Exploring Marketing Strategies for Culinary Tourism in Hong Kong and Singapore

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This study focused on Hong Kong and Singapore and sought to explore culinary tourism development and marketing strategies and contents. The study also analyzed the framework of marketing strategies for developing culinary tourism from a resource-based theory perspective. The methodology primarily involved in-depth interviews with strategy planners on tourism boards and content analysis of academic documents and official publications on tourism as means for exploring marketing strategies for culinary tourism in Hong Kong and Singapore. The results showed that, although Hong Kong and Singapore do not have abundant natural resources to develop more diverse tourism experiences, they do have a diversified dietary and cultural background, and with a combination of tourism and creativity they could develop culinary tourism that is innovative, diverse and likely to attract attention. The public and private sectors could form strategic alliances to enhance the attractiveness of tourism through different marketing strategies and thereby present an image of the destination’s culinary culture.

Key words: resource-based theory, marketing strategy, culinary tourism, Hong Kong

Introduction

Countries, areas and regions have devoted much energy to the development of tourism to improve their economies and images. It is now important to use natural and cultural resources as bases for tourism planning and strategic development, and to connect the relevant social, cultural and political forces. The “product portfolio” of a tourist destination consists of various visible and invisible products and services; food is now a burgeoning element for destinations in developing tourism (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher,
Cohen and Avieli (2004) proposed that a city, or even an entire nation, resort to its unique culinary appeal. Food and cooking styles not only play significant roles in different regions, but also represent features of different countries, and may even stand as international brands. Thus, a positive linkage between food and a nation’s features can create a marketing opportunity (Fox, 2007; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Okumus et al., 2007). Culinary tourism is not only a rising category of tourism, but also an opportunity for the destination and its industries to gain a competitive edge (International Culinary Tourism Association, 2009).

Resource-based theory is a concept combining economic and strategic theories. It suggests that the long-term competitiveness of an industry is grounded in its unique resources. These resources should be enduring and hard to imitate or replace (Barney, 1991; Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001; Collis & Montgomery, 1995; Grant, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Porter, 1991; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). If a company holds a resource that cannot be imitated, it can achieve higher performance than its competitors and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. A nation can be thought of in the same way. The main resources necessary to develop culinary tourism are food and culture (Long, 2004). It is essential to connect these resources with tourism development strategies to maximize the multiplier effect of culinary tourism and to enhance the competitiveness of a nation’s culinary tourism development (Fox, 2007; Teo & Chang, 2000). Tourism strategies should be market-led (i.e. focused on tourist demand) and product-led (based on the resources of the destination) so as to create sustainable tourism development (Smith & Xiao, 2008; Stokes, 2008; Weaver, 2000). In research using resource-based theory (RBT), many studies have focused on the fields of human resource management, economics and finance, entrepreneurship, and international business (Barney et al., 2001; Espino-Rodriguez & Padró-Robaina, 2005). To our knowledge, no reported study has explored marketing strategy for culinary tourism development from the RBT perspective. Thus, this was a major aim of our study.

For many countries in Asia, cuisine has become a major draw to attract tourists, as seen, for instance, in Hong Kong and Singapore (Enright & Newton, 2005; Hong Kong Planning Department, 2008; Horng & Tsai, 2010; McKercher, Okumus, & Okumus, 2008; Singapore Tourism Board [STB], 2007). For example, Hong Kong’s cuisine is a key aspect of the travel experience it provides (Kivela & Crotts, 2005). As a result, Hong Kong has dedicated resources to the marketing and promotion of its cuisines (Okumus et al., 2007). Similarly, Singapore proposed the slogan “Singapore: the Food Capital of Asia”, and it also treats food and dining out as major factors in its tourism marketing. Singapore has created policies to stimulate the development of culinary tourism (Henderson, 2004). Hong Kong and Singapore can be classified, at least in part, as culinary destinations, and both offer a rich diversity of foods, although their natural resources, agricultural development, culinary routes or trails, and production and processing plants, are limited. Culinary tourism can have a great influence on tourism development; thus, this study has two main purposes: (1) to explore marketing strategies in Hong Kong and Singapore and the content of culinary tourism; and (2) to analyze the framework of marketing strategies for developing culinary tourism from the RBT perspective.
Literature Review

Applied RBT in Culinary Tourism

A basic challenge in any organization is survival. Thus, it is essential for an organization to gain and sustain a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Hunt, 2000). Grant (1991) pointed out that competitive advantages can reflect the profitability of an organization. Whereas environmental factors are neither sufficient nor necessary, “resources” and “capabilities” are sufficient and necessary conditions if companies are to profit. Similarly, if a government has a clear understanding of its internal resources and capabilities, its policies will be more stable.

In The theory of the growth of the firm, Penrose (1959) suggested that for a company to profit, it must not only gain resources, but also effectively exert distinctive competence with its resources. These concepts were the origin of RBT (Montgomery, 1996). In the strategic management field, Wernerfelt (1984) followed Penrose’s theory and first proposed the term “resource-based view”. He pointed out the value of analyzing firms from the resource side, rather than only from the product side. In his view, with proper use of resources and proper management to enhance the efficient use of resources, a company can accumulate resource advantages that competitors do not have, and thereby create a long-term, sustained competitive advantage. Later, Barney (1986) furthered Wernerfelt’s thesis and proposed that different companies with different strategic resources will have different future values, so their performances are affected not only by competition in a product market, but also by the different resources they hold. As a result, a company should analyze its unique technologies and capabilities before adopting any strategy. Grant (1991) used RBT to emphasize that if a company can hold strategic resources that others cannot imitate, it can achieve performance higher than its competitors, which also means holding a sustainable competitive advantage. According to the analysis of Acedo, Barroso, and Galan (2006, p. 621), RBT commonalities can be identified in its widespread dissemination in the academic literature and in management practices as a strategic management approach. Thus, this study explored culinary tourism development marketing strategies from the RBT perspective.

The focus of strategic management lies in exploring and understanding what a company’s competitive advantages are and how to craft strategies accordingly to facilitate high performance. In strategic planning, RBT can be viewed as a kind of strength and weakness analysis (Acedo et al., 2006; Hoskisson, Hitt, Wan, & Yiu, 1999). RBT stresses that a company should focus on its internal resources, try to acknowledge, establish, deploy and protect its resources (especially irreplaceable strategic core resources), and then develop strategies accordingly. Also, Barney (1991) noted that RBV assumes that resources are heterogeneous in nature and not perfectly mobile, and that resources can transform a competitive advantage into real performance. Further, resources can be categorized into physical capital resources (e.g. technology, equipment, geographic location, material), human capital resources (e.g. training, experience) and organizational capital resources (e.g. formal structure, planning, control, coordination and informal group relationship). Based on these concepts, Grant (1991) proposed a five-step strategic analysis framework (Figure 1): first, identify a firm’s resources and capabilities, then appraise the firm’s rent-generating potential, select a strategy, and then augment and upgrade the
firm’s resource base. These steps will be the analytical bases of this study.

From the RBT perspective, for any nation, area or region, food is not only an important resource for culinary tourism development, but also a feature that can become the value added benefit of travel to the destination (Handszuh, 2000; Telfer & Wall, 1996). Additionally, food can provide a sustainable competitive advantage for the destination (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Handszuh (2000) suggested that local delicacies had great potential to enhance the sustainability of tourism; thus, tourism planners and related industries should make efforts to fulfill customers’ needs, boost the local economy, and offer a sound framework to handle local and regional food resources. To compete with other popular destinations and to understand or improve culinary tourism planning, it is important to learn from the best practices and make one’s national planning a benchmark for global best practices (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Wolf, 2004). Through dynamic marketing activities, tourists can be motivated to purchase local food. However, this requires specific marketing strategies to appeal to potential and target tourists. For example, planners can develop strategic alliances with food producers, handlers, sellers, hotels, restaurants, wine-sellers and cooks so as to improve the image of local cuisines (Telfer, 2000).

Based on the information above, to analyze culinary tourism development marketing strategies from the RBT perspective requires that we first identify and categorize different resources, evaluate the advantages and disadvantages each competitor holds, and be aware of opportunities to use the resources effectively. Second, we must identify the capabilities in the public sector to ensure that, compared with competitors, we can be more

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**Figure 1** A Resource-based Approach to Strategy Analysis: A Practical Framework.  
*Source: Grant (1991, p. 115).*
effective and make better use of the resources. At the same time, we have to evaluate the potential of the resources and capabilities, of the sustainable competitive advantage and of exclusivity. It is also important to assess external opportunities, threats, resources and capabilities so as to identify resource gaps that can be filled. Finally, the identified resource gaps have to be filled to strengthen the resource base.

Culinary Tourism

In recent years, a new form of tourism has developed that regards food-tasting as the major or only purpose; it is referred to, variously, as food and wine tourism, culinary tourism, gastronomy tourism and gastronomic tourism, and it includes food festivals and other food-related activities (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Henderson, 2004; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Ignatov & Smith, 2006; Kivela & Crotts, 2005, 2006; Long, 2004; McKercher et al., 2008; Quan & Wang, 2004; Richards, 2002; Santich, 2004; Smith & Xiao, 2008). “Culinaria” and “gastronomy” are often viewed as being the same, as both include the food materials, food preparation skills and cooking skills that can enhance a country or region’s feature cuisine. In 1998, the term “culinary tourism” was proposed for the first time to refer to the concept that tourists can experience other countries’ cultures or local cultures through tasting their foods (Long, 2004). The term also generally means that the purpose of traveling is to explore and enjoy the special foods that reveal characteristics of the destination (Wolf, 2004). After reviewing many definitions, Ignatov and Smith (2006, p. 238) suggested that culinary tourism be defined as “tourism trips during which the purchase or consumption of regional foods (including beverages) or the observation and study of food production (from agriculture to cooking schools) represent a significant motivation or activity”.

Culinary tourism is an aspect of cultural tourism, and cuisine is an integral part of the culture of communities and destinations. Culinary tourism is considerably different from simply eating meals in a location during traveling. That is, culinary tourism assumes that the local foods and drinks have stories behind them that can reveal some aspect of the local culture. Culinary tourism also entails passing on knowledge and information about the local culture and identity and conveying some local or unique feature (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). Thus, the uniqueness of the destination’s cuisine has become the major factor that makes the destination popular and attractive, and culinary tourism can also enhance the country’s image of its cuisine culture.

Marketing Strategies in Culinary Tourism

When seeking to develop culinary tourism, a destination should ensure that it possesses the key elements to support culinary tourism. That is, it must establish what unique culinary assets it has and what are its strong and weak points in terms of culinary tourism development (Kivela & Crotts, 2006), such as special or ethnic cuisines, creative cooks, seafood or farm products, and special cooking heritage. Hjalager (2002, p. 33) analyzed the content of culinary/gastronomy tourism from an economic viewpoint, dividing it into four orders based on different economic backgrounds and providing what should be done in each. The first order is the indigenous, which strives to develop culinary/gastronomy tourism within the existing economic struc-
tured, collaborative network and knowledge base. The second order is the horizontal, which broadens the horizon beyond the first order, including improving the quality of the products and creating higher profits. The third order is the vertical, which adds more service elements to the provision of food itself, creating a new type of cooperation. Finally, the fourth order is the diagonal, in which the gastronomy experience is enhanced and “intelligent” gastronomy clusters are created in the economy. These points make clear that when a destination is developing culinary tourism it should have short-, intermediate- and long-term strategic plans based on its resources, the status quo, and the special needs and expectations of the target market in order to make culinary tourism sustainable.

Many national tourism organizations are engaged in the promotion of cuisines around the world. For example, the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC), Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) and Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) are all local destination marketing organizations (DMOs) that have proposed marketing strategies for culinary tourism in their national tourism policy plans (Ignatov & Smith, 2006; Okumus et al., 2007; Plummer, Telfer, Hashimoto, & Summers, 2005). Kivela and Crotts (2006) proposed that the development of a specific market for culinary tourism that provides only culinary experiences is insufficient. Tourists must have a satisfying overall experience. This must be provided through cooperation among related public sector entities and cuisine-providers, informing the tourists why the cooking and cultures are special. du Rand, Heath, and Alberts (2003) suggested that policies and strategies must work together to allow a destination’s organizations to develop culinary tourism more actively. For example, a clear development framework can be provided to assist destination organizations in applying related knowledge of the local area and local delicacies to marketing strategies and tools so as to promote culinary tourism development.

Additionally, to promote culinary tourism is to view the local delicacies as an important tourism resource (Handszuh, 2000). Mass media related to lifestyles and tourism (e.g. travel magazines, advertisements, TV programs, Internet) are the best channels to promote cuisines (Boyne, Hall, & Williams, 2003; du Rand et al., 2003; Kivela & Crotts, 2005). Dynamic marketing campaigns can also positively stimulate tourists to purchase local food. To do this, specific marketing strategies are needed to attract potential and target tourists, such as forming strategic alliances of food producers, handlers, sellers, hotels, restaurants, wine-sellers and cooks. This will also improve the image of local cuisines (Telfer, 2000).

As a whole, a successful marketing strategy for culinary/gastronomy tourism needs to maintain good public relations and media control, as well as create authentic experiences and gain support from the government and international marketing organizations. At the same time, a marketing campaign should integrate food and cuisine heritages to attract more tourists. Finally, local governments should encourage the development of tourism, including the development of food and beverage industries, to boost the economy, create job opportunities and enhance the sustainability of tourism at the destination.

Culinary Tourism in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the DMO thinks the richness of Hong Kong’s local and international food
has become a major competitive advantage of the city (Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005). Cuisine can be a driving force of culture and assist Hong Kong, this multicultural metropolis, to find its position in the global tourism market, providing cuisines of all sorts (e.g. Chinese cuisine, other Asian Cuisines and Western food). At the same time, Hong Kong’s traditional Chinese cuisines can be a basic differentiator, making tourists feel closer to the locals, giving them a more authentic feeling about this visit (Okumus et al., 2007). Enright and Newton (2005) pointed out that food ranks second in the attractions of Hong Kong, whereas it is fourth in Bangkok and fifth in Singapore; and the study of Okumus et al. (2007) further disclosed that 15% of all marketing tools in Hong Kong are allocated to the promotion of cuisines. Brochures for shopping and dining, provided by HKTB or hotels, have food coupons in them. The website of HKTB also offers information on quality restaurants. The Hong Kong Planning Department issued “Northbound Southbound 2007” on 4 September 2008, making a clear statement that tasting cuisines has become an important reason for tourists to visit Hong Kong. It shows that Hong Kong’s cuisines are playing an essential role in creating a high-quality traveling experience and encouraging tourists to visit again (Kivela & Crotts, 2005, 2006).

Culinary Tourism in Singapore

Singapore’s hinterland is limited, and it is not countryside with prosperous agriculture activities. Almost all food in Singapore is imported, which excludes Singapore from being a typical food tourism destination. When food production and processing are largely limited, and natural resources needed to combine all culinary tourism activities are also found wanting, the key point is to make the best choice for the food available; and the choices can show the composition of the society, the culture and the dynamics (Henderson, 2004).

The diversity of Singapore cuisines comes from its ethnic diversity. The food reflects the influence of cultural backgrounds and the uniqueness of various ethnic groups, bringing the slogan “Singapore: the Food Capital of Asia”. Through paper-based and electronic publications, Singapore emphasized the concept of “new Asian cuisine” (Scarpato & Daniele, 2003). The Singapore Tourism Board established a Food and Beverage Division to take care of the marketing and development of culinary tourism. This division is in charge of market, product and industry development, and channels management of Singapore cuisines, with the goal of establishing Singapore as a destination that combines local and international cuisines, dining experiences and nightlife. The division has chosen 10 must-eat cuisines, hoping they will become the representative cuisines of Singapore and improve the tourists’ culinary experience. As we can see, the city state Singapore treats cuisine as a main theme for tourism marketing and formulates related policies within its state-specific framework to improve the development of culinary tourism. Culinary tourism will continue to be a main part of its economy (Henderson, 2004).

Methodology

Document Collection and Analysis Procedures

A few studies on food-related tourism have used a content analysis approach (Boyne &
Hall, 2004; Boyne et al., 2003; Frochot, 2003; Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000; Okumus et al., 2007). To compare and explore culinary tourism development marketing strategies in Hong Kong and Singapore, the present study used content analysis as a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text and the message being communicated (Neumann, 2003, p. 219). According to the protocols identified by Finn, Elliot-White, and Walton (2000) and Neumann (2003), first, the aims and objectives of the research were identified and a coding scheme was developed. Then, up-to-date print and electronic brochures and booklets in English and Chinese were collected from the HKTB and the Singapore Tourism Board and their respective official websites. Videos attached to websites and materials produced officially by national tourism offices were also content analyzed. In the third stage, content analysis was used to identify and explore culinary tourism development marketing strategies. Next, the initial results of the content analysis by the two researchers were compared and, when disparities arose, they were analyzed until a consensus was achieved. In the final stage, the results were refined and the research findings were finalized.

**Interviews**

For cross-checking, this study conducted two semi-structured interviews with regional directors of the Hong Kong (code: H) and Singapore (code: S) tourism boards in Taiwan who were involved with policy planning and international marketing for tourism destinations. Given convenience and timing, this study also conducted two interviews with the regional tourism planning directors via email to obtain more data and documents. A list of semi-structured questions, informed by the frameworks proposed in the food-related tourism literature (e.g. du Rand et al., 2003) but more focused on marketing strategy and development, was drawn up and used as an interview guide. The major interview directions and questions were as follows:

1. Analyze the competitive advantage (e.g. culinary tourism resources, the capabilities of government or destination marketing organization) while developing culinary tourism in your country.
2. Describe the concrete strategies that are employed to promote culinary tourism in your country. With this approach, which are the key successful strategies or factors?
3. What benefits has your country received from promoting culinary tourism? Have there been any negative effects?
4. Why do you promote tourism through dietary culture? What are the points of implementation? Also, what is the image of the cuisine?

To obtain and ensure the validity and reliability of the data, a letter stating the objectives and introducing the interview questions was then sent to each Director, followed by personal phone calls to schedule the date and time of the interview. Interviews were conducted by the researchers at the interviewees’ office either face-to-face or by telephone in English or Chinese, involved both researchers, and were taped and transcribed to ensure reliability (Eisenhardt, 1989; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007).

The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed by each of the authors separately following RBT (Grant, 1991); however, many codes were derived from the interview guide and thus from the authors’ theoretical pre-understanding of the situation (Ryan &
Bernard, 2003). Building on the RBT on which this study was based, the participants’ answers and document literature were coded and classified.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis procedure and content, four researchers who were doctoral graduates and majored in tourism and hospitality management carefully reviewed and discussed each text and then categorized the Hong Kong and Singapore marketing strategies and events, based on RBT. Next, an outside researcher was invited to review the data and categorize them. The results were then compared for consistency. The results showed a consistency of 92% between the two reviews, indicating a reliability of over 80% (Latham & Saari, 1984). Three culinary tourism professionals were also invited to evaluate content reliability (Sadarangani & Gaur, 2004). The researchers and all three professionals worked together to compare and negotiate the results where there was disagreement, and categories were finalized when agreement was reached. Finally, according to the evaluation results all three professionals agreed with the present study’s inclusion of marketing strategies for culinary tourism; thus, the study has considerable content reliability.

Findings and Discussion

Identification and Classification of a Country’s Culinary Tourism Resources

To develop culinary tourism, the destination should confirm whether it has the elements needed to support culinary tourism strategies.

That is, it should confirm how many unique cuisine resources it has, such as unique or multiethnic cuisines, creative cooks, seafood and agricultural products, and special cooking heritage, and what are its advantages and disadvantages in terms of these resources (Kivela & Crotts, 2006).

Gastronomy and Food Culture

For countries lacking the natural resources needed for culinary tourism activities, a key point is to make the best choice of the food available. These choices can be based on the composition of the society, the culture and the dynamics (Henderson, 2004). Owing to their geographical position, Hong Kong and Singapore lack many natural resources, and their agricultural development is limited. However, because of their geographical location, they have unique and multiethnic food cultures, which are the core resources for these two places in developing culinary tourism. At the level of products for culinary tourism, food or cuisine are the physical products exemplifying culinary culture, and the content of culinary culture is the brand story for formulating culinary identity.

Cuisine can be a driving force for culture creation, which has assisted Hong Kong, a multicultural metropolitan destination, in finding its position in the tourism market by providing cuisines of all sorts. At the same time, Hong Kong’s traditional Chinese cuisine can be a basic differentiator, separating Chinese cuisine from other Asian cuisines (e.g. Japanese, Thai, Korean, Vietnam, Indonesian, south-east Asian and Muslim Halal food) and Western food (e.g. French, Italian, American, and others) (Okumus et al., 2007). Additionally, Hong Kong’s geographical position has led to its culinary culture being influenced by
many different countries and ethnic groups. Thus, in addition to its original Cantonese and Chiu-chow cuisines, Hong Kong integrated and created many new cuisines during the years of colonization by the UK and with immigrants from many different countries. Today, Hong Kong has earned the name “Asian Gourmet Paradise”. The “yum cha” or “tea restaurant” culture can be said to be the representative cuisine, exemplifying this integration and creation. Yum cha and dim sum are definitely not “traditional” cuisines, but they are surely identifying Hong Kong cuisines.

Hong Kong cuisines are basically exotic and diversified (H-45). Menus in restaurants and snack bars are transliterated from English into Chinese (e.g. toast is transliterated as “多士”). This is evidence of the influence of foreign cultures, and it is also a distinguishing characteristic of Hong Kong culture (H-56). Because Hong Kong is a metropolitan area, it has exotic food from all over the world in addition to its local and Chinese dishes. Thus, the culinary culture in Hong Kong is rich and abundant (H-17). Dim Sum, for example, is a major culinary culture (H-57).

Similarly, Singapore also enjoys abundant cuisine culture, because of its multiethnic background, which is reflected in its food, and has led to the slogan “Singapore: the Food Capital of Asia”. Singapore citizens are primarily of Malay, Indian, Chinese and Peranakan descent. Singapore’s culinary culture reflects the influences of each, but also integrates them into one, making Singapore culinary culture special and different.

Thinking of Singapore’s distinguishing features, its cuisine is a major one (S-4). Tourists can experience our culture through food (S-13). Every cuisine reflects its own special way of cooking. Take the famous Singapore Laksa, for example; Malays and Indians cook it differently (S-25). The culture and cuisine of Peranakan can also be used to develop and promote tourism (S-89).

Only in Singapore can you find cuisines mixing features of Portuguese, Dutch, Malay, Indian, and Chinese cuisines (S-91).

It is a pity that Singapore does not have a national specialty or feature farm products (S-261). However, different regions still have local specialties (S-262). For example, Chinatown is famous for its sweet red bak kwa (barbequed pork) (S-263).

Of course, national, regional, local and ethnic cuisines can show their identities, which also serve as tools to preserve and improve cultures. Famous cuisines can also provide symbolic representations of different places (Henderson, 2004). The most famous Singapore cuisines are Hainan chicken rice, Bak Kut The and chilli crab, which are feature cuisines that local residents feel proud of, and are also important themes for Singapore in promoting its culinary tourism and attracting tourists to enjoy these classic “must-eats”. From the cultural aspect, food is a part of culture, a distinguishing element of different regions and communities, and it can be an important cornerstone of cultural identity.

Many have heard about Singaporean food, such as Hainan chicken rice and Bak Kut The (S-9). Since our people and tourists agree that these foods are attractive, why don’t we make them a theme for marketing in culinary tourism? (S-10).

In 2004, ten dishes were chosen to be the “top 10” representative foods of Singapore: Satay, Bak Kut The, Chilli/Pepper Crab, Hainan Chicken Rice, Roti Canai and Teh Tarik, Laksa, Curried Fish Head, Fried Kuey Teow, Rojak, and Carrot Cake (S-33).
Facilities

To develop culinary tourism, in addition to “software” resources such as cuisines and culinary cultures, “hardware” resources are also needed such as food processing, food stores, food-related museums, restaurants, urban restaurant districts and culinary routes or trails (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). In Hong Kong, in addition to the ubiquitous Chinese and exotic restaurants, one can also find food districts (e.g. Causeway Bay, Kowloon City, Tsim Sha Tsui) containing many culinary resources and providing various food routes. There are even museums with exhibits about tea culture (HKTB, 2008). Similarly, Singaporean cuisines reflect the many multiethnic and multicultural interactions that have occurred on this island state in past decades. For example, Singapore dining is categorized into sky dining, tropical garden dining, waterfront dining and romantic dining. Many food stands and food centers that provide prepared food are also found in Singapore. Together, they provide a very diverse culinary experience (STB, 2008).

Previously, the Singapore government had no control over the food stands in Chinatown (S-133). After re-planning, the look and services of food stands were standardized, with the original local culinary features kept intact. Now, we can be more confident of this culinary service (S-134). The night market is a characteristic of Taiwan, a must-see for tourists visiting Taiwan. Night markets are not only tourist spots, but also a powerful resource (S-135).

Generally, the culinary cultural context of a country is an important resource for establishing it as a culinary tourism destination, and also an important background for marketing the brand story. At the same time, local feature cuisines should be combined with culinary facilities to build a cooperative network, enhancing the relationship among the core sources of culinary tourism and maximizing the resource performance of culinary culture and cuisines.

Identifying a Country’s Capabilities for Developing Culinary Tourism

After a country’s core culinary tourism resources are identified, the second step is to identify the government’s and related organizations’ capabilities in using resources and getting people involved. To develop a specific culinary tourism market, it is not enough to provide culinary experiences alone. What the tourist really expects is a great overall experience, which requires the collaboration of DMOs and cuisine providers to inform the tourist regarding the unique connections between the area, the local cuisine and the related culture (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Du Rand and colleagues (2003) further pointed out the need for a clear development framework, created and supported by policies and strategies, to assist DMOs in making good use of knowledge related to culinary products and experience, so as to stimulate the development of culinary tourism. This is a clear description of the relationship between tourism organizations, government policies and the execution of strategies.

STB established a Food and Beverage Division to take care of the marketing and development of culinary tourism. This division is in charge of the market, product and industry development, and channel management of Singaporean cuisines, with the goal of establishing Singapore as a destination that combines local and international cuisines, dining experiences and nightlife (Henderson, 2004). STB also col-
laborates with other public sector entities to develop plans for famous tourist spots and to provide comfortable dining environments and high-quality food that tourists can enjoy. Thus, the promotion of tourism cannot rely on just one department; it is important that all related public sector entities collaborate and coordinate, making the best use of all their professionals to maximize the potential of culinary tourism.

We work with many organizations (S-182), like the Ministry of National Development, National Environment Agency, Ministry of Transport, etc. (S-184). The responsibility to promote tourism belongs to STB, but it requires cooperation from all related organizations (S-185).

Hong Kong also realizes that it depends on tourism. Thus, the general public in Hong Kong is very cooperative in terms of government tourism promotion activities, and entertainers have even been willing to participate in advertising for free. This was especially true when the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) epidemic hit Hong Kong tourism. At that time, Cathay Pacific first proposed programs to encourage travel and save tourism. The close cooperation between the public and private sectors in Hong Kong is an important factor contributing to Hong Kong’s success in this area today.

For a long time I have thought that a distinguishing feature of Hong Kong’s tourism is that it combines pretty well the private sector and other organizations (H-1).

If the government has any idea about promoting tourism, it only has to coordinate with the industry and try to reach a consensus. The private sector usually responds quickly and is willing to cooperate. Besides, they also propose many great ideas (H-2).

All people in Hong Kong know that tourism is the lifeblood of Hong Kong, so people are willing to cooperate with the tourism board (H-90). When we have related activities, the restaurants, food districts, and related businesses are willing to cooperate. That’s because they know that if they cooperate with the tourism board, it will lead to advertisements that bring customers to their stores (H-91).

Thus, the public sector should create high-level DMOs to handle the establishment and execution of strategies and policies related to culinary tourism development, and coordinate other departments appropriately to make culinary tourism development more complete and comprehensive. Private human resources and capital are also important factors in culinary tourism. With appropriate controls, private culinary-related industries can play important roles in promoting the quality of culinary tourism services. Thus, when seeking to promote culinary tourism, a country should pay attention to the power of the people and private industries, build consensus, and emphasize coordination and communication between public sector entities, so as to use effectively and properly all culinary tourism resources and promote the country’s capabilities in culinary tourism.

Appraising the Potential of Resources and Capabilities for Culinary Tourism

Hong Kong and Singapore both have limited natural resources, but they enjoy abundant and diverse cultural resources (e.g. language, food culture), which have become great competitive advantages in developing cultural tourism. Local cuisine represents a core example of the invisible heritage of a destination, and it is something that tourists can
consume while experiencing authentic culinary culture (Okumus et al., 2007). That is, a combination of cuisine and culture will bring out the greatest potential of culinary tourism at a destination, and when the forces of related stakeholders (e.g., restaurant, hotel, airlines) can be integrated further, the competitive potential of culinary tourism development can be improved.

Hong Kong’s DMOs believe that the diversity of Hong Kong’s international cuisines has become a major competitive advantage (Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005). This concept has to be accepted by the private sector, so that the private sector can provide pioneers to promote tourism. At the same time, strategic alliances between different industries are the best way to make good use of resources and professionals. Alliances of different sectors in the tourism industry can enhance the promotion of all products and lower the pressure of competing with each other.

Being a good Hong Kong citizen and enterprise, Cathay Pacific presents the “I love Hong Kong” campaign, integrating airlines, travel agencies, restaurants, hotels, and overseas partners (H-37). When private companies see that the tourism is decreasing, they will stand up, provide resources, and remind people of the important concept that the whole of Hong Kong is one community (H-46).

The tourism boards of Hong Kong and Singapore both agree that large-scale international culinary festivals provide great competitive advantage in culinary tourism development. These festivals integrate local resources and professionals from the public and private sectors to bring local cuisines on to an international stage. Examples include the “Singapore Food Festival”, which presents the food and drinks of Singapore, the “World Gourmet Summit” (WGS), an international cooking performance, and the annual “Best of the Best Culinary Awards” in Hong Kong. It is important to bring high-quality cuisine from its origins and into restaurants everywhere so that tourists have a chance to taste many kinds of creative cuisine.

The major mission of HKTB in terms of cuisine is the annual “Best of the Best Culinary Awards” (H-12) . . . The spirit of this event is to make these cuisines accessible to anyone. Giving all the people a chance to taste these cuisines is the best way to promote them (H-27).

The Singapore food festival is primarily about authentic local Singapore food culture, and actually, when we talk about Singapore food, we’re talking about local food (S-22) . . . Another annual “World Gourmet Summit” is held every April, introducing high-quality restaurants in Singapore. The wining and dining they present will bring the tourists totally different culinary experiences (S-99).

Thus, we can see that to provide tourists with new products and services it is essential to create new connections and forms of cooperation so that food can be a link to other economic activities (e.g., food festivals, restaurants). To increase the value added component of culinary/gastronomy tourism, related activities have to be integrated to enhance the value of a visitor’s culinary experience. Food might be just one factor contributing to the economy, but when food is combined with restaurants, markets and stores, together they constitute a most important part of tourist activities. That is the part of their visit on which tourists will spend time and money. When trying to relocate food’s advantageous position in this new vertically integrated system, we can make good use of the resources and abilities of all stakeholders.
to explore the niche market of culinary tourism in a destination, so as to build channels for marketing in the future (e.g. food festivals and events, gastronomy museum, cooking classes) and change the culinary tourism experience.

**Select a Marketing Strategy to Promote Culinary Tourism**

To use its competitive advantage effectively when a country is developing and promoting culinary tourism requires assessing the resources, making the best use of existing resources, bringing talents into full play and grasping any opportunity to advance the competitive advantage. To develop strategies for marketing culinary tourism, it is important to know the unique expectations in this market segment, to find value added features and to increase positive tourist experiences (Richards, 2002).

**Gourmet Travel Guidebooks and Brochures**

Marketing tools can affect tourists’ decisions in choosing their destination, and images and information in marketing media can also be helpful in promoting a positive image of a destination. Nowadays, promotional tools used for gastronomy/culinary tourism marketing are diverse, including brochures, guides, websites, electronic media and other publications (du Rand et al., 2003; Horng & Tsai, 2010). As can be seen from the choices of marketing tools for promoting culinary tourism made by Hong Kong and Singapore, publications or guides to cuisines are a practical way of marketing, providing handy direct references for tourists. Similarly, official websites and blogs can also provide information about culinary tourism, and these media can provide images and text side by side to describe better the social realities and characteristics of the culture (Bessière, 1998; Frochot, 2003). These can all be important in marketing.

HKTB collaborates with culinary writers to publish brochures introducing New Year’s dishes in Hong Kong (H-65). Those who want this brochure can get it for free from travel agencies or visit the HKTB in person (H-66). Now, the HKTB also works with bloggers. Bloggers are invited to visit Hong Kong, and then they can promote Hong Kong when they return to their countries (H-69).

We have many advertisements or travel brochures, and a large proportion include culinary information. Cuisine is one essential element of traveling in Hong Kong, so in addition to tourist spot introductions and shopping suggestions, we must also tell our readers what and where to eat (H-70). It is quite effective (H-110).

In 2004, STB made a brochure introducing tourists to the “top 10” cuisines of Singapore, which reflect the city’s multicultural background (S-11). A list of certified restaurants is also provided to encourage tourists to visit (S-253).

**International Food/Gastronomy Events and Festivals**

Food events/festivals are not only a major part of culinary tourism, but also important marketing tools and activities through which tourists can experience local culinary culture (du Rand et al., 2003; Park, Reisinger, & Kang, 2008; Smith & Xiao, 2008). Henderson (2004) pointed out that advertisements for festivals directly influence the domestic and international tourism market, and with strict regulations and standards of hygiene and food preparation tourists will not be concerned about food safety. Food events/festivals can
also demonstrate the characteristics of local food and living culture and promote local food heritage. In addition to local food events/festivals, Hong Kong and Singapore also hold international-level food events or festivals that appeal to both local and international tourists. For example, STB holds the annual Singapore Food Festival (featuring the Chilli Crab Festival) and the World Gourmet Summit, along with other cultural activities featuring, for example, Indian food and Chinatown food. Hong Kong has the “Best of the Best Culinary Awards”, which aim to make creative cuisine available to anyone so as to popularize restaurants and promote the status of the chefs.

The annual Singapore Food Festival features Chilli Crab (S-59). The Chilli Crab weekend is followed by the Indian food week, during which we encourage everyone to visit Little India, and this may be followed by Chinatown week. If we can have four or five weekends to feature cuisines from different districts, this is enough to constitute a food festival (S-64).

Restaurants can be promoted and marketed through the World Gourmet Summit (S-101). The World Gourmet Summit includes not only local Singaporean food, but also all kinds of quality cuisine (S-102). Be it Japanese food or gourmet food from other places, as long as it is good food or good wine, it can be promoted at the World Gourmet Summit (S-103). The organizer co-organizes this event with STB, so it can invite famous chefs from all over the world to join the promotion (S-104), and many people come specifically for these chefs’ dishes (S-105).

**Advertising Endorsers for Promoting Local/Regional Cuisines**

When a destination is marketing its cuisines, in addition to stressing the characteristic of cuisines themselves it is a fundamental marketing strategy to market through advertisements (du Rand et al., 2003). Famous people attract consumers’ attention and recognition. Thus, if advertisers can find suitable endorsers it can help to bring about favorable attitudes and behavior by consumers. Additionally, if the image of a celebrity endorser fits the characteristics of the product or the image and concept of a target market, the effect is usually positive (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2001). Hong Kong and Singapore both invite reputable celebrities (e.g. gastronomes, actors, singers) to endorse their culinary cultures, promote culinary cultural images and present advertisements.

A characteristic of Hong Kong is that local people love this place. Many festivals will invite performing artists as endorsers, like Karen Mok, Daniel Wu, and the Twins. They endorse for free (H-112), and their endorsement greatly strengthens the power of the whole promotion (H-113).

**Restaurant Quality Certificates Promise Safe Dining**

To ensure that tourists receive only high-quality food, Hong Kong and Singapore both have strict quality assurance certification systems. Certified restaurants can become well known, and tourists can enjoy quality-assured cuisine, which leaves tourists with favorable impressions of the destination and increases the probability of their returning. Hjalager and Corigliano (2000) proposed that if governments want to improve the culinary element in tourism, they should immediately establish suitable policies and regulations regarding food; such regulations are indispensable in the development of regional culinary tourism. For example, HKTB developed the Quality Tourism Services (QTS) scheme to raise overall service standards and visitor confi-
With the QTS sign as an indicator, tourists can readily identify restaurants that are trustworthy. The scheme is representative and fair. Stringent rules are followed in handling applications, investigations, reviews, anonymous visits and tourist complaints. To be QTS-accredited, the establishments must be qualified in terms of working environment, products, selling process, employer and operation. This scheme has helped to enhance the quality of services in restaurants, and tourists are guaranteed high-quality food and service.

The QTS Scheme is organized by the HKTB to help visitors find shops and restaurants they can trust. This scheme certifies shops and restaurants that pass stringent annual assessments showing that they provide genuine products with clearly displayed prices; clearly display product information and/or menus, and ensure superb customer service with front-line staff possessing extensive product knowledge so they can answer questions efficiently. (HKTB website – Gourmet Paradise: Dining Tips).

**Culinary Classes for International Tourists**

The authenticity and uniqueness of traditional food appeal to tourists, and to enjoy the food or join culinary classes are aspects of cultural tourism that provide links to the local society (Henderson, 2004). Through culinary classes, tourists can not only enjoy authentic cuisine, but also learn how to cook the food and understand the local culture so as to improve the overall culinary tourism experience. For example, STB puts emphasis on culinary classes provided in culinary academies. These classes provide tips on cooking not only characteristic Singapore cuisines, but also Asian, Middle Eastern and European cuisines. STB also provides links to the websites of every culinary academy so that web surfers can understand further the content of the classes and procedures for joining them.

The experience of attending cooking school is special. We usually recommend this for incentive tours (S-236). The tourists can learn and experience the preparation of exotic cuisines (S-238).

For those who love to travel and cook, pick up a culinary tip or two at some of the culinary academies in Singapore. Whether it is local, Asian, Middle Eastern or European cuisine, there’s something for everyone, and we are sure this will spice up your travel adventure in Singapore. (STB website – Where to Eat: Culinary Classes).

**Research for Understanding the Food/Gastronomy Tourism Market**

It is important to conduct market segmentation research before promoting a product. Many scholars have proposed that to succeed in designing suitable marketing strategies for culinary tourism, the tourism market must first be segmented. Only when different kinds of tourist are each provided with appropriate food products is the link between food and tourism really built (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Hong Kong Tourist Board worked with well-known market research companies to study the behavior of tourists visiting Hong Kong, and the results were analyzed to develop more effective marketing strategies for each market segment. STB regularly conducts similar research to decide on marketing strategy modifications. However, although this research surely provides important information, it surveys the tourists’ overall experience, not the culinary experience in particular.
HKTB has done more research, both qualitative and quantitative. If we find the most important segment, we can focus our resources for promotion and really get to it (H-122). We also integrate interviews from research companies, which are universally applicable (H-125). In addition, we recruit students to assist in the process of doing daily surveys, so we can have enough effective samples (H-129).

Our survey shows how many tourists really visited these tourist spots at a particular time (S-78). We can conduct surveys at shopping malls or even cultural areas (S-79), but it’s hard to tell whether the visitors really come for the culinary festival (S-80). Tourists come to Singapore for many reasons, probably not just for the culinary festival, so it’s really hard to tell in the surveys (S-82).

From the above, we can see that to increase the value added in culinary tourism, in addition to using marketing tools and strategies, the destination still has to enhance its knowledge base regarding culinary experiences. With the help of professional agencies, academic organizations and media, and large-scale culinary activities, features of national and local cuisines can be marketed internationally, increasing the value added component of culinary tourism.

Overview of Framework for Developing Culinary Tourism Marketing Strategies

Overall, when a country is developing marketing strategies for culinary tourism, it has to center on its internal resources. First, it should confirm, establish, deploy and protect its resources, especially the irreplaceable strategic core resource (e.g. culture). Then, with the core resources in mind, it can set development strategies, integrating internal and external resources to plot suitable marketing strategies that will achieve sustainable national tourism development. Thus, after analyzing the research results, this study integrates national resource bases with strategic development and describes the mode of strategic development in the process of promoting culinary tourism with Grant’s (1991) analytical framework on strategic planning.

As shown in Figure 2, when a country is developing culinary tourism marketing strategies it should first confirm its related resources for gastronomy and food culture, including facilities (e.g. food stores, restaurants, urban restaurant districts, farms, culinary routes) and others factors (e.g. dining at restaurants, touring city food districts). Then, it should strengthen its advantages and turn the disadvantages into competitive edges.

Next, a country’s capabilities must be evaluated and confirmed. Development strategies and promotion strategies must reach a balance so that investments can achieve the highest return. Also, national standards should be set to ensure quality in culinary tourism. Of course, the country should also coordinate with DMOs to actually execute these promotion strategies and national standards.

Furthermore, if the country can extend its capabilities further, it can enhance its overall competitive advantage. The authorities concerned must evaluate the potential of existing resources and capabilities and build strategic alliance among industries, companies and education providers (e.g. schools, hospitality training centers) so as to enhance the competitive advantage of the country in developing culinary tourism.

After evaluating and confirming national resources, capabilities and competitive advantages, the government should propose suitable marketing strategies, such as through the public media, international food events and
festivals, advertising endorsers, culinary classes and academic research. Media promotion can improve the knowledge experience in culinary tourism, create a new network between food producers and consumers, and expand activities related to culinary tourism, creating an interacting relationship among knowledge, food and tourism. Finally, in the process of planning such strategies, if the social, cultural or political environment has changed, policies and marketing strategies can also be appropriately modified.

Conclusions

This study has sought to examine the relationship between food and tourism development
strategies in Hong Kong and Singapore in order to understand the marketing strategies and content of culinary tourism in these two places, and to analyze the framework for marketing strategies to develop culinary tourism from the RBT perspective. The results show that, although Hong Kong and Singapore do not have abundant natural resources to develop more diverse tourism experiences, they do have diverse food and cultural backgrounds, and with a combination of tourism and creativity they can develop a culinary tourism industry that is innovative, diverse and eye-catching. At the same time, different marketing packages can also attract tourists and present images of culinary culture. Additionally, strategic alliances between the public and private sectors, the holding of international culinary events and maintenance of culinary quality are important factors in promoting culinary tourism marketing strategies. These factors can lead to building a consensus to work together in the development of tourism and to enhance international competitiveness. Thus, the goal of a culinary tourism marketing strategy is not only to attract more people to visit the destination to enjoy the food and experience the local culture in person, but also to make good use of the country’s internal and external resources and abilities to increase the competitive advantage and economic effects of culinary tourism.

The integration of a country’s resources, policies and strategies is an important base for culinary tourism marketing strategies (du Rand et al., 2003; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Successful cooperation between the public and private sectors relies heavily on successful marketing strategies. Government must set a general direction and propose suitable projects for the sustainable development of culinary tourism. Government should also connect different industries related to tourism and educate local people actively to join related promotional activities. In this way, each culinary tourism marketing strategy can rely on getting the helps it needs, and the largest economic benefit can be achieved. To develop culinary tourism, in addition to the horizontal integration of the strategic alliance between government and related industries it is also important to build vertical integration between the public and private sectors. This will help to form a consensus in the public sectors, and private companies will also be able to fulfill their corporate social responsibilities. Nowadays, society faces environmental challenges that government alone will not be able to handle effectively, so if private companies are willing to shoulder their corporate social responsibilities, it will help the government to raise economic competitiveness and ensure satisfactory social conditions (Zappalá, 2003). If we take a narrow view of corporate social responsibility, it can have a positive effect on a company’s performance. If we take a broader view, it can have an even greater positive effect on a nation’s economy.

If any destination wants to increase its tourism products’ value added qualities and market identity, it is essential to build a brand image. Thus, DMOs should develop identities for destination brands (Pike, 2005). In this process, knowledge concerning food culture is not only an asset that can be sold, but also provides a connection between the destination and cultural food products. When food and the destination are successfully linked, an ideal brand image for culinary tourism becomes possible, and the food culture that combines local food and destination can become an effective and profitable marketing asset (Tellström, Gustafsson, & Mossberg, 2006). Thus, when forming brand attraction in culinary tourism, the destination should find food products that
are representative and popular, integrating the context of the destination’s culinary culture as the background, and then promote this culinary culture in the context of tourism. For example, with multiple culinary cultures as the main attraction, the STB formulated the brand “Singapore: the Food Capital of Asia” to represent the variety of Singaporean cuisines, while Hong Kong has the brand “Asian Gourmet Paradise” for its international cuisines.

Fox (2007, p. 555) discussed two myths about the authentication of cuisines. One is a belief in gastronomic authenticity, as reflected in the juxtaposition of “good old food” and “bad new food”. However, the old food is not totally “old”. Another common myth comes from gastronomic tradition. With changes in history, time, methods of travel, transactions, transportation and technological changes, the cuisine and gastronomic identities of regions or countries have also changed. These two myths remind us to reflect on both tradition and innovation in cuisines of the destination, and they also highlight the importance of building a cuisine identity. In Singapore, innovation is an important characteristic of its cuisines, but the traditional spirit is still preserved to maintain these cuisines’ Singaporean identity. Thus, traditional and innovative cuisines are not necessarily in conflict in Singapore.

Behind the value added elements of the brand image, an important effect of tourism quality assurance is to ease tourists’ concerns when visiting a destination. Restaurants presenting the special flavor of local cuisines have always been an important element of local culinary cultural tourism, and if the government can recommend restaurants for special local features, it will immediately boost local tourism. Thus, the quality of food, beverages and service in restaurants should be emphasized to enhance tourists’ satisfaction with culinary tourism. For this reason, it is a good marketing strategy for the government to set culinary accreditation standards. For example, STB has set policies to enhance local culinary quality, and HKTB has the QTS scheme to protect consumers’ rights.

Additionally, food events/festivals are not only a resource for culinary tourism, but are also ways to increase the visibility of a destination in terms of its culinary image and to bring more participation from the community (Quan & Wang, 2004). At the same time, marketing strategies for large-scale international food festivals will directly affect the domestic and international tourism market (Henderson, 2004), and are thus important. They must demonstrate the characteristics of local food and local life and also promote local food products. For example, STB has the annual Singapore Food Festival and WGS, while Hong Kong has the Best of the Best Culinary Awards.

Food events or festivals also provide ideal promotion platforms for tourism and for food and beverage industries, which ultimately benefits the whole of tourism. With an understanding of tourists’ expectations, governments can better formulate marketing strategies. Thus, HKTB conducts daily research on visitors to Hong Kong to understand the different needs of different market segments so that it can promote different products and design different brochures emphasizing different resources and directions. This knowledge is based on daily tourist research conducted at the airport. With large samples, HKTB analyzes its marketing targets and resource allocation so as to improve the efficacy of its marketing.

When promoting culinary tourism, the destination should allow tourists to have
authentic experiences. This will give the destination a clearer profile, help the local cuisine to emphasize cultural differences and richness, differentiate the destination from others and also upgrade the cultural heritage. Thus, in addition to providing opportunities for tasting cuisines and experiencing cultures, culinary tourism will be more meaningful if it integrates educational activities. For example, Singapore has culinary academies for tourists to learn how to cook local food. With cooks having knowledge about local food culture, such experiences deepen the local culinary culture and improve the culinary image of the destination.

Overall, Hong Kong and Singapore have made good use of the interacting relationship among their cuisines, culture and tourism. They have built successful cooperation among the public sector, private sector and their people. As a result, both have innovatively developed their marketing strategies to expand their culinary tourism markets. Both have also sought to educate more professionals in the hotel and restaurant industries so as to improve the quality of culinary tourism, provide diverse and culture-embedded local cuisines for tourists, and successfully create a national culinary image.

Finally, in addition to its practical value, this study adopted the RBT perspective to analyze tourism resources and strategies. This may provide an important contribution to the study of tourism.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study was limited to Hong Kong and Singapore. Future studies can compare differences and advantages/disadvantages of marketing strategies for culinary tourism in different countries in Asia or the West. Additionally, this study primarily interviewed officials, and it lacks information on opinions from the industry or academia. The integration of these opinions might facilitate new culinary tourism marketing strategies that appeal to different consumers and influence their motivation for and experience of culinary tourism. In the future, quantitative research can also be conducted on this topic. Finally, it is recommended that future studies employ focus groups, consumer surveys, Delphi methodology and interviews with travelers who have visited the destination to extend and confirm the findings of this study.

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