



Will they tell others to taste? International tourists' experience of Ghanaian cuisines



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ABSTRACT

Memorable local food experiences can influence tourists' intentions to recommend. However, food tourism literature has provided limited insights in this area of scholarship. This paper sought to explore international tourists' experiences regarding local foods in Ghana. The results from a random survey of 654 international tourists indicate that local food experience is multiple ranging from cultural, educational, novelty, hedonism–meaningfulness, and adverse experience. The study also found that tourists' local food experience has a statistically significant influence on their willingness to recommend. The study, therefore, concluded that the provision of memorable experience could be a viable approach for generating referral marketing of local foods. Theoretical and practical implications of the study findings are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Tourism, as a form of trade, involves buying and selling of experiences (Mahika, 2011; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Woodside & King, 2001). Some researchers consider the term 'experience' as an experiential fulfillment (Arnould & Price, 1993), a cognitive-affect (Schmitt, 1999) or a quality (Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Willson, 2002). However, it is largely regarded as a function of an individual's psychological process due to an object he or she encounters (Renko, Renko, & Polonijo, 2010). At the destination level, tourists' experiences are considered as multi-dimensional consumption of the tourism system of which local foods are part (Moscardo, 2009; Updhyay & Sharma, 2014). In this context, local food is conceptualised as food grown and processed within a particular locality with indigenous ingredients (Nummedal & Hall, 2006). Emphasis is, however, made that local food in this context does not necessarily mean that 100% local produce.

Tourists consumption of local food while on holiday was mostly an issue of utilitarianism, but today it has grown beyond just a need for survival to include one consumed to enhance holiday experience (Jang, Liu, & Namkung, 2011; Richards, 2012). While there is no consensus on the specific attributes that constitute tourist local food experience, food

quality issues including food appearance and taste, service environment and behaviour of service providers (Adam, Adongo, & Dayour, 2014; Ha & Jang, 2010; Karim & Chi, 2010) have been mentioned. Evidence has also shown that food tourism is a means for tourists to participate and discover the geography and culture of destinations different from the known (Everett, 2012; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Updhyay & Sharma, 2014). On that account, there is a change from the traditional sand, sun and sea-based holiday activities and sightseeing to culinary tourism (Richards, 2012). The centrality of food in tourism is further heightened by the fact that it is a product that arouses almost all the human senses – touch, taste, smell and sight; hence, its strategic position in tourist holiday experiences (Young, 1933).

Generally, what runs through most researches on tourists' experiences, is emphasis on positive memorability. A positive experience is seen as a favourable encounter which is easily recalled after the event has occurred (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). Contrastingly, much evidence regarding food and food related products from African destinations gives indications of negative experiences (Amuquandoh, 2011; Carter, 1998). Negative experiences denote tourists' encounters which are thought of and recalled as unfavourable after the event. Therefore, it is the proposition of this study that tourists' encounter with a destination's local food can be positive, negative or a combination. Dining experience is not only a determinant of tourists' level of satisfaction, but more importantly, a shaper of one's willingness to recommend (Pearce & Packer, 2013; Ryu & Jang, 2006; Su & Hsu, 2013).

Memorable experiences are said to predict post-purchase behaviour better than service quality and customer satisfaction (Keiningham &

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Vavra, 2001; Kim et al., 2012). If the forgoing assertion is anything to go by, an understanding of tourists' memorable experiences with local foods is central. Kim et al. (2012) developed a scale for measuring tourist memorable experiences. The utility of the scale has been confirmed by various studies (Kim, 2013, Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014) in some tourism setting. For example, Otoo and Amuquandoh (2014) employed it in the study of volunteer tourists' experiences in Ghana. However, its usefulness in the food settings, in particular is considerably lacking. Ghana is one of the Western African destinations, which in addition to its ecological and historical resources, is luring tourists along its traditional cuisines as cultural artefacts that can enhance visitors experiences. As a region with different geographical and cultural diversity from those that tourists are used to, the destination management hopes to achieve competitive advantage through its food and beverage offerings (GTA, 2013). Tung and Ritchie (2011) note that Destination Management Organizations' (DMOs) role is to ensure that destination's products and services create lasting impressions on its patrons. One way to do that is to identify the components of the product that matter to the consumer.

In Africa, tourism related studies have rarely focused on tourists' memorable local food experiences. Available studies on tourists' experiences in the destination (notably, Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014) have generally focused on the broader destination's offerings rather than product-based (for example local foods). But, there is the need to recognize that a wider consideration of tourists' experiences may not lead to a thorough understanding of the concept. The present study is, therefore, a modest contribution as it assesses and explores the influence of international tourists' experiences with Ghanaian foods on their willingness to recommend local foods. Findings are expected to have both theoretical and practical relevance. From the theoretical standpoint, the study seeks to address the knowledge gap by providing holistic insights on tourists' local food experiences by adapting the MTE scale by Kim et al. (2012).

Also, this study adds to the existing literature by highlighting the link between each of the dimensions of the MTE scale and tourists' willingness to recommend local Ghanaian foods. Besides, a study of this nature is significant because promotion of local food has implications for the economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability of tourism destinations (Sims, 2010). Ghana is a country where government is making efforts to strengthen the agricultural-tourism sector value chain through local produce (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). From this perspective, it is worth investigating inbound tourists' local food experiences since it has implications on their demand of local food. Bravi and Gasca (2014) aver that the attractiveness of a destination is revealed in the utility that tourists attain from its product mix including local foods. Gaining insights on tourists' local foods experiences can provide valuable inputs that could help improve Ghana's attractiveness as a destination. More importantly, unravelling adverse feeling tourists construct regarding local foods can provide useful information to food vendors on the specific areas that need improvement in order to meet the expectation of patrons. Further, an understanding of the relationship between tourists' local food experiences and their willingness to recommend can be a conduit for evaluating customer loyalty and thus customer relationship management.

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptualisations of tourist experience

The term 'experience' is one that continues to elicit multiple definitions, measurements and conceptualisations that are inherently contradictory and paradoxical. To this end, it is considered a concept that is illusive and indistinct in construct (Huang & Hsu, 2010). For instance, experience is seen as an event which leaves a lasting impression on one's mind (Ma, Gao, Scott, & Ding, 2013). Also, Bigne and Andreu (2004) consider it as a series of event(s) that occupy individuals in a

personal way. Sharpley and Stone (2011) simply maintain that it is what the tourist experiences. Incorporating 'memory', Kim et al. (2012) denote 'experience' as a recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination visited. Following from these definitions, first, it can be inferred that experience is an outcome of an encounter with an object of interest. Second, it could include the outcomes of services/activities at the destination whose consumption is occasioned by patronage of the actual object.

Researchers have also made various attempts to capture the phenomenon, experiences. Cohen (1979) proposes five constructs of tourist experiences, namely recreational, diversional, experiential, experimental and existential. Conversely, Pine and Gilmore (1999) delineate four realms of experience: education, aesthetics, escapism and entertainment. Employing psychological strands, Le Bel, Sears, and Dube (2004) regard tourism experience as sensory (or physical), social, emotional and intellectual. Still, Otto and Ritchie (1996) comprehensively theorise six (6) components of tourism experience: hedonism, interactive/social, novelty/escape, comfort, safety, and stimulating/challenge seeking dimensions.

Reliable and valid as these earlier theoretical models maybe, Kim et al. (2012) argue that they overlooked 'memory' — experience as a reflection, an important mediator of behavioural intentions. Kim et al. propose a seven dimensional MTE scale (hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty). This scale, nonetheless, is also inadequate since it emphasises experiences as positively memorable. In a bid to deal with this limitation, negative experiences are incorporated into the MTE scale which form the basis of discussion on tourists local food experiences in this study. Given the multiplicity of the tourism experience, no single model or scale can claim superiority in measurement, but the decision to use this scale is based on its all-encompassing and contemporary nature. More importantly, it is worthwhile to state that the scale captures some important local food experience factors that have long been overlooked, but merit in-depth investigation, such as hedonism, meaningfulness, involvement and intellectual development.

2.2. Food tourism experience

Much of the pleasure in travel has been linked with dining out and sampling novel foods (Gee, Maken, & Choy, 1997). Given this, local food is seen as playing a significant role towards enhancing sensual indulgence (Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012). For Mak, Lumbers, Eves, and Chang (2012), tourists' consumption of indigenous food arouses certain emotional responses, including enjoyment, sensory stimulation and fulfilment, most especially, when such experiences are novel. Novelty denotes newness and or unusualness associated with eating food and beverage outside one's environment (Tse & Crotts, 2005). Gee et al. (1997) found that one of the reasons why people travel is to dine out and sample novel foods. If this observation by Gee et al. (1997) on why tourists travel is anything accurate, then it stands to reason that unusual, strange, or distinctive dining experiences are more probable to be recalled than typical events (Rajaram, 1996). Novelty encompasses four main indicators: once-in-a-lifetime experience, uniqueness, an experience different from previous one and new (Kim et al., 2012).

Within a cultural domain, the consumption of local foods affords visitors the opportunity to appreciate the rich and diverse culture of the destinations they visit. Eating and drinking a particular local food and beverage during holidays implies partaking in the local culture of the people (Wijaya, King, Nguyen, & Morrison, 2013). It is an opportunity to closely experience the authentic local culture of a group of people in a geographical area — including the way they cook, eat and drink as well as experience the friendliness of the locals (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Mittelberg and Palgi (2011) and Tung and Ritchie (2011) posit that experiencing the local eateries of a particular destination enriches the memorability of the tourism experience.

Moreover, tourists seek food experiences that promote exploration (Kim et al., 2012). This has to do with intellectual development which is considered as the most sought tourism experience (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). For instance, eating local cuisine on holiday helps tourists to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding about a destination's culture (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Such new knowledge adds to the individual's accomplishments and self-esteem. Getz (2000) acknowledges that not only does consumption of indigenous food provides visitors the chance to learn, their involvement in its cooking contributes to their outstanding experiences. What this suggests, then, is that the level, stage and form of involvement can have a bearing on their memory. Kim (2010) also observes that one's level of involvement with local food experiences increases one's ability to recollect past experiences vividly. Regarding refreshment, Kauppinen-Raisanen, Gummerus, and Lehtola (2013) posit that it may be viewed as a sensory appeal gotten from eating local cuisines outside one's own domicile. Refreshment focuses on the state of mind and the depth of experiential engagement of tourists. Its manifestation is an emotional state of being revitalised or liberated (Kim et al., 2009).

Consumers' worries with foods have been amply validated by Carter (1998) and Cohen and Avieli (2004), who highlight poor food hygienic standards, diarrhoea and stomach upsets as tourists' adverse feelings with novel foods. The above notwithstanding, these experiences gained by holidaymakers are the impetus for recommending certain destinations and their offerings (Dougherty & Green, 2011). Therefore, willingness to recommend local foods is regarded as a post-purchase intention by a consumer to refer others to the product (Buttle, 1998). In that instance, willingness to say positive things about local Ghanaian foods, or encourage others to patronise are contingent on tourists' experiences with the foods (Bjork & Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014).

3. Theoretical framework

The transaction-specific customer satisfaction theory (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994; Teas, 1993) serves as the theoretical basis for understanding international tourists' local food experiences in Ghana. The theory maintains that a person's experience is a function of the core product (local food) and maybe other services whose demand is prompted by patronage of the food (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991). Therefore, customers' evaluation of experiences can be based on attributes and or sum total product. The theory admits that certain attributes of local foods may be memorable while others may not (Amin, Isa, & Fontaine, 2011). Subsequently, one's decision to recommend local foods to others could be attribute-based or based on overall experience (Bjork & Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2012). Hence, aftermath purchase behaviour is reliant on which of the attribute components is of greater concern to the visitor (Bayus, 1985). By using this model, this study aims to demonstrate that the international tourists' local food experiences are not homogeneous and that these experiences can impact one's willingness to recommend local cuisines or not. However, despite the wide and reliable application of the transaction-specific theory, it is criticised as not providing room for validating one's prior expectations as against actual experiences. This notwithstanding, based on the adapted MTE scale, the following a priori equations are proposed:

$$LFE = f(H, N, LC, R, M, I, K, AE) \tag{1}$$

WTR as a dichotomous outcome is expressed as $P(Y = 1) = \pi$ and $P(Y = 0) = 1 - \pi$. Consequently, the function is formulated as:

$$WTR = \ln[\pi/(1-\pi)] = f(E) \tag{2}$$

Combining Eqs. (1) and (2) above, it can be restated that

$$WTR = \ln [\pi / (1 - \pi)] = f(H, N, LC, M, R, I, K, AE) \tag{3}$$

Therefore:

$$WTR = \ln(\pi/(1-\pi)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1H + \beta_2N + \beta_3LC + \beta_4R + \beta_5M + \beta_6I + \beta_7K + \beta_8AE + \varepsilon_i \tag{4}$$

where *LFE* represents Local food Experience; *WTR*, Willingness to Recommend; *H*, Hedonism; *N*, Novelty; *LC*, Local Culture; *R*, Refreshment; *M*, Meaningfulness; *I*, Involvement; *K*, Knowledge and *NE*, Negative Experience.

4. Materials and methods

Using an exit interview approach, a total of 791 out-bound international tourists were randomly selected at the Kotoka International Airport, between May and July, 2014. Given that most tourists enter Ghana through the airport, it was envisaged that the sample contacted would be representative of international tourists' arrival figures to the destination. Permission was sought from the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority and management of departing flights of major airlines including Alitalia, British Airways, Lufthansa, KLM, Emirates and Turkish Air. These airlines were selected for the study because they regularly travel from countries that are major tourists generating markets to Ghana. International tourists travelling by any of the aforementioned airlines were drawn systematically at every third interval on entrance to the departure lounge. Tourists who declined participation were replaced before the next count. Those who accepted to participate were given the questionnaires which they answered and returned to the researchers before boarding their flights. As much as data on domestic tourists could have enriched the study, the researchers focused more on inbound tourists because the study reckons the need to ascertain the emotional attachments other nationals have about local foods in Ghana.

Data was collected using questionnaires organised in three sections. The instrument was designed and administered in English language since most international tourists who come into the country can read and write in English (Boakye, 2010). Section A of the questionnaire had two filter questions. First, tourists were asked whether or not they were interviewed on the same subject before. Second, they were asked whether they had tasted any local cuisine and if yes, listed any three (3) local foods patronised. The rationale for these questions was to ensure that the views captured were views of those who had consumed some local foods while in Ghana.

Section B covered tourists' experiences with local foods measured on the MTE scale. The experiences were captured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Reliability of the scale was assessed using a ≥ 0.7 Cronbach's alpha (α) threshold (Lankford & Howard, 1994; Pallant, 2005). The section also measured tourists' willingness to recommend local foods, captured as binary response (yes or no). The last section covered socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Pretesting of the questionnaire was done in Cape Coast, using 30 international tourists who were contacted at 'chop bars'. Cape Coast was selected because it receives the highest number of tourists to Ghana (GTA, 2013). The pilot exercise helped the researchers to assess the viability of the instrument after which necessary adjustments were made. Consequently, 654 (83%) questionnaires out of 791 administered were found valid and usable.

The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS), version 20 was used to process the data. Mainly, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using varimax rotation (with Kaiser Normalisation) was used to assess the component structure of the international tourists' local food experiences in Ghana. The binary logistic regression was also used to test the influence of the international tourist local food experiences on their willingness to recommend. The intention to recommend which was measured as a dichotomous outcome was recoded into a

Bernoulli outcome (0 and 1), where 1 represented the intention to recommend (those who answered yes) and 0, the intention not to (responses that fell into the category of no).

5. Results

5.1. Profile of the respondents

Out of the 654 tourists that were covered in the survey, the study found that there were more females (67.3%) than males (32.7%). About 48.8% was between 20–29 years while 21.9% was less than 20 years of age. Also, more unmarried (75.8%) than married (24.2%) respondents were included in the study. Regarding educational qualification, about half (49.2%) of the respondents had attained tertiary education, almost a third (29.0%) had postgraduate degrees and another 28.9% had attained high school qualification. More than half (55.2%) of them, came from Europe while about a third (33.2%) came from Africa. Worth noting is the proportion from Africa. *GTA (2013)* data shows that nationals from the African sub-region are increasingly the bulk of international tourists' arrivals to Ghana. This perhaps signals an increasing travel culture in the sub-region. On religious affiliation, the majority (65.3%) professed Christianity, and 25.6% were Atheist. The topmost traditional foods patronised by the tourists included: *Red Red* (31.0%), *Banku* (25.0%), *Fufu* (16.9%), *Kenkey* (15.0%), *Tuo-Zaafi* (6.4%) and *Akple* (5.7%).

5.2. International tourists' experiences with local foods

Table 1 displays the experiences expressed by international tourists concerning local foods. Means, standard deviations and item reliability summary statistics were computed. Results of the analysis show that on the whole, respondents had both positive and negative experiences with local foods. Based on the mean category ratings, however, tourists generally recalled that local Ghanaian foods are novel ($M = 4.18$).

Specifically mentioned was that sampling local foods is a once-in-a-lifetime experience ($M = 4.43$), and one which was different from previous experiences ($M = 4.22$). In addition, respondents recounted cultural experiences associated with consuming local foods ($M = 4.16$). More precisely, tourists strongly agreed that they closely experience the local food culture ($M = 4.44$), likewise, they remembered that they had an authentic cultural experience ($M = 4.53$). The results also indicate that most international tourists acknowledged that consumption of local foods is educating ($M = 4.10$). They could recall that they appreciated the history of local food ($M = 4.57$) and had uncovered new form(s) of knowledge ($M = 4.69$). Also, respondents ate something meaningful ($M = 4.88$) and important ($M = 3.74$). With regard to the extent to which tourists were involved in the tourism activity, respondents generally remained neutral ($M = 2.96$). But an instance that received high endorsement was that they tried out new food ($M = 4.67$). A major observation that remained unequivocal was international tourists' negative experiences with local foods in Ghana. Dissatisfaction with sanitation around eating places ($M = 4.43$), diarrhoea/stomach upsets ($M = 4.34$), and unfair pricing by food vendors were recalled.

5.3. Tourists' experiential factors with local foods in Ghana

The suitability of the PCA was first ascertained by examining the two most recommended measures: Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity (6710.38) was found to be significant at $P = 0.000$ and was further confirmed by a KMO coefficient of 0.834 (Kaiser, 1974). The PCA was performed on 26 explanatory variables of international tourists' local food experiences with 18 variables meeting the factor loading threshold of >0.5 and item communality of >0.6

Table 1
Attributes of international tourists' local food experiences in Ghana (N = 654).

Factors	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Hedonism			
Exciting	3.54	0.94	0.87
Enjoyed myself	3.80	0.57	0.84
Local food was tasty	3.53	0.54	0.76
Component rating	3.62	0.68	0.82
Novelty			
Once-in-a lifetime experience	4.43	0.65	0.76
Unique experience	4.09	0.95	0.85
Different from previous experiences	4.22	0.94	0.80
Experienced something new	3.98	0.80	0.89
Component rating	4.18	0.84	0.83
Local culture			
Closely experienced the culture	4.44	0.60	0.83
People serving the food were friendly	3.51	0.34	0.77
Had an authentic food cultural experience	4.53	0.65	0.85
Component rating	4.16	0.53	0.82
Refreshment			
I felt liberated	2.05	0.46	0.77
I felt refreshed	2.29	0.56	0.82
Revitalised	3.88	0.53	0.73
Component rating	2.74	0.52	0.77
Meaningfulness			
I ate something meaningful	4.88	0.53	0.79
I ate something important	3.74	0.78	0.85
Learned about myself	3.54	0.43	0.82
Component rating	4.05	0.58	0.82
Involvement			
Participated in preparing local food	2.78	0.88	0.80
Participated in assembling food ingredients	1.43	0.84	0.79
Tried out new food	4.67	0.86	0.87
Component rating	2.96	0.86	0.82
Knowledge			
Learned how to prepare new foods	3.04	0.72	0.77
Explored new form of knowledge	4.69	0.87	0.78
Learnt history of local food	4.57	0.54	0.84
Component rating	4.10	0.71	0.80
Adverse experiences			
Unfair pricing by food vendors	4.32	0.88	0.83
Litter around eating places	4.43	0.84	0.85
Diarrhoea/stomach upsets	4.34	0.80	0.88
Component rating	4.36	0.84	0.85

Scale: 1.0–1.49 = strongly disagreed, 1.50–2.49 = disagreed, 2.50–3.49 = neutral, 3.50–4.49 = agreed, 4.50–5.0 = strongly agreed.

(Tabachnick & Fidell, 2010). Based on eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser–Guttman criterion), the Varimax rotation extracted five related yet distinct factors, which accounted for 64.2% of the total variance of international tourists' experiences with local Ghanaian foods. **Table 2** summarises the results.

However, each of the components accounted differently to the total variance explained. Factor I involved items measuring local culture experience associated with local foods. The factor comprised issues such as close experiential of local food culture, friendly local food servers and authentic local foods. This factor accounted for the highest variation with an eigenvalue of 6.36, which is equivalent to 16.3%. Factor II also measured knowledge, which represented 5.49 (15.0%) of the total variation in local food experiences of international tourists. Factor III captured items measuring novelty [4.57 (13.6%)], while factor IV appeared as a parasitic component that results from items measuring hedonism and meaningfulness. Hence, it was labelled as 'hedonism–meaningfulness'. Loadings here included 'local food is tasty', 'eat something important', 'learned about myself', and 'enjoyed myself'. Together, these explained 3.11 (11.0%) of the total variance. Finally, Factor V consisted of the negative experiences. Such instances included litter around eating places, diarrhoea/stomach upsets, and unfair pricing of food. This factor scored an eigenvalue of 1.16 representing 8.32% of the total variance.

Table 2
Dimensions of international tourists' local food experience in Ghana.

Number	Factors	Loadings	Eigenvalues	% of variance explained	Cronbach's alpha
I	Local culture		6.36	16.3	0.85
	Closely experienced the local food culture	0.83			
	Locals serving the food were friendly	0.76			
II	Had an authentic local food cultural experience	0.72	5.49	15.0	0.86
	Knowledge				
	Learnt how to prepare new foods	0.78			
	Learnt history of local food	0.77			
III	Tried out new food	0.70	4.57	13.6	0.76
	Novelty				
	It was once-in-a lifetime experience	0.94			
IV	It was a unique experience	0.84	3.11	11.0	0.80
	Different from previous tourism experiences	0.78			
	Hedonism–meaningfulness				
	Local food is tasty	0.88			
	I ate something important	0.79			
	Eating local food is exciting	0.78			
	I ate something meaningful	0.78			
	Enjoyed myself	0.71			
Learned about myself	0.70				
V	Adverse experiences		1.16	8.32	0.81
	Litter around eating places	0.84			
	Diarrhoea/stomach upsets	0.75			
	Unfair pricing by food vendors	0.74			
	Total variance explained				

KMO = 0.834, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Approx. χ^2) = 6710.38, P = 0.000.

5.4. Determinants of tourists' willingness to recommend local food

A binary logistic regression was used to examine the influence of tourists' local foods experiences on their willingness to recommend. Sweet (1999) and Hosmer, Lemeshow, and Sturdivant (2013) posit that logistic regression is the most appropriate tool for a dichotomous dependable variable and measurements of varying levels. Characteristics of the model (Table 3) include the Exp (B) which denotes the odds of the outcome event, the Wald and the significance (P) which shows the power that each independent variable has on the entire model, and the B represents the unstandardized beta. To be considered significant in the logit model, a predictor variable should have odds of more than 1 and a $p < 0.05$ (Sweet, 1999; Varin, Reid, & Firth, 2011). Odds ratio less than 1 means increasing value of the variable is parallel to decreasing odds of the event's occurrence and the reverse is true.

With an Omnibus tests model coefficient of ($\chi^2 = 192.06, P < 0.05$) and Hosmer and Lemeshow test of ($\chi^2 = 12.47, p > 0.05$), a statistically significant relationship was observed between tourists local food experience and willingness to recommend. The model was fitted at a Hosmer and Lemeshow P value greater than 0.05 (Hosmer et al., 2013; Pallant, 2005). The results show that the set of the independent variables combined to explain about 53% of the variation in willingness to recommend. Yet per the disaggregated experience components, not all

significantly predicted international tourists' intention to recommend local foods. One that had a profound effect was the cultural experience dimension. Its associated odds ratio indicated that tourists who had culturally memorable experiences were 10.3 times more likely to recommend local food to others, than those who did not. Similarly, the logit model indicated that the novelty attached to local foods in Ghana had a 7 times odds of influencing tourists to recommend, likewise the knowledge component (odds = 4.90; $p = 0.030$). On the contrary, the adverse experience component was found to correlate negatively ($B = -2.09; p < 0.01$) with intention to recommend. Thus, the unsatisfied tourists were 9.82 times more likely to discourage others from consuming local foods in Ghana.

6. Discussion

Five main categories of local food experiences (local culture, knowledge, novelty hedonism–meaningfulness, and adverse experiences) were expressed by international tourists as yielded by the PCA. Though these dimensions are consistent with four (4) of the seven dimensions proposed by Kim et al. (2012) in the MTE scale, they are different in structure.

The emergence of the cultural dimension of local food as a significant factor that contributes to international tourists' memorable experience supports Mittelberg and Palgi (2011) assertion that the tangible and intangible cultural manifestations of a destination are the most enriching and memorable holiday 'moments'. Given its association with the local culture, indigenous foods are mostly regarded as important experience heritage goods of the destination and it epitomises sharing in the culture of locals (Wijaya et al., 2013). The study established that the culture attached to local foods is a basis for which tourists' would recommend local food to others. This may be especially so for Updhyay and Sharma (2014) typology of culinary tourists known as the 'experience seekers'. This category view food resources as cultural markers that connect them with places and people which they will want to be identified with.

More importantly, tourists, as part of their culinary experience have the quest for broadening their horizon about the social world, including the history of foods they consume at destinations (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Such new information adds to the individual's intellectual

Table 3
Experience by intention to recommend local foods.

Experience dimensions	B	Odd ratios	Sig (p).	Wald
Culture	0.65	10.3	0.000*	0.49
Knowledge	1.62	4.90	0.030*	2.68
Novelty	2.48	7.41	0.006*	7.11
Hedonism–meaningfulness	1.09	1.01	0.175	1.57
Adverse experiences	-2.09	9.82	0.000*	14.4
Constant	1.46	9.49	0.000*	6.56

Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.528$; Hosmer and Lemeshow Test: $\chi^2 = 12.47, df = 8, P = 0.132$. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients: $\chi^2 = 192.06, df = 5, P = 0.000$. Significant at * $p < 0.05$. Source: Fieldwork, 2014.

achievement about people and their food, which leaves a lasting memory (Mcintosh, Goeldner, & Ritchie, 1995). The insight gotten about local foods tends to positively influence the individual's post-purchase endorsement about an area's food resources to others. Rajaram (1996) avers that there is high probability for unusual, atypical or distinctive moments to be remembered than typical ones. Tourists described their local food experiences in Ghana as unique and novel. Fischler (1988) is of the view that the food *neophilics*, are more open to searching for novel and even strange food experiences which enriches their memorability of the holiday experience and thus impact positive word-of-mouth. Particularly, eating novel foods during holiday is a mark of an authentic experience which most visitors crave to behold (Wijaya et al., 2013). The fact is that international tourists celebrate novel cuisines, therefore, it is not needful for local food service providers to incur extra costs to 'westernise' their products. Rather, they should be more traditional in their choice of ingredients for food preparation in order to maintain the authenticity of local dishes.

Another significant finding from this study is that the negative attributes of destination food products also contribute to tourists' memories of the food tourism experience. Three main complaints about the local foods were made: litter around eating places, unfair pricing and diarrhoea/stomach upsets after consuming indigenous foods. The concerns raised by the tourists regarding the untidiness of the eating environment have been highlighted by earlier studies including Cohen and Avieli (2004) and Amuquandoh (2011), while the other two are quite peculiar to this study. Tourists' dissatisfaction regarding the cleanliness of the eating environment indicates that visitors who consume local foods in Ghana are particular about food hygiene. Adam, Hiamey, and Afenyo (2014) assert that the eating environment is the most noticeable feature in food service operations and so its appearance may be used as a proxy of the overall conditions under which the actual food is prepared and served. The health implications of the unclean eating environment reflects not only in the presence of diseases causing organisms and but subsequent illness of consumers.

In addition, the situation that some consumers had diarrhoea or suffered stomach upsets could be attributed to the fact the foods might have been unfamiliar to them, especially first time consumers. With respect to unfair pricing, the appearance (western outlook), restricted time and space coupled with their apparent urgency to complete travel itineraries (Mathieson & Wall, 1982), can make tourist vulnerable to exploitation by service providers. Generally, the study noted that people's memorable negative encounters with local food products can adversely affect their intention to recommend the food to others. This observation lends credence to the fact that consumers dissatisfaction has the potential to mar efforts at promoting a destination's local food (Everett, 2012), and to the food vendors, it can wane profitability.

7. Conclusions and implications

This study offers a number of theoretical and policy contributions in the area of food tourism and visitors experiences. Unlike most research on tourist local food experiences which are largely based on food quality issues, this research has taken a further step by offering insight into tourists' memorable local food experiences based on the MTE scale by Kim et al., (2012). It provides theoretical contributions in the following ways: first, the findings indicate that local food experiences of tourists border on five main domains: culture, knowledge, novelty, hedonism—meaningfulness and adverse experiences. Although, the dimensions of tourists' local food experiences in Ghana are similar to the MTE scale, this study points out that the covariance structure of the scale is not an identity matrix in food settings. Following from that it is proposed that the dimensions of hedonism and meaningfulness are parallel and may be considered as a single dimension. This also points to the fact that notwithstanding the usefulness of the MTE scale in measuring tourists' local food experiences, a modified version of the scale is worth considering.

More importantly, despite the scanty items of adverse experiences considered in the study, a more salient observation was that the study incorporated some adverse attributes of local foods in exploring the structure of the MTE scale among international tourists' in food settings. The factor analysis results showed that consumers' recollection of adverse local food experiences, just like the positive ones, can strongly affect memory. Contrarily, Kim et al. (2012) conclude that experiences are positively memorable. Therefore, the study is in sync with literature which views experience as mixed and multiple in constructions.

From policy perspective, the four main positive experiential dimensions can be used as benchmarks for marketing the country's local foods, hence strong efforts should be made at leveraging them. In line with this, GTA and the Traditional Caterers Association of Ghana should sensitise food vendors on the need to incorporate significant aspects of the destinations culture in the selection of ingredients, cooking and serving. Vendors, event organisers should also encourage the packaging of authentic local food programmes, such as food bazaars, allowing for moderate participation in order to enhance experiences of international tourists. GTA can also incorporate these experience components for periodic evaluation of performance of local food vendors in ensuring MTE in Ghana and instituting corrective adjustments. This request for periodic tracking is important owing to the view that tourists are dynamic (Moutinho, 1987).

With regard to the concerns tourists raised about local Ghanaian foods, they have implications for the image and general impression about the destination and its food products. Word-of-mouth is often perceived with high credibility than official sources and commercial media which may be guilty of masked embellishments (Murray, 1991). Moreover, the issue of uncleanliness of dining environments raises questions about the credibility of food regulatory agencies in enforcing standards in the country. There is either inadequacy in the supervision of sanitation issues relative to food vending in the country or reluctance in the implementation of rules and regulations. Regulatory agencies such as the Ghana Food and Drugs Authority and the Traditional Caterers Association need to step up efforts in their mandated supervisory role and to educate vendors through periodic food safety and hygiene workshops.

The study has also bridged the theoretical gap between travellers' memories with local food and intention to recommend by pointing out the utility of three domains of the MTE scale: food culture, knowledge and novelty, in influencing consumers' willingness to recommend local foods. That is, tourists are ready to share positive sentiments about local Ghanaian foods based on the local food culture, knowledge and the novelty attached to them. This observation is in tandem with the transaction-specific model which argues that consumers' positive post-purchase behaviour regarding a product or service is influenced by their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The results also suggest that provision of positive local food experiences along the aforementioned areas is one way to ensure free publicity of the country's cuisines. This is based on the traditionally held notion that satisfactory experience can generate five to ten potential buyers (Desatnick, 1987). Increased demand for local foods has implications for the preservation of the culture of the country and higher linkages in the agriculture value chain (Richards & Wilson, 2006). Nevertheless, adverse experiences are inversely related to willingness to recommend. This implies that pleasant outcomes tend to generate positive future behaviours, whereas unpleasant ones lead to customer disgruntlement and negative comments.

Finally, methodologically, this research has also made some significant contribution by using the 'exit interview' method (at the airport) in examining the experiences that remain in the minds of international visitors who consumed local foods during their stay in the country. While this study may have offered insightful findings, like other studies, it had some limitations. First, the MTE scale largely dwells on food cultural attributes and other sensory affective attributes with less emphasis

on consumers' interaction, which may be directly related to tourists' experiences.

It is again acknowledged that socio-demographic and travel characteristics as well as food establishments' characteristics are important factors that can influence local food experiences of tourists. Given that these factors were not considered in the present study, future studies could explore their effects on the local food experiences of international tourists. Finally, it remains clear that people's memories about their encounters are subjected to time and space, so further studies can compare tourists' local food experiences during exit and post-travel using the self-reporting approach.

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