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Exploring tourists' slow food experience: perspectives from slow tourism

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Introduction

Slow tourism is a new form of tourism, originating from the “Slow Food Movement” in Italy in the late 1980s (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Meng & Choi, 2016a; Oh et al., 2016; Shang et al., 2020). Slow Food Movement which protested the establishment of a McDonald’s restaurant advocates farm-to-table restaurants, locavores, farmers markets and the revitalization of craft-made food and drink (Lindholm & Lie, 2013; Clancy, 2017). The definition of slow tourism remains elusive and has been constantly debated by tourism scholars. In general, slow tourism can be defined as traveling slowly with local transportation, immersing oneself in traditional activities and cultures, practicing environmental sustainability, and being conducive to personal life and well-being (Meng & Choi, 2016a).

Slow food describes a movement of promoting local ingredients, traditional recipes, healthier food, and taking time to source, prepare, and enjoy food (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2011). Slow food, introduced by Carlo Petrini in 1986 in Italy, aims to combine the pleasure of food and wine with a deep knowledge of the local traditions, capabilities and resources (Petrini & Padovani, 2005). However, limited studies have focused on slow food and its consumption experience. Hence, this study aims to explore tourists’ slow food experience from slow tourism perspective.

Literature Review

Authenticity, slowness, environmental consciousness

Most studies on authenticity in slow tourism have focused on tourist experience and how it influences tourist behavior. Meng and Choi (2016a, 2016b) adopted perception of authenticity, especially existential authenticity to predict tourists’ decision-making process, desires and intentions to engage in slow tourism activities in near future. Existential authenticity offers tourists a chance to escape dull daily life, stimulate their relaxation and satisfaction, achieve personal goals, and interact with others, including families, friends, or even local people. Thus, this study employed existential authenticity as one of the approaches to measure slow tourism.

The concept of slowness was developed in the conceptual framework of slow travel by Dickinson et al. (2011). Slowness is an antithesis to fast, such as fast food, fast travel, and fast life (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011). Dickinson et al. (2011) suggested that taking time is a form of practicing slowness. Slowness prompts tourists’ sense of relaxation, freedom, and release while they are not sticking to a specific timetable (Lin, 2017). However, the measurement and the definition of slowness in slow tourism remain inconsistent. Thus, this study defines

slowness in slow tourism as tourists who take time in engaging with locals, value their time during the trip, choose slow mode of transportation, and subjectively participate slow activities driven by their own motivations.

Environmental consciousness is one of the core elements of slow tourism (Dickinson et al., 2011; Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011; Lin, 2017). Slow tourists, as defined by Dickinson et al. (2010), shared common characteristic with eco-tourists that express environmental consciousness concern about environment in the trip. Meng and Choi (2016b) described environmental concerns as slow tourists who tend to consume environmentally friendly products which reduce waste and carbon footprint. This study construes environmental consciousness in slow tourism as tourists who concern with environmental impacts, reduce tourism carbon footprint, conserve natural settings, and appreciate environmentally friendly products, such as green food and local cuisine.

Slow food experience

Slow food is composed of three principles, including good, clean, fair (Lee et al., 2014). Good food means that the food every person eat should be tasty and diverse, and produced in authentic and natural ways, and connect to a geographic and cultural region. Clean food means the food is produced in a sustainable way and helps to preserve environment and animal welfare. Fair food is produced in socially sustainable ways, with an emphasis on social justice and fair wages.

Slow food experience describes the experience while consuming slow food. Kim et al. (2016) explored local food experience and developed a conceptual model of local food consumption. The model comprised five categories, including cultural experience, excitement, interpersonal relationship, sensory appeal, and health concern. Hence, this study adopted local food experience model to validate slow food experience.

Hypotheses development

The relationship between authenticity and food experience has been examined by Beer (2008). Meng and Choi (2016a) indicated that authenticity plays an important role in slow tourists' consumption behavior. Further, Chung et al. (2018) mentioned slow value/slowness is associated with tourists' slow food seeking experience. Last, Hall (2012) pointed out that tourists with environmental consciousness have higher intention to choose and consume slow food. Figure 1 shows the structural model of this study. Based on previous literature, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Authenticity positively influences tourist's slow food experience.

H2: Slowness positively influences tourist's slow food experience.

H3: Environmental consciousness positively influences tourist's slow food experience.

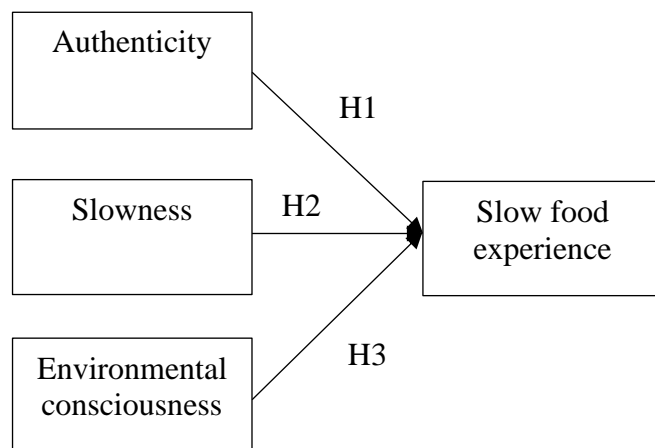


Figure 1. Structural model

Methodology

Data collection

Data will be collected through a survey questionnaire. Data will be planned to collect in March 2021 at Oliver Winery and Vineyards, located at northwest of Bloomington, Indiana. The winery is chosen for its locality which provides tourists locally made wine, cheese, smoked meat, and bacon. The winery also shows wine production to tourists and offers a place for wine tasting. While wine tourism is part of Slow Food Movement, winery is a suitable venue for investigating slow food and wine consumption. Hence, this study chooses Oliver Winery in Indiana to be the typical object of this study, where tourists enjoy local food and wine with the slow theme.

Measurement

There are four main variables in this study that composed the questionnaire. To measure authenticity, six items proposed by Shang et al. (2020a, 2020b) were adopted. In the section of slowness, six items were adopted from previous studies (Dickinson et al., 2011; Oh et al., 2016). Environmental consciousness was measured with eight items adopted from previous studies (Meng & Choi, 2016a; Dickinson et al., 2011; Lin, 2017). Slow food experience was measured with twenty items adopted from previous literature (Kim et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2014). Note that all items in above four sections (shown in Table 1) used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Table 1. Measurement items.

Factor/Construct	Item
Authenticity (AU)	(AU1) I become more self and subjective in its own right at the winery.
	(AU2) I am immersing myself in this slow atmosphere and enjoying it.
	(AU3) I am able to discover more about myself and the life in this atmosphere at the winery.
	(AU4) I can contact local people in a natural, authentic, and friendly way.
	(AU5) I quite agree with the lifestyle of residents living around the winery.
	(AU6) I am willing to contact with others in a natural, authentic, and friendly way.
Slowness (SL)	(SL1) I take the time to travel at my own pace.
	(SL2) I slowdown in my overall pace of travel.
	(SL3) I take time in engaging with locals at the winery.
	(SL4) I value my time at the winery.
	(SL5) I choose slow mode of transportation while traveling.
	(SL6) I subjectively participate slow activities at the winery.
Environmental consciousness (EC)	(EC1) I concern with environmental impacts while traveling.
	(EC2) I reduce tourism carbon footprint while traveling.
	(EC3) I conserve natural settings while traveling.
	(EC4) I appreciate environmentally friendly products, such as green food and local cuisine.
	(EC5) Non-recyclable products should be taxed to reduce waste.
	(EC6) Manufacturers should be required to use recycled materials in their operations.
	(EC7) Commercial advertising should be required to mention the environmental disadvantages of products.
	(EC8) Products polluting the environment during manufacturing or consumption should be taxed.
Slow food experience (SF)	(SF1) The slow food and wine here are good.
	(SF2) The slow food and wine here are clean.
	(SF3) The slow food and wine here are fair.

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- (SF4) I like to learn what the slow food tastes like.
(SF5) The slow food and wine offer a unique opportunity to understand local culture.
(SF6) I discover something new here.
(SF7) I see the things that I do not normally see.
(SF8) It is a special experience tasting slow food and wine.
(SF9) I increase the knowledge about different cultures when I taste slow food and wine.
(SF10) Experiencing slow food and wine makes me excited.
(SF11) The slow food and wine help me relax.
(SF12) I feel exhilarated when I taste slow food and wine.
(SF13) I have an expectation that tasting slow food and wine is exciting.
(SF14) I talk to everyone about my slow food and wine experience.
(SF15) Having slow food and wine increases friendship.
(SF16) I give advice about slow food experience to people who want to travel.
(SF17) Slow food enables me to have enjoyable time with friends and/or family.
(SF18) Slow food and wine are nutritious.
(SF19) Slow food and wine keep me healthy.
(SF20) Slow food and wine contain a lot of fresh ingredients produced in a local area.
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Data analysis

Descriptive analysis will be used to present demographic information of respondents, including gender, age, annual income, and highest level of education. The normality assumption will be applied to examine whether the data is normally distributed. Kurtosis and skewness will also be tested to meet the criteria. Convergent validity and discriminant validity will be examined to ensure each construct is acceptable. Composite reliability will also be tested for the internal consistency. Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be adopted to test construct validity. CFA provides a rigorous test of the proposed scales through testing how well the measurement items represent the constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Further, the measurement model will be tested by goodness-of-fit indices to examine whether the data fits the model well. Goodness-of-fit indices show how well a specified model reproduces the observed covariance matrix among the indicator terms (Hair et al., 2010).

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