

Macanese delights: How tea cafés drive gastronomy tourism in a UNESCO city

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism, encompassing both inbound and domestic travel, constitutes a significant portion of the gross domestic product for numerous economies worldwide. This impact is most pronounced in Macao, where tourism contributes to 48% of the GDP in 2018. Since being designated a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2017, the government of Macao has made significant strides to entice tourists and kindle their interest in Macanese cuisine. Today, local cuisine, particularly Macanese food, plays a pivotal role in Macao's tourism promotion. One of Macao's well-loved dining establishments is the tea cafés, *Cha Chaan Teng*. Tea cafés offer a variety of unique dishes. Their diverse food offerings can satisfy a wide range of patrons by providing multiple cuisines at affordable prices. Tea cafés are known for their "efficiency, cost-effectiveness, delicious flavors, and consistency," making them a popular choice among locals and tourists alike (Leung & Lau, 2021).

To gain deeper insights into tourists' dining intentions at *Cha Chaan Teng*, this study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) proposed that an individual's attitude, injunctive and descriptive norms, and beliefs about behavioral control influence their actions. Additionally, Aarts and Van (1998) noted that habitual behavior often falls within the scope of attitude-behavior models, as current behavior can be predicted by previous actions. Following Ajzen's (1991) recommendation, the theory's original variables can be enhanced by incorporating additional factors to explain variations in behavioral intention. The present study examines the role of past behavior in predicting tourists' intentions to dine at Macao-style tea cafés. It also explores factors influencing customers' decisions to dine at these tea cafés. TPB has been utilized in an extensive amount of research to anticipate intents and actions among people, showing that it is effective at doing so, particularly in the areas of gastronomy and vacation selections. Hence, subsequent hypotheses were put forth to investigate from the perspectives of tourists within Macao-style tea cafés context:

- H1. Attitudes is positively correlated with the intention of tourists to dine at Macao-style tea cafés
- H2. Subjective injunctive norms are positively correlated with the intention of tourists to dine at Macao-style tea cafés
- H3. Subjective descriptive norms are positively correlated with the intention of tourists to dine at Macao-style tea cafés
- H4. Perceived behavioral controls are positively correlated with the intention of tourists to dine at Macao-style tea cafés
- H5. Past behaviors are positively correlated with the intention of tourists to dine at Macao-style tea cafés

METHOD

The present study utilized offline surveys to distribute questionnaires, which were collected at Ruins of St. Paul, Border Gate, and local tea cafés. The sample was specifically limited to tourists interested and willing to dine in local tea cafés. Purposeful quota sampling was employed to obtain a sample that was gender-balanced and to enhance the generalizability of the findings. A total of 400 valid surveys were assessed. The sample encompassed tourists of all ages visiting Macao, ensuring a diverse demographic range among the participants.

The first section of the questionnaire addressed variables influencing intention. The second section focused on variables assessing intention itself. The final part of the survey gathered respondents' demographic information, such as gender, age, education level, and income. The consent form was

presented on the first page of the survey. Referenced scales from prior research were employed to measure various variables.

Participants were informed that their confidentiality was prioritized during the survey's development and implementation, reducing their inclination to modify responses to appear socially acceptable (Kang & Busser, 2018). SPSS was utilized for multiple regression and factor analysis to assess several dependent relationships. Finally, ANOVA tests were conducted to examine the impact of demographic factors.

FINDINGS

The present study found that attitudes ($\beta = 0.85, p < 0.001$), subjective injunctive norms ($\beta = 0.09, p < 0.01$), and perceived behavioral control ($\beta = 0.11, p < 0.01$) had a significant impact on behavioral intentions. As a result, hypotheses 1, 2, and 4 were validated. Attitudes were identified as the most important component in determining intentions. This research suggests that tourists' perceived barriers to dine at local tea cafés influenced their behavioral intentions. Subjective descriptive norms did not have a significant effect on intentions ($\beta = -0.03, p > 0.05$). Hypothesis 3 was therefore not supported. This suggests that tourists' intentions to dine at local tea cafés were not related to their own expectations of importance. Past behavior significantly influenced intentions to dine at local tea cafés ($\beta = 0.04, p < 0.001$), this supports Hypothesis 5 and validates extending the TPB to include past behavior into this model.

The findings of this study helped to clarify the influence of TPB constructs on tourists' inclinations towards local tea cafés facilities. Surprisingly, the study found that perceived behavioral control impacts respondents' inclinations to dine at local tea cafés, implying that tourists will pick local tea cafés without sacrificing their own convenience. A plausible reason for this phenomenon might be the problems that visitors perceive when going to local tea cafés, such as price, location, uniformity, and a lack of information (Nimri et al., 2020). If any of the aforementioned obstacles arose, tourists' willingness to dine at local tea cafés would be diminished. As a result, it is ideal for caterers to interact with their customers in order to raise knowledge about the benefits of using local tea cafés and to advise them of any potential issues.

In addition, findings revealed that descriptive norms had no substantial influence on customers' intentions, but injunctive norms do. This might be attributable to the study's samples, since these findings show that how key referents behave in the restaurant environment is more relevant to customers than how they anticipate individuals to behave (Al Kurdi, 2016). Consequently, behavioral intentions to dine at local tea cafés were influenced by the activities of friends, relatives, and coworkers rather than what they believed and expected (Alshurideh, 2014; Joghee et al., 2021). Past behavior had a significant influence on behavioral intentions, with tourists' intentions to dine at local tea cafés increasing with previous experience with similar businesses (Han & Kim, 2010). This outcome is consistent with Fishbein and Ajzen's (2011)'s work that includes previous behavior in the TPB framework, improving the understanding of consumers' decision-making processes. Thus, local tea cafés management must improve customers' experience and satisfaction levels throughout their stay.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to examine the factors that influence tourists' intentions to dine at the iconic local tea cafés in Macao, recognized as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. The research enhances existing literature on food tourism and the application of the TPB framework to understand dining choices and behavioral intentions. The study validates the TPB model's effectiveness in predicting tourists' intentions to dine at local tea cafés. Consistent with the core principles of the theory, attitudes, subjective injunctive norms, and perceived behavioral control were significant positive predictors of dining intentions. Additionally, incorporating past behavior as a predictor in the extended TPB model was a valuable enhancement. The positive relationship between past dining experiences at local tea cafés and future intentions underscores the role of habit and familiarity in shaping behavioral decisions.

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