

# THE ROLE OF TOURIST MOTIVATIONS TOWARDS PURCHASE INTENTION OF LOCAL FOOD IN THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

*Nowadays, tourists are seeking for pleasant food experience, which becomes an important motivation for them to visit a destination. This study aims to discover tourist motivations towards purchase intention of local food in Thailand as well as to consider potential and capabilities of marketing promotion from government and private organizations that affect purchase intention of local food. The survey was carried out on the sample of 400 tourists purchasing local food in Pathumthani province, Thailand. In the questionnaire, tourists rated their physical motivation, interpersonal motivation, emotional motivation, and self-development motivation from their perspective using 5-point Likert scale to evaluate their opinions towards purchase intention of local food. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression with backward elimination method to investigate the most powerful effect of independent variables. The reliability of the whole questionnaire was 0.970. The results showed that tourist's purchase intention of local food significantly correlated with self-development motivation and marketing promotion ( $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, in order to connect tourist to local food, modern entrepreneurs should focus on tourist's self-development motivation rather than physiological motivation. Additionally, government and private organizations should increase the potential of marketing promotion to create tourist's knowledge and allow them to perceive the benefits of purchasing local food.*

**Keywords:** Tourist Motivation, Purchase Intention, Local Food, Marketing Promotion.

## INTRODUCTION

Consumption is a physiological need in the first stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and also the most essential of human needs (Maslow, 1943). However, in the 21st century, people do not only consume food for survival or to fulfil their physiological needs (Henderson, 2014) but they also anticipate food experience because food can present the destination identity (Jones & Jenkins, 2002) and make a pleasant eating experience that is one of the physiological needs (Tikkanen, 2007). Therefore, gastronomy becomes an essential need for modern society (Boniface, 2017). It is believed that it played an important role in tourists' decision making to visit a destination (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; World Tourism Organization, 2019) Moreover, gastronomy can deeply enhance tourist's experience by connecting tourist to the authentic local community (Sims, 2009) as local foods create a unique experience for specific tourist destination and fulfil tourist's demand on experiential tourism (García-Henche, 2018) and also contributes to increasing the value of tourism (Ellis et al., 2018). It can be said that local food will be a tourism

destination's brand and culture representative (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Tikkanen, 2007). Additionally, the local food market is another place that reflects culture, tradition, history, and way of life in the destination area (Crespi-Vallbona & Dimitrovski, 2016). Not surprisingly, the World Tourism Organization found that tourists had food expenditure about more than a third of all travel spending (World Tourism Organization, 2019).

The interest in the local foods, food experiences, and food tourism has been increasing in recent years (Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2010; Kim & Jang, 2016; World Tourism Organization, 2019). Tourists purchase local food and also discover the destination's culture in the food market (Organ et al., 2015). Occasionally, tourist destinations are developed from food commercial cities to the city of gastronomy where not only food and beverage are served, but also the rich indigenous culture and knowledge are exchanged. In this case, tourists might want to visit the food producers, food festivals, restaurants, or try local dishes to gain different culture. These are the main purposes for travelling (Hall & Mitchell, 2000). Therefore, many suppliers utilise foods as a marketing resource to attract tourists. (Lin et al., 2011) and also gastronomy has become a factor to build an attractive destination (Lopez-Guzman et al., 2017). Additionally, the number of researchers proposed that food, as a motivator, inspires tourists to travel. According to Fields (2002), McIntosh & Ritchie (2009) summed up four categories of gastronomic tourism motivation: physical motivation; cultural motivation; interpersonal motivation; and status and dignity motivation. Similarly, Pearce (1988) described motives for travelling as biological needs; safety and security needs; relationship development and extension needs; self-esteem and development needs; and fulfilment needs. Whereas, Kim et al. (2009) classified motivating factors that attract food consumption into nine factors, which were exciting experience; escape from routine; health concern; learning knowledge; authentic experience; togetherness; prestige; sensory appeal; and physical environment. Regarding literature reviews, the number of tourist motivation concepts are presented, however, only some of them were mentioned in common. In order to clarify terminology in this article, the independent variables in this study were, (1) physical motivation, which is the basic need of a human to have food for body and mind relaxation; (2) interpersonal motivation that human wants to interact or build a relationship with others by having a meal together; (3) emotional motivation, which is the feeling that drives consumption behaviour; and (4) self-development motivation that enhances the experience, prestige and fulfilment of the tourist. Most of the research studied found that effective marketing strategies can positively affect and convince people to purchase, especially organic food and Halal food (Nurhasanah & Hariyani, 2017; Paul & Rana, 2012; Wee et al., 2014). While the studies focusing on marketing strategies affecting tourists purchasing local food are limited.

Thailand has numbers of province that have unique local food. Pathumthani, a province in Bangkok's vicinity, is one of those which has diversity in national tourism resources, including historical tourism, cultural tourism, agricultural tourism as well as relaxed local life. Furthermore, Pathumthani conserves tradition, culture, and the variety of distinct gastronomy of different ethnics such as Rmen cuisine in Samkhok district or Indian cuisine in Lumlukka district. Gastronomic tourism in Pathumthani has been continuously supported by the government in order to enhance gastronomic tourism along with agricultural development (Swadsaen, 2020).

This study aims to discover the lacked information of the relationship between tourist motivations and the purchase intention of local food. Moreover, it aims to consider the marketing promotion factors from government and private organizations in order to find the potential and capabilities to support the local marketing plan and private organization promoting. The result of

this study will explain the missing knowledge of tourist motivations on local markets and will be beneficial for those countries that attract tourist as a gastronomic tourism destination such as Hongkong, Italy, Japan, Mexico, etc. (Lynch, 2021) in terms of guideline for investment or do marketing on gastronomic tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

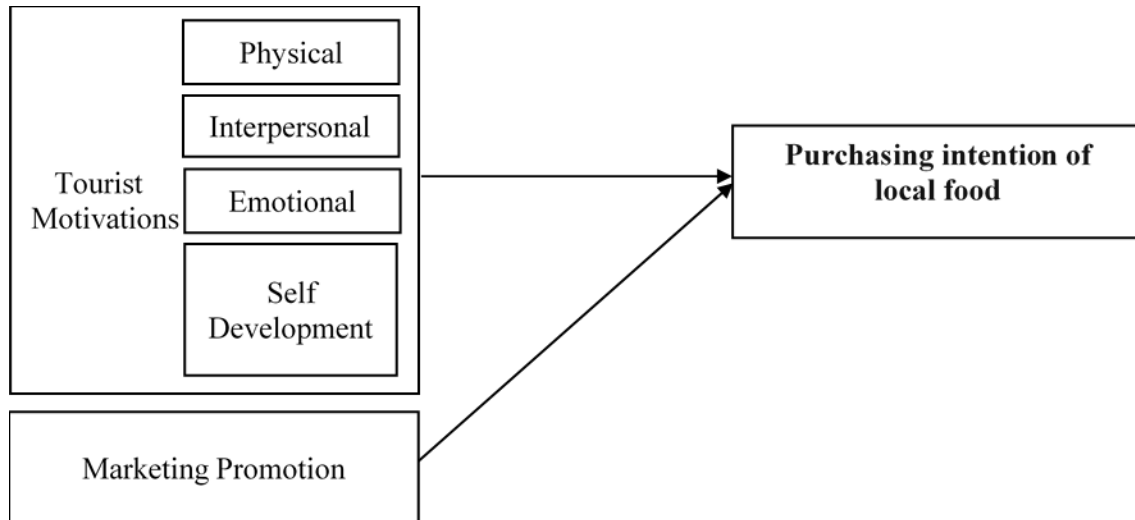
### Motivation of Local Food

The tourist motivation studies are very widespread since motivation has a significant effect on purchasing decision of tourists and also predict their needs to develop products and services to satisfy them by specifying market segment (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Kruger & Saayman, 2016; Utami, 2010). Besides, Iso-Ahola (1982) also proposed that motivation is an important factor for leisure activity. To explain tourist motivation, many researchers have adapted Push and Pull motivation theory (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Pearce, 1993; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). These motivations encourage tourists to make a journey or purchase local foods. A push factor is an internal drive of human, for example, desire to escape, adventure, recreation, seek for new things, and so on. Whereas, pull factor is an external drive explaining the destination attributes that attract tourists, for instance, reputation and beauty of a destination, promotion, or uniqueness (Dan, 1977; Swanson & Horridge, 2006; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). To sum up, Fields (2002) and McIntosh et al. (1995) divided gastronomic tourism motivation into four categories: physical motivation, cultural motivation, interpersonal motivation, and status and dignity motivation. But apart from that, Kim et al. (2009) classified motivational factors as attracting food consumption of tourists including exciting experience, escape from routine, health concern, learning knowledge, authentic experience, togetherness, prestige, sensory appeal, and physical environment. Similarly, Uysal & Li (2008) studied the festival and event motivations were socialization, family togetherness, novelty, escape, cultural exploration, entertainment, and excitement. Furthermore, Pearce (1988) described travel motivation model as travel career ladder that tourists have been motivated by biological needs, safety and security needs, relationship development and extension needs, self-development needs, and fulfilment needs. The main findings of this study will focus on the tourist motivations that interest in local food or gastronomic tourism. Hence, from the review literature above, it was considered the tourist motivation variables including physical motivation, interpersonal motivation, emotional motivation, and self-development motivation. Conceptually, it can be presented as in Figure 1.

### Marketing Promotion

In the context of tourist motivations for purchase intention of local food, there are many factors influencing tourist purchasing behaviour, not only buy food for survival, (Henderson, 2014) such as marketing stimulation and stimuli from other environments (Kotler & Armstrong, 2003). However, Handoko (2001) consisted that motivation was the desire of individuals leading people to buy or act something to achieve the goal. Similarly, Gretzel et al. (2006) stated that personal factors and environmental factors such as psychological, physiological, social, political, cultural, and social media influence on consumer perceived and changes in consumer purchase intention. Besides, Blakeman & Brown (2010) described that traditional and modern marketing media effect on consumer's purchase decision and word of mouth is also the powerful tool leading the consumer behaviour (Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988). Therefore, marketing

promotion has a significant role for conveying with consumers due to it can influence specific target groups, add the consumer perceived value, introduce new products, and build a brand image (Kotler, 2003). This article will focus on offline and online marketing media were used for local food promoting in Thailand.



**FIGURE 1**  
**THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON TOURIST MOTIVATION, MARKETING PROMOTION, AND PURCHASE INTENTION OF LOCAL FOOD**

As mentioned above, motivation, marketing promotion has significant effects on local food purchase intention of tourists. Therefore, destinations can potentially develop local foods to establish an advantageous marketing strategy. Henderson (2009) and Smith & Costello (2009) found that tourists look for novel experience by trying special food. Similarly, Kim et al. (2009) and McIntosh et al. (1995) stated that people were motivated by physical motivators such as escapade from routine, gaining sensational experience, sensory appeal, health concern and taking time for leisure. Additionally, Field (2002), Lupton (1996) and Otis (1984) proposed that tasting local foods and unfamiliar foods was a physical experience responding to the need for excitement. Hence, food experience can satisfy tourists if their meals are over expectation (Rust & Oliver 2000). Not only physical motivation leading a food consumption but also cultural, social, and sensory acceptance factors. According to Kumar & Pansari (2016), and Sobal et al. (2006), these factors affected buying decision process and consumption behaviour because gastronomy relayed the authentic culture, heritage, and local identity (Chaney & Ryan, 2012).

For marketing studies, Du Rand & Heath (2006) proposed that food festivals should be accredited by national organizations as well as the cooperation between the local community and foreign associations that should be promoted. According to Horng & Tsai (2012), Hall et al. (2003), Long (2004), Quan & Wang (2004) studies, it was recommended that destinations should focus on local foods as the popularity of culinary tourism is interestingly rising. For instance, the Canadian Tourism Commission improves the relationship between the national tourism image and cuisine by inculcating and promoting culinary tourism activities. Similarly, López et al. (2019) described that gastronomic visitors are motivated to purchase foods and join activities

that integrated with the traditional and typical foods. Suggestion from their research stated that the communication and promotion programs of the culinary product should be developed for the economic improvement and providers' income increasing in the cantons of Tungurahua, Ecuador. In addition, Rimdusit et al. (2019) mentioned that most tourists were motivated to choose gastronomy tourism because of the taste of foods, location and atmosphere of the restaurant, prices for gastronomic tours, variety of food, a service provider in the restaurant, variety of flavours of food, advertising food through social media and cooking equipment in order.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Respondents and Data Collection

Population of this study was Thai tourists who have been to Pathumthani. According to statistics of Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 161,505 tourists have visited Pathumthani in August 2019. Yamane's calculation formula was used (Yamane, 1973) at confidence interval level of 95% and an error margin of 5%.

This research collected a convenient sample of 400 tourists consuming local food in Pathumthani province, Thailand. The data was collected between 20 August - 15 September 2020 by multistage random sampling. In stage one, four out of seven districts were randomly selected, including Thanyaburi, Samkhok, Mueang Pathumthani, and Lamlukka. In the second stage, ten restaurants listed on recommendation website were randomly selected from each district and 10 Thai tourists from each restaurant were simply collected. Before collecting the data, the screening question, "*Have you ever tried Pathumthani local food?*" ask to confirm the subject. The tourists with "Yes" will continue doing the rest of questionnaire. Respondents answered the questions addressing their physical motivation, interpersonal motivation, emotional motivation, and self-development motivation from their perspective towards purchase intention of local food.

All collected questionnaires were complete and useable for data analysis. The information analysis was conducted using the statistical software and the reliability of the whole questionnaire was 0.970. The data were analysed by descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression within the backward elimination method to investigate the most powerful effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The statistically significant was considered to reject hypothesis-null at  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . The sample included predominantly female respondents (65.3%), within aged between 21 to 29 years old (36.5%), single (71.8%), graduated a bachelor's degree (52.0%), were working as company officer (27.5%), had average income between ฿10,000 to ฿20,000 (31.5%), living in Bangkok and vicinity areas (37.0%). Furthermore, most samples were travelling in Pathumthani province for consuming local food and relaxing (Table 1).

### Variables and Measurement

This study has factors measurement scales of the gastronomic tourism motivation theory gathered by Fields (2002) and McIntosh et al. (1995) and adapted from previous studies in this gastronomic tourism motivation. These motivations relate to tourists' buying decision (Uysal et al., 2008). 5-point or 7-point Likert scale is commonly used to evaluate tourist motivation affecting to consume local food of tourist (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Kim & Eves, 2012). In

this study, variables of tourist motivations including physical motivation, interpersonal motivation, emotional motivation, and self-development motivation were rated by using a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the opinion of respondents towards the statements. Likewise, marketing promotion and purchase intention of local food and can also be measured using 5-point Likert scale for measuring the tourist motivations explaining the tourist expense (Alegre et al., 2011), purchasing behaviour and willingness to buy organic food (Voon et al., 2011). However, some researchers use a 10-point Likert scale (Snepenger et al., 2006), or 7-point Likert scale (Fodness, 1994).

<b>Table 1</b>		
<b>RESPONDENT'S DEMOGRAPHICS</b>		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequent</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Gender (n = 400)		
Male	139	34.8
Female	261	65.3
Age (Years) (n = 400)		
18-20 years old	19	4.8
21-29 years old	146	36.5
30-39 years old	134	33.5
40-49 years old	55	13.8
50-59 years old	30	7.5
Over 60 years old	16	4.0
Status (n = 400)		
Single	287	71.8
Married	103	25.8
Divorced/Widow	8	2.0
Others	2	0.5
Education level (n = 400)		
Lower than bachelor's degree	90	22.5
Bachelor's degree	208	52.0
Upper than bachelor's degree	102	25.5
Occupation (n = 400)		
Government/State enterprise	90	22.5
Company officer	110	27.5
Business owner	39	9.8
Labor	29	7.3
Freelance	49	12.3
Student	63	15.8
Farmer	1	0.3
Others	19	4.8
Monthly income (Baht) (n = 400)		
Less than 10,000	84	21.0
10,000-20,000	126	31.5
20,001-30,000	68	17.0
30,001-40,000	62	15.5
40,001-50,000	25	6.3
Over 50,001	35	8.8
Residence (n = 400)		
Bangkok and vicinity	148	37.0
Pathumthani	144	36.0
Others	108	27.0

All proposed constructs have adequate reliability (Table 2). The reliability of physical motivation, interpersonal motivation, emotional motivation, self-development motivation, marketing promotion and purchase intention of local food were higher than 0.70. Therefore, these variables are acceptable.

Measurement scale	Number of items	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Average inter-item correlation
Purchase intention of local food	8	3.157	0.809	0.867	0.338
Tourist motivations					
Physical motivation	5	3.738	0.882	0.792	0.757
Interpersonal motivation	5	3.721	0.923	0.789	0.768
Emotional motivation	5	3.629	0.917	0.781	0.806
Self-development motivation	5	3.612	0.998	0.789	0.760
Marketing promotion	6	2.823	0.823	0.868	0.338

## RESEARCH RESULT

This study aimed to investigate the tourist motivations and marketing promotion towards purchase intention of local food, as well as their contribution to the predictive power in the model. Thus, correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis had been created to analyse the causal relationship (Table 3 and 4). The results of multiple linear regression analysis showed that the purchase intention of local food had a statistically significant correlation with self-development motivation and marketing promotion.

	Physical motivation	Interpersonal motivation	Emotional motivation	Self-development motivation	Marketing promotion	Purchase intention of local food
Physical motivation	1					
Interpersonal motivation	0.733**	1				
Emotional motivation	0.735**	0.748**	1			
Self-development motivation	0.692**	0.718**	0.819**	1		
Marketing promotion	0.319**	0.287**	0.273**	0.225**	1	
Purchase intention of local food	0.252**	0.279**	0.289**	0.287**	0.259**	1

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presented the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. All independent variables, including physical motivation, interpersonal motivation, emotional motivation, self-development motivation and marketing promotion, positively related to the purchase intention of local food (R= 0.252, 0.279, 0.289, 0.287 and 0.259 respectively).

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance	
	B	Std. Error	Beta ( $\beta$ )			
4 (Constant)	1.881	0.173		10.707	0.000	
Self-development motivation	0.196	0.039	0.241**	5.002	0.000	
Marketing promotion	0.201	0.047	0.205**	4.242	0.000	
	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	SE <sub>est</sub>	DF	F
	0.350	0.122	0.118	0.760	339	27.669

Source: Authors' analysis

Note: Dependent Variable: Purchase intention of local food; \*\*  $p < .01$

Four multiple linear regression models with backward elimination method have created. The first model, which is widely used in this research field, shows the influence of tourist motivations and marketing promotion on consumption behaviour. In this research, it was found that tourist motivations had no influence on purchase intention of local food, however, marketing promotion still had a significant impact on purchase intention of local food ( $p < 0.01$ ). Overall, the model explained 11.8% of the variance in purchase intention of local food. The second model showed that marketing promotion was statistically significant at 0.01 levels. However, the second model can explain 12.0% of the variance in purchase intention of local food. The third model also showed that marketing promotion was statistically significant at 0.01 levels and self-development motivation was significant at 0.05. However, the third model can explain 12.0% of the variance in purchase intention of local food. Lastly, the fourth model showed that self-development motivation (Beta=0.241) and marketing promotion (Beta=0.205) were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Both variables were relevant in explaining the purchase intention of local food. Overall, the fourth model can explain 11.8% of the variance in purchase intention of local food and the SEest is 0.760. The results obviously presented that only the fourth model was the most powerful independent variables that affected the purchase intention of local food (Table 4).

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study was to discover the tourist motivations towards purchase intention of local food in Thailand. The data was collected by questionnaire and analysed by descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression within the backward elimination method to investigate the most powerful effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The finding of this study found self-development motivation and marketing promotion had an impact on the purchase intention of local food.

Tourists' self-development motivation is an important factor influencing tourists' purchase intention towards local food (Chaniotakis et al., 2010). The number of studies about food consumption mentioned that consumer values have an impact on consumer perception of foods (Aertsens et al., 2009; Arvola et al., 2008; Krystallis et al., 2008). Similarly, previous research of Huang et al. (2019); Krystallis & Chryssohoidis (2005) and Rezai et al. (2017) found that consumers' attitude such as self-respect and enjoyment of life, had the effect on their intention towards consuming and purchasing functional foods. Furthermore, they also aware of socially responsible consumption and environmental responsibility that reflect self-development



needs as according to self-actualization needs level in Maslow's hierarchy theory (Nasir & Karakaya, 2014). Self-actualization needs to make human find new things, new experience and drives their life in a new way (Moses, 2007). Not surprisingly, tourists had a purchase intention of local food because of their self-development needs. Therefore, modern entrepreneurs should focus more on tourists' self-development motivation rather than physiological needs in order to connect tourists as the consumers to local food. It suggested that tourists prefer to enhance their knowledge and experience about food they consumed. Agyeiwaah et al. (2019) stated that tourist satisfaction will increase when they involve in their food experiences. Restaurant and tourism entrepreneurs may design the activities related to food such as telling food story, connecting food to culture, or teaching how to cook. However, negative purchase intention may occur if tourists experience food incidents, hence, they often choose certified and safe food products (Nam et al., 2019). This indicates that they still focus on physiological needs.

Marketing promotion strongly impacts on the purchase intention of local food. According to Blakeman & Brown (2010) stated that traditional and modern media are tools increasing the purchasing decision of consumer that marketers should pay attention to. Similarly, Kotler (2003) described that marketing promotion can add the consumer perceived value, introduce new products, build a brand image, and raise brand awareness and also be the tools impacting on consumers' purchase intention (Boonsiritomachai & Sud-On, 2020; Wongpitakroj, 2017). Previous research showed that perceived value and consumer knowledge have a significant relationship with purchase intention (Younus et al., 2015). Hence, the government and private organization should increase the potential of marketing promotion for building tourists' knowledge and perception, leading them to see the benefits of purchasing local food.

In conclusion, the findings confirmed that self-development motivation and marketing promotion positively affects the purchase intention of local food. For practical implications, the government agencies and tourism authority of the countries that attract tourist as gastronomic tourism destination should focus and plan the tourism policy supporting tourists' self-development motivation. The supports can be not only the presentation of food image or physical benefits but also showing food background and origin of the ingredients. In addition, designing the campaign that creates tourist involvement in local food-related activities is another interesting possibility. Furthermore, restaurant and tourism entrepreneurs should raise the investment in marketing promotion such as food event activities or social media where the tourist can reach to the local food information easily, increasing brand awareness and promoting authentic foods.

The data in this study was collected from Thai tourists and most of respondents were local tourists. Hence, suggestion for future research is that researchers should collect data from international tourists and investigate other factors that may affect tourists' purchase decision. Finally, data from supply side should be explored for better understanding about gastronomic tourism development.

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