

Chinese Tourists And Souvenirs In Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Food is one of the most important attractions sought out by tourists in their carving for new and unforgettable experiences. In addition, tasting local food play an important role in tourism experience because it is not only a cultural activity but also an entertainment. The present study mainly explores the effects of pineapple cake on the Chinese tourists in Taiwan. The study send out a total of 500 questionnaires to Chinese tourists to understand their attitude toward pineapple souvenir in Taiwan, and 458 questionnaires were completed and returned. This left 405 valid for analysis and yielded a valid return rate of 81%. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents hold quite positive attitude toward pineapple cake. It has doubtlessly become the most popular souvenir for Chinese tourists in Taiwan.

KEYWORDS: souvenir, tourists.

INTRODUCTION

Souvenir buying or giving is universally acknowledged to be linked with tourism as an important experience for the purchasers (Swanson & Horridge, 2006), moreover, souvenir purchasing is also one of the two most ubiquitous activities in tourism (Swanson & Timothy, 2011). Being a tourist, one may feel that something is missing if s/he neglected to take souvenir back from tourism. Notably, “food is one of the most important attractions sought out by tourists in their carving for new and unforgettable experiences” (Selwood, 2003, p.178), and tasting local food play an important role in tourism experience because it is not only a cultural activity but also an entertainment (Kim & Eves, 2012; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Therefore, food tourism has become one prominent subject in the modern era.

The present study mainly deals with a case study that explores the effects of pineapple cake on the Chinese tourists in Taiwan. It was back to about ten years ago, Taiwanese government started to open the door for Chinese tourists. From that time on,

a lot of tourists from China came to Taiwan for taking a look of the natural or humanity scenery (see Table 1 for reference). Certainly, souvenir-buying is one of their must-dos during the times in Taiwan. Mass media reported (Wen Wei Po, 2013) that Chinese tourists' daily average expenditure on shopping ranked the top one, which reached about 157.37 U.S. dollars. The ratio is about 59.33% to their daily average expenditure (265.26 U.S. dollars), which is also the foremost one.

Based on the above, the present study is therefore to explore the relationship between the Chinese tourists and pineapple cake in Taiwan.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Souvenirs and tourism

“Souvenirs typically refer to objects that tourists when traveling on vacation” (Love & Sheldon, 1998; p.170). Souvenir purchasing is associated with tourism and leisure activities (Clarke, 2008; Swanson & Horridge, 2006) in human society. Buying souvenirs or souvenir purchasing behavior has therefore become an issue to be explored by past researchers from different perspectives (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004; Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Yu & Littrell, 2003). Though the types of souvenirs are fantastic, however, buying souvenirs from numerous selections is doubtlessly indispensable and brings much of unforgettable experiences in tourism. To some extent, the behavior of gift-giving or souvenir purchasing highlights the importance of our usual life, for example: one may expect to receive or be self-gifted special presents or souvenirs on birthday, holiday, special event, anniversary, or exceptional experience.

Past research (Gordon, 1986) classified souvenirs into several categories, some of which are with tangible mementos, such as: pictorial image, piece-of-the-rock, symbolic shorthand, and markers; while the other, like local products (e.g., foods or snacks) may become a psychological memory as time goes by. Though the attributes of souvenirs are different, tourists make their purchase decision based on their motivation and product attributes (Swanson & Horridge, 2006). However, no matter what and how tourists' buy, shopping expenditure almost accounts for one third of total travel expenditure (Littrell et al. 1994; Fairhurst, Costello, & Holmes, 2007). This implies that souvenir-buying definitely is an issue to be explored.

Tourists usually select products or souvenirs based on the product attributes, for example, Graburn (1976) argued that the preferable product attributes should be: easily portable, with acceptable price, understandable, cleanable, and useful. Later, Pysarchik (1989) concluded that size, fragility and manageability were the key points

for the air flight travelers. In this regard, the above-stated situations rightly answer why the Chinese tourists like to take cartons or boxes of pineapple cake when they come back from Taiwan, because the product is portable, tasty, and easy to carry and be stored.

On the other side, one may run into similar products or souvenirs somewhere else in their travel experiences, however, the point of each experience is that local conditions/customs and souvenirs possibly create an unsubstitute experience in one's life. Therefore, from the standpoint of the Chinese tourists, it possibly be a valuable memory to buy pineapple cake in Taiwan because they can also see similar products or fruits in other countries (e.g., China, Singapore, or Malaysia ..., etc.), but the feeling and experiences that they obtained elsewhere would be absolutely different from that of Taiwan. Therefore, the present study argues that souvenirs and tourism should be deeply understood because of the following points: First, it can be a good instrument to attract tourists and make significant contribution on local economy; Second, it could be a possible way to enhance the travel destination's image; Finally, souvenir buying brings boundless synergies to the industry, which thereby creates unpredictable development for the country.

Pineapple in Taiwan and the legend of pineapple cake

Being a tropical country, Taiwan produces a great amount of quality tropical fruits annually. Among all of the fruits produced, pineapple significantly attracts people's eyesight for its sweet, juicy and tasty features. Though it is only a quite popular fruit in tropical zone, thanks to the highly developed gardening technology in Taiwan, the quality of pineapple is outstanding. Its production reached to be 420 thousand tons in 2010 and ranked to be the top among various kinds of fruits in Taiwan (Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan, 2011). For the farming technology is highly improved in the recent years, the quality of pineapple is even more advanced than that of before. The noted quality of pineapple not only derived the delight of consumers from different countries but also contributed a lot on Taiwanese foreign exchange annually (Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan, 2011). In order to promote pineapple in high seasons and present different purposes of the fruit, people or dessert chef not only send it to be fruit can but also make it to be the chewy filling of Taiwan's representative local food, pineapple cake.

Conventionally, valentines in Taiwan used to send friends or relatives a gift set with six kinds of confectionery when they are engaged. In the gift set, pineapple cakes are usually a "must", because they imply that the gift receivers are blessed with

grand-generativity and “luck coming”. In the mean time, pineapple has long been one of the popular and important tributes for its pronunciation in Taiwanese means good fortune or prosperity. Therefore, pineapple cakes were widely favored by people institutionally.

Pineapple cake, pronounced "Fong Lee Sue" in Chinese, "Ong Lai So" in Taiwanese ("So/Sue" means something crispy in Taiwanese/ Chinese), not only attracts tourists' eyesight but also brilliantly contributes in our foreign exchange. The ingredients usually contain flour, egg, sugar, and butter in the outer skin and stuffing with pineapple jam, which is mixed with appropriate proportion of sugar and white gourd to increase its taste. People just love its sour-and-sweet flavor and mouth-watering taste.

Based on the report published by the mass media in Taiwan (China Times, 2012), pineapple cake is one of the two most popular souvenirs for the tourists in Taiwan. In recent years, the sales of pineapple cake climbed up straightly and the annual production soared up to 27 billion (approximately US\$ 845 million) in 2012, which was almost contributed by the Chinese and Hong Kong tourists. Specifically, it is estimated that, averagely speaking, each Chinese tourist spends about 1,300 NT dollars (approximately 45 U.S. dollars) in buying pineapple cake. It is surprising that pineapple cakes have turned out to be a huge money-spinner for Taiwan. Notably, the Chinese tourists go to specialty shops by buses and take pineapple cakes by dozens or cartons. One practitioner even expressed they have to keep doing replenishment during the business hours in high seasons and the goods on the shelves were often sold out shortly whenever tourist buses come in (Food culture in Taiwan, 2013).

People would be curious about that why the “little golden brick” attracts so much attention from Chinese tourists? It is said that there's no such kind of dessert in Mainland China, further, the Chinese do not realize that such a scrumptious snack unexpectedly comes from pineapple, a sour and ordinary tropical fruit.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed quantitative method to conduct the investigation. A questionnaire was utilized to be the instrument. The details of the questionnaire development are described as follows:

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was firstly developed by the researcher based on the related literature (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004; Clarke, 2008; Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Swanson &

Horridge, 2006; Yu & Littrell, 2003) to ensure its validity. In addition, in order to confirm whether the wordings of the items were all understandable, a small-scale of pretest was conducted to implement the procedure.

The questionnaire mainly consists of two parts: part A, the demographic part, recorded the subject's gender, age, income and level of education; while part B asked about consumers' attitude toward the pineapple cake in Taiwan. Part B is divided into 5 sections and each section contained 4 to 5 questions. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-type scale, where the higher the score, the more positive the respondents hold toward the item.

Data collection

Four pre-trained students with business and administration background were asked to work in pairs to do the data collection. The respondents were politely asked to fill out the self-administered questionnaire under the situation of none disturbance.

The respondents

The respondents were randomly selected at pineapple cake stores or shops to fulfill the questionnaire investigation to ensure the validity of the investigation.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Data analysis

The present study send out a total of 500 questionnaires, and 458 questionnaires were completed and returned. Of the returned questionnaires, 53 respondents gave invalid or incomplete answers and their results were eliminated from the study. This left 405 valid for analysis and yielded a valid return rate of 81%.

Table 1 reports the demographic attributes of the respondents. The data shows that the majority of the respondents are with the education of above college. 83.9% of them were between the ages of 21 to 40. Nearly 45% had a monthly income over NT 40,000 (approximately US\$1212 at a 1:33 exchange rate).

Table 1 Demographics of the respondents

Questions	Contents	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	195	48.15	405
	Female	210	51.85	
Age	Under 25	62	15.31	117
	25-45-	117	28.89	

	45-65	126	31.11	
	Above 65	100	24.69	405
Education	Above graduate school	40	9.88	
	University	47	11.60	
	High school	203	50.12	
	Junior middle school	115	28.40	405
Marital status	Married	282	69.63	
	Single	123	30.37	405
Monthly income	Less than NT\$20,000	17	4.20	
	20,001-50,000	45	11.11	
	50,001-80,000	102	25.19	
	80,001-100,000	125	30.86	
	Above 100,001	116	28.64	405
Times to visit Taiwan	Multiple times	157	38.77	
	One time	248	61.23	405
Occupation	Industry/ Manufacturing	114	28.15	
	Commerce/Service	138	34.07	
	Home maker/Retired	126	31.11	
	Others	27	6.67	405

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
I've heard that pineapple cake is a famous souvenir for a long time.	3.76	0.84
I would like to take this opportunity to taste pineapple cake.	3.69	0.83
I've been long to take pineapple cake.	3.45	0.86
I would like to take pineapple cake to be souvenir for my friend.	3.62	0.93
It's a good opportunity to experience this time.	3.76	0.84

Many of my friends have taken pineapple cake in Taiwan.	3.66	2.93
Taking some pineapple cake is one of my goals during this journey.	3.85	0.92
I personally like pineapple cake very much.	3.21	1.07
The taste of pineapple cake is enjoyable for me.	4.18	0.93
I am willing to introduce pineapple cake to my friends.	3.78	0.78
Pineapple cake is easy to carry.	3.92	0.75
Pineapple cake is easy to store.	4.02	0.91
The unique taste of pineapple cake is irreplaceable.	3.61	0.88
	3.55	0.93
	3.90	0.86

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The results indicated that pineapple has doubtlessly become the most popular souvenir for Chinese tourists in Taiwan. The little golden cake has not only made a lot of foreign exchange for Taiwan but also become a famous attraction of Taiwan. Following research may focus on another point to go further explore the tourism value of pineapple cake, such as: pineapple cake's gender differences of tourists.

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