

Factors Affecting Tourist Satisfaction with Culinary Specialties of An Giang Province, Vietnam

NGUYEN QUOC NGHI

Can Tho University, Viet Nam

NGUYEN HOANG PHUONG

Vinatrans Cantho, Viet Nam

Abstract

The study was conducted to determine the factors affecting the level of tourist satisfaction towards food specialties in An Giang Province, Vietnam. The data were collected from 232 visitors by the direct interview method. The research result shows that five factors that affect the level of tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties which are Quality, Price, Diversity, Convenience, and Brand name. From this view, several solutions have been proposed to promote the value of food culture in the developing process of tourism in An Giang Province.

Key words: culinary specialties, tourism, tourist, satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

An Giang is a province in the Mekong Delta region with plenty of advantages and potential for tourism development. According to a report of An Giang Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism in 2017, An Giang Province welcomed about 7.3 million visitors, up 12% over the same period in 2016. Tourists come to An Giang, not only to experience the majestic natural scenery, see the historical heritage, or learn about art and culture of the peoples, but also to enjoy the culinary specialties. The fertility of the land helps facilitate the development of local agriculture. Besides, the intersection of the four ethnic cultures, namely Kinh, Cham, Chinese, and Khmer group,

gives An Giang a colorful picture of food culture. Each sub-region or ethnic group has its characteristics in the way they cook the food, so each culinary product has its unique features. Each culinary specialty brings a special flavor to visitors, while also leaving a strong impression about the land that the product belongs to. For a long time, many kinds of culinary specialties in An Giang Province have represented for the local brands, such as fish sauce, dried snakehead, dried catfish, dried frog (also known as long-legged dancers), products from palmyra palm fruit, etc. In addition to enjoying local culinary specialties, tourists can buy them as gifts for relatives, friends, and colleagues or household use. To promote the potential of culinary specialties in tourism development of An Giang Province, it is necessary to research on clarifying the level of satisfaction of tourists with culinary specialties, thereby developing solutions to make use of the potential of An Giang cuisine.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Theoretical framework and research model

In the field of business, Berkman and Gilson (1986) said that customer satisfaction is important for a business because it influences customers' decision to re-purchase and advertising behavior in the form of word-of-mouth. According to Philip (2006), satisfaction is the level of sensory status of a certain person. It is derived from the awareness of a product/service that he or she has used compared to his or her previous expectations. If the awareness is less than expectation, it means customers are dissatisfied; if it is equal to expectation, customers are satisfied; and if the awareness is greater than expected, customers' satisfaction exceeds their expectations. Particularly, the expectation is what customers wish for and is gained from previous experiences, personal needs, or external information such as advertising or word of mouth, etc.

According to the literature review, there are a few types of research on the role of culinary in tourism development. Hjalager and Corigliano (2000) have indicated that the relationship between culinary and tourist destination is still ambiguous and incomplete. Meanwhile, Quan and Wang (2004) suggested that food is thought to be a factor that creates value for the destination and also a factor that tourists take into consideration to choose the travel stations. Several

studies have demonstrated that cuisine contributes significantly to the destination image and improve the satisfaction of visitors with tourist sites (Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Henderson, 2009). Moreover, according to Tellstrom et al. (2006), local cuisine influences customers' minds. Accordingly, it activates the human senses (visual, gustatory, olfactory, auditory, and tactile) and can be saved in long-term memory.

This study is based on the discovery results of some studies related to tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties and visitors' assessment of the local cuisine's attractiveness (Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Tellstrom et al., 2006; Henderson, 2009; Duong et al., 2014; Nguyen, 2016; and Le, 2015). Qualitative research was conducted with 8 tourists who have previously bought and enjoyed some kinds of culinary specialties of An Giang Province. The result of the qualitative research shows that 5 factors are likely to affect the level of tourists' satisfaction with An Giang's culinary specialties are quality, price, diversity, convenience, and brand name. Therefore, the research model on "factors affecting the level of tourists' satisfaction with culinary specialties in An Giang Province" is proposed as follows:

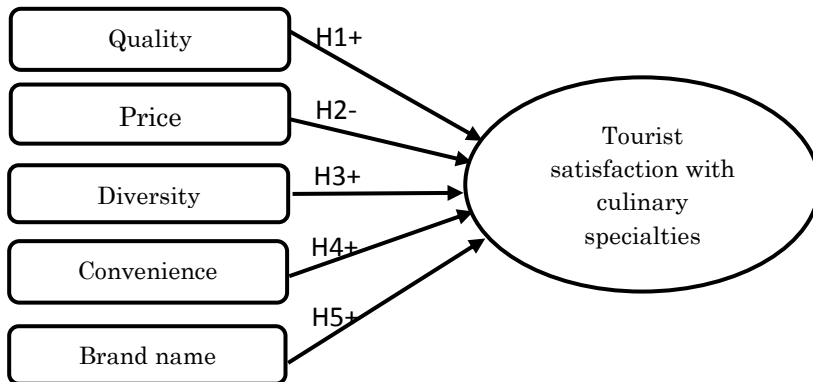


Figure 1: Proposed research model

The research hypotheses are stated as follows:

H1: Quality positively impacts tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties;

H2: Price negatively impacts tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties;

H3: Diversity has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties;

H4: Convenience positively influences tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties;

H5: Brand name positively influences tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties.

Table 1: Interpretation of observed variables in the research model

Factor	Sign	Observed variables	Scale
Quality	QUA1	Culinary specialties are good and tasty.	Likert 1-5
	QUA2	Culinary specialties ensure food safety.	
	QUA3	Culinary specialties are nutrient-rich.	
	QUA4	Production raw material has a clear origin.	
	QUA5	Culinary specialties are always guaranteed high quality.	
	QUA6	Detailed and clear information about quality.	
Price	PRI1	Price is not commensurate with the quality.	Likert 1-5
	PRI2	Information about prices is not listed.	
	PRI3	There are price differences between selling points.	
Diversity	DIV1	Culinary specialties are diverse.	Likert 1-5
	DIV2	Culinary specialties have a unique taste and meet different interests.	
	DIV3	Product design and packages are diverse.	
	DIV4	The packaging is nice, precise, and clear.	
Convenience	CON1	Culinary specialties are always available at tourist destinations.	Likert 1-5
	CON2	Easy to find and buy culinary specialties.	
	CON3	Culinary specialties are displayed in an easily accessible location.	
	CON4	Easy to enjoy on the spot or buy as a gift.	
Brand name	BN1	Culinary specialties are known by many tourists.	Likert 1-5
	BN2	An Giang culinary specialties are different from other places.	
	BN3	Names, packages, and brands of culinary specialties are easy to remember.	
	BN4	Easy to recognize culinary specialties of An Giang Province.	
Satisfaction	SAT1	An Giang culinary specialties meet the desire of enjoying and experience.	Likert 1-5
	SAT2	An Giang culinary specialties bring an interesting feeling.	
	SAT3	Quality and price are suitable for tourists.	
	SAT4	An Giang culinary specialties create a strong impression with visitors.	

Source: Author's proposal, 2019

2.2 Analytical method

The analysis of factors affecting the level of tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties of An Giang Province is conducted in 3 steps, (1) Analyzing the reliability of the scales by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. (2) Explore Factor Analysis (EFA) is used to group observed variables

into statistical significance factors and ensure consistency with market data. (3) Multivariate linear regression is used to determine the factors that affect visitor satisfaction with culinary specialties in An Giang Province.

2.3 Data collection method

Non-probability sampling, particularly, the convenient sampling method was used to collect the data. In terms of the sample size, Green (1991), Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) stated that the minimum sample size for multivariate linear regression is $N = 50 + 8m$, where m is the number of independent variables. In this study, the expected number of independent variables is 5, so the minimum sample size is 90. Besides, according to Hair et al. (1998), the appropriate number of observations for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is $N > 5x$ (x is the total number of observations). The 21 observations corresponding to 5 independent factors are the same in the research model, so the minimum sample size for this study is 105. Thus, to ensure the representativeness, the study interviewed 2 groups of tourists (domestic and international) with 244 observations who have recently bought and enjoyed the culinary specialties of An Giang Province. However, after the screening process, the number of observation ensuring the quality was 232 (in which international visitors accounted for 28.88% and domestic tourists reached 71.12%). For this reason, the sample size of the study is appropriate.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 The consumption behavior of tourists towards An Giang culinary specialties

The survey result indicates that most of the tourists coming to An Giang have had high demands in enjoying the culinary specialties of the “seven mountains” region (another name of An Giang Province). Also, tourists like to buy them as gifts for relatives and friends, or family use. In particular, the proportion of tourists buying specialties for family use accounted for 81.9%. Many types of specialties of An Giang Province have a long shelf life, so if tourists visit the province, they tend to buy these for storage and use in the family. Besides, the proportion of tourists who enjoy the culinary specialties on the spot

accounts for 77.59% and the group of tourists buying as gifts accounts for 74.14%.

Among the specialties, honeycomb cake with palm sugar and palmyra palm juice are the two most popular choices to enjoy on the spot whose rate is 69.82%. It is because they cannot be preserved for long, so enjoying immediately helps keep the original taste and unique flavor. The two types of specialties mentioned above are popular at tourist attractions. Meanwhile, to buy the specialties as gifts for friends, dried snakehead fish and salted snakehead fish account for the largest proportion with 58.62% and 54.31%. These two specialties have become the culinary brand of the province for a long time because when coming to An Giang, visitors can experience the typical smell of them almost everywhere. For this reason, they are considered as precious gifts for relatives from the hometown. Palm sugar is chosen by visitors who want to buy for family use with the highest proportion of 75.4%. It is also said to be a typical specialty of An Giang Province because the soil here is the most favorable environment for growing palmyra palm trees. Palm sugar has a sweet taste and special fragrance so it attracts visitors. Palm sugar is often used in making cakes or sweet soup, and everyday cooking. In addition to this, it can be stored for a long time without compromising its quality.

According to the survey result, the Sam Mountain in Chau Doc City is the tourist attraction that chosen by tourists to buy specialties with the highest rate, accounting for 51.72%. This is the destination where people pilgrimage and visit the shrine of “Ba Chua Xu” in a huge number. At the foot of the mountain, there are countless shops selling specialties along two sides of the road. The second site is the Chau Doc Market which 43.1% of tourists choose to buy An Giang culinary specialties. This market is a place almost types of specialties are sold. Moreover, it locates close to the shrine of “Ba Chua Xu” so it is easy for visitors to visit the shrine and then visit the market. The Cam Mountain in Tinh Bien District is chosen by only 25.86% of tourists to buy culinary specialties because the products here are not diverse while having higher prices than other tourist spots. However, tourists preferred to enjoy specialties at the Cam Mountain with a proportion of 47.41%. The reason is this is considered as the "paradise" of palmyra palm trees and represents for the food culture of the province. Next, visitors choose the Chau Doc

Market to enjoy the local food at a rate of 40.95% and the Sam Mountain (Chau Doc City) with 26.72%.

3.2. Factors affecting the level of tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties of An Giang Province

3.2.1 Evaluating the reliability of the scales

In this study, the reliability of the scales was assessed by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. After eliminating the QUA2 and CON2 variable whose Item-total correlation coefficients less than 0.3 (Nunnally, 1978; Peterson, 1994; Slater, 1995). The result claims that the factor Quality, Price, Diversity, Convenience, Trademark, and Satisfaction all have high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (minimum is 0.722). All observed variables have Item-total correlation coefficients greater than 0.3 (the smallest is 0.38).

Table 2: Testing the reliability of observed variables

No.	Scales	Number of observed variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Min Item-total correlation
1	Quality (QUA)	5	0.722	0.432
2	Price (PRI)	3	0.835	0.380
3	Diversity (DIV)	4	0.728	0.425
4	Convenience (CON)	3	0.759	0.458
5	Brand name (BN)	3	0.818	0.410
6	Satisfaction (SAT)	4	0.751	0.454

Source: Survey data, 2019

3.2.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

According to the analysis result, the outcomes are guaranteed as follows: The significance level of the model (Sig) is less than 0.05 and the KMO = 0.657 (in the range between 0 and 1). The loading factor of observed variables is all higher than 0.5. Hence, there are 5 factors created, namely F1, F2, F3, F4, and F5 (Table 3). The observed variables belong to the factors as in the proposed model, so the factors' names remain unchanged. Therefore, these 5 factors (Quality, Price, Diversity, Convenience, and Brand name) are included in the multivariate linear regression to identify the factors affecting visitor satisfaction with culinary specialties of An Giang Province.

Table 3: Factors formed from exploratory factor analysis

Sign	Observed variables	Factors
F1	5 variables: QUA1, QUA2, QUA3, QUA4, QUA5	Quality
F2	3 variables: PRI1, PRI2, PRI3	Price
F3	4 variables: DIV1, DIV2, DIV3, DIV4	Diversity
F4	4 variables: CON1, CON2, CON3, CON4	Convenience
F5	4 variables: BN1, BN2, BN3, BN4	Brand name

Source: Survey data, 2019

3.2.3 Multivariate linear regression

After the exploratory factor analysis step, the multivariate linear regression was used to identify the factors affecting the satisfaction level of tourists with culinary specialties in An Giang Province. The result is displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Multivariate linear regression result

Factor	Estimated coefficient	Sig.	VIF	Hypotheses
Constant	-2.186	1.000	-	
Quality	0.227	0.000	1.324	H1: accepted
Price	-0.134	0.032	1.248	H2: accepted
Diversity	0.122	0.021	1.247	H3: accepted
Convenience	0.068	0.048	1.216	H4: accepted
Brand name	0.175	0.004	1.438	H5: accepted
Adjusted R2				0.464
Durbin-Watson stat				1.921
Significance coefficient (Sig.F)				0.000

Source: Survey data, 2019

Based on the testing result in Table 5, the significance level of the model (Sig.F = 0.00) is smaller than 0.05 so the model is statistically significant. The adjusted R square is 0.464, which means that 46.4% of the variation of tourist satisfaction with An Giang culinary specialties is explained by the factors in the model. The Durbin - Watson value is 1.921 showing that the model does not have autocorrelation (Mai, 2008). Also, VIF values of variables are much smaller than 4 so the model does not reach multicollinearity (Hoang and Chu, 2008). As a result, the level of tourist satisfaction with culinary specialties of An Giang Province depends on the following factors, quality, price, diversity, convenience, and brand name. In particular, the factors of quality, diversity, convenience, and brand name positively impact the satisfaction of visitors to culinary

specialties of An Giang Province. That is if the culinary specialties are focused more on the quality and the variety of design, color, and category, combined with the convenience in reaching customers, tourists will be more satisfied with the cuisine in An Giang. Furthermore, if the products have attractive brand names and distinctive images that are easy to remember and make an impression on visitors, the satisfaction level of tourists with culinary specialties will be higher. In contrast, the product price negatively affects the satisfaction of visitors with food specialties. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to issues related to pricing, listing prices, and price consistency to improve visitor satisfaction with the culinary specialties of An Giang Province.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In general, An Giang culinary specialties are diverse, each type of food represents for different features of the province. Tourists who love the culinary specialties of An Giang Province have various consumption behaviors. Factors affecting the level of tourist satisfaction with the culinary specialties of An Giang Province are Quality, Price, Diversity, Convenience, and Brand name. In which, quality puts the strongest impact on the satisfaction level of visitors. The research results lead to several suggested solutions as follows:

Firstly, promote the features of the cuisine. Especially, the quality and the local food culture are the most important factors. If the product meets the quality standards and deeply performs the culture of each region, it will easily create trust and attraction for visitors. Moreover, it is necessary to diversify products to attract visitors and meet consumer demands, including eating on the spot, buying as gifts, and for family use. At the same time, prices need to be considered, ensuring that the price is compatible with the quality. As well, ensuring the listing quality criteria on the products and suitable pricing technique is needed to be taken into consideration.

Secondly, do the branding for An Giang culinary specialties. To develop a specialty brand, it is necessary to use a multimedia communication strategy with mixed advertising tools such as the internet, television, radio, outdoor advertisement, and spot advertisement. The designing for the specialty brand name together with improving the packaging and diversifying the models should be

invested. It helps improve the brand recognition of An Giang culinary specialties in the market. Besides, it is important to display eye-catching and impressive products. If every issue is concerned and properly solved, the image of An Giang cuisine will be increasingly known by more and more visitors.

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