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How neophilia drives international tourists' acceptance of local cuisine

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ABSTRACT
Culinary tourism has emerged as an area of practical interest for many developing destinations. Nonetheless, little is known about the factors shaping international tourists' acceptance of local cuisine. Through an application of the Tri-Component Attitude Model, this study explores how attitudes are influenced by food-related personality traits of tourists. Using a survey of 396 international tourists, the study provides insights into the role of neophilia in explaining tourists' cognitive, affective and conative responses toward local cuisines. The findings verify the significant influence of food neophilia and highlights the confounding effects of tourists' idiosyncrasies. The study further offers distinct implications for theory and practice.

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Gastronomy tourism; food tourism; neophobia; neophilic tendency; attitudes

1. Introduction

Food is an essential component of the tourism experience and critical to tourists' 'stay' at a destination (Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour, 2015; Hsu, Robinson, & Scott, 2018; Wijaya, 2014). As a result, culinary tourism has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism in recent times (Omar, Ab Karim, & Omar, 2015). The food tourists patronize at a destination may include those that are familiar as well as those that are unusual or indigenous to the places they are visiting (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2011; Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Local cuisine has therefore emerged as an essential part of the tourism experience and gained significant traction in contemporary studies (Shalini & Duggal, 2014). For international tourists, local cuisine provides a novel experience and the chance to become more deeply involved in the host's culture and traditions (Adongo et al., 2015). As Gálvez, Granda, López-Guzmán, and Coronel (2017) observed, the local food of a destination is an exceptional tourist attraction and might play a critical role in the travel experience. This is because food serves a biological need and represents a form of entertainment as well as a cultural activity. Every destination has its own way of preparing and serving food. It is the uniqueness and unfamiliarity of the local food that often attracts some tourists.

Several scholars underscore how destinations could employ their unique local cuisines to appeal to tourists and reap economic benefits (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017, 2019; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Kivela & Crotts, 2009). Yet not all tourists have the tendency to experience local cuisines. Despite a rise in the popularity of culinary tourism, there is still a concern among tourists about unfamiliar and unknown foods especially when it comes to trying new or exotic cuisines in international contexts (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Dimitrovski & Crespi-Vallbona, 2017; Siegrist, Hartmann, & Keller, 2013). This concern could be more acute among international tourists who usually find themselves in

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cultural contexts dissimilar to their usual environment. Such contexts are often typical of less developed regions and yet, it is these very destinations that are in dire need of the economic benefits to be derived from tourist spending on local cuisines. To maximize the economic gains of tourism in less developed regions, understanding what drives tourists' attitudes toward local cuisines of such destinations is crucial. Research in culinary tourism tends to focus on tourist food preferences and choice (Amuquandoh, 2011; Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010), food experiences (Adongo et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2011; Kivela & Crotts, 2009), and local food consumption (Hsu et al., 2018; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009). Limited attention has however been given to the antecedents of perceived attributes and attitudes of tourists. This study therefore attempts to help address this gap by investigating the effects of neophilic tendencies on international tourists' perceptual, emotional and conative responses toward a destination's local cuisine. Though food neophilia has been examined in relation to eating behaviours in the Food and Nutrition literature (e.g. Cooke, Haworth, & Wardle, 2007; Pliner & Hobden, 1992; Siegrist et al., 2013), little attention has been given to it in tourism-related contexts. Yet given the cross-cultural nature of tourism experiences, food neophobic/neophilic tendencies represent an important concept that could advance our understanding of tourists' attitudes towards local cuisines. Attempts have been made to comprehend attitudes in relation to local cuisine from varied perspectives (e.g. Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Bondzi-Simpson, 2015; Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017; Shalini & Duggal, 2014). Theoretical evidence suggests that attitude is informed by the interaction between cognitive, affective and conative components (Asiegbu, Powei, & Iruka, 2012; Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2001). Empirical research also supports the view that attitudes toward an object is a multidimensional construct comprising of cognitive, affective and conative dimensions (Hsu & Chen, 2014; Omar et al., 2015). However, studies on attitudes toward local cuisine tend to be more descriptive than explanatory and largely focus on the cognitive component of attitude (e.g. Jalis, Zahari, Zulkifly, & Othman, 2009; Jang, Ha, & Silkes, 2009; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005), although attitude goes beyond perceptions (Seo, Kim, Oh, & Yun, 2013). Thus, this study considers perceptual, emotional and conative components of attitude to holistically examine international tourists' acceptance of local cuisine. Secondly, we explore the confounding effects of respondents' characteristics such as age, gender, education and previous destination experience on the endogenous constructs in the model. Exploring the correlates and predictors of tourists' acceptance of local cuisine merits further research in order to more deeply understand how to develop effective strategies for food tourism marketing.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we review relevant literature and offer theoretical rationale for the hypotheses development. The methods applied in data collection and analyses are described in Section 3 before proceeding to present the results of the analyses in Section 4. The last section concludes with a discussion of the key findings and considers the germane implications for theory and practice.

2. Theoretical background and research hypotheses

In the past, tourists were motivated to travel to destinations for sun, sea, sand and sex (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). However, in recent times, other forms of tourism have emerged; one of which is culinary tourism or what others have termed as gastronomic tourism or food tourism (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Wijaya, 2014). This has resulted in a surge of studies on tourists and local cuisine (e.g. Adongo et al., 2015; Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Bondzi-Simpson, 2015; Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017; Dimitrovski & Crespi-Vallbona, 2017; Gálvez et al., 2017; Hsu et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2009; Kim, Suh, & Eves, 2010). Several studies have noted that a growing number of tourists recognize food as a key aspect of the travel experience (e.g. Adongo et al., 2015; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Gálvez et al., 2017; Kivela & Crotts, 2009). Hjalager and Richards (2002) highlight the link between the stay at a destination and consumption; and how food plays an important role in creating quality visitor experience which impacts tourists' intentions to return and/or tell others about the destinations. A study by Kivela and Crotts (2009) demonstrates that local cuisine adds

value to tourists' overall experience at the destination. Their study suggests that tourists would return to a particular destination just to experience its special local cuisine. Thus, prior research highlights how cultural exploration through food is an integral part of tourism experiences.

2.1. Tri-component attitude model

The trilogy attitude model, also known as the Cognitive–Affective-Conative(CAC) Model by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), suggests that attitudes are built around three components: cognitive, affective and the conative responses. These three components of attitude are vital and must be taken into consideration in any measurement of attitudes.

The cognitive component refers to the knowledge and perceptions an individual has about an attitude object (Asiegbu et al., 2012). Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) claim that perceptions are developed by a combination of direct experiences with the attitude-object and related information from various sources. The consumer trusts that the attitude-object possesses various attributes and that specific behaviours will satisfy some needs or wants (Hawkins et al., 2001). In the context of this study, the cognitive component refers to the perceptions international tourists hold about local cuisines. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), the affective component of attitude reflects feelings or emotions regarding the attitude object. Affect refers to the way a consumer feels about an object. This study conceptualizes it as the emotional reaction – either likes or dislikes – towards local cuisine. The conative component reflects behavioural tendencies toward the attitude object (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004), which may include the actual behaviour itself. This study interprets it as the post consumption intention to continue eating local cuisines and the individual's inclination to refer others to try these cuisines.

2.1.1. International tourists' perceptions of local cuisine

Food attributes have been regarded as central factors in forming tourists' perceptions of local foods. Verbeke and Lopez (2005) referred to food attributes as the features of food that makes it different compared to other competing foods. In the hospitality and tourism industry, most studies on perceptions of local food have mainly attempted to examine the effects of local food perceptions in developing marketing strategies to attract more tourists (Dimitrovski & Crespi-Vallbona, 2017; Gálvez et al., 2017) with less attention on the determinants of those perceptions.

A study by Jalis et al. (2009) on western tourists' perceptions of Malaysian food products indicated that foreign tourists perceive the local cuisine in that context as unique, tasty, diverse, reasonably priced but too spicy. In another study, Jang et al. (2009) reported that tourists' views on local cuisine varied depending on the food attributes such as taste, freshness, colour, uniqueness, and healthiness. A noteworthy study by Verbeke and Lopez (2005) reveal that tourists' food perceptions were based on attributes such as search, experience and credence. Another study by Yip and Jassen (2015) on how tourists perceive local foods from different origins using Hong Kong and Shanghai showed that consumers regard local foods as cheap, safe and of high nutritional values. However, Yip and Jassen (2015) observed that local foods were limited in terms of availability at various outlets and often lacked variety.

It can be argued that the perceived attributes of local foods may regulate tourists' response. The effect of perceptions of local cuisine on behaviour was tested by Ryu and Han (2010). The study found perception of local cuisine as a dominant antecedent of behavioural intentions. A similar observation was made by Omar et al. (2015). Consistent with theories in social psychology, the CAC model suggest that perceptions drive affective and conative responses and hence the hypotheses:

H1: Perceived attributes of local cuisine influence emotional reaction of international tourists towards local cuisine

H2: Perceived attributes of local cuisine influence post-consumption behavioural intention of international tourists

2.1.2. Emotional reactions

Allen and Hinrichs (2007) conjecture that local foods have become prevalent because there is a 'feel-good' element associated with its consumption as a symbol of participating in the host culture. In another study by Omar et al. (2015), tourists conceded to the pleasure they felt when eating local foods because of its uniqueness.

In most studies on local foods, emotional reaction has been used solely to measure attitudes (e.g. Chen, 2007; Hsu & Chen, 2014; Omar et al., 2015). Tourists' attitudes toward local foods have been noted in the literature to have a relationship with post-purchase behavioural intentions (Adongo et al., 2015; Badarneh & Som, 2011). Research suggest that favourable attitudes of tourists toward local foods could contribute to future consumption and recommendation to others (Adongo et al., 2015; Chi & Qu, 2008). A positive attitude is related to believing that the local food is healthy and tastes good, thus leading to more consumption as well as recommending to others (Chen, 2007). Similarly, Adongo et al. (2015) found that the more favourable tourists' attitudes toward local foods are, the more willing they were to patronize the foods and tell others. Emotional reaction is thus recognized to influence conative response (e.g. Adongo et al., 2015; Badarneh & Som, 2011) and hence the hypothesis:

H3: Emotional reaction towards local cuisine influences post-consumption behavioural intention of international tourists

2.2. Neophobic and neophilic tendencies

Personality traits play an essential role in explaining behaviour (Hsu et al., 2018). Food behaviour is also considered to be linked with personality characteristics (Siegrist et al., 2013). Neophilia refers to an individual's love or passion for what is novel (or new). Food neophilic tendency is thus a food personality trait depicting the degree to which an individual has no fear of new or exotic foods and has the zeal to sample it. Cohen and Avieli (2004) match such individuals to what Plog's (2001) Tourists Typology termed as 'allocentric tourists' or 'the venturers'. Tse and Crotts (2005) suggest that tourists prefer foods they are familiar with and resist trying local cuisine. In contrast, Ji, Wong, Eves, and Scarles (2016) report that most tourists express desire to patronize foods that are not familiar from their home countries. Despite the fact that one of the major motives for travel to a destination is in pursuit for a new culinary experience (Dimitrovski & Crespi-Vallbona, 2017), a number of scholars have insinuated that food preferences could be influenced by neophobic tendencies (Chang et al., 2011; Dimitrovski & Crespi-Vallbona, 2017; Kim et al., 2009).

Neophilic/neophobic tendencies are thus believed to influence attitudes and food preferences (Chang et al., 2011; Siegrist et al., 2013). Some scholars have observed that food neophobia affects people's eating behaviour and food choice such that people with this trait are less willing to try novel food (Hsu et al., 2018; Siegrist et al., 2013). However, the role of neophilia in tourism contexts has been less clear in the existing literature. For example, Ji et al. (2016) report that though novelty seeking does not moderate the relationship between personality traits and consumption of food, it does however moderate satisfaction with food. It is therefore expected that international tourists who are neophilic will have more favourable cognitive, affective and conative responses toward local cuisines than those who are neophobic, and hence the hypotheses:

H4: Neophilic tendency influences perceived attributes of local cuisine.

H5: Neophilic tendency influences emotional reaction of international tourists towards local cuisine.

H6: Neophilic tendency influences international tourists' post-consumption behavioural intention.

2.3. Control variables

Socio-demographic factors have been found to be important variables in explaining disparities in attitudes in various contexts (e.g. Amuquandoh, 2011; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Kim et al., 2009, 2010; Sengel

et al., 2015; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005). Notable factors include gender (e.g. Ares & Gambaro, 2007; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005), age (e.g. Sengel et al., 2015), education (e.g. Amin & Roy, 2016; Kim et al., 2009) and prior visitation (e.g. Kwun & Oh, 2006). Hence, we treated gender, educational level, age and previous destination experience (first-time vs. repeat visitation) as control variables. Figure 1 presents the proposed model.

3. Research design and methodology

3.1. Measures

Questionnaires were used for data collection. The instrument consisted of a number of sections, each gathering information about the main variables in the study. The first section captured international tourists' perceptions of local cuisine with a five-point Likert scale. The items measuring perceived attributes of local cuisines were developed from earlier studies on local foods in various contexts. These included 18 items on perceived food attributes (Jalis et al., 2009; Jang et al., 2009). Similarly, respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale their feelings when they ate Ghanaian cuisine. These items were developed from a study conducted by Asiegbu et al. (2012) on consumer attitudes.

A seven-item measuring scale was adapted from Ab Karim, Chua, and Salleh (2009) to capture the post-consumption intention to eat local food and recommend to others. Food neophilic tendency was measured with the 10 items proposed by Pliner and Hobden (1992), where international tourists indicated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 5 *(strongly agree)* their willingness to try new foods.

3.2. Sample and procedure

The study followed the post positivist philosophy. In accordance with this research philosophy, the quantitative approach to research was employed. The study area was Ghana, specifically, the Kumasi Metropolis. The metropolis is known for its rich culture and tourist attractions which draw people from diverse locations. Because of its position in the Middle Belt, the metropolis hosts different ethnic groups resulting in diverse ethnic foods making it suitable for the study on attitudes towards local cuisine. These local delicacies attract a lot of people to the metropolis and offers an exciting range of flavour and vast food adventure.

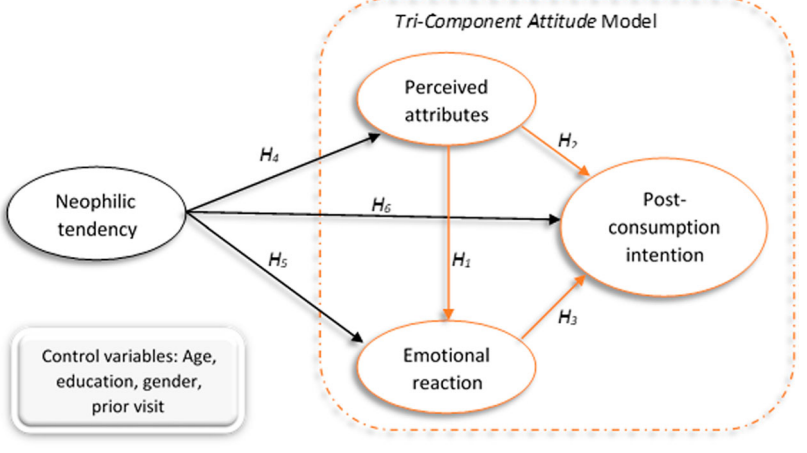

Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

Data for the study was obtained from international tourists visiting the metropolis, who had patronized local cuisine between 1st of February and 21st of March 2017. A pre-test was carried out from 16th to 20th January 2017 at the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles using 40 respondents. Data for the study was gathered from 422 international tourists at the major tourist attractions in the study area. They included the Manhyia palace, Prempeh II Jubilee Museum, Kumasi Cultural Centre, Kumasi Fort (Ghana Armed Forces Museum), Rattery Park, and Okomfo Anokye Sword Site.

3.2. Data analysis

Data collected from the field were initially processed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 21). After screening the data for incomplete responses, outliers, etc., 396 valid responses were found to be suitable for analysis. We then conducted principal component analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation for the reflective indicators to investigate possible measurement problems. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis; KMO equals 0.950, exceeding Kaiser's (1974) recommended threshold of 0.5. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity χ^2 (253) = 12434.028, $p <$ 0.001, indicating that correlations between items were adequate for PCA. Three theoretically meaningful components were extracted. Based the Field's (2009) recommendations, we deleted three items that loaded in the wrong group or whose factor loadings fell below the 0.5 criterion. The resulting items for the main analysis confirmed the scales' unidimensionality and reliability.

Data analysis and hypothesis testing were conducted using variance-based structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM has the advantage of allowing for the examination of a series of relationships among indicator variables (measurement model) as well as latent constructs of the theory under study (structural model) in the same analysis (Sarstedt et al., 2016). More specifically, we applied partial least squares SEM to estimate the theoretical model using the SmartPLS 3.0 Software application (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). This technique is preferable for research involving formative constructs and for studies exploring plausible causality (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). The PLS algorithm puts less demand on residual distributions and is most appropriate for prediction-oriented research (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Given the explorative and predictive nature of this study as well as the model's reliance on a formative construct, this technique was deemed most suitable. To test for possible confounding effects, we treated age, gender, education and prior visit as control variables in the model.

4. Results

4.1. Sample characteristics

Table 1 presents the background characteristics of respondents.

4.2. Measurement analysis

First, we analysed the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs. Indicator reliability was verified by observing the factor loadings (Table 2). All loadings of the reflective indicators were significant at the 0.01 level and well above the required minimum threshold of 0.7. Composite Reliability Test assessed the consistency of a construct based on its measurement indicators (Henseler et al., 2009). The values of both the composite reliability and Cronbach's α were well above the minimum requirement of 0.7, demonstrating the reliability of the latent constructs. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) represents the most common measure for assessing convergent validity. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, the AVE values were above the minimum threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), demonstrating that the respective constructs explain over half of the variance of their indicators (Hair et al., 2011). Discriminant validity was verified as an observation of the indicators' cross-loadings; it revealed that none of the indicators loads higher on an opposing construct. In addition, the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was applied in testing discriminant validity. A latent construct

Table 1. Profile of respondents.

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	149	37.6
Female	247	62.4
Age		
<20	50	12.6
20–29	120	30.3
30–39	109	27.5
40–49	55	13.9
50–59	46	11.6
60+	12	4.0
Trip experience		
First time visitors	162	40.9
Repeat visitors	234	59.1
Nationality		
Africa	139	35.1
Europe	103	26.0
North America	73	18.4
South America	29	7.3
Asia	52	13.1
Level of Education		
Primary school	99	25.0
High school	90	22.7
College/University	119	30.1
Post-graduate	88	22.2
Total household income		
<$20,000	96	24.2
$20,000–$39,999	66	16.7
$40,000–$59,999	82	20.7
$60,000–$79,999	98	24.7
$80,000+	54	13.6

Table 2. Factor loadings for individual items (reflective constructs).

Reflective construct	Measurement item	Factor loadings
Emotional reaction	I feel relaxed	0.842
	I feel happy	0.914
	I feel nourished	0.914
	I feel satisfied	0.912
	I feel refreshed	0.916
	I feel good	0.919
	I feel energized	0.908
Post-consumption behavioural intention	I intend to patronize more local cuisines	0.798
	I will try other local cuisines which are different from what I have eaten	0.849
	I consider eating local cuisine as my first choice when in Ghana	0.808
	I will patronize local cuisine if there is an increase in prices	0.880
	I will recommend local cuisines to others	0.920
	I will encourage family/friends to eat local cuisines	0.898
	I am likely to visit a Ghanaian restaurant when I am not in Ghana.	0.874
Neophilic tendency	I am constantly sampling new cuisines	0.798
	I prefer places where cuisines from different cultures are served	0.862
	I am eager to try different cuisines	0.885
	I will try any cuisine when I do not know the ingredients used	0.900
	I like cuisines from different countries	0.875
	I will try a new cuisine when I go out	0.912
	I am not afraid to eat foods I have never had before	0.889
	I am not selective in what to eat	0.819

Note: All loadings are significant at $p < 0.001$.

is expected to share more variance with indicators than with other constructs in the model. Comparing the square root of the AVEs with the inter-construct correlations further verified discriminant validity (Table 3). Next, we compute the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) criteria for

Table 3 Inter-construct correlations, reliability & AVE (reflective constructs).

Reflective constructs	Emotional reaction	Neophilic tendency	Post-cons. intention	A	rho_A	CR	AVE
Emotional reaction	(0.904)			0.962	0.963	0.969	0.817
Neophilic tendency	0.836	(0.868)		0.953	0.955	0.961	0.754
Post-consumption intention	0.834	0.836	(0.862)	0.942	0.944	0.953	0.743

Notes: The number in parenthesis is the square root of AVE; α = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability.

each pair of reflective constructs based on the item correlations (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). The maximum value was 0.881 in respect of $HTMT_{(Neophilia,Intention)}$ (Table 4). Comparing the results with the threshold values as defined in $HTMT_{.90}$ (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001; Henseler et al., 2015; Teo, Srivastava, & Jiang, 2008) confirmed discriminant validity. Nonetheless, since the values exceed the more stringent $HTMT_{.85}$ criterion, we proceeded to conduct complete bootstrapping to investigate $HTMT_{inference}$. The results of the $HTMT_{inference}$ test (Table 4) provide further confirmation that discriminant validity has been established.

Next, we verified the validity of the formative construct. The measures of tourists' perception of local cuisine were treated as formative or causal indicators because the construct sought to measure different aspects of cuisine perceptions derived from the perceived attributes of local cuisine (Jalis et al., 2009; Jang et al., 2009). In contrast to the more popular reflective model, a formative model does not hold the assumption that the indicators are caused by a single underlying construct and that the indicators 'as a group, jointly determine the conceptual and empirical meaning of the construct' (Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 201).

The criteria for evaluating a formative measurement model include the assessment of indicator weights and their significance, collinearity tests and nomological validity (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001; Henseler et al., 2009). We applied the resampling procedure of bootstrapping to assess the significance of the coefficients of the formative indicators. All indicator weights for *tourists' perception of local cuisine* were significant with coefficients greater than 0.1, thus verifying indicator validity. The VIFs of two indicators (… *of high quality* & … *reasonably price*) were greater than 5, raising concern for possible multicollinearity. Consequently, these items were deleted from the formative model, following the recommendations of Henseler et al. (2009). As shown in Table 5, the VIF values for the remaining items reveal no serious concern for multicollinearity. Each of the VIFs was within the more stringent threshold of <5 (Hair et al., 2011). A test of nomological validity further suggest that *perception of local cuisine* has a highly significant effect on *emotional reaction* (β=0.518, $t = 7.97$, $p < 0.01$) and hence external validity can be assumed.

4.3. Structural model and hypotheses testing

The Stone-Geisser's Q^2 Test (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974) is recommended for assessing the predictive validity of the exogenous latent variables in the model. We therefore applied the blindfolding procedure to compute the cross-validated redundancy measure Q^2. As shown in Table 6, all Q^2 values were significantly above zero, verifying the exogenous constructs' high predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$ implies predictive validity, $Q^2 < 0$ suggests lack of predictive relevance; Chin, 1998).

We also assessed the residual root mean square (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The SRMR reflects the average magnitude of the difference between the matrix of observed correlations and the correlation

Table 4. HTMT results (reflective constructs).

Reflective Constructs	Emotional reaction	Neophilic tendency	Post-consumption intention
Emotional reaction			
Neophilic tendency	0.871		
	97.5%CI [0.871; 0.905]		
Post-consumption intention	0.874	0.881	
	97.5%CI [0.874; 0.909]	97.5%CI [0.881; 0.916]	

Table 5. Validity test for formative construct.

Formative construct	Measurement items	Weights	*T*-value	VIF
Perceived attributes of local cuisines	… taste good	0.095	26.939	4.032
	… are hot and spicy	0.071	29.605	2.927
	… are unique	0.096	23.798	3.586
	… offers value for money	0.084	28.343	4.621
	… are less salty	0.069	22.501	2.656
	… are served hot	0.084	27.914	2.896
	… are low in carbohydrates	0.035	9.747	2.183
	… contains much protein	0.095	31.500	3.634
	… are less oily	0.061	19.336	2.796
	… have a good smell	0.072	24.989	2.728
	… are freshly prepared	0.087	29.118	3.742
	… are lite	0.072	26.185	2.164
	… are nutritious	0.095	31.704	4.675
	… are colourful	0.084	30.119	4.377
	… are attractive	0.095	29.363	4.983
	… offer variety of choices	0.097	26.023	4.616

matrix implied by the model. A model is deemed a good fit if the SRMR value is less than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1998). In this study's case, SRMR = 0.054 and thus meeting the recommended threshold.

Next, we assessed the proposed model's explanatory power and predictive relevance as well as the size of the path coefficients and the hypothesized relationships. The variance explained (R^2) represents a key criterion in the evaluation of the structural model. Chin (1998) suggests that R^2 values of 0.19, 0.33 or 0.67 could be interpreted as weak, moderate or substantial respectively. In the present study, the structural model could explain 76% of the variance in tourists' perceptions of local cuisine, 78% of the variance in emotional reaction and 77% of the variance in post consumption behavioural intention; implying that the model sufficiently reflect international tourists' attitudes towards local cuisines. Nonetheless, since the explained variances also take into account the effects of the control variables (i.e. age, gender, education and first-time/repeat visitation), we proceeded to investigate the effect sizes of the main exogenous construct – neophilic tendency – on the three dependent variables using Cohen's (1988) f^2. Cohen (1988) recommends f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as a measure for determining whether the predictor construct has a small, medium or large effect. Our analysis revealed that the magnitude of the effect of neophilic tendency on perceived attributes met the threshold of large effect size but the effect on emotional reaction ($f^2 = 0.153$) and post-consumption intention ($f^2 = 0.118$) were moderate. Whereas the magnitude of the effect size of perceived attributes on emotional reaction surpassed the medium threshold ($f^2 = 0.291$), the effect on post-consumption behavioural intention was somewhat negligible ($f^2 = 0.041$). Emotional reaction, on the other hand, had a near medium–size effect on post-consumption intention ($f^2 = 0.120$).

To assess the significance of the hypothesized relationships, *t*-values were calculated by means of bootstrapping. Following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2011), we applied the non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 396 cases, 5000 subsamples and individual sign changes. The results offer support for the hypothesized relationships (Figure 2).

H_1 and H_2 which assume direct positive relationships between perceived attributes and emotional reaction ($\beta = 0.518$, $t = 7.97$, $p < 0.01$) and post consumption behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.224$, $t = 3.66$, $p < 0.01$) were verified. Emotional reaction has a positive and significant effect on post consumption behavioural intention (H_3: $\beta = 0.354$, $t = 5.759$, $p < 0.01$). With regards to H_4, H_5 and H_6, the study found neophilic tendency to be significantly related to perceived attributes of local cuisine ($\gamma = 0.0.759$, $t =$

Table 6. Prediction relevance (Q^2) test.

Endogenous construct	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1 – SSE/SSO)
Emotional reaction	3101.00	1258.49	0.594
Perceived attributes	7088.00	4333.31	0.389
Post-consumption intention	3101.00	1444.61	0.534

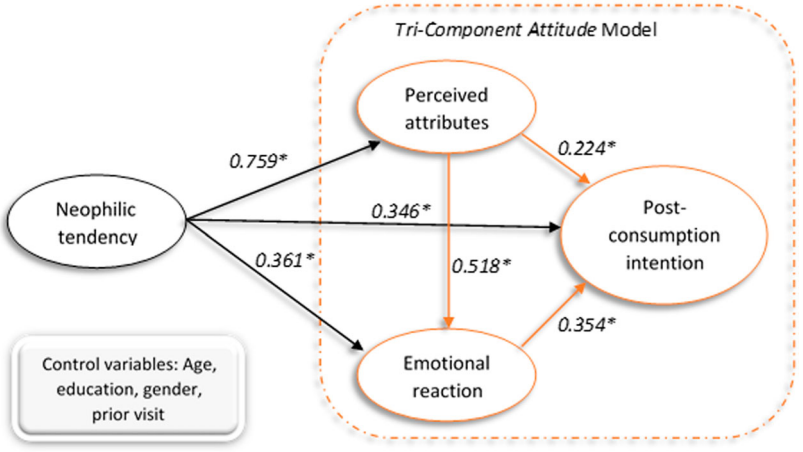

Figure 2. PLS results of the structural model. *Significant at $p < 0.01$.

26.143, $p < 0.01$), emotional reaction ($\gamma = 0.361$, $t = 5.944$, $p < 0.01$) and post-consumption behavioural intention ($\gamma = 0.346$, $t = 5.429$, $p < 0.01$) respectively (Table 7).

We also controlled the effects of respondents' characteristics such as age, gender, education and repeat/first time visit on the endogenous constructs in the model. Interestingly, age was found to be significantly related to post-consumption intention but not to perceived attributes and emotional reaction (Table 8). The significant effect of age on post-consumption behavioural intention was negative, suggesting that the younger the tourists, the more likely they were to continue trying local cuisines and vice versa (i.e. the older the tourist, the less likely he/she is to continue eating local cuisines). Also, tourists' emotional reaction was found to vary with respondents' level of education. This relationship was positive and significant, implying that the higher the educational level, the more favourable are tourists' attitudes towards local cuisines. The control effect of education on perceived attributes and post-consumption intention was however found to be insignificant. Similarly, gender was found to have no significant influence on any of the dependent latent constructs, suggesting no noteworthy differences between males and females with regards to their cognitive, affective and conative responses towards local cuisines. The study also revealed significant differences between first time and repeat visitors regarding their perceptions of local cuisines but found no differences in their emotional reaction and post consumption intention.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1. Key findings

The results offer support for the hypothesized relationships and contributes to our understanding of the mechanisms driving international tourists' perceptual, affective and conative responses toward local cuisines of a destination.

Table 7. Results of hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	Coefficient	*t*-value
H1: Perceived attributes -> Emotional reaction	0.518	7.970
H2: Perceived attributes -> Post-consumption intention	0.224	3.660
H3: Emotional reaction ->Post-consumption intention	0.354	5.759
H4: Neophilic tendency -> Perceived attributes	0.759	26.143
H5:Neophilic tendency -> Emotional reaction	0.361	5.944
H6: Neophilic tendency -> Post-consumption intention	0.346	5.429

Notes: These significance levels are determined via bootstrapping analysis (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 8. Test for confounding effects.

Control variables	Coefficient	*t*-value	*p*-values
Age -> Emotional reaction	−0.009	0.583	0.560
Age -> Perceived attributes	0.016	0.863	0.388
Age -> Post-consumption intention	−0.05*	2.351	0.019
Education -> Emotional reaction	0.074**	2.756	0.006
Education -> Perceived attributes	0.048	1.665	0.096
Education -> Post-consumption intention	−0.05	1.865	0.062
Gender -> Emotional reaction	−0.005	0.352	0.725
Gender -> Perceived attributes	0.01	0.657	0.511
Gender -> Post-consumption intention	−0.014	0.825	0.409
First time/repeat visit -> Emotional reaction	0.022	0.955	0.340
First time/repeat visit -> Perceived attributes	0.157**	4.833	0.000
First time/repeat visit -> Post-consumption intention	0.038	1.299	0.194

Notes: These significance levels are determined via bootstrapping analysis (Hair et al., 2011).
*Significant at $p < 0.05$. **Significant at $p < 0.01$.

Findings highlight the critical role of neophilia in explaining international tourists' attitudes toward indigenous foods in destination contexts. The concept of neophilia could benefit our understanding of tourists' decision to travel to other countries (or different cultural contexts outside their usual place of residence). This may also help explain why some tourists believe that they could more easily adapt to a foreign destination's environment than others. According to Hendis (2013), people who visit African countries are adventurous travellers who want to merge with the host culture and the local cuisine offers the chance to connect with local people. The findings reveal that food neophilic tendency is a critical determinant of international tourists' attitudes (perception, emotional reaction and post-consumption intention) towards local cuisine. Neophilics are more likely to accept local cuisine; they tend to have favourable perceptions, positive emotional disposition and are likely to consume again in the future as well as to recommend to others. These findings corroborate studies by Chang et al. (2011) and Hsu et al. (2018) that found food neophilic tendency as a justification for respondents' predisposition to seek various local cuisines. Cooke et al. (2007) note that not only do people with high neophobic tendencies resist trying new foods, but they also rate unfamiliar foods lower than others.

The study also reports a positive relationship between perceived attributes and international tourists' emotional reaction towards local cuisines; implying that the more favourable tourists' perceptions are, the more positive their affective response and vice versa. This finding offer support for prior studies that have explored the relationship between these two concepts in other contexts (Jalis et al., 2009; Omar et al., 2015; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005; Yip & Jassen, 2015). Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) assert that the cognitive and affective components move in the same direction. Some studies (e.g. Chen, 2007; Hsu & Chen, 2014; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005) have concluded that when people have positive perceptions of the attributes of local cuisine, their feelings towards it is ameliorated. Tourists who perceive local cuisine as suitable are more likely to feel satisfied with it. Nonetheless, our results contrast the work of Ab Karim et al. (2009) which seems to suggest a negative relationship between tourists' perceptions of local cuisine and their emotional reactions.

Jalis et al. (2009) observed that an international tourist who perceives local food as tasty and fresh is likely to eat more to enhance their experience at the destination. Such tourists are also more likely to communicate their experience to others. In line with the Tri-Component Attitude Model (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004), our findings highlight a robust relationship between perceived attributes and post-consumption intention. International tourists with favourable cognitive response towards local cuisines tend to be willing to continue to patronize these cuisines and recommend to others (and vice versa). A study by Yip and Jassen (2015) also reported a positive relationship between perceptions of local foods and post-consumption behaviour.

Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei (2013) suggest that emotional reaction could shape tourists' conative response towards post-consumption intention. Likewise, Verbeke and Lopez (2005) observed

that the decision to continue patronizing local cuisines and recommend to others will depend on what an individual feels about the cuisine. Our findings offer empirical support for this insinuation by verifying the relationship between emotional reaction and conative response in the context of local cuisines. When tourists have negative emotional reaction, their destination experience could be damaged, and this might lead to negative word-of-mouth publicity.

The results of the confounding effects are most interesting. Prior research have found significant differences in the attitudes of men and women regarding certain objects (e.g. Ares & Gambaro, 2007; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005). Nonetheless, this work found no significant effect of gender on perceptions, emotional reactions and post-consumption intention. Education broadens one's perspectives and thus may influence a person's way of assessing an object of interest. This study finds that educational background had significant effect on tourists' emotional reaction towards local cuisines. Similarly, Kim et al. (2009) report significant differences between the educational attainments of international tourists in terms of their attitudes toward local foods. People with higher education may have a stronger desire to understand and experience foreign cultures through local food consumption (Kim et al., 2009) and as such they tend to have more favourable attitudes.

The study further discloses that younger tourists are more likely to continue trying local cuisines than older ones. This is not surprising since young travellers tend to be more adventurous and risk takers than the older generation. Amuquandoh (2011) found younger travellers in particular to be more willing to try new experiences and take greater risks at a destination than when they are at home. As Sengel et al. (2015) explained, older people are less inclined to try unfamiliar foods to avoid triggering their health problems, anxieties, etc. Similarly, Tse and Crotts (2005) reported that older tourists had negative attitudes toward local food and hence consumed few of the local cuisines at a destination.

Lastly, the study underscores the role of prior destination experience. Repeat visitors perceived local cuisine more favourably than first-time visitors. Mirroring the findings of Kwun and Oh (2006), repeat visitors tend to have more positive attitudes toward local foods. This may be as a result of their prior experience and familiarity with local cuisines. First-time tourists are less inclined to try local cuisines probably because they are less familiar with it.

5.2. Implications for theory and practice

According to Asiegbu et al. (2012) an individual does not have an attitude unless he or she responds evaluatively to an entity on an affective, cognitive, or behavioural basis. In this regard, the Tri-Component Model by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) was adapted in examining the attitudes of international tourists toward local cuisine. This study validates the significant roles of the cognitive, affective and behavioural components in explaining attitudes towards local cuisine. The study verifies the relationships among the attitude components – perceived attributes, emotional reaction and post-consumption intention. The study shows that these components move in the same direction; for example, positive perceptions of local cuisine is associated with more favourable affective and conative responses. Empirically, the study offers evidence to confirm the Tri-Component Attitude Theory in the context of international food tourism.

This study contributes to the literature by examining the role of food neophilic tendency in driving tourists' acceptance of local cuisine. Previous research (Chen, 2007; Cooke et al., 2007; Hsu et al., 2018; Siegrist et al., 2013) has argued that personality trait is a determinant of food choice and attitude. Nevertheless, few studies have discussed its significance and relationship to attitudes toward local cuisine taking into consideration the cognitive, affective and conative components altogether. Thus, the study offers additional insights into the complex interrelationships among these concepts.

The study also holds some practical implications. Local cuisine is progressively seen as a tool for differentiating one destination from another (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2019; Hsu et al., 2018; Okumus, Okumus, & Mckercher, 2007). In the light of today's fierce competition, destinations have to stand out

to attract more tourists. Therefore, no tourist – whether neophobic or neophilic – should be excluded from the culinary tourism experience. The study reveals that tourists' favourable perceptions of local cuisines are considerably driven by neophilia. Other scholars have asserted that most tourists to underdeveloped or developing countries have adventurous tendencies (e.g. Hendis, 2013). The implication for such countries is that, to be able to benefit substantially from the participation of neophobic tourists in their culinary tourism quest, there has to be a corresponding holistic development and marketing of their tourist attractions and destination image. It is imperative for policy makers to develop and market culinary tourism alongside the development of other tourism-oriented sites and services if there would be any inroads in attracting neophobic tourists to participate in culinary tourism. Marketing efforts should be directed at reducing the anxieties of neophobic tourists and encouraging them to make the travel in the first place as well as addressing their concerns about exotic or unfamiliar cuisines.

To reduce food neophobic tendencies, local cuisines should be part of promotion in destination marketing efforts (focusing on the attributes that are most important universally such as nutritional content, taste and economic value) in order to expose potential tourists to the cuisines before they take the trip. This will give neophobic tourists a sense of familiarity with the local food at the destination and ease their discomfort in trying it. In addition, exotic destinations can incorporate familiar hints into their service delivery. These may include multi-lingual menus that enable guests to read and understand the menu items and ingredients in their own dialect, thereby reducing unfamiliarity.

The finding that perceived attributes of local cuisine have a direct positive effect on the emotional reaction and post-consumption intention accentuates the need for managers of culinary establishments to take keen interest in the preparation, presentation and service of local food. In line with Cohen and Avieli's (2004) suggestion, local recipes should be continually modified – while maintaining its authenticity – and fashioned to meet international taste profiles with regards to attributes like oiliness, saltiness and spiciness. Government agencies responsible for tourism should also regulate and train local food producers to align their skills to internationally accepted standards with respect to health, safety and nutritional practices.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) propose that an individual's knowledge about an object determines attitudes towards that object. Regional and national tourism marketing organizations could thus use emerging technologies to educate and promote local cuisine to tourists. The literature (e.g. Adongo et al., 2015; Okumus et al., 2007) on the other hand suggest that when tourists are satisfied, it influences their entire experience at the destination and their decision to recommend it to others. Positive word-of-mouth is also recognized as the most effective and least expensive marketing tool for destinations (Okumus et al., 2007). It is therefore more prudent for destinations to capitalize on improving food attributes to attract tourists.

The study shows that age matters significantly in tourists' conative response to local cuisine. Youth travel is reported to be the fastest growing segment in international tourism, representing 23% of all international travels (Rifai, 2019). This implies that, in promoting less developed regions as culinary destinations, destination marketers, Tourism authorities, travel agencies and tour operators should focus more on younger tourists since they tend to be more willing to patronize local cuisine and recommend to family and friends. Advertisements and special packages can be developed to suit their personality. Social media can also be used as means to reach this market segment since they are more abreast with technology.

5.3. Limitations and future research

This study used a set of multi-attributes to determine the perceptions of international tourists about local foods. The list of attributes may be incomplete, and might not incorporate all characteristics of local foods within a destination. Future research could adopt both quantitative and qualitative methods (example, free-elicitation) to capture the multifarious perceptions of local foods.

Likewise, international tourists' emotional reactions toward local food were measured on a nine-item scale, which was originally developed by Asiegbu et al. (2012) in the context of marketing a business. As a result, the items used in this study might not reflect the full spectrum of emotional reactions associated with local cuisines. To provide a more comprehensive picture of emotional responses, future research could use indirect methods such as focus group discussions to uncover international tourists' emotional reactions toward the local food.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendices

Appendix A1. Table of Mean scores and Standard Deviations ($N = 396$).

Construct	Indicators	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Perceived attributes of local cuisine	… taste good	1	5	3.348	4	1.396
	… are less oily	1	5	2.740	3	1.455
	… have a good smell	1	5	3.023	3	1.427
	… are freshly prepared	1	5	3.460	4	1.427
	… are lite	1	5	3.010	3	1.554
	… are nutritious	1	5	3.636	4	1.339
	… are colourful	1	5	3.394	4	1.496
	… are attractive	1	5	3.674	4	1.410
	… offer variety of choices	1	5	3.722	4	1.366
	… are of high quality	1	5	3.480	4	1.478
	… are hot and spicy	1	5	3.089	3	1.531
	… are unique	1	5	3.682	4	1.446
	… are reasonably priced	1	5	3.578	4	1.379
	… offers value for money	1	5	3.465	4	1.495
	… are less salty	1	5	3.126	3	1.617
	… are served hot	1	5	3.409	4	1.453
	… are low in carbohydrate	1	5	2.331	1	1.606
	… contain much protein	1	5	3.679	4	1.425
Emotional reaction	I feel relaxed	1	5	3.146	4	1.314
	I feel happy	1	5	3.412	4	1.295
	I feel nourished	1	5	3.576	4	1.373
	I feel satisfied	1	5	3.540	4	1.309
	I feel refreshed	1	5	3.601	4	1.294
	I feel good	1	5	3.707	4	1.363
	I feel revitalized	1	5	3.619	4	1.383
	I feel pleased	1	5	3.631	4	1.309
	I feel energized	1	5	3.689	4	1.415
Post-consumption behavioural intention	I intend to patronize more local cuisines	1	4	2.606	3	0.978
	I will try other local cuisines which are different from what I have eaten	1	4	2.694	3	0.982
	I consider eating local cuisine as my first choice when in Ghana	1	4	2.654	3	1.042
	I will patronize local cuisine if there is an increase in prices	1	4	2.846	3	1.017
	I will recommend local cuisines to others	1	4	2.891	3	0.959
	I will encourage family/friends to eat local cuisines	1	4	2.929	3	1.018

(*Continued*)

Appendix A1. Continued.

Construct	Indicators	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
	I am likely to visit a Ghanaian restaurant when I am not in Ghana	1	4	2.841	3	1.041
Neophilic tendency	I am constantly sampling new	1	5	3.278	4	1.431
	I am eager to try different cuisines	1	5	3.359	4	1.366
	I will try any cuisine even when I do not know the ingredients used	1	5	3.376	4	1.41
	I like cuisines from different countries	1	5	3.356	4	1.404
	Cuisines from different countries are not strange to me	1	5	3.351	4	1.508
	I will try a new cuisine when I go out	1	5	3.601	4	1.347
	I am not afraid to eat foods I have never had before	1	5	3.710	4	1.477
	I am not selective in what eat	1	5	2.985	3	1.479
	I will eat almost everything	1	5	3.268	4	1.4
	I prefer places where cuisines from different cultures are served	1	5	3.366	4	1.499

Appendix A2. Table of cross loadings.

Reflective indicator	Emotional reaction	Neophilic tendency	Post-consumption intention
I feel relaxed	***0.842***	0.696	0.690
I feel happy	***0.914***	0.754	0.750
I feel nourished	***0.914***	0.739	0.729
I feel satisfied	***0.912***	0.779	0.790
I feel refreshed	***0.916***	0.785	0.791
I feel good	***0.919***	0.761	0.759
I feel energized	***0.908***	0.772	0.764
I am constantly sampling new cuisines	0.756	***0.798***	0.686
I prefer places where cuisines from different cultures are served	0.688	***0.862***	0.715
I am eager to try different cuisines	0.757	***0.885***	0.746
I will try any cuisine even when I do not know the ingredients used	0.725	***0.900***	0.738
I like cuisines from different countries	0.702	***0.875***	0.745
I will try a new cuisine when I go out	0.789	***0.912***	0.787
I am not afraid to eat foods I have never had before	0.769	***0.889***	0.721
I am not selective in what eat	0.604	***0.819***	0.655
I intend to patronize more local cuisines	0.760	0.691	***0.798***
I will try other local cuisines which are different from what I have eaten	0.711	0.699	***0.849***
I consider eating local cuisine as my first choice when in Ghana	0.601	0.691	***0.808***
I will patronize local cuisine if there is an increase in prices	0.768	0.719	***0.880***
I will recommend local cuisines to others	0.778	0.768	***0.920***
I will encourage family/friends to eat local cuisines	0.713	0.733	***0.898***
I am likely to visit a Ghanaian restaurant when I am not in Ghana	0.689	0.737	***0.874***

Note: Highest loading of each indicator are emphasized in bold.