# Thai street food in the fast growing global food tourism industry: Preference and behaviors of food tourists

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ABSTRACT

The interest in street foods is increasing. Hence, many tourism destinations are exerting effort to identify initial needs and understand the reasons why street foods are capturing the interest of tourists. This study was designed to identify the attributes of street foods and test them on tourist behavior by applying qualitative and quantitative methods. Firstly, in-depth interviews were conducted with 22 respondents including 14 international tourists, six professional tour guides and two street food business owners. Second step, a total of 475 effective survey questionnaires with non-probability convenience sampling of international tourists was used to conduct; the 45 attributes of Thai street foods were identified and grouped into 9 dimensions; namely, cultural and local experiences, menu and atmosphere, staff service, core food quality, value for money, product attractiveness, staff proficiency, packaging and portions, and tradition and authenticity. Results indicated that the attributes were positively significant in predicting tourist behaviors. This study also investigated the moderating role of the perceived risks of consuming Thai street foods and found that this variable is a potential moderator. Implications related to the study were examined to perform the factors of street food that significantly influence on tourist post-purchase behaviors and can be boost tourist intention.

## 1. Introduction

Over the past decades, food tourism has become as a dominant trend in global traveler's interest (Choe & Kim, 2018). More than one-third of tourism expenditures are spent on food (Henderson, Yun, Poon, & Biwei, 2012). Food is a major component of a travel experience, and it is a part of travel activities (Lai, 2020; Lee, Chua, & Han, 2020; Lee, Han, Radic, & Tariq, 2020). Previous research has confirmed that food and dining are major elements considered by tourists when traveling and choosing destinations (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Choe & Kim, 2018; Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012). Tourists eat the local cuisine in a tourism destination to fulfil their travel experiences (Choe & Kim, 2018; Vesci & Botti, 2019). Travelers acquire new knowledge and understanding of the traditional local and regional culture of a destination, which are valuable in relation to destination image and future tourist intention (Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018; Kuhzady, Cadici, Olya, Mohajer, & Han, 2020). Accordingly, several tourism destinations have emphasized food activities and created gastronomic/culinary experiences to attract international visitors.

Street foods combine the authentic culture of the local people and the traditional values by using local resources, contributing to local economies and maintaining a sustainable tourism system (Ellis et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2012). Street foods experience challenges and opportunities to increase the long-term sustainability at tourist destinations. Moreover, street foods have been used as a tourism tool in many destinations and are even regulated in some Asian countries, such as Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong, and Vietnam (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Choi, Lee, & Ok, 2013; Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). In Southeast Asia, street foods have become an essential part of the tourism and hospitality industries because a tourist attraction represents the local culture and the way of life of local people (Henderson, 2019, pp. 45–57; Henderson et al., 2012). Given the aforementioned reasons, several destinations are focusing on street foods as an upcoming tourism product.

In the past, scholars have indicated that food (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Tsai & Wang, 2017) and street food (Henderson et al., 2012) are the core of tourists' motivation and the main component of tourists' decision-making processes to traveling. For exciple, Henderson et al. (2012) found that street food centers played a significant role in Singapore's tourist attractions. Street food has long been understood as an

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important issue related to the tourist's desire to travel. However, street food attributes and the influence of its through tourists behavior remain unexplored. Furthermore, limiting studies were empirically investigated local street food. Hence, understanding the future prospects of street foods and tourist behavior toward them is crucial. Accordingly, the current study sets the following objectives: (1) to identify street food attributes that tourists are concerned about when traveling; (2) to determine how the identified attributes contribute to tourist behavior by investigating Thai street food attributes and their relationship with tourist satisfaction with, attitude toward, attachment to, and behavior toward Thai street foods; (3) to examine the moderating role of the perceived risks of street food consumption between tourist attitude toward and attachment to Thai street foods with behavioral intention regarding such foods; and (4) to propose effective marketing strategies to destination governments and/or food businesses for creating and improving food and street food quality on the basis of tourists' perception. The attributes of Thai street food and its contribution to tourist behavior model can be supported them to increase positive street food image and food goers demand to the destination.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Food and street food in the tourism industry

Many tourists travel to seek food experiences (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Food has become a significant tool in tourism marketing and business as part of the tourism industry's revenue (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Henderson, 2009). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (2017) defined food tourism or gastronomy tourism as tourism involving travelers who plan a trip to try the local food and/or food products and/or take part in food activities (World Food Travel Association, 2018). In tourism, activities related to food have been called by several names, such as food tourism, culinary tourism, and gastronomy tourism. However, these names refer to tourism in which tourists travel to a certain destination for the purpose of eating local foods (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Many previous researchers are interested in food in the tourism industry (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Mak et al., 2012; Choi et al., 2013; Ellis et al., 2018). Visitors may not only learn about local foods, but also about the way of life, culture, and history of the locals through food tourism.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defined street foods as "ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and sold by vendors, hawkers, stalls, trolley carts notably in streets and public areas" (FAO, 1986). The primary characteristic of street foods is that they are cooked prior to being sold or after a customer places an order using traditional food processing; most retail outlets are located on the street, with a small operation and low costs (Cohen, 1984). Henderson et al. (2012) reported that street/hawker food is cooked or uncooked food that symbolizes the local people, society, and culture. Street food tourism generally reflects the food of the traditional local culture and offers tourists the chance to experience and understand the local way of life (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). Street/hawker foods are currently important in the tourism industry, and many tourist destinations use street foods as attraction tools and tourism resources (Henderson, 2019, pp. 45–57; Henderson et al., 2012). Street food is also a popular subject in tourism studies (Henderson et al., 2012; Sun, Wang, & Huang, 2012; Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). Sum et al. (2012) investigated the hygiene knowledge and practices of local street food vendors in the night markets in Tainan, Taiwan. Henderson et al. (2012) confirmed that street food hawkers play a significant role in Singapore's tourist attractions. Chavarria and Phakdee-auksorn (2017) surveyed the attitudes of international tourists toward street foods in Phuket, Thailand.

### 2.2. Thai street foods and tourism in Thailand

Thailand is a world tourism destination; it is known for offering a

variety of tourism resources, including scenic landscapes for traveling, rich historical sites, diverse cuisines, hospitable locals, and all-year-round tourism activities (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017). The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) reported that approximately 326 billion baht, or roughly 20% of Thailand's total tourism revenue from international visitors, was spent on food in 2016 (TAT, 2017). Thai dining is known globally as a significant factor that influences international tourists to visit Thailand (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). *Travel Weekly UK* (2017) ranked Thailand as the 4th best destination for food and drink. Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand was ranked 3rd in the Top Global Cities for Dining by *The MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index* in 2018 (TAT, 2019). CNN (2017) named Bangkok as one of the world's 23 best destinations to eat street foods. *The Euromonitor International* (2017) reported that street foods have the largest market share among various food business operators in Thailand. Nearly 103,000 out of 150,000 food business operators are street food vendors with total revenue of approximately 271,355 million baht (Prachachat News, 2018).

Street foods in Thailand are commonly uncooked (ready-to-cook) or ready-to-eat meals, such as Thai cuisine, snacks, desserts, fruits, and beverages. Empirical evidence indicates that these foods are related to the culture of the local people. Street foods are divided into the following categories: (1) sold by mobile vendors/hawkers (e.g., food stalls, trollies, carts, trucks, and kiosks on road/street sides or public areas); (2) sold in fixed locations or trading sites on the ground floor or doorsteps of semipermanent structures, providing only tables and chairs; and (3) sold at a point occupied in marketplaces or in front of the seller's house with cooking and food service areas, such as tables and chairs in the house and on the sidewalk or street (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017; Cohen, 1984; Henderson et al., 2012). The picture of Thai street foods is shown in Appendix A. Street food has become an interesting issue among international tourists, reflecting the growth of food tourism in Thailand.

### 2.3. Literature review and hypotheses

#### 2.3.1. Food consumption and street food attribution

Theoretical product and service attributes can be referred to the characteristics, stimulus factors, and role of overall customer evaluation based on their knowledge and perception (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Attributes and factors have been identified in the hospitality and tourism industry, and considerable attention has been given to the consumption experiences of tourists (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2011; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009; Mak et al., 2012; Stone, Soulard, Migacz, & Wolf, 2018), food and local food products (Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012), and food service businesses (Han & Ryu, 2009; Jang, Kim, & Bonn, 2011; Kwun, 2011). Kim et al. (2009) established local food consumption and divided it into three factors: motivational, individual demographics, and physiological food. Mak et al. (2012) found that factors that influence food tourism consumption can be divided into five dimensions: symbolic, obligatory, contrast, extension, and pleasure. Chang et al. (2011) found six attributes that affect Chinese tourists' evaluation of their dining experiences while traveling. These attributes are tourists' food culture, dining experience, food variety and diversity, perception of the destination, service encounters, and tour guide performance. Stone et al. (2018) identified five key components that contribute to the memorable food and culinary experiences of tourists. These components are consumed food/beverages, occasion, companions, setting/location, and touristic elements.

In particular, food production has been investigated in tourism studies. Kim and Eves (2012) developed a measurement scale for tourist consumption of local food and created five motivational dimensions of local food: tourist's cultural experience, personal individual relations, excitement, sensory appeal, and health concerns. Kim et al. (2013) found that customers perceived food healthiness attributes, such as nutritional information, fresh and natural ingredients, weight control, and a nutritionally balanced diet, as essential factors to increase their

dining perceptions of value, satisfaction, and revisit intention of healthy restaurants in Korea. Previous food service studies in the hospitality and tourism field, including that of Han and Ryu (2009), have also investigated the three physical environments of restaurants: price perception, customer satisfaction, and décor and artifacts. These studies have found that the element décor and artifacts exerts an important positive effect on predicating customer price perception and satisfaction. Kwun (2011) determined that the enhanced performance of food service attributes, including service and product quality, menu, and facility, significantly affects consumers' perceived value, satisfaction, and attitude. Jang et al. (2011) investigated Generation Y consumers' evaluation and behavioral intention toward green restaurants attributes, such as natural/organic ingredients, value/service reliability, environmental activities, reputation, food quality, nutritional menu, atmosphere, and location.

The previous review of the multiple factors/attributes of customers' (tourists') decision-making processes when considering food, food and local food, and food service choices is enlightening, but provides limited information about street foods. Accordingly, identifying, understanding, and clarifying specific attributes regarding street foods that are required to develop long-term sustainability in the tourism industry are important."

### 2.3.2. Street food attributes and their influences on satisfaction

Oliver (1997) reported that satisfaction is the total evaluation of the purchase situation that includes customer's expectations regarding a product or service. The level of customer satisfaction increases if the product/service and its attributes are overfulfilled (Han & Kim, 2017; Oliver, 1999). Customer satisfaction is an important topic in marketing research because it leads to positive behavioral outcomes in predicting customer feelings, decision-making, and future intention (Han & Hyun, 2015; Kim, 2018). The relationship between attributes and satisfaction has been widely studied (Kim, 2018; Kuo, Wu, & Deng, 2009; Trang, Lee, & Han, 2019; Zhao, Lu, Zhang, & Chau, 2012). Kuo et al. (2009) found that customer satisfaction plays a significant role in the mediation of perceived value and the future intention of mobile phone companies' value-added service quality. Zhao et al. (2012) studied mobile service's customer behavior and identified three attributes of service quality: interaction, environmental, and outcome qualities. The result showed that these attributes exert a positive effect on customer satisfaction and intention. Kim (2018) found that satisfaction plays an important mediating role that indicates visitors' behavioral intention. Previous studies of food in tourism, such as that of Canny (2014) who focused on restaurants in Jakarta, Indonesia, determined that service quality attributes exert a positive impact on customer satisfaction and intention. Customer satisfaction generally influences customers' perception of products and service attributes. Considering this information, the first hypothesis of this study is as follows:

**H1**. Multiple attributes of street foods in Thailand significantly influence tourist satisfaction.

### 2.3.3. Relationship among satisfaction, attitudes, and attachment

Customer satisfaction influences post-purchase attitudes and feelings and future intention (Han, Lee, Chua, Lee, & Kim, 2019; Kwun, 2011; Oliver, 1997). Several studies on food services and tourism have found empirical evidence that customer satisfaction is likely to influence customer outcomes, such as overall attitude and emotions, and it is related to intention (Han, Lee, Chua, & Lee, 2020; Kwun, 2011; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Moon & Han, 2019; Orth, Limon, & Rose, 2010; Li & Liu, 2019). Kwun (2011) studied campus food service attributes and determined that customer attitudes toward perceived value are affected by the quality of products and services, the menu, and the facility. Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012 confirmed that high customer satisfaction creates a positive customer attitude through the restaurant's image and consumer intention. Orth et al. (2010) indicated that customer satisfaction mediates the emotional attachment to a brand of retail customers. Li and Liu (2020)

confirmed that tourist satisfaction and attitudes are positively related to cultural memories and attachment to a destination. Hence, the measurement of satisfaction has long been a critical element in customer decision-making. Consequently, the following hypotheses were developed.

**H2**. Satisfaction with Thai street foods significantly influences attitude toward Thai street foods.

**H3**. Satisfaction with Thai street foods significantly influences attachment to Thai street foods.

### 2.3.4. Relationship among attitudes, attachment, and behavioral intention

Attitude is an important factor in a customer's evaluation of a brand, product, or service (Kwun, 2011), and it is developed on the basis of the difference between pre-information about a product or service and post-purchase experiences (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Oliver, 1999). Customer attachment is highly beneficial business marketing (Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilm, 2010). Attachment in previous studies refers to the level of emotion a consumer feels toward a product/service/brand/place, linked from their post-purchase experience, and relate to customer individual interaction behavior (Orth et al., 2010; Kaufmann, Petrovici, Goncalves Filho & Ayres, 2016). Behavior intention is important goal for service provides and business as the higher number of customer intention is the greater in competitive advantage. Customer behavior intention can be defined as a customer's positive assessment after consumption (Oliver, 1999). Favorable, has been linked to a customer's intention continue to repurchase/revisit and their intention to recommend a product/service to others (Chen & Chen, 2010). Accordingly, behavior intention in this study, defined as an individual customer's positive assessment base on their past experiences and information, desire to return/re-purchase the same produce/service, and willingness to recommend/sharing about produce/service to other.

The study of tourist attitudes have been investigated in previous research to explain the evaluation, feelings, emotional attachment, and behavioral intention of tourists (Li & Liu, 2019; Choi et al., 2013; Choe & Kim, 2018). Such as, Choe and Kim (2018) found that the value attributes of tourists' local food consumption, including taste/quality, epistemic, and emotional attributes, exert a positive effect on tourists' attitudes, food destination image, and behavioral intention. Furthermore, tourists' attitudes and attachments have been highlighted in previous research as requirements for improving future behavioral intention (Jeaheng, Al-Ansi, & Han, 2019; Liu, Wang, Chiu, & Chen, 2018; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010). Yuksel et al. (2010) showed that affective attitude and emotional attachment to a place can influence tourists to recommend the place and their revisit intention. Jeaheng et al. (2019) confirmed that Muslim guests perceive Halal-friendly hotel attributes to be related to their attitudes and positive emotional evaluations, increasing Muslim customers' revisit intention. Liu et al. (2018) showed that hotel guests' positive brand attachment positively influences their intention. Given the aforementioned data, increasing positive attitudes and emotions, such as attachment to a product or service, can play a key role in predicting tourists' future behavioral loyalty. Hence, the following hypotheses were developed.

**H4**. Attitude toward Thai street foods significantly influences attachment to Thai street foods.

**H5**. Attitude toward Thai street foods significantly influences intention to continue eating Thai street foods.

**H6**. Attitude toward Thai street foods significantly influences intention to recommend Thai street foods.

**H7**. Attachment to Thai street foods significantly influences intention to continue eating Thai street foods.

**H8**. Attachment to Thai street foods significantly influences intention to recommend Thai street foods to others.

### 2.3.5. Perceived risk and its moderating impact

The level of risk perception toward an object is related to a customer's evaluating behavior (Choi et al., 2013). The role of perceived risk has been identified as critically influencing consumer behavior in diverse sectors, and it has been used to determine consumer decision-making, as indicated in several studies (Lai-Ming Tam, 2012; Choi et al., 2013; Casidy & Wymer, 2016). Choi et al. (2013) examined the relationship among customer perceived risks and the benefits toward street food, customer attitude, and intention outcomes. They found that the perceived risk dimension influences the relationship between consumer attitude and behavioral intention. The concept of perceived risk has been investigated because of its moderating role in previous studies, such as that of Lai-Ming Tam (2012), which determined that low and high perceived risk groups exhibit a significant relationship with customer post-purchase evaluation and loyalty. Casidy and Wymer (2016) tested the relationship among satisfaction, loyalty, and willingness to pay and the moderating role of perceived risk. The result showed that customers' perceive risk exerts significant positive effects as a moderator in the customer behavioral model. In the current study, the perceived risk of Thai street food consumption may play a moderating role in influencing tourist attitude and attachment toward Thai street foods on tourist behavioral intention. If tourists' perceived risk is high, then they are likely to continue eating and their intention is to recommend Thai street foods. By contrast, if tourists' perceived risk is low, then they are not likely to continue eating and recommending Thai street foods. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H9a.** The perceived risk of Thai street food consumption significantly moderates the relationship between attitude toward Thai street foods and the intention to continue eating them.

**H9b.** The perceived risk of Thai street food consumption significantly moderates the relationship between attitude toward Thai street foods and the intention to recommend them.

**H9c.** The perceived risk of Thai street food consumption significantly moderates the relationship between attachment to Thai street foods and the intention to continue eating them.

**H9d.** The perceived risk of Thai street food consumption significantly moderates the relationship between attachment to Thai street food and the intention to recommend them.

### 3. Methods

This study aims to contribute to Thai street food attribution and tourism post-consumption behavior. The research methodology is illustrated in Fig. 1. First, an approach used in previous studies was adopted to assess street food attributes and measure the items by reviewing existing studies and conducting in-depth interviews (Anderson & Gerbing, 1998; Churchill, 1979; Kim & Eves, 2012). Thereafter, survey development and pretest were conducted. Subsequently, data were collected from international visitors who had experience with Thai street foods using a nonprobability sampling method. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which was recommended by Churchill (1979), was used to refine and implement the measurement model items. The two-step approach of Anderson and Gerbing (1998) was then adopted to examine the variable attributes. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to the initial model. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test and determine the fit to the proposed model and its relationship to the research. In addition, mediation analysis was conducted using a bootstrapping method. Lastly, a moderator was tested with metric invariance on the basis of Steenkamp and Baumgartner's (1998) and Yoo's (2002) procedures.
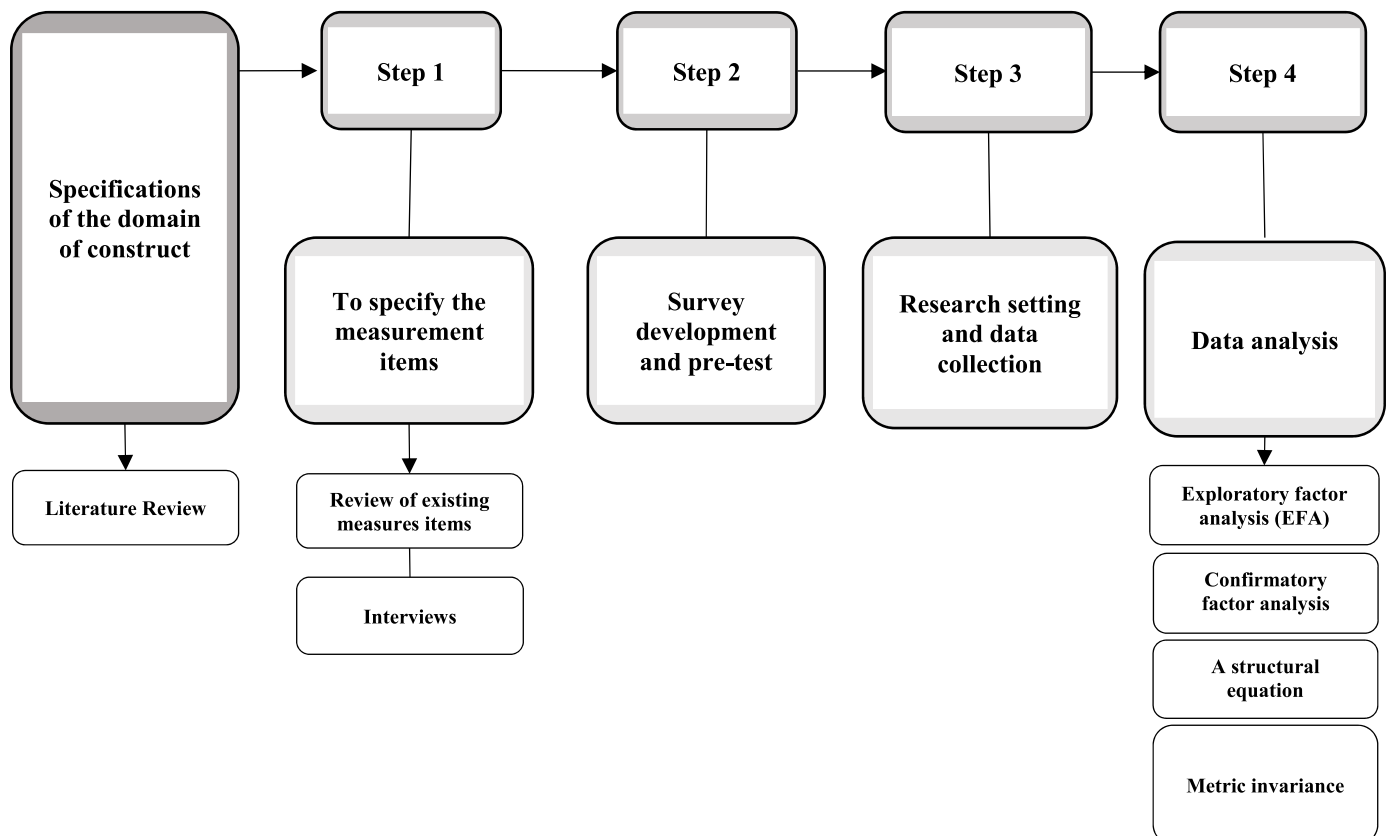


**Fig. 1.** The research methodology flow chart.

## 3.1. Measurement tools for the study

### 3.1.1. Thai street food measurement items

In this study, the key attribute items of the Thai street food questionnaire statements were obtained from previous studies and in-depth interviews. Initially, the previous literature was reviewed on the basis of the characteristics of food tourism and the functions of local and traditional foods that are related to food tourism (Chang et al., 2011; Choe & Kim, 2018; Jang et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2009; Kim & Eves, 2012; Kwun, 2011; Mak et al., 2012; Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). In this study, the key attribute items of the Thai street food questionnaire statements were obtained from previous studies and in-depth interviews. Initially, the previous literature was reviewed on the basis of the characteristics of food tourism and the functions of local and traditional foods that are related to food tourism (Chang et al., 2011; Choe & Kim, 2018; Jang et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2009; Kim & Eves, 2012; Kwun, 2011; Mak et al., 2012; Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). After a review of the relevant literature, in-depth interviews were conducted with 22 respondents who have direct and indirect relevance to Thai street foods. In particular, 14 international tourists who experience Thai street food, 6 professional local food tour guides, and 2 street food business owners participated in the interviews.

### 3.1.2. Other measurement tools

In this study, other valuable measurement instruments were adopted from existing scales in previous studies, including satisfaction with Thai street foods, attitudes toward and attachment to Thai street foods, tourists' behavioral loyalty, and perceived risks. The study variables were measured using multi-item and seven-point Likert scales with the following choices: extremely disagree (1), moderately disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), neutral (4), slightly agree (5), moderately agree (6), and extremely agree (7). The statements for customer attitudes toward Thai street foods were adopted from Jeong et al. (2014) and Choe and Kim (2018) and measured using a semantic differential rating scale with a seven-point scale ranging from bad to very good. The measured variables for satisfaction with Thai street foods were developed from existing studies (Choi et al., 2013; Kim, 2018; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012) and included five items, such as "I am sure being a customer of Thai street foods is the right thing." A five-item scale of attachment to Thai street foods, such as "I feel that Thai street foods are a part of me," was also included. The scales were developed from a previous study by Yuksel et al. (2010) and Jang, Kim, and Lee (2015). Subsequently, statements related to tourists' loyalty toward Thai street foods were developed from previous studies (Han & Hyun, 2017; Kim, 2018; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012), including three items of intention to continue eating Thai street foods, such as "I will eat Thai street foods when traveling." Three items of intention to recommend Thai street foods, such as "I will encourage my friends and relatives to eat Thai street foods when traveling," were also included. Lastly, the measurement of the perceived risk of Thai street food consumption in this research was obtained from previous assessments (Casidy & Wymer, 2016; Choi et al., 2013) and included 10 items, such as "Thai street foods are unsanitary."

### 3.2. Data collection and demographic profiles of the samples

After the questionnaire measurement variables were gathered, the proposed survey questionnaire was sent to two academics/professionals for review and to check its reliability and validity. A pretest was conducted to ensure that the questions were clear and understood by the 14 respondents who participated and had experience with street foods in Thailand. No major changes to the initial survey were required, and only a few words were clarified. The survey questionnaire was designed and developed in English. The questionnaire was then translated into three languages, namely, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, by using the back-translation method.

The survey was conducted in Thailand. The samples were international visitors who had previously experienced with Thai street foods. Initially, The screening question was "Have you ever experienced eating Thai street food?". The survey team informed the participants about the definition of "Thai street food" and research purpose in order to ensure that the potential participants understood the concept of "Thai street food". Using a non-probability convenience sampling technique, the questionnaires were distributed in tourist sites where street foods are easily available in Thailand. The questionnaire was delivered and returned onsite to increase the response rate. A total of 503 questionnaires were collected over a period of four weeks from the third week of January 2019 to the second week of February 2019. After removal of incomplete response, 475 valid cases were used for data analysis.

A total of 475 valid cases were used for the analysis. Among the 475 survey participants, approximately 44.4% (211) had experienced Thai street foods 2–5 times, 26.7% (127) had experienced them 6–10 times, 20.6% (98) had experienced them only once, and 8.2% (39) had experienced them >10 times. Approximately 39.4% (187) had eaten Thai street foods in the past 1–3 days, 32.2% (153) had eaten them the day of the survey, 13.5% (64) had eaten them within the past 4–7 days, 11.4% (54) had eaten them 1–2 weeks ago, and 3.6% (17) last ate them more than 2 weeks ago. The majority of the respondents, i.e., 53.9% (256), were female, and 46.1% (219) were male. A total of 45 different nationalities were represented, and the largest group was from China, 16.6% (79). The next largest groups were from Japan and the USA, 9.1% (43) and 6.1% (29), respectively. The Russian and British groups both accounted for 5.3% (25). The respondents' mean age was 27.6 years old (6.848 SD) and ranged from 16 years old to 70 years old.

The respondents were highly educated: 50.1% (238) were college graduates, 16.8% (80) have graduate degrees, 18.1% had finished high school, 13.7% (65) had college education, and 1.3% (6) had below high school education. The majority of the respondents, i.e., 35.2% (167), reported that they worked in the business sector, 24.2% (115) were students, 12% (57) were professionals, 5.9% (28) were government employees, 5.1% (24) worked in the education sector, 4% (19) were in the agricultural sector, 1 respondent was retired, and 13.4% (64) had other occupations or did not reply to that question. Among the 475 respondents, 23.4% (111) indicated that they had an income between 55,000 and 69,999 USD, 23.1% (110) had an income within the range of 25,000–39,999 USD, 21.1% (100) had an income of <24,999 USD, 19.6% (93) had an income between 40,000 USD and 54,999 USD, 10.5% (50) had an income between 70,000 USD and 84,999 USD, and 2.3% (11) had an income of >85,000 USD. The majority of the respondents, i. e., 70.3% (334), reported that the purpose of their visit to Thailand was for a holiday. More than a half of the respondents, i.e., 53.3% (253), planned to stay in Thailand for 1–7 days, 30.7% (146) planned to stay for 8–14 days, and 16% (76) planned to stay for ≥15 days. The descriptive statistics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Qualitative procedures

This research used a mixed purposeful sampling process. First, an in-depth interview with international tourists who have experience with Thai street food was conducted. International respondents (n = 14) were individuals' tourists and familys tourist who experience Thai street food. They work in government, business, private employees and students within the age group of 18–54 years. Next, a nonprobability sampling with a snowball technique was applied in this process, a total of 6 certificate tour guides participated in this interview. All of them were professional in culture and local experience tour and food tour and have experience with international tourists between 10 and 25 years. Lastly, in-depth interview with 2 street foods (one got Michelin Bib Gourmand and one operated more than 60 years) both located in China town Bangkok (the most famous place for street food in Thailand). The interview period was from the end of November 2018 to early

**Table 1**
Demographic information.

| Variable | Category | Distribution | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Thai street food experiences while traveling | Once | 98 | 20.6 |
| | 2–5 times | 211 | 44.4 |
| | 6–10 times | 127 | 26.7 |
| | 10 + | 39 | 8.2 |
| Last time Thai street food was experienced | Today | 153 | 32.2 |
| | 1–3 days ago | 187 | 39.4 |
| | 4–7 days ago | 64 | 13.5 |
| | 1–2 weeks ago | 54 | 11.4 |
| | More than 2 weeks | 17 | 3.6 |
| Gender | Male | 219 | 46.1 |
| | Female | 256 | 53.9 |
| Nationality | Chinese | 79 | 16.6 |
| | Japanese | 43 | 9.1 |
| | USA | 29 | 6.1 |
| | Russian | 25 | 5.3 |
| | British | 25 | 5.3 |
| | India | 23 | 4.8 |
| | Indonesia | 22 | 4.6 |
| | Korean | 19 | 4.0 |
| | Malaysia | 17 | 3.6 |
| | German | 16 | 3.4 |
| | Other | 177 | 37.26 |
| Age | Mean (Standard deviation) | 27.60 | 6.848 (SD) |
| Education | Less than high school degree | 6 | 1.3 |
| | High school degree | 86 | 18.1 |
| | Some college | 65 | 13.7 |
| | College graduate | 238 | 50.1 |
| | Graduate degree | 80 | 16.8 |
| Occupation | Business | 167 | 35.2 |
| | Professional work | 57 | 12.0 |
| | Government | 28 | 5.9 |
| | Education | 24 | 5.1 |
| | Agricultural | 19 | 4.0 |
| | Student | 115 | 24.2 |
| | Retired | 1 | 0.2 |
| | Other | 64 | 13.4 |
| Income | Under $24,999 | 100 | 21.1 |
| | $25,000 – $39,999 | 110 | 23.1 |
| | $40,000 – $54,999 | 93 | 19.6 |
| | $55,000 - $ 69,999 | 111 | 23.4 |
| | $70,000 – $84,999 | 50 | 10.5 |
| | Over 85,000 | 11 | 2.3 |
| Duration of stay in Thailand | Between 1 and 7 days | 253 | 53.3 |
| | Between 8 and 14 days | 146 | 30.7 |
| | 15 days and more | 76 | 16.0 |

January 2019. Interviews were conducted in English for the international tourists and in Thai for the tour guides and street food vendors. The average length of an interview was approximately 24 min. The interviews were conducted in comfortable places, such as street food selling points, coffee shops, hotel lobbies, and residence lobbies of the respondents. During the interviews, most participants shared their opinions with regard to discovering different foods, learning about culture, and having authentic experiences. The following are important statements that reflect the valuable role played by street foods in promoting Thai culture and traditional experiences.

I like to understand the differences in the countries I visit, especially local habits and culture. Eating other countries' food is the best way to discover and understand those countries, so when traveling aboard, I always eat the food in those countries. Here in Bangkok, I am eating local and street foods.

Eating street foods is one way to experience Thai life. I think eating street foods is more authentic than eating in restaurants, and street foods offer real Thai food taste.

The tour guides offered interesting insights.

Aside from tours of Wung (Temple) and Wang (Palace), a local food tour is one of the favorite requested programs. Eating Thai street foods is a part of our tour program. I think Thai street foods offer a sense of Thailand to tourists. They will learn something new and see traditional Thai. Many international tourists like the street food experience.

The most common issue about Thai street foods is related to quality. The following quotes reflect these concerns.

I am looking for high turnover and clean street food shops. I'm quite afraid of dirty food. I have gotten food poisoning that required hospitalization two or three times when traveling in Southeast Asia.

The most important things that I consider are hygiene and freshness. I will be looking for street food stalls that offer freshly cooked food with fresh ingredients and recipes.

The food vendors also addressed the freshness issue.

As you know, our shop has operated for more than 50 years. This is the second generation. I provide food products that are new, fresh, clean, and with good quality. I keep the original taste the same as my father did. I learned everything and every process from my father and do the same things he did.

Other important concerns for tourists are related to the environment of the street food selling area. The respondents commented on the street food selling environment as follows.

The street food place must be easily visible and in a good location. Moreover, the street food shop should have a good atmosphere and be a hygienic and clean area.

The guides weighed in on the environment of the street food selling area in the following statements.

Tourists are always looking for street food shops that provide a nice environment and are neat and clean, such as tables and seating areas that are spacious and have easy access along with a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere.

The performance and skills of street food staff were also important attributes emphasized by participants. The following statements reflect these issues.

We need some suggestions. The Thai staff should speak in English or be willing to communicate with us because we don't know about the menu. If they can speak in English, it will be easy for us to know what we want to try on the many items listed in the menu of Thai street foods.

The menu is also an important element of Thai street foods. The menu should provide clear pictures and descriptions of how the food will taste. Clear pricing should also be displayed. A respondent's statement regarding this issue is as follows.

The other thing that I prefer and look for in a street food shop is that the menu is presented with clear pricing and pictures of the food. The pictures of the dishes are the best way to help me know about them.

Price is a priority that motivates and enforces customers' purchase decisions. The affordable pricing of Thai street foods is an attribute mentioned in the following tourists' remarks.

I like Thai food. I heard that Thai street food is very cheap and tastes good, so I tried it because of its cost-effectiveness. I am very satisfied.

Street food is very cheap compared with other food prices, such as in a restaurant.

The previous literature and in-depth interviews of the 22

respondents were combined. A total of 61 street food attributes were identified. These attributes were divided into seven temporary categories: (1) core food production, (2) meal portion and packaging, (3) staff performance, (4) menu, (5) physical environment, (6) cultural and local experiences, and (7) value for money.

## 4.2. Measured model approach

### 4.2.1. EFA approach

EFA was applied in this study by using maximal likelihood analysis and a varimax rotation method to determine Thai street food attributes. Among the 61 developed items, 45 were explored and condensed into 9 factors. The value of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy was 0.928, and Bartlett's sphericity was significant (p < 0.001), verifying the adequacy of the EFA. All the nine factors had eigenvalues of >1.000, and the total variance of the nine factors accounted for 63.235%. The first factor was cultural and local experiences, and it involved nine items with a factor that captured 32.964% of the variance. Factor 2 was labeled menu and atmosphere, and it included eight items and explained approximately 6.833% of the variance. The third factor was termed staff service, and it included six items with 6.091% of the variance. Factor 4 was called core food quality, and it contained five items with 4.129% of the variance. Factor 5 was labeled value for money, and it included four items that captured 3.607% of the variance. Factor 6 was named product attractiveness, and it involved four items with 2.875% of the variance. The seventh factor was called staff proficiency, and it included three items with 2.623% of the variance. The eighth factor was labeled packaging and portions, and it included three items that accounted for 2.081% of the variance. Lastly, the ninth factor included three items loaded into a single factor called traditional and authentic. This factor explained approximately 2.032% of the variance. All factor loadings for the 45 items were high and exceeded the threshold of 0.50 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). In terms of the reliability of the explored constructs, the coefficient alpha values were >0.70 and were between 0.876 and 0.917, indicating that the nine factors meet the reliability criteria (Nunally, 1978). All nine factors were statistically appropriate for the data analysis and the measurement assessment. The skewness values ranged from −0.0906 (standard error = 112) to +0.055 (standard error = 112) and fell between −1.00 and + 1.00. The kurtosis values ranged from −0.709 (standard error = 224) to 1.396 (standard error = 224) and fell between −1.00 and + 1.00. The results indicate that the study data set was acceptable and free from skewness and kurtosis problems. The data set was valid in terms of the normality and homoscedasticity of residuals. Table 2 presents a summary of the EFA results.

### 4.2.2. CFA approach

CFA was performed to generate the measurement model for quality testing using AMOS software version 23.0. The results of the CFA summary are presented in Fig. 2. The CFA findings indicated that the model exhibited a satisfactory fit for the data, i.e., goodness-of-fit statistics for the measurement model: $\chi^2 = 3026.919$, df = 909, $\chi^2$/df = 3.330, p < 0.001, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.070, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.855, and normed fit index (NFI) = 0.806. Subsequently, the composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.854 to 0.919, indicating that the result had excellent reliability values in accordance with the recommended cutoff level of 0.60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998). The average variance extracted (AVE) showed that all the constructs were acceptable from 0.530 to 0.746, and they were all greater than the threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). The squared correlations between the nine constructs were smaller than the AVE values. Accordingly, the CFA findings confirmed the validity, and the discriminant validity of the nine measurement items was evident (Hair et al., 2014).

### 4.2.3. Measurement model results

The additional six variable items in this study's model included satisfaction with Thai street foods, attitude toward Thai street foods, attachment to Thai street foods, intention to continue eating Thai street foods, intention to recommend Thai street foods, and the perceived risks of Thai street food consumption. The CFA findings reported that the goodness-of-fit statistics were adequate ($\chi^2 = 7685.948$, df = 2809, $\chi^2$/df = 2.736, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.061, CFI = 0.842, and NFI = 0.773). The CR presented high values ranging from 0.854 to 0.929 and had excellent reliability that exceeded the suggested cutoff level of 0.60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998). Subsequently, the AVE of each item was tested. The values ranged from 0.530 to 0.747. All the constants were higher than the minimum recommended cutoff level of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). The discriminant validity and the reliability of the constructs were established. The results showed that the AVE values of all the constructs were higher than the square correlation of the constructs (Hair et al., 2014).

## 4.3. SEM approach

SEM was used to test the proposed model. The goodness-of-fit statistics of the model were as follows: $\chi^2 = 5774.336$, df = 2152, $\chi^2$/df = 2.683, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.060, CFI = 0.849, and incremental fit index (IFI) = 850. The results of SEM are given and summarized in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 states that the attributes of street foods in Thailand are positively and significantly related to satisfaction with Thai street foods. The findings indicate that the seven of nine important elements are positively significant (β cultural and local experiences → satisfaction with Thai street foods = 0.214, t = 2.749, and p < 0.01; β menu and atmosphere → satisfaction with Thai street foods = −0.142, t = −2.184, and p < 0.05; β staff service → satisfaction with Thai street foods = 0.116, t = 1.984, and p < 0.05; β value for money → satisfaction with Thai street foods = 0.307, t = 7.506, and p < 0.001; β product attractiveness → satisfaction with Thai street foods = 0.137, t = 2.513, and p < 0.05; β staff proficiency → satisfaction with Thai street foods = 0.082, t = 2.016, and p < 0.05; β traditional and authentic → satisfaction with Thai street foods = 0.129, t = 2.242, and p < 0.05). Only wo constructs were insignificant (β core food quality → satisfaction with Thai street foods = 0.003, t = 0.067, and p > 0.05; β packaging and portion → satisfaction with Thai street foods = −0.012, t = −0.235, and p > 0.05).

The results of Hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported. Satisfaction with Thai street foods exerts a significant and positive effect on attitude toward Thai street foods (H2: β satisfaction with Thai street foods → attitude toward Thai street foods = 0.116, t = 7.264, and p < 0.001) and on attachment to Thai street foods (H3: β satisfaction with Thai street foods → attachment to Thai street foods = 0.434, t = 6.392, and p < 0.001). Hypothesis 4, which involves attitude toward Thai street foods, exerts a positive and significant influence on attachment to Thai street foods (β attitude toward Thai street foods → attachment to Thai street foods = 0.195, t = 2.393, and p < 0.05). Hypotheses 5 and 6 were used as the basis to test the SEM result. The findings showed that attitude toward Thai street foods has a positive and significant affective evaluation on intention to continue eating Thai street foods (H5: β attitude toward Thai street foods → intention to continue eating Thai street foods = 0.556, t = 7.405, and p < 0.001) and on intention to recommend Thai street foods (H6: β attitude toward Thai street foods → intention to recommend Thai street foods = 0.409, t = 6.195, and p < 0.001). Hypotheses 7 and 8, which involve attachment to Thai street foods, exert a significant and positive impact on intention to continue eating Thai street foods (H7: β attachment to Thai street foods → intention to continue eating Thai street foods = 0.294, t = 6.941, and p < 0.001) and on intention to recommend Thai street foods (H8: β attachment to Thai street foods → intention to recommend Thai street foods = 0.275, t = 6.996, and p < 0.001). The total variance of satisfaction with Thai street foods was $R^2 = 0.516$. Attitude toward and attachment to Thai street foods were $R^2 = 0.152$ and 0.159, respectively. Intention to continue

**Table 2**

Summary of the exploratory factor analytic results. (9 factors).

| Factor | % of variance (Eigen-value) | Mean | Std. Deviation | Factor Loadings | Coefficient alphas | Skewness (Std.error) | | Kurtosis (Std. error) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 1 Cultural and local experience (SFCL) | 32.964 | | | | .892 | | | | |
| SV1. Experience with Thai street food offers a sense of Thai culture. | | 5.68 | .958 | .628 | | -.412 | .112 | -.195 | .224 |
| SV2. Experience with Thai street food offers a unique of Thai traditions. | | 5.67 | .909 | .722 | | -.361 | .112 | -.174 | .224 |
| SV3. Experience with Thai street food presents a traditional and cultural image of Thailand. | | 5.68 | .879 | .689 | | -.329 | .112 | -.032 | .224 |
| SV4. Experience with Thai street food gives an opportunity to increase new knowledge of Thailand cultures. | | 5.63 | .955 | .703 | | -.474 | .112 | .071 | .224 |
| SV5. Experiencing Thai street food helps me to understand local people lifestyle | | 5.68 | .905 | .831 | | -.276 | .112 | -.370 | .224 |
| SV6. Experiencing Thai street food makes me seek things that I don't usually see. | | 5.70 | .925 | .775 | | -.506 | .112 | .789 | .224 |
| SV7. Experiencing Thai street food enables me to learn what Thai food/local food tastes like. | | 5.74 | .979 | .727 | | -.524 | .112 | -.021 | .224 |
| SV8. Experiencing Thai street food allows me to discover something unique. | | 5.65 | .944 | .615 | | -.332 | .112 | -.054 | .224 |
| SV9. Tasting a Thai street food in an original place is an authentic experience. | | 5.76 | .913 | .533 | | -.418 | .112 | -.353 | .224 |
| Factor2 Menu and atmosphere (SFMA) | 6.833 | | | | .893 | | | | |
| SM6. Thai street food menu provides picture and description. | | 5.54 | 1.053 | .732 | | -.617 | .112 | .172 | .224 |
| SM7. Thai street food menu informs food tastes/grades (*i.e. spicy or not spicy*). | | 5.49 | 1.133 | .809 | | -.718 | .112 | .380 | .224 |
| SM8. Thai street food menu shows a clear price and easy to obvious. | | 5.59 | 1.072 | .674 | | -.811 | .112 | .901 | .224 |
| SE1. Thai street food areas are neat and clean. | | 5.34 | 1.248 | .772 | | -.731 | .112 | .046 | .224 |
| SE2. Thai street food has easy accessibility. | | 5.63 | 995 | .624 | | -.498 | .112 | -.269 | .224 |
| SE3. Thai street food eye-catching to the customer (i.e., lighten, name). | | 5.61 | .975 | .635 | | -.504 | .112 | -.005 | .224 |
| SE4. Thai street food provides information of service time. | | 5.49 | 1.122 | .701 | | -.906 | .112 | 1.396 | .224 |
| SE5. Thai street food has a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere. | | 5.59 | 1.014 | .594 | | -.493 | .112 | .020 | .224 |
| Factor 3 Staff service (SFSS) | 6.091 | | | | .902 | | | | |
| SS1. Thai street food staff is being friendly. | | 5.59 | .988 | .679 | | -.350 | .112 | −338 | .224 |
| SS2. Thai street food staff is being helpful. | | 5.53 | 1.006 | .714 | | -.289 | .112 | -.391 | .224 |
| SS3. Thai staff is willing to go the extra mile. | | 5.51 | 1.058 | .757 | | -.481 | .112 | .068 | .224 |
| SS4. Staff is pleased to serve Thai street food. | | 5.63 | .936 | .881 | | -.383 | .112 | -.323 | .224 |
| SS5. Thai street food staff is being kindliness. | | 5.67 | .963 | .850 | | -.369 | .112 | -.380 | .224 |
| SS6. Thai street food staff is being courteous. | | 5.67 | .969 | .677 | | -.318 | .112 | -.676 | .224 |
| Factor 4 Core food quality (SFCQ) | 4.129 | | | | .876 | | | | |
| SC1. Thai street food provides freshness of foods, ingredients, and recipes. | | 4.93 | 1.145 | .620 | | -.048 | .112 | .074 | .224 |
| SC2. Thai street food provides nutrient-rich foods, ingredients, and recipes. | | 4.86 | 1.138 | .564 | | .055 | .112 | -.286 | .224 |
| SC3. Thai street food provides cleanness of foods, ingredients, and recipes. | | 5.01 | 1.176 | .920 | | -.418 | .112 | .155 | .224 |
| SC4. Thai street food is good for health (*i.e. many Thai herbs, varieties nutrition*). | | 5.21 | 1.097 | .649 | | -.440 | .112 | -.012 | .224 |
| SC5. Thai street food is safe to eat/consume. (*i.e. prepare, fresh products*) | | 5.25 | 1.175 | .670 | | -.560 | .112 | .576 | .224 |
| Factor 5 Value for money (SFVM) | 3.607 | | | | .917 | | | | |
| SP1. Thai street food is reasonably priced. | | 5.33 | 1.072 | .806 | | -.160 | .112 | -.517 | .224 |
| SP2. Thai street food offers value for money to pay. | | 5.38 | 1.023 | .944 | | -.077 | .112 | -.687 | .224 |
| SP3. Thai street food charge is appropriated. | | 5.50 | .989 | .919 | | -.095 | .112 | -.709 | .224 |
| SP4. Thai street food is inexpensive. | | 5.55 | 1.049 | .827 | | -.428 | .112 | -.065 | .224 |
| Factor 6 Product attractiveness (SFPA) | 2.875 | | | | .877 | | | | |
| SC7. Thai street food smells nice. | | 5.53 | 1.070 | .606 | | -.625 | .112 | .751 | .224 |
| SC8. Thai street food is tasty/yummy. | | 5.61 | 1.022 | .948 | | -.474 | .112 | .034 | .224 |
| SC9. Thai street food look a pleasant texture. | | 5.60 | .985 | .806 | | -.333 | .112 | -.369 | .224 |
| SC10. Overall, Thai street food preparation/taste/flavor with quality. | | 5.57 | 1.050 | .540 | | -.407 | .112 | -.040 | .224 |
| Factor7 Staff proficiency cooking (SFSP) | 2.623 | | | | .859 | | | | |
| SS9. Thai street food staff is well-known about the street food menu. | | 5.12 | 1.160 | .747 | | -.138 | .112 | -.185 | .224 |
| SS10. Thai street food staff has an efficient cook appearance by wearing a clearness and prompt suite. | | 4.95 | 1.196 | .809 | | -.117 | .112 | -.493 | .224 |
| SS11. Overall performance of street food staff provided is satisfied. | | 5.32 | 1.078 | .757 | | -.273 | .112 | -.196 | .224 |
| Factor8 Packaging and portion (SFPP) | 2.081 | | | | .852 | | | | |
| SL2. Thai street food portion/container look delicious. | | 5.39 | 1.005 | .664 | | -.459 | .112 | .234 | .224 |
| SL3. Thai street food is a properness and nice packaging. | | 5.41 | 1.113 | .892 | | -.743 | .112 | .938 | .224 |
| SL4. Overall, Thai street food presentation is visually attractive. | | 5.61 | 1.028 | .751 | | -.638 | .112 | .512 | .224 |
| Factor9 Traditional and *authenticity* (SFTA) | 2.032 | | | | .898 | | | | |
| SV11. Tasting Thai street food in a traditional way is a special experience. | | 5.75 | .955 | .748 | | -.462 | .112 | -.242 | .224 |
| | | 5.75 | .962 | .810 | | -.613 | .112 | .243 | .224 |

**Table 2** (*continued*)

| Factor | % of variance (Eigen-value) | Mean | Std. Deviation | Factor Loadings | Coefficient alphas | Skewness (Std.error) | | Kurtosis (Std. error) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SV12. Experience with Thai street food provides the original of Thailand features. | | | | | | | | | |
| SV13. Thai street food is widely popular and famous (well-known). | | 5.82 | .938 | .820 | | -.426 | .112 | -.349 | .224 |
| **Total variance:** | **63.235** | | | | | | | | |

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .928.

eating Thai street foods was $R^2 = 0.304$, and intention to recommend Thai street foods was $R^2 = 0.313$.

Next, the mediating role of each variable was identified using a bootstrapping technique, and the result of the indirect impact was assessed through other contrast variables. The findings showed that street food attributes exerted a significant effect on the indirect impact on attitude toward Thai street foods ($\beta$ STCL → STSF → ATSF = 0.067, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFMA → STSF → ATSF = −0.045, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFSP → STSF → ATSF = 0.037, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFCF → STSF → ATSF = 0.001, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFVM → STSF → ATSF = 0.097, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPA → STSF → ATSF = 0.043, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPS → STSF → ATSF = 0.026, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPP → STSF → ATSF = −0.004, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFTA → STSF → ATSF = 0.041, p < 0.05). Similarly, the indirect paths exerted a significant impact on attachment to Thai street foods ($\beta$ STCL → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.106, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFMA → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = −0.071, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFSP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.058, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFCF → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.002, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFVM → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.152, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPA → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.068, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPS → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.041, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = −0.006, p < 0.05; $\beta$ STSF → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.064, p < 0.05; $\beta$ STSF → ATSF → ACTSF = 0.061, p < 0.05). The 10 indirect paths exerted a significant impact on the intention to recommend Thai street foods ($\beta$ STCL → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.057, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFMA → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = −0.038, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFSP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.031, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFCF → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.001, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFVM → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.082, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPA → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.036, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFSP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.022, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = −0.003, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFTA → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.034, p < 0.05; $\beta$ ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.053, p < 0.05). Only one indirect patch exhibited an insignificant relationship ($\beta$ STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → IRTSF = 0.265, p > 0.05). The findings showed that the 10 paths were significantly related to the intention to continue eating Thai street foods ($\beta$ STCL → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.069, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFMA → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = −0.046, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFSP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.037, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFCF → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.001, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFVM → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.099, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPA → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.044, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFSP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.026, p < 0.05; $\beta$ SFPP → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = −0.004, p < 0.05; $\beta$ STSF → STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.041 p < 0.05; $\beta$ ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.057, p < 0.05). And one indirect path presented an insignificant relationship ($\beta$ STSF → ATSF → ACTSF → ICTSF = 0.321, p > 0.05). The results of the indirect impact assessment are summarized in Table 3.

*4.4. Moderator model approach by an invariance model assessment*

The next stage of the analysis is to investigate Hypotheses 9a–9d, which are related to the moderating impact. This task was performed using metric invariance. The study sample was divided into two conspicuous high and low groups using the k-means cluster analytical approach. The high group perceived the high risks of Thai street food consumption and provided 288 responses. The low group perceived the low risks of Thai street food consumption and provided 187 responses. The results showed that the goodness-of-fit statistics of the unrestricted model were adequate to the data ($\chi^2 = 8116.356$, df = 4238, $\chi^2$/df = 1.915, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.044, CFI = 0.842, and IFI = 0.844) and the full metric invariance to the data ($\chi^2 = 8086.286$, df = 4301, p < 0.001,

$\chi^2$/df = 1.880, RMSEA = 0.043, CFI = 0.846, and IFI = 0.847). The findings indicated that the $\chi^2$ difference test between the unrestricted and fully restricted models was insignificant: ($\Delta\chi^2$=(63) = 30.068, p > 0.01). Hence, the results of the moderating variable were freely estimated and generally supported. The details are shown in Table 4.

The invariance test for the structural model was investigated. The model exhibited adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 8518.598$, df = 4304, p < 0.001, $\chi^2$/df = 1.979, RMSEA = 0.045, CFI = 0.828, and IFI = 0.707). The baseline model was compared with the nested models between the two groups of perceived risks of Thai street food consumption in accordance with the data reported in Table 4 and Fig. 3. The $\chi^2$ test results showed that attitude toward Thai street foods to the intention to continue eating ($\Delta\chi^2$=(1) = 0.648, p > 0.001) and recommending ($\Delta\chi^2$=(1) = 0.596, p > 0.001) Thai street foods was insignificant between the two groups (H9a and H9b). In particular, the path link between the attachment to Thai street foods to intention to continue eating Thai street foods was determined via the $\chi^2$ test ($\Delta\chi^2$=(1) = 25.316, p < 0.001). The intention to recommend Thai street foods ($\Delta\chi^2$=(1) = 33.304, p < 0.001) was significant. This result supported the hypothesized moderating effect (H9c and H9d).

## 5. Discussion and implications

### 5.1. General discussion

This study was designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the attributes of Thai street foods based on tourists' post-purchase experiences and their perceptions during their visit to Thailand. In this study, a qualitative technique was used to identify Thai street food attributes. This approach generated Thai street food attributes that are considered important factors by international tourists. This study also examined the attributes of Thai street foods among the construct variables, including tourist satisfaction with, attitude toward, and attachment to their intention. Lastly, this study identified the role of perceived risks of Thai street food consumption among attitude, attachment, and loyalty. Exploratory and confirmatory statistical analyses were used to thoroughly verify the elements of Thai street foods. The following nine potential dimensions of Thai street foods were acceptable in terms of reliability and validity levels: (1) cultural and local experiences, (2) menu and atmosphere, (3) staff service, (4) core food quality, (5) value for money, (6) product attractiveness, (7) staff proficiency, (8) packaging and portions, and (9) traditional and authentic.

The findings identified cultural and local experiences as the largest factor. All the item variables were related to learning and knowledge of Thai cultural and local experiences and the realization of authentic Thai experience by eating Thai street foods. This result substantiates the opinion that tourists are generally seeking and focusing on new experiences, such as local cultural and authentic way of life (Henderson, 2019, pp. 45–57; Kim & Eves, 2012). The second dimension, namely, menu and atmosphere, was associated with Thai street food menu information, description, food picture/presentation, food variety, and atmosphere of Thai street food areas as clean and comfortable; these aspects were identified in previous customer food consumption research (Kwun, 2001; Jang et al., 2011; Ali et al., 2015). The third dimension, i. e., staff service, comprised of the service offered by street food sellers and/or cooks, such as being friendly, helpful, kind, and courteous.
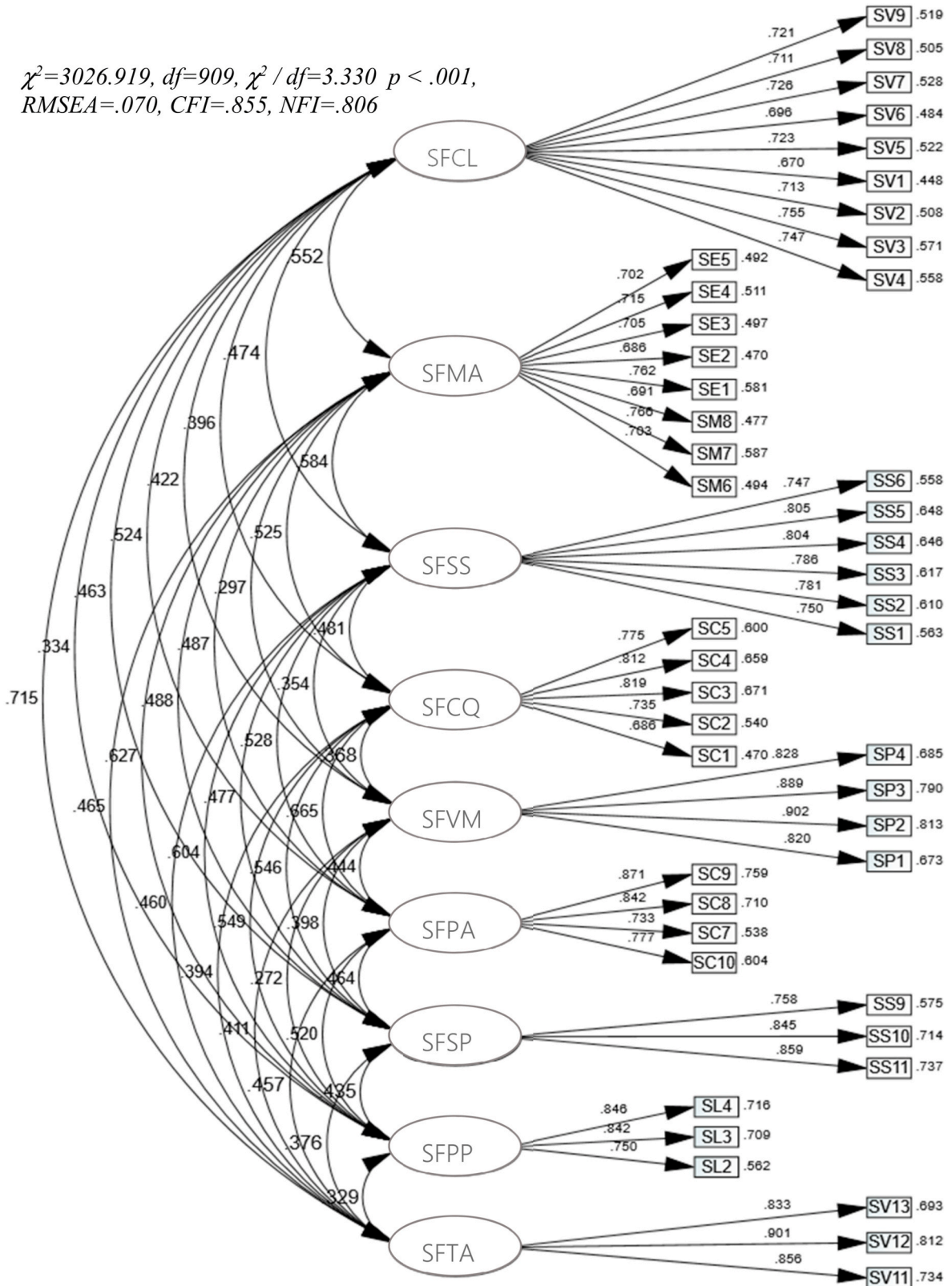
**Fig. 2.** The measurement model – the attributes of Thai street food.
Cultural and local experiencing = SFCL, Menu and atmosphere = SFMA, Staff service = SFSS, Core food quality = SFCQ, Value for money = SFVM, Product attractiveness = SFPA, Staff proficiency = SFSP, Packaging and portion = SFPP, Traditional and authenticity = SFTA.

**Table 3**
Results of the structural equation modeling.

| | | | Standardized Estimates | t-Values | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SFCL | → | STSF | .214 | 2.749** | Supported |
| SFMA | → | STSF | -.142 | −2.184* | Supported |
| SFSS | → | STSF | .116 | 1.984* | Supported |
| SFCF | → | STSF | .003 | 0.067 | Not supported |
| SFVM | → | STSF | .307 | 7.506*** | Supported |
| SFPA | → | STSF | .137 | 2.513* | Supported |
| SFSP | → | STSF | .082 | 2.016* | Supported |
| SFPP | → | STSF | -.012 | −0.235 | Not supported |
| SFTA | → | STSF | .129 | 2.242* | Supported |
| STSF | → | ATSF | .316 | 7.264*** | Supported |
| STSF | → | ACTSF | .434 | 6.392*** | Supported |
| ATSF | → | ACTSF | .195 | 2.393* | Supported |
| ATSF | → | ICTSF | .556 | 7.405*** | Supported |
| ATSF | → | IRTSF | .409 | 6.195*** | Supported |
| ACTSF | → | ICTSF | .294 | 6.941*** | Supported |
| ACTSF | → | IRTSF | .275 | 6.996*** | Supported |

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| SFCL | SFMA | SFSP | SFCF | SFVM | SFPA | SFSP | SFPP | SFTA | STSF | ATSF | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STSF | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| ATSF | .067* | -.045* | .037* | .001* | .097* | .043* | .026* | -.004* | .041* | – | – |
| ACTSF | .106* | -.071* | .058* | .002* | .152* | .068* | .041* | -.006* | .064* | .061* | – |
| IRTSF | .057* | -.038* | .031* | .001* | .082* | .036* | .022* | -.003* | .034* | .265 | .053* |
| ICTSF | .069* | -.046* | .037* | .001* | .099* | .044* | .026* | -.004* | .041* | .321 | .057* |

Indirect **Goodness-of-fit statistics:** $\chi^2 = 5774.336$, df = 2152, p < 0.001, $\chi^2$/df = 2.683, RMSEA = .060, CFI = .849, NFI = .781     $R^2$

SFTA = .516
ATSF = .152
ACTSF = .159
IRTSF = .313
ICTSF = .304

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.
Cultural and local experiencing = SFCL, Menu and atmosphere = SFMA, Staff service = SFSP, Core food quality = SFCF, Value for money = SFVM, Product attractiveness = SFPA, Staff proficiency = SFSP, Packaging and portion = SFPP, Traditional and authenticity = SFTA, Satisfaction with Thai street foods = STSF, Attitude toward Thai street foods = ATSF, Attachment to Thai street foods = ACTSF, Intention to continue eating Thai street foods = ICTSF, Intention to recommend Thai street foods = IRTSF.

**Table 4**
The results of the measurement and structural – invariance models for High PRTSFC (288) and Low PRTSFC group (187).

Measurement – invariance models for the high (N = 288) and low (N = 187)

| Models | $X^2$ | df | $\Delta\chi^2$ | Full-metric invariance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-restricted model | 8116.354 | 4238 | (63) = 30.068, p > 0.01 (insignificant) | Supported |
| Full-metric invariance | 8086.286 | 4301 | | |

Other Goodness-of-Fit indices of the non-restricted model: RMSEA = .044, CFI = .842, IFI = .844
Other Goodness-of-Fit indices of the Full-restricted model: RMSEA = .043, CFI = .846, IFI = .847

| Paths | High PRTSFC group (n = 288) | | Low PRTSFC group (n = 187) | | Baseline model | Nested model |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Coefficients | t-values | Coefficients | t-values | (freely estimated) | (Constrained to be Equal) |
| ATSF > ICTSF | .396 | 4.592*** | .510 | 4.472*** | $X^2$ (4304) = 8518.598 | $X^2$ (4305) = 8519.246[a] |
| ATSF > IRTSF | .246 | 3.787*** | .353 | 3.581*** | $X^2$ (4304) = 8518.598. | $X^2$ (4305) = 8519.194[b] |
| ACTSF > ICTSF | .659 | 9.274*** | .205. | 3.584*** | $X^2$ (4304) = 8518.598 | $X^2$ (4305) = 8543.914[c] |
| ACTSF > IRTSF | .638 | 9.507*** | 176 | 3.464*** | $X^2$ (4304) = 8518.598 | $X^2$ (4305) = 8551.902[d] |

Chi-square difference test:

a $\Delta\chi^2$ = (1) = 0.648, p > 0.001 (not supported)
b $\Delta\chi^2$ = (1) = 0.596, p > 0.001 (not supported)
c $\Delta\chi^2$ = (1) = 25.316, p < 0.001 (supported)
d $\Delta\chi^2$ = (1) = 33.304, p < 0.001 (supported)    *Goodness-of-fit statistics for the baseline model*$^2$ = 8518.598, df = 4304 p < 0.001, $\chi^2$/df = 1.979, RMSEA = .045, CFI = 828, IFI = .707

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.
Attitude toward Thai street foods = ATSF, Attachment to Thai street foods = ACTSF, Intention to continue eating Thai street foods = ICTSF, Intention to recommend Thai street foods = IRTSF, Perceived risks of Thai street foods consumption = PRTSFC.

Undoubtedly, service from the staff is an important priority factor related to business success, particularly in the hospitality and tourism industries (Chang et al., 2011; Jang et al., 2011). Fourth, the participants' perceptions about core food quality included the basic elements, such as freshness and cleanliness of food, ingredients, and recipes.

The fifth dimension, namely, value for money, was related to the prices of Thai street food products, which were reasonable with an appropriate value for money. This factor was confirmed as the key characteristic of street foods, which are generally offered for a low price (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). The sixth dimension, which is product attractiveness, is related to tourists' attraction to street foods based on good smell, delicious taste, and pleasant texture along with

**Fig. 3.** Structural model estimation (n = 475).
H = High perceived risks of Thai street foods consumption.
L = Low perceived risks of Thai street foods consumption.
Cultural and local experiencing = SFCL, Menu and atmosphere = SFMA, Staff service = SFSS, Core food quality = SFCF, Value for money = SFVM, Product attractiveness = SFPA, Staff proficiency = SFSP, Packaging and portion = SFPP, Traditional and authenticity = SFTA.
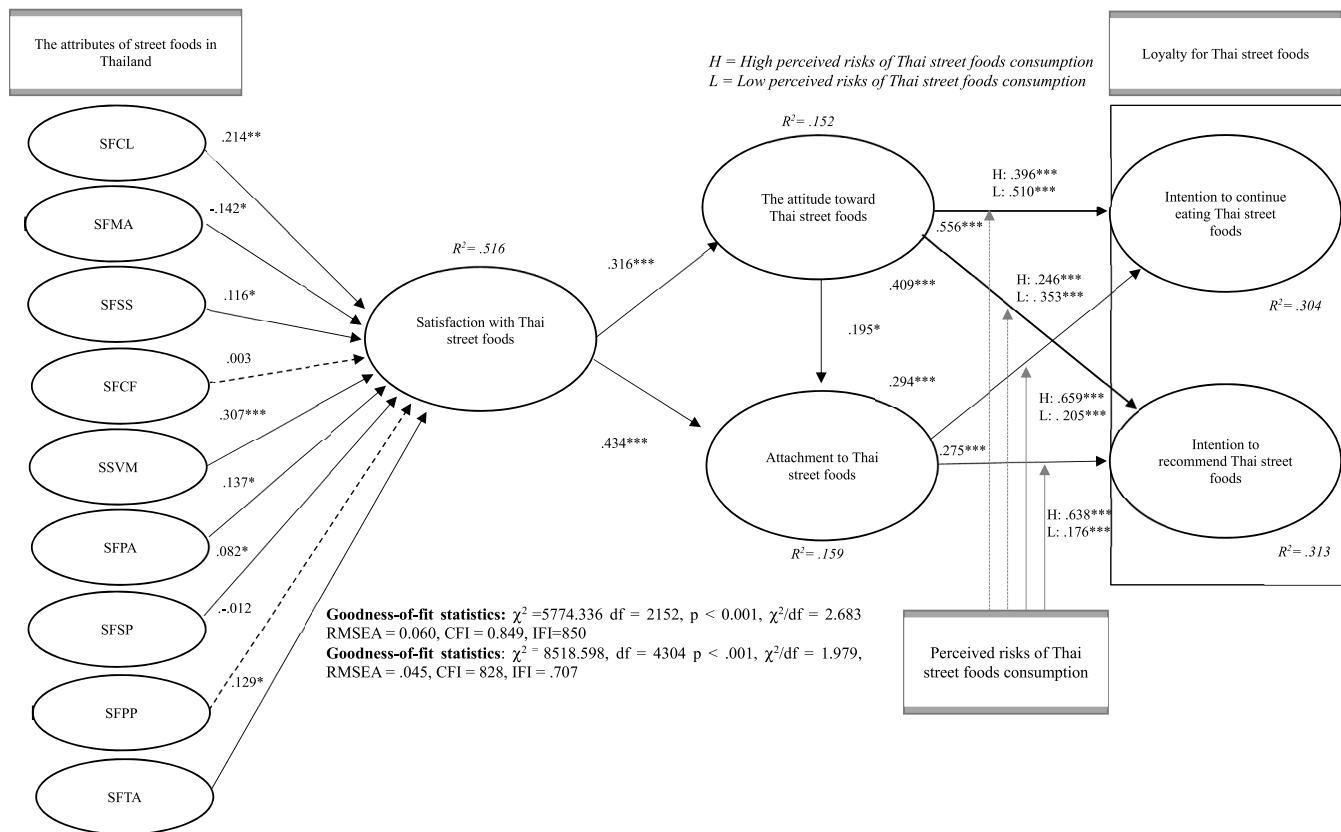
high quality and hygiene. The seventh factor, which is staff proficiency, is related to the ability of the sellers and/or cooks to inform and communicate with tourists about their products and menus and efficiently prepare/cook street foods. The next dimension, labeled packaging and portions, is related to packaging design, portion size, and the general appearance of street foods (i.e., looks delicious and visually attractive). The last dimension, namely, traditional and authentic, relates to the popularity of Thai street foods, which are well-known for offering special traditional experiences that are authentically Thai.

The proposed model indicated that the attributes of Thai street foods play a role in tourist satisfaction. Tourists' attitude toward and attachment to Thai street foods are related to behavioral loyalty. The results of the SEM approach showed seven potential elements of Thai street foods that were significant predictors of tourist satisfaction with Thai street foods. These elements included cultural and local experiences, menu and atmosphere, staff service, value for money, product attractiveness, staff proficiency, and traditional and authentic experiences. The results confirmed that the perceived elements were positively significantly related to tourists' satisfaction when they received these elements. For example, the findings related to some dimensions, such as cultural and local experiences and traditional and authentic, are consistent with the past literature (Kim et al., 2011; Chang et al., 2011; Mak et al., 2012; Kim & Eves, 2012). Staff service quality, which included staff performance and skill, was a key element of success in the hospitality and tourism industries (Zhao et al., 2012; Chang et al., 2011; Canny, 2014; Zang et al., 2019). The product attractiveness attribute was confirmed to be positively significant in tourist behavior in previous studies (Han & Ryu, 2009; Zhao et al., 2012). Travelers' perception of price reasonableness is an important predictor of customer satisfaction (Han & Ryu,

2009; Ali et al., 2016).

The menus and atmosphere of street foods exhibited a significant negative association to customer evaluation and behavior. Such an output is statistical because of the high correlation and collinearity values between the constructs. The finding confirms that the essential role manifests a positive significance over tourists' feelings. The menu and atmosphere dimension is regarded as an important factor in food marketing, which has been shown in previous food business studies (Han & Ryu, 2009; Zhao et al., 2012). The results indicated that two attributes, namely, core food quality and street food packaging, were insignificant with regard to tourist satisfaction with Thai street foods. Food quality is generally regarded as an important element in the food business and should be provided to meet the needs and satisfaction of customers; this aspect has been widely considered in previous studies (Canny, 2014; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012). In this case, international visitors may question and worry about hygiene and the quality of street foods, which has been observed in past Southeast Asian street food studies (Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017; Henderson et al., 2012).

The proposed theoretical model of tourists' satisfaction, attitude, attachment, and behavioral intention exerted a positive effect on tourist loyalty intention toward Thai street foods. The results supported previous studies (Orth et al., 2010; Kwun, 2011; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Li & Liu, 2020) and confirmed attitude and attachment as mediating predictors of tourist loyalty (Li & Liu, 2020; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012). This study also assessed the metric invariance of the perceived risks of street food consumption among tourist attitude, attachment, and behavioral loyalty. The results confirmed that the perceived risks of the high and low groups play a significant role as moderator in attachment to Thai street foods and behavioral intention. The findings indicated that the

perceived risks of the high and low groups had a negative impression as moderator of attitude toward Thai street foods and tourist future intention. Given the preceding evidence, this study recommends that tourists' perceived food consumption risks must be efficiently managed to improve future behavioral intention.

### 5.2. Implications

Food tourism has increasingly flourished in the hospitality and tourism contexts. Understanding tourists' attitudes and needs regarding food plays a role in the choice of destination. This study investigated Thai street food attributes and the roles they play in tourists' satisfaction, attitude, attachment, and behavioral intention. Furthermore, this research confirmed that when international visitors receive these attributes poorly, future intention to visit a destination will be affected negatively. This study provides the information of the major elements that tourists required regarding Thai street foods. The results suggest that street food services/marketers should fulfill tourists' expectations regarding the key attributes of Thai street foods. For example, street food services/marketers should offer authentic Thai food presented in a manner that represents local culture, wisdom, and daily life to meet the expectations and desires of international tourists of having an authentic Thai experience. In addition to reasonable prices and high-quality food, this attribute will provide a competitive advantage to Thai street food vendors.

The results of the second part of this research, which involved the potential value to the hospitality sector of providing appropriate services and creating tourist experiences that lead to high levels of satisfaction, attitude, attachment, and loyalty, will be useful for Thai tourism agencies or other tourism destinations in developing and promoting street food production in a manner that ensures the long-term sustainability of a food destination. In addition, to alleviate tourists' concerns, vendors should improve the safety and hygiene of food production by considering its quality to build tourist trust and belief toward street foods. Enhancing the image of street foods as a food destination will create a competitive advantage. These issues challenge the government and food businesses to work closely together in improving food tourism strategies/policies and good practices to increase its demand. By doing so, tourist intention will be boosted, and the positive image of a destination as one of the best places for food tourism will be improved.

### 5.3. Limitations and recommendations

This study has several limitations. First, the data were collected in Bangkok and Phuket only, and thus, do not cover all Thai street foods. Further studies may look into the other tourism destinations, such as Chaing Mai and Krabi. Moreover, future studies may focus on other tourist destinations by further exploring other countries, such as Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, which are famous for their street foods. This study contributed a general understanding of Thai street food attributes and tested their relationship with international tourists visiting Thailand. Future research that specifically focuses on nationalities or cultural identities, such as Chinese, Asian, European, and Muslim tourists, can be conducted. This research considered street foods in the general categories/types, such as street foods in the market/hawker centers and mobile street foods. Further studies may focus on specific categories/types of street foods. Lastly, this research was only applied to the framework of Thai street foods and tourist satisfaction, attitude, attachment, and future intention. Further studies can develop or add street food attributes to other proposed structural models or include other tourist decision-making contributors.

## Appendix A

### A1: **The mobile** Thai Street food vendor



*1) mobility vendors/hawkers such as food stalls, food trollies, food carts, food trucks, and kiosks on the road/street-side or public areas*

### A2: Thai street food open in a fixed location

2) open at fixed locations or trading or market sites on the ground floor or doorsteps located on semi-permanent structures and providing only tables and chairs

**A3:** *Thai street food occupied in front of the seller's house*



3) a selling point occupied in front of the seller's house with cooking area and food service (e.g., tables and chairs) both in-house and on the sidewalk or street

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