PERCEPTION OF FOOD AND LOCALITY AMONG CHINESE TOURIST EXPERIENCES IN FINLAND

MARJO SÄRKKÄ-TIRKKONEN
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI, RURALIA INSTITUTE

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UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
AUTHORS

• Fanyi Ma
  Henan University
• Xiuhua Liu
  Henan University
• Carina Tikkanen-Kaukanen
  University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute
• Marjo Särkkä-Tirkkonen
  University of Helsinki, Ruralia Institute
• Sinikka Mynttinen
  South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences
Chinese tourists have showed a growing interest in travel to the Nordic countries and the number of Chinese overnights has almost tripled since 2010 (Wu, 2016).

- In Finland 522 000 visitors from China in 2015
- 73 % were first-time visitors

The focus of the study is to gain an understanding of Chinese tourists’ relations to food during their visit to Finland.
The research material consists of fifteen semi-structured in-depth interviews.

- 12 Female and 3 male interviewees
- Ages 18 to over 60 years
- from different parts of China:
  - Shanghai area (2)
  - Liaoning Province (Dalian City) (2)
  - Henan Province (4)
  - Beijing (1)
  - Hubei Province (1)
  - Hebei Province (2)
  - Zhejiang Province (2)
  - Sichuan Province (1)
The thematic interviews were used to understand the perceptions of Chinese tourists on four themes:

- Food and tourism
- Locality
- Environmentally friendly food, and
- Organic food.

The interview data was analysed using qualitative content analysis.
• The Chinese interviewees had money but no time to spend during their holidays in Finland.

• The lack of time affected what kind of food they ate:
  o Snack products were preferred under time pressure
  o They made an easy, time-saving choice (e.g. noodles)
  o Visiting Chinese or Japanese restaurants

KEY RESULTS

Source: Visit Finland visitor survey, 2015

Length of stay

- 6+ days: 14%
- 4-5 days: 12%
- 3 days: 7%
- 2 days: 17%
- No overnight stay: 52%

Half of Chinese visitors stayed overnight in Finland
• Skilled in using online travel advisers
  ○ “Traditional and original food”

• Traditional food, restaurants and small local food shops were seen as symbols of Finnish culture in general.
PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIC FOOD

• Interviewees not that familiar with “organic food”
• Attributes and descriptions from interviews:
  
  ”Healthy”
  ”Vegetables, I think.”
  ”Green, healthy, no additives, no pesticides and chemical fertilisers.”
  ”High standard production”
  ”High standard, high price”
  ”Organic food focus more on the quality than the quantity”
  ”Expensive, healthier and safer”
"Yes, I like organic food. I think it’s safer, high quality and fortunately I can afford it”

"Not that important to me. If the price is similar [to the conventional], I will choose organic food”

"I don’t usually spend money on organic food. I will clean all the [conventional] food properly”
CONCLUSION

- It can be concluded that Chinese tourists are not familiar with the Finnish food and they have difficulty in identifying local food or organic food at holiday destinations.
- However, Chinese tourists are skilled in using online travel advisers and seek recommendations and additional information there.
- Services of this kind were considered trustworthy and informative.
- Keywords in seeking: most famous, traditional.
THANK YOU!

MARJO.SARKKA-TIRKKONEN@HELSEINKI.FI
+358 44 5906849
@Marjo_ST

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
REFERENCES


