

Identify the Factors Influence on Purchase Intention of Local Foods by Foreign Tourists in Coastal Area in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka is well-known for unique and authentic traditional food varieties and they have become one of the key attractions in tourism over the years. Recently, many initiatives have been taken at different levels contributing to develop and to promote gastronomy tourism. Accordingly, this study was aimed at identifying the inbound tourists' perception of local foods and to identify the factors that influence local food choice of inbound tourists in the coastal area of Sri Lanka. Primary data were collected from 160 tourists on the South and East coast distributing a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. Further, in-depth interviews were carried out interviewing 15 local food vendors using purposive sampling. Confirmatory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, and thematic analysis were employed to analyse the data. Results revealed that there is a high potential for local food to promote gastronomy tourism in the country. Further, socio-demographic, motivational, and psychological factors were influenced on the local food purchasing intention of tourists. The purchase intention of inbound tourists in the Sri Lankan context was not affected by sensory appeal and new taste (under the motivational and psychological factors). The study showed that the promotion of local food depends on government involvement whereas a strategic marketing campaign could be used to bring traditional local food to the international level. Restaurant environment should be familiar to international tourists while maintaining the authentic features of the restaurants. Moreover, tourists were willing to have mild spicy varieties of food and healthy authentic local food. Further, this study directs future researchers to investigate the local food vendors' perception of local food as a tourism product and tourists' intention specifically on Ayurveda food in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Gastronomy tourism, Local food, Purchase intention, Vendor's perception