transform into consumption spaces; that is, from places where local food is purchased to spaces where local cuisine is

enjoyed and learned about (Castillo-Canalejo, Sánchez-Cañizares, Santos-Roldán, & Muñoz-Fernández, 2020). Based on the aforementioned research findings, this study defines food tourism as any of the various activities involving the production and consumption of food aimed at enhancing positive experiences for tourists.

2.2. The Segmentation Approach to Food Tourists

Hjalager (2004) classified tourists into four different types based on their food-related lifestyles (FRL) and on-site food-related behaviors: existential, experimental, diversionary, and recreational food travelers. For example, diversionary food travelers and recreational food travelers both prefer familiar places, with the former being less loyal and more passive, while the latter value local cuisine and actively seek such experiences. Ignatov and Smith (2006) categorized culinary tourists in Canada into three types based on the degree of participation in activities (such as food, wine, or both): food tourists, wine tourists, and those who engage in both. Socio-demographic, motivational, and behavioral differences were found to be significant among the three segments. Getz et al. (2014) classified European food enthusiasts based on their frequency of participation in food-related activities into three categories: (1) Dynamic foodies, (2) Active foodies, and (3) Passive foodies.

Ying et al. (2018) identified two approaches for categorizing food tourists: a priori and a posteriori. The a priori approach, commonly used in tourism research, relies on intuitive reasoning and individual characteristics such as country of origin, gender, age, geographic distance traveled, family life cycle, and travel expenditures (e.g., (Cai & Li, 2009; Kozak & Martin, 2012)). This approach can also differentiate tourists based on their participation in food-related activities at destinations. In contrast, the a posteriori approach employs data-driven segmentation methods, using multidimensional psychological or behavioral frameworks to group tourists (MacLeod, Hayes, & Slater, 2010). For instance, it categorizes and differentiates tourists based on their motivations for engaging in food-related activities at destinations. Notably, Ying et al. (2018) found that the self-classification approach performs as effectively as the psychographic approach in segmenting food-related consumption behaviors.

On the other hand, many past studies have categorized tourist types based on motivation or level of involvement. For instance, Levitt et al. (2019) argue that food tourists exhibit different demographic and psychological characteristics. They categorized tourists into three types based on motivation and involvement: high (31%), medium (48.4%), and low motivation and involvement tourists (20.6%). Additionally, different types of tourists show significant differences in their attitudes and willingness to consume local cuisine. Pérez-Gálvez et al. (2021) differentiated tourists based on motivation and satisfaction related to food and dining. They examined the importance of food and dining as travel motivations, emphasizing how crucial food and dining experiences are in destination choice and their impact on overall travel satisfaction. The above-cited study segmented three types of tourists: (1) Experiencers, (2) Enjoyers, and (3) Survivors. They argue that segmenting tourism demand and studying its characteristics and motivations can help shape tourism services that cater to the tastes and needs of specific food tourists at certain tourist destinations. Moreover, when tourists' desires and needs related to tasting local cuisine are fulfilled, they tend to be more satisfied with their experiences.

Based on the assertions of scholars such as Levitt et al. (2019), Pérez-Gálvez et al. (2021), and Ying et al. (2018), it is implied that types of food tourists can be differentiated based on multiple variables such as motivations, involvement, and frequency of participation in food activities. Therefore, this study infers that food tourists can be divided into different types based on their daily food exploration behaviors. Hypothesis one is proposed as follows:

H₁: Food tourists can be segmented into homogeneous groups on the basis of their daily food exploration behaviors.

2.3. Tourists' Daily Dining Behaviors and Experiences while Traveling

Tourists' daily dining behaviors also influence their food tourism experiences. For example, food tourists actively participate in food-related activities in their daily lives, enjoy tasting various foods, and consider themselves as foodies or food enthusiasts (Donald Getz & Robinson, 2014). Hjalager (2004) categorizes food tourists into four types based

on their food-related lifestyles: existential, experimental, diversionary, and recreational food travelers. Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2016) indicate that, based on tourists' commitment to food and dining, as well as their interest in local cuisine and food habits, different types of travelers can be identified. From the aforementioned studies, it is evident that tourists' dining and eating behaviors, such as balanced diet practices (Chang, 2017) and considerations of food health attributes (Peštek & Činjarević, 2014), represent important dining concepts and behaviors in their daily lives.

Additionally, diversity-seeking represents an individual's satisfaction with product characteristics and pursuit of novelty in previously untested or unknown products (McAlister & Pessemier, 1982). Consumer diversity-seeking behavior can be explained according to optimal stimulation theory (Inman, 2001; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1992). When individuals perceive their personal stimulation levels to be lower than optimal, they seek new levels of stimulation. Conversely, when stimulation exceeds the optimal level, avoidance behaviors may occur. In daily food diversity-seeking behavior, individuals engage in food-related activities such as tasting unfamiliar foods, trying new recipes, showing curiosity towards foods from different countries, and experiencing exotic cuisines (Germann, 2004; Kahn, 1995). This behavior provides emotional benefits such as entertainment and satisfaction (Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012). Therefore, tourists' daily dining and diverse exploration of food can be seen as the extent to which individuals engage in food-related activities in their daily lives.

According to Chang (2017), travel eating behaviors encompass five factors: (1) novelty, (2) risk avoidance, (3) health commitment, (4) familiarity, and (5) food supplementation and medication. Respondents with stronger attitudes towards balanced diet and eating habits are often more stimulated by the novelty factor. Risk avoidance, health commitment, and familiarity are closely associated with stronger attitudes toward food ingredients and nutrition. Among these factors, novelty emerges as the most significant dimension, scoring the highest, followed by risk avoidance, which ranks second. These dimensions are derived from four primary dimensions of food consumption: (1) the symbolic dimension, which encompasses the pursuit of local culture, authentic experiences, learning and education, as well as prestige and status; (2) the compulsory dimension, which addresses the basic need to maintain bodily functions; (3) the comparative dimension, which motivates tourists to contrast their everyday experiences with those encountered when trying new foods; and (4) the extensional dimension, which encourages tourists to seek food experiences that build upon their daily habits. Illustrating this multidimensionality, Chang (2007) noted that even health-conscious tourists might temporarily set aside their healthy eating practices when presented with indulgent meals during vacations.

Based on the above literature review, tourists' culinary behaviors during travel constitute a multidimensional psychological and behavioral structure, which can serve as a basis for an a posteriori segmentation approach. Hence, hypothesis two is proposed as follows:

H₂: There are differences between tourists' daily dining behaviors and travel dining behaviors across different types of food tourists.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Data Collection Method

First, to avoid sampling bias, and as recommended by studies such as Soltani, Soltani Nejad, Taheri Azad, Taheri, and Gannon (2021), areas known for their traditional culture and culinary features were selected as ideal sites.

In Taiwan, the government actively promotes a list of 70 main Hakka cultural development areas. Four regions—Nanzhuang Township and Sanyi Township, both in Miaoli County, Meinong District in Kaohsiung City, and Neipu Township in Pingtung County—were selected based on four criteria. The selection criteria are (1) areas known as hometowns of traditional Hakka cuisine (Soltani et al., 2021) (2) regions that host specific Hakka cultural festivals annually (e.g., Sanyi Tung Blossom Festival, Meinong White Radish Festival, and Nanzhuang Flower Festival), (3) areas with rich natural environments, and (4) regions with numerous Hakka cuisine restaurants that

attract a large number of tourists (Zatori, Smith, & Puczko, 2018).

Second, this study adopts an online survey to collect samples. Researchers posted invitations in travel groups on Facebook (FB) and the social platforms Dcard and PTT, inviting respondents who had visited one of the four Hakka cultural areas within the past three months to participate in the survey (Chang, 2017). The goal was to gather heterogeneous samples across different ages, genders, and groups (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). The survey introduction page explained the research topic to avoid misunderstandings, and respondents were required to have visited one of the four cultural areas within the last three months to proceed. The sampling criteria included: (1) respondents must be 18 years or older, (2) respondents must not be local residents, and (3) respondents must have tasted local cuisine during their visit (Zatori et al., 2018).

Third, regarding sample size, this study adopts the Cochran formula for limited communities and selects 750 individuals as the study samples. Using the formula shown below, the minimum required sample size of a statistical population can be estimated:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq/d^2}{1 + 1/N \left[\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} - 1 \right]}$$

In the formula, p and q represent the success and failure ratios, both assumed to be 0.5. The value of Z^2 at a 0.05 error level is 1.96, while the margin of error (d) is set at 0.04. The variable N denotes the size of the target population. To ensure the required sample size, the number of questionnaires distributed was increased by 25%. As a result, 750 questionnaires were deemed necessary for this study. Increasing the sample size enhances the representativeness of the data and improves the reliability of the results. After extensive follow-up, a total of 744 valid samples were collected, having the following distribution: 214 individuals from Miaoli County, Nanzhuang Township; 173 individuals from Miaoli County, Sanyi Township; 201 individuals from Kaohsiung County, Meinong Township; and 156 individuals from Pingtung County, Liudui Hakka Cultural Park.

3.2. Questionnaire Design

There are three parts to the instrumentation details. The first part covers daily dining behaviors, including a balanced diet and habits, as well as daily food diversity-seeking behavior. The balanced diet and habits section is adapted from Chang (2017) and includes 8 items with an alpha value of 0.907. An example item is: "I will try various novel foods when traveling." The daily food diversity-seeking behavior section is based on Derinalp Çanakçı and Birdir (2020) and consists of 7 items with an alpha value of 0.900. The second part addresses travel dining behaviors across five dimensions, referencing Chang (2017) and Derinalp Çanakçı and Birdir (2020). It includes novelty (α=0.921), risk avoidance (α=0.761), health steadfastness (α=0.791), familiarity (α=0.801), and food supplement and medicine (α=0.638). All items use a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with Cronbach's alpha values for each dimension exceeding 0.7 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The third part collects demographic variables, such as gender, age, education level, income, marital status, work experience, occupation, number of visits to the destination, and dining locations during the visit (Derinalp Çanakçı & Birdir, 2020).

3.3. Data Analysis

This study employs AMOS software for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), aiming to assess the appropriateness of the factor structure (Byrne, 2010). Cluster analysis is utilized to evaluate and categorize tourists based on their daily food exploration behaviors with SPSS software (Liang, Lim, Tung, & Lin, 2023). Lastly, t-tests are conducted to examine differences in daily and travel-related dining behaviors among tourists of different food exploration types.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Demographic Analysis

The respondents are predominantly female (66.3%), unmarried (69.6%), with a university degree or higher (87.7%), and aged below 20 years (57.8%). Work experience is primarily either over 9 years (32.3%) or less than 1 year (30.9%). The most common occupations are in the service industry (30.5%), followed by students (23.9%) and government/military (19.4%). The majority earn a monthly income of less than $1,300 USD (61.8%). Visit numbers are evenly distributed, with 1 visit (37.0%), 3 visits (32.8%), and 2 visits (30.2%) being common. Dining predominantly occurs in restaurants (61.3%).

4.2. Reliability and Validity Analyses

Anderson and Gerbing (1988) argue that a two-stage analytical procedure should be used to analyze the fit among the dimensions. Therefore, this study conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) based on their claims. The analysis results show the following: (1) Items No3, No7, FA3, BH8, and DE3 have modification indices higher than 10 (as Table 1); thus, scholars' recommendations for deletion were followed (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). (2) All items have factor loadings greater than 0.5 (except BH6, which is 0.46, slightly below 0.5, hence it was retained in this study). (3) All indices (e.g., RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, NFI, NNFI) exceed the thresholds recommended by Bentler and Bonett (1980). (4) Except for risk avoidance (AVE = 0.37) and balanced diet and dining habits (AVE = 0.47), the composite reliabilities (CR) of each construct exceeded 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.5. Regarding risk avoidance and balanced diet and dining habits, the AVEs are below 0.5.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) state, "Based on the reliability for the construct (ρy) alone, researchers can still conclude that construct convergent validity is adequate, despite over 50% of the variance being due to error." These results suggest that the AVE, reliability, and convergent validity of all dimensions were within the acceptable range.

Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis results.

Dimensions	Items	Factor loading	t-value(p)	error	CR	AVE
Novelty	NO1 I get plenty of energy from my diet to maintain a healthy balance.	0.84	26.86	0.30	0.84	0.52
	NO2 I want to eat various cuisines during my travels.	0.81	25.57	0.34		
	NO4 I enjoy experiencing local dining habits/behaviors when traveling.	0.71	21.26	0.50		
	NO5 I try various exotic foods when traveling.	0.66	19.15	0.57		
	NO6 When traveling, I choose food prepared using local cooking methods.	0.50	13.89	0.75		
Risk avoidance	RI1 I only drink bottled water when traveling.	0.52	13.51	0.73	0.70	0.37
	RI2 I only patronize restaurants with high hygiene standards when traveling.	0.65	17.72	0.57		
	RI3 I am particularly careful to avoid foodborne illnesses when traveling.	0.65	17.79	0.57		
	RI4 I avoid eating raw food when traveling.	0.59	15.73	0.65		
Health steadfastness	H1 When traveling, I won't indulge myself by eating whatever I want.	0.74	22.63	0.45	0.58	0.80
	H2 I will make an effort to maintain my healthy eating habits during my journey.	0.85	27.51	0.28		
	H3 I choose restaurants that offer healthy menus when traveling.	0.88	29.00	0.23		
Familiarity	FA1 When traveling, I choose foods that I am familiar with.	0.92	29.23	0.14	0.86	0.76

Dimensions	Items	Factor loading	t-value(p)	error	CR	AVE
	FA2 When traveling, I choose foods prepared using cooking methods that I am familiar with.	0.81	24.71	0.34		
Food supplement and medicine	ME1 When traveling, I bring along a health medication kit.	0.74	18.10	0.46	0.79	0.65
	ME2 When traveling, I bring along healthy products.	0.88	20.65	0.22		
Balanced diet and dining habits	BH1 I get plenty of energy from my diet to maintain a healthy balance.	0.76	23.65	0.42	0.86	0.47
	BH2 I eat a variety of foods.	0.84	27.34	0.30		
	BH3 I maintain nutritional balance.	0.88	29.35	0.23		
	BH4 I eat a lot of vegetables.	0.70	21.21	0.51		
	BH5 I drink plenty of water.	0.51	14.18	0.74		
	BH6 I avoid overeating.	0.46	12.78	0.79		
	BH7 I maintain sufficient meal times.	0.60	17.34	0.64		
Diverse food seeking behaviors	DE1 I find it interesting to try foods that I am not familiar with.	0.79	25.33	0.37	0.91	0.63
	DE2 I enjoy eating exotic foods.	0.78	24.92	0.39		
	DE4 Seeing unfamiliar items on the menu makes me curious.	0.82	26.46	0.34		
	DE5 When dining out, I like to try the most unusual items, even if I'm not sure I'll like them.	0.81	25.59	0.35		
	DE6 I am curious about foods that I am not familiar with.	0.85	26.47	0.27		
	DE7 When preparing food or snacks, I like to try new recipes.	0.72	22.24	0.48		

Note: No3: I try local traditional foods when traveling; No7: When traveling, I eat anything I like, even if it's expensive; FA3: When traveling, I choose food carefully; BH8: I eat at fixed times every day; DE3: I'm eager to know what people in other countries eat.
$\chi2(df=94) =4.88$, RMSEA=0.072, NFI=0.94, NNFI=0.95, PNFI=0.83, CFI=0.96, IFI=0.96, RFI=0.94, CN=195.07, RMR=0.11, SRMR=0.063, GFI=0.86, AGFI=0.83, PGFI=0.70.

4.3. Discriminant Validity

To assess discriminant validity, this study employed the paired correlation confidence interval (CI) test for latent variables, as proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Discriminant validity is confirmed if the value of 1 is excluded from the confidence interval. The results indicate that the CIs for all dimensions did not include the value of 1, thereby confirming the presence of discriminant validity between the dimensions (see Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation matrix.

Dimensions	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	G.
A. Novelty	1	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.03
B. Risk avoidance	0.40	1	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04
C. Health steadfastness	0.09	0.68	1	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.03
D. Familiarity	0.05	0.62	0.70	1	0.04	0.04	0.04
E. Food supplement and medicine	0.25	0.48	0.39	0.31	1	0.04	0.04
F. Diverse food-seeking behaviors.	0.73	0.30	0.13	0.02	0.32	1	0.03
G. Balanced diet and dining habits	0.48	0.44	0.43	0.21	0.27	0.39	1

4.4. Cluster Analyses of Diverse Food Seeking Behaviors

This study uses two-stage cluster analysis to assess tourists' diverse food-seeking behaviors. Initially, hierarchical clustering (Ward's method) is used to determine the number of clusters. Subsequently, based on the change in agglomeration coefficients, two distinct types of tourists are differentiated. A non-hierarchical method (K-means) is then employed to validate the appropriateness of tourist segmentation (as shown in Table 3). It is consistent with the

approach used by Liang et al. (2023). The results of the discriminant analysis revealed that 40 respondents were misclassified in the two-stage cluster analysis, yielding an accurate segmentation rate of 94%. This high accuracy indicates a strong alignment between the two-stage cluster analysis results and the predicted outcomes. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Average scores for each cluster and dimension were compared to explore the characteristics of different clusters, and each of these was then given a name. In general, t-test results found that compared to Cluster B tourists (Mean=4.652), Cluster A tourists exhibit a high curiosity and enthusiasm for trying novel foods (Mean=6.314), but differ in the details of diverse tasting behaviors. Tourists in Group A prefer exotic foods (Mean=6.53), are curious about unfamiliar ingredients (Mean=6.36), and dishes (Mean=6.42), with all items averaging above 6. Although Group B tourists are curious about unfamiliar dishes (Mean=5.16), they are less inclined to try unusual ingredients (Mean=4.09) and are less curious overall (Mean=4.47). Therefore, this study names Group A tourists as enthusiasts of diverse cuisines and Group B tourists as preferers of familiar cuisines.

Table 3. Cluster analysis of daily food-seeking behaviors.

Cluster number	Rate of change of the agglomeration coefficient		%	Items	Group	Mean	SD	t (p)
10	1901.267		4.17	Total	A	6.31	0.521	35.166(0.000)
9	1980.457		4.62		B	4.65	0.762	
8	2071.869		4.94	DE1	A	6.22	0.844	21.756(0.000)
7	2174.263		4.89		B	4.59	1.181	
6	2280.611		5.39	DE2	A	6.42	0.693	21.044(0.000)
5	2403.493		6.48		B	5.01	1.124	
4	2559.213		20.61	DE4	A	6.53	0.67	21.736(0.000)
3	3086.554		20.43		B	5.16	1.04	
2	3717.145		78.57	DE5	A	6.2	0.807	31.038(.000)
1	6637.562				B	4.09	1.021	
K-mean method Ward method	Cluster A (%)	Cluster B (%)	Total	DE6	A	6.36	0.711	27.766(0.000)
Cluster A (%)	458(96.6%)	16(3.4%)	474		B	4.47	1.143	
Cluster B (%)	24(8.9%)	246(91.1%)	270	DE7	A	6.16	0.936	20.540(0.000)
total	482(64.8%)	262(35.2%)	744		B	4.58	1.127	

Note: Accuracy rate: 94.62%; χ^2=580.38(p<.001).

4.5. Hypothesis Test

This study used t-tests to identify differences among consumers with different styles in their daily dining habits and food tourism behaviors. As Table 4 shows, those who love diverse cuisines place more importance on their personal daily diet being balanced compared to those who prefer familiar food (Mean$_{diverse-cuisine-lovers}$=5.638 > Mean$_{familiar-food-lovers}$=5.006, t=8.664).

Table 4. A balanced diet among different types of food tourists.

Dimension	Group	Mean	SD	t (p)
Balanced diet	A	5.638	0.914	8.664(0.000)
	B	5.006	1.028	

Note: A: tourists as enthusiasts of diverse cuisines; B: tourists as preferers of familiar cuisines.

Those who love diverse cuisines are more likely than those who prefer familiar foods to agree with trying various novel foods (Mean$_{diverse-cuisine-lovers}$=6.349 > Mean$_{familiar-food-lovers}$=5.506, t=16.705), to avoid the potential risks of trying new foods while traveling (Mean$_{diverse-cuisine-lovers}$=5.459 > Mean$_{familiar-food-lovers}$=5.057, t=5.183), to restrain from indulging in random food (Mean$_{diverse-cuisine-lovers}$= 4.742 > Mean$_{familiar-food-lovers}$=4.468, t=2.419), and to be more concerned with preparing health products for travel (Mean$_{diverse-cuisine-lovers}$= 5.354 > Mean$_{familiar-food-lovers}$=4.535, t=8.664). However, the two types of tourists show no difference in

their preference for familiar foods or familiar cooking methods while traveling (Mean_diverse-cuisine-lovers=4.992 > Mean_familiar-food-lovers=4.870, t=1.164). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Table 5. The difference between food tourist types based on the t-test.

Dimensions	Group	Mean	SD	t (p)	Ranking	
Novelty	A	6.349	0.582	16.705(0.000)	1	1
	B	5.506	0.782			
Risk avoidance	A	5.459	1.049	5.183(0.000)	2	2
	B	5.057	0.959			
Health steadfastness	A	4.742	1.568	2.419(0.015)	5	5
	B	4.468	1.329			
Familiarity	A	4.992	1.502	1.164(0.245)	4	3
	B	4.870	1.528			
Food supplement and medicine	A	5.354	1.511	7.082(0.000)	3	4
	B	4.535	1.528			

Note: A: tourists as enthusiasts of diverse cuisines; B: tourists as preferers of familiar cuisines.

5. DISCUSSION

In traditional food markets, it seems that people who enjoy seeking different cuisines are more inclined to try novel foods, which may be high in oil and salt. Thus, it creates the impression that achieving a balanced diet (e.g., consuming more vegetables and maintaining a healthy balance) is difficult (Choe & Kim, 2018). However, this study finds results contrary to this stereotype. In previous research, some scholars (Getz et al., 2014; Hjalager, 2004) have argued that tourists who enjoy food-related lifestyles and leisure experiences highly value local cuisine and actively seek out such experiences.

Nevertheless, other scholars, Levitt et al. (2019), have pointed out that when tourists have a high level of food involvement, they meticulously plan the food activities they want to engage in during their travels well before the trip begins. Additionally, past research by Ellis et al. (2018) suggests that Maslow's hierarchy of needs can explain why tourists are motivated to engage in food tourism. This is because tourists are willing to taste specific destination foods or partake in food-related experiences (Lee et al., 2014). Therefore, this study argues that the differences in individuals' daily food-seeking behaviors indicate that tourists who enjoy seeking diverse cuisines also maintain a balanced diet in their daily lives. The possible reasons include that these tourists enjoy participating in food-related activities, thereby accumulating more food knowledge (Chen & Antonelli, 2020). Alternatively, due to cultural and religious reasons, they place greater emphasis on a healthy or balanced diet. This also suggests the possibility of moderating variables, which is worth exploring in future research. Previous research by Luković et al. (2024) and Soltani et al. (2021) emphasizes allowing tourists to experience the beautiful scenery, culture, history, and foods of different regions.

When tourists are in a travel destination, they are easily attracted by the local environment or culture to taste foods that are different from those in their daily lives. This study further confirms that tourists exhibit different types of behaviors in their daily food exploration. The details of tourists' dining behaviors while traveling indicate that, regardless of the type, all tourists enjoy tasting different food. However, some tourists (such as those who love diverse cuisines) prefer to explore a wide variety of novel foods, while others (those who prefer familiar foods) enjoy seeking only those foods that they are familiar with.

This study found that across various aspects of culinary behavior during travel, regardless of the type of food exploration, tourists prioritize novelty in food experiences (Mean_diverse-cuisine-lovers=6.349; Mean_familiar-food-lovers=5.506) and food hygiene to mitigate disease risks (Mean_diverse-cuisine-lovers=5.549; Mean_familiar-food-lovers=5.057) as the two most important factors. Conversely, due to the desire to try different foods during travel, both types of tourists tend to relax their adherence to health considerations (Mean_diverse-cuisine-lovers=4.742; Mean_familiar-food-lovers=4.468), which leads to a willingness to indulge in less healthy food. Therefore, the present authors argues that the freshness and delightful experiences brought by travel encourage people to relax and enjoy

different aspects of life (self-liberation). Additionally, tourists who love seeking diverse cuisines not only enjoy the novelty of food experiences during travel (Mean=6.349), but also prioritize avoiding risks (Mean=5.459) and carrying medication for self-protection (Mean=5.354). On the other hand, tourists who prefer exploring familiar foods appreciate the novelty of food experiences (Mean=5.506) and also focus on risk avoidance (Mean=5.057). This latter type of tourist also values familiarity with food or cooking methods (Mean=4.870) rather than preparing medication for self-protection (Mean=4.535). Therefore, the authors argue that tourists who explore diverse cuisines seek a structured approach from external sources to mitigate risks, whereas tourists who explore familiar foods rely on internal familiarity with food to avoid risks.

Based on the above research findings, it can be seen that observing people's dining behaviors while traveling is quite consistent with their usual dining behaviors. For tourists who love seeking diverse cuisines, they resemble opinion leaders: They are the largest group, prioritize novelty in food experiences during travel, and do not place as much importance on health pursuits. However, they tend to mitigate risks by preparing medication. On the other hand, tourists who prefer familiar foods resemble opinion followers: They are less curious about novel food and typically mitigate risks by choosing familiar foods or cooking methods.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Past studies (e.g., Pérez-Gálvez et al. (2021)) have largely focused on investigating tourists' perceptions and behaviors regarding dining during travel, overlooking the potential influence of tourists' everyday food perceptions on their dining behaviors while traveling. Only a few studies (e.g., Getz et al. (2014)) have addressed this issue. Therefore, the aim of this study is to utilize tourists' everyday food-seeking behaviors as a classification criterion (a priori approach) and examine the differences in their everyday eating behaviors (a priori approach) and travel eating behaviors (a posteriori approach) based on different types of food tourists. Importantly, this study takes a nuanced approach to discussing differences in tourists' dining behaviors during travel and seeks to understand the possible reasons behind these differences, as previous studies (e.g., Ying et al. (2018)) have suggested that this should be explored in depth.

6.1. Implications

This study's academic implications can be explained in two parts. First, the method of distinguishing food tourists has traditionally been categorized into a priori and a posteriori approaches (Ying et al., 2018). These approaches differ in their foundational assessments: The former focuses on individual characteristics (such as gender and age) or participation in food-related destination activities (Kozak & Martin, 2012) while the latter utilizes multidimensional psychological or behavioral structures, such as motivations for engaging in food-related destination activities (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2021). Levitt et al. (2019) argue that employing both approaches to investigate the culinary tourism consumption behaviors of different types of tourists is feasible. Furthermore, this study initially categorized tourists based on their everyday food-seeking behaviors (a priori method), and subsequently examines everyday dining behaviors and travel dining behaviors of different types of tourists (a priori vs. a posteriori method). The empirical integration of these two categorization methods in tourist analysis indeed proves effective in distinguishing tourist categories and investigating their behavioral differences. The present authors argue that such methodological approaches can serve as crucial foundations for future researchers to further explore tourist types.

Second, this study discusses why tourists exhibit the behavior of accepting new foods during the travel process from the perspective of tourists' daily food seeking. The study confirms that not only do types of food explorers vary, but also that tourists' dining behaviors during travel exhibit both similarities and differences. Similarly, novelty in local food is the most important factor for different types of tourists, and the pursuit of health tends to decrease during travel, which aligns with Chang (2017). However, differences arise in how tourists perceive and manage risks associated with trying different types of food. Some may prepare medications (external measures), while others may

rely on familiar cooking methods (internal psychological approaches) to mitigate risks. Therefore, the academic contribution of this study lies not only in demonstrating changes in tourists' eating behaviors during travel but also in identifying potential reasons for these changes. Different types of tourists employ varying strategies (external measurements vs. internal psychological approaches) to protect themselves. In other words, this study explains why different types of tourists enjoy consuming local foods during travel (e.g., novelty or enjoyment). Furthermore, based on cue utilization theory, the authors argue that different types of tourists employ external measures (medication) as external cues and internal familiarity (familiar cooking methods) as internal cues to protect themselves from food safety risks during travel.

In terms of practical implications, this study argues that culinary tourism communicates elements such as tourist activities, culture, and motivations. Therefore, the service design in culinary tourism must align with the values of the tourists (Phau, Quintal, & Shanka, 2014). For instance, in the context of Taiwan, tourism operators can incorporate promotional images or videos that highlight Hakka lifestyle and culinary culture in local restaurants and surrounding attractions. Historically, Hakka communities emphasize a philosophy of hard work and resilience, which is reflected in their cuisine with salty, savory, and hearty flavors, including preserved foods, dishes cooked with ample salt and oil, and substantial portions. As demonstrated by Choe and Kim (2018), utilizing Hong Kong as an example, enhancing the savory taste of local foods can elevate the overall quality and attract travelers and tourists from different countries. Therefore, marketing strategies for tourism destinations can emphasize elements of traditional Hakka culture in various tourism venues such as restaurants and attractions. For example, destination marketing materials, such as promotional videos, online platforms, or promotional materials, can highlight the uniqueness of Hakka cuisine. Additionally, while health factors are not the most crucial in tourist dining behaviors (M=4.468 to 4.742, Table 5), it is evident that tourists still place significant importance on health concepts in their daily balanced diets (M=5.006 to 5.638, Table 4). As researchers have advocated, healthy dining is an essential concept in contemporary diets (Luković et al., 2024; Mak et al., 2012). Therefore, in the dissemination of information about such special traditional cultures, it is essential to stay updated. For instance, training operators in culinary DIY experiences could transform the cultural spirit of diligence into features such as minimizing food waste and promoting sustainable practices. Emphasizing how modern Hakka cooking methods improve health requirements is crucial. This also addresses the observation that many tourism destination managers are constrained by traditional cultural practices and are hesitant to change, which presents challenges that must be addressed.

6.2. Limitations and Suggestions

This study proposes four suggestions for future research. First, while past research suggests a more diverse sampling approach (e.g., Zatori et al. (2018)), this study selected four regions as sampling sites. However, it focused solely on a single traditional culture. Future studies could compare tourist food behaviors across different cultural types in heritage tourism destinations or among tourists in multiple cities. Second, in addition to exploring differences in tourist dietary behaviors among different types of tourists, future researchers could also investigate tourists' travel demands and perceptions of traditional local products (Luković et al., 2024). Furthermore, future research could examine variations in tourists' perceptions of budget and the value of different activities during the pre-planning phase of travel (Laesser & Dolnicar, 2012). Third, there is a need for longitudinal studies to investigate if tourists' experiences with unfamiliar local foods influence their dietary habits after returning home (Madaleno et al., 2019). Additionally, exploring the impact of tourists' length of stay on local food consumption (Frisvoll, Forbord, & Blekesaune, 2016) could provide valuable insights. Fourth, examining moderating variables such as age (Tasci & Gartner, 2007) attitudes towards food and health (Luković et al., 2024) cultural backgrounds, and dining locations (e.g., themed restaurants or street food stalls) (Soltani et al., 2021) could shed light on how tourists' everyday dining behaviors influence their consumption of local cuisine at tourist destinations.

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