

## A Cross Cultural Study Regarding Motivations for Visiting Ethnic Restaurants\*

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### Abstract

Asian food and the Asian restaurant market have grown rapidly in the international market. It has become one of the major trends in the restaurant industry in the world. However, there has been little attempt to develop a scale for measuring customer's motivation to experience Asian restaurants, and cross-cultural approaches are very rare. From this point of view, this study examined an instrument to measure motivation to visit Asian restaurants developed by Jang and Kim (2015), which was originally developed based on UK customers, by applying the population from another cultural background, Thailand. A total of 308 valid responses were obtained in Thailand. CFA was performed with a Thai sample to test internal and external consistency of the scale with another population, and a comparison was made between UK and Thai customers.

**Keywords:** Asian Restaurant, Motivation, Measurement and Cross-culture

**JEL Classifications:** M30, M31

## I. Research Background

Ethnic food is defined as foods originated from an ethnic group's heritage and culture. Ethnic food is the food pertaining to a specific region, thus it carries characteristics and traditions of the re-

gion and/or the culture of a particular ethnic group (Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug, 2015). Also, ethnic food often indicates a cuisine that is unfamiliar, outside ones' domestic region (Ting et al., 2016). According to Turgeon and Pastinelli (2002, 252), the term 'ethnic' refers to "outsiders, people who come from far away and who are foreign to the mainstream culture", and in this context, ethnic restaurant is "a restaurant whose signboard or publicity clearly promises the national or regional cuisine of another land". Strickland (2013) also defined

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ethnic restaurant as one that prepares and sells food that is geographically, historically or ethnically related to a culture, perceived as distinct by themselves or by others.

To experience ethnic restaurant as a regular individual's dining-out is an increasing trend (D'Antuono and Bignami, 2012). This is due to globalization, the increase of tourism and international trade. The role of ethnicity became more important in the world, both in business world and food culture including food industry (Rossiter and Chan, 2004). In addition, awareness and interest to try exotic ethnic cuisine has been increasing nowadays among customers from different background, due to the multiple platforms and social media (Burgess, 2014). According to the National Restaurant Association (2016), 80% of customers in the U.S. consume at least one international cuisine every month, and two-thirds of consumers experience a wide range of ethnic foods than they experienced ethnic foods before (NRA, 2016). In the U.K., ethnic restaurants have enjoyed robust growth since 2015, and it seems that the growth set to slow. However, still more than half of the customers still enjoy ethnic restaurants at least once per month, as well as the ethnic takeaway and home delivery (Mintel, 2017). In Italy, the number of ethnic restaurants increased from 2000 to 4000 in 2017, and the most numerous are Chinese, then Japanese, followed by other Asian restaurants such as Vietnamese and Korean (Fanelli and Di Nocera, 2018).

Dining-out is a well-developed culture in Thailand due to working environment

and climate. Since most are from double-income family and the weather is hot and humid, eating out is a huge part of Thai people's daily life. 43 % of Thai customers in Bangkok reported that they enjoy dining out at least once to twice per week, and 33.6 % of customers reported that they go to restaurants three to four times a week. This excludes eating street foods for quick meal. Regarding ethnic restaurants, 66.4 % of Thai customers in Bangkok visited ethnic restaurants once or twice a week, while 16.4 % of customers visited ethnic restaurants three to four times a week. Ethnic restaurant customers preferred Japanese restaurants most (55.8%), then Korean (16.2%) and Chinese (8.8%). These three Asian restaurants are top three popular ethnic restaurants in Thailand (KFPI, 2012)

As seen above, the growth of ethnic restaurants, especially Asian restaurants is significant. Due to the rapid growth of the ethnic restaurant market, a growing number of studies regarding ethnic restaurants have been published, but studies specifically focused on Asian restaurants are rare, even though it is a main trend in ethnic restaurant market. Moreover, previous studies have been carried mainly in Western countries such as United States, while little research has been conducted in Asia such as Thailand, which has one of the biggest restaurant industry market in Southeast Asia. In addition, little effort has been made to develop reliable measurement scale for motivation for people to choose Asian restaurants, with no precedent attempt on cross-cultural research. Therefore, this study focuses on these issues.

## II. Theoretical Background

Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug (2015) developed a motivational scale to measure customers' motivation to visit Asian restaurants in the U.K. Adopting grounded theory approach, through rigorous literature review on previous studies regarding restaurants, in conjunction with the findings from 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews with British customers, 31 items were generated. Restaurant-selection attributes suggested by previous related study as well as those found in interviews were included in items for the measurement scale. These were categorized into two factors, food-related factors and non-food related factors. Since food is one of the biggest part in restaurant selection, motives found in the Food Choice Questionnaire (FCQ) were adopted and included. Also, other food-related factors such as food quality, food type, food safety and sensory appeal, which were found in previous related research were also included in motivational scale development process as food-related factors, when confirmed in interview stage. Service, mood

and atmosphere, and convenience were included in non-food related factors. As ethnic restaurants have special characters distinct from general restaurants, factors found in interview stage specifically related to Asian restaurants were also included. These factors are: looking for spicy food, getting a change, to experience and learn something new and different culture. Scale refinement was performed through pre-test and pilot test, then online questionnaire survey was carried out with 313 British customers. Participants were restricted to British people who have visited and experienced at least one of Asian restaurants such as Japanese, Chinese, Thai or Korean. Respondents rated the items using a 7-point Likert scale. With total 313 valid responses, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to reveal underlying patterns or structure among variables and to refine the scale, followed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess both internal and external consistency (Hair et al., 2010). As a result of the study, five motivational factors with 18 items were confirmed as shown in <table 1>.

**Table 1.** Five Motivational Factors and Scale Items

| Factors & Items                                  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Factor 1- Novelty, Learning &amp; Culture</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase my knowledge about different cultures.</li> <li>To experience another culture.</li> <li>To see other people's way of life.</li> <li>To discover something new.</li> <li>To be adventurous in trying out a variety of foods.</li> <li>Out of curiosity, to explore something I don't know well.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Factor 2-General Restaurant Attributes</b>    |  |

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|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
|                                     | To dine in a restaurant that provides good service. |
|                                     | To dine in a clean place.                           |
|                                     | To dine in restaurants with a pleasant atmosphere.  |
|                                     | To have food that contains high quality ingredients |
|                                     | To have an enjoyable time with family/friends.      |
| <hr/>                               |   |
| <b>Factor 3-Sensory Appeal</b>      |   |
|                                     | To enjoy food that has a pleasant texture.          |
|                                     | To have food that smells nice.                      |
|                                     | To have food that looks nice.                       |
| <hr/>                               |   |
| <b>Factor 4-Health Concern</b>      |   |
|                                     | To have food that helps me control my weight.       |
|                                     | To have food that keeps me healthy.                 |
| <hr/>                               |   |
| <b>Factor 5-Change &amp; Escape</b> |   |
|                                     | To have/feel some change in my daily routine.       |
|                                     | To escape from my daily life.                       |

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Five factors were named as: (1) Novelty, Learning & Culture (2) General Restaurant Attributes (3) Sensory Appeal, (4) Health Concern, and (5) Change & Escape.

Factor 1 Novelty, Learning and Culture includes six items: “to increase my knowledge about different cultures”, “to experience another culture”, “to see other people’s way of life”, “to discover something new”, “to be adventurous in trying out a variety of foods”, and “out of curiosity, to explore something I don’t know well.” Novelty and the desire to learn something new and something about other cultures was noticed as one of important motivational factors to visit Asian restaurants. The desire for novelty here includes both food itself and the culture of the country that the ethnic restaurant represents.

Factor 2 General Restaurant Attributes has five items: “to dine in a restaurant that provides good service”, “to dine in a

clean place”, “to dine in restaurants with a pleasant atmosphere”, “to have food that contains high quality ingredients”, and “to have an enjoyable time with family/friends.” This factor indicates that basic attributes for restaurants are important for customers when choosing Asian restaurants as well.

Factor 3 Sensory Appeal consists of three items: “to enjoy food that has a pleasant texture,” “to have food that smells nice,” and “to have food that looks nice”. These items were originally from the Food Choice Questionnaire developed by Steptoe, Pollard and Wardle (1995), suggesting that food-related factor is important not only for general restaurants but also for Asian restaurants (Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug, 2015).

Factor 4 Health Concern contained two items: “to have food that helps me control my weight”, and “to have food that keeps me healthy”. These factors were adopted from FCQ as well, and previous

study regarding Asian restaurants also suggested that healthiness is one of the valued attributes for Asian restaurant customers (Jang Soo-Cheong et al., 2009).

Factor 5 Change and Escape has two items: “to have/feel some change in my daily routine”, and “to escape from my daily life”. Due to the unique atmosphere of Asian restaurants reflecting their own culture and the ethnic foods unfamiliar to customers help them to escape their daily lives (Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug, 2015).

The measurement scale developed by Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug (2015) tried to establish representative constructs of visiting Asian restaurant motivations based on UK customers, and this study adopted this measurement scale to examine visiting Asian restaurant motivations with another population in different culture.

### III. Methodology

#### 1. Data Collection

The original version of the measurement developed by Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug (2015) is in English, thus Thai version was created through trans-

lation and back translation. This was performed by experts in the hospitality and tourism field who are multi-lingual in Thai and English, as well as a translation agency. Then pre-testing with translated questionnaire was performed to examine if there is any potential problem, such as missing questions, vague or ambiguous questions and misunderstood questions (Hensley, 1999). Data were obtained from 332 Thai people through online survey, with 308 valid responses. The target population was Thai people over 18 years of age and who had eaten in at least one of Japanese, Chinese or Korean restaurants.

#### 2. Measurement and Data analysis

As stated earlier, the measurement scale with 18 items developed by Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug (2015) was adopted for this study. As seen in the result of CFA shown in <Table 2>, this scale has good level of convergent validity and the standardized factor loadings exceeded the cut-off value of 0.50 on all latent construct, and average variance extracted (AVE) of all factors were higher than 0.50 when examined with British sample (Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug, 2015).

**Table 2.** Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (British Sample, n=313)

| Factors & Items                                    | Std. Factor Loading | Critical Ratio | AVE* | Construct Reliability |
|--|---------------------|----------------|------|-----------------------|
| <b>Factor 1- Novelty, Learning &amp; Culture</b>   |                     |                | 0.91 | 0.984                 |
| To increase my knowledge about different cultures. | 0.892               | 25.231         |      |                       |
| To experience another culture.                     | 0.937               | Fixed          |      |                       |
| To see other people's way of life.                 | 0.860               | 23.095         |      |                       |

|   |       |        |      |       |
|---|-------|--------|------|-------|
| To discover something new.  | 0.691 | 14.735 |      |       |
| To be adventurous in trying out a variety of foods.   | 0.567 | 10.952 |      |       |
| Out of curiosity, to explore something I don't know well.   | 0.580 | 11.377 |      |       |
| <b>Factor 2-General Restaurant Attributes</b>   |       |        | 0.92 | 0.982 |
| To dine in a restaurant that provides good service.   | 0.769 | 11.840 |      |       |
| To dine in a clean place.   | 0.715 | Fixed  |      |       |
| To dine in restaurants with a pleasant atmosphere.  | 0.791 | 12.346 |      |       |
| To have food that contains high quality ingredients   | 0.657 | 10.259 |      |       |
| To have an enjoyable time with family/friends.  | 0.540 | 8.480  |      |       |
| <b>Factor 3-Sensory Appeal</b>  |       |        | 0.93 | 0.976 |
| To enjoy food that has a pleasant texture.  | 0.813 | 12.490 |      |       |
| To have food that smells nice.  | 0.737 | 11.468 |      |       |
| To have food that looks nice.   | 0.764 | Fixed  |      |       |
| <b>Factor 4-Health Concern</b>  |       |        | 0.79 | 0.885 |
| To have food that helps me control my weight.   | 0.809 | 7.647  |      |       |
| To have food that keeps me healthy.   | 0.809 | Fixed  |      |       |
| <b>Factor 5-Change &amp; Escape</b>   |       |        | 0.79 | 0.883 |
| To have/feel some change in my daily routine.   | 0.753 | Fixed  |      |       |
| To escape from my daily life.   | 0.830 | 8.379  |      |       |
| Goodness-of-fit indexes:  |       |        |      |       |
| Model $\chi^2(df)=249.76$ (110); $\chi^2/df=2.27$ ; p-value: 0.000; GFI=0.91; AGFI=0.88; NFI=0.90; CFI=0.94; RMSEA=0.06 |       |        |      |       |

\* AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

(Source: Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug, 2015:115)

For Thai sample, CFA was also performed to confirm the underlying dimensions and assess the quality of the structure of the factors (Hair, Babin and Anderson, 2010). Also, descriptive analysis, which is the most efficient way of summarizing the characteristics of large data sets, was performed to understand central tendency (Sekaran, 2003).

### 3. Results of Analysis

CFA is performed for Thai sample. The results are shown in <Table 3>. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the scale development procedure providing an alternative measure of internal consistency and assessing the external consistency of the scale items identified in

the EFA (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2006). The covariance matrix was used as input data and maximum likelihood method of estimation was used with the Amos 18.0 statistical package.

In terms of model fit, other than chi-square value was considered as a recommendation from past studies (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988, Hair et al., 2006). As Hair et al. (2006) suggested, other fit indexes are employed, given the sensitivity of the chi-square statistics to sample size. The normed chi-square (chi-square=df) is used in order to reduce the sensitivity of the chi-square statistic. They mentioned that a good model should conform to the following fit indices: goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), and

comparative fit index (CFI), range from 0.00 to 1.00, with a value close to 1.00 indicating a good model fit (Byrne, 1998). In addition, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) should be less than .1 (Byrne, 1998; Hair et al., 2006).

The internal consistency was calculated using the construct reliability value. As the results of the CFA, the construct reliability values ranged between 0.717 and 0.847, higher than the minimum cut-off score of 0.7. Also, the chi-square was 347.905 with 120 degrees of freedom (d.f.), and the value of the normed chi-square is 2.89, which is below the cut off criterion of 3.00, indicating that the model fits the data well (Hair et al.

2006). The CFA for the overall data revealed that the fit index displayed an acceptable level of fit: GFI=0.89; AGFI=0.84; NFI=0.89; CFI=0.93; RMSEA=0.07, and the 18 item scale satisfied the recommended level of goodness-of-fit, which suggests that the measurement model fits the sample data well (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Byrne, 2009; Hair et al., 2006). In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) was also calculated to identify the convergent validity of constructs (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2006a). The AVE of all constructs was higher than the suggested value, ranged .50 to 1.0 by previous studies (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2006).

**Table 3.** Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Thai sample, n=308)

| Factors & Items   | Std. Factor Loading | Critical Ratio | AVE  | Construct Reliability |
|---|---------------------|----------------|------|-----------------------|
| <b>Factor 1- Novelty, Learning &amp; Culture</b>          |                     |                | .487 | .847                  |
| To increase my knowledge about different cultures.        | .667                | 14.325         |      |                       |
| To experience another culture.                            | .614                | Fixed          |      |                       |
| To see other people's way of life.                        | .562                | 11.527         |      |                       |
| To discover something new.                                | .917                | 11.920         |      |                       |
| To be adventurous in trying out a variety of foods.       | .736                | 10.507         |      |                       |
| Out of curiosity, to explore something I don't know well. | .707                | 10.199         |      |                       |
| <b>Factor 2-General Restaurant Attributes</b>             |                     |                | .505 | .832                  |
| To dine in a restaurant that provides good service.       | .771                | 13.747         |      |                       |
| To dine in a clean place.                                 | .791                | Fixed          |      |                       |
| To dine in restaurants with a pleasant atmosphere.        | .787                | 14.045         |      |                       |
| To have food that contains high quality ingredients       | .624                | 10.825         |      |                       |
| To have an enjoyable time with family/friends.            | .502                | 8.529          |      |                       |
| <b>Factor 3-Sensory Appeal</b>                            |                     |                | .556 | .790                  |
| To enjoy food that has a pleasant texture.                | .818                | 13.917         |      |                       |
| To have food that smells nice.                            | .748                | 12.816         |      |                       |
| To have food that looks nice.                             | .776                | Fixed          |      |                       |

|   |      |        |      |      |
|---|------|--------|------|------|
| <b>Factor 4-Health Concern</b>  |      |        | .570 | .717 |
| To have food that helps me control my weight.   | .581 | 6.575  |      |      |
| To have food that keeps me healthy.   | .907 | Fixed  |      |      |
| <b>Factor 5-Change &amp; Escape</b>   |      |        | .654 | .790 |
| To have/feel some change in my daily routine.   | .910 | Fixed  |      |      |
| To escape from my daily life.   | .822 | 17.866 |      |      |
| Goodness-of-fit indexes:  |      |        |      |      |
| Model $\chi^2$ (df)=347.905 (120); $\chi^2$ /df=2.89; p-value: 0.000; GFI=0.89; AGFI=0.84; NFI=0.89; CFI=0.93; RMSEA=0.07 |      |        |      |      |

The importance of each motivational factor and attribute by customers in each country is presented in <table 4>. For both British and Thai customers, Factor 2 General restaurant factor has the highest grand mean among five factors. Respondents from both countries considered the basic attributes as important. As the number of Asian restaurants grows, customers do not satisfy just with exotic foods and atmosphere. Mintel (2018) reported that traditional restaurants that

lack certain standard are at risk of falling behind since there is tendency for more upscale dining in restaurant market.

Sensory appeal has the second highest mean for both British and Thai customers. With general restaurant attributes, this implies that even though Asian restaurants have their own unique characteristics and unfamiliar taste, the food itself is important for customers from both countries.

**Table 4.** Mean Ratings (Scale 1-7) of the Importance of Each Factor

| Factors & Items  | British Customers |      |        | Thai Customers |      |        |
|--|-------------------|------|--------|----------------|------|--------|
|  | Grand Mean        | Mean | (S.D)  | Grand Mean     | Mean | (S.D)  |
| <b>Factor 1 – Novelty, Learning &amp; Culture</b>        | 5.35              |      |        | 5.37           |      |        |
| To increase my knowledge about different cultures        |                   | 5.04 | (1.43) |                | 5.25 | (1.32) |
| To experience another culture                            |                   | 5.20 | (1.40) |                | 5.34 | (1.31) |
| To see other people's way of life                        |                   | 4.85 | (1.45) |                | 4.94 | (1.49) |
| To discover something new                                |                   | 5.67 | (1.09) |                | 5.59 | (1.26) |
| To be adventurous in trying out a variety of foods       |                   | 5.88 | (1.05) |                | 5.48 | (1.19) |
| Out of curiosity, to explore something I don't know well |                   | 5.44 | (1.21) |                | 5.64 | (1.20) |
| <b>Factor 2 – General Restaurant Attributes</b>          | 6.17              |      |        | 5.86           |      |        |
| To dine in a restaurant that provides good service       |                   | 6.20 | (0.85) |                | 6.01 | (1.07) |
| To dine in a clean place                                 |                   | 6.41 | (0.85) |                | 6.13 | (1.05) |
| To dine in restaurants with a pleasant atmosphere        |                   | 6.18 | (0.83) |                | 5.86 | (1.12) |
| To have food that contains high quality ingredients      |                   | 6.05 | (1.01) |                | 5.67 | (1.21) |
| To have an enjoyable time with family/friends            |                   | 6.00 | (1.05) |                | 5.65 | (1.26) |



|  |      |        |      |        |
|--|------|--------|------|--------|
| <b>Factor 3 – Sensory Appeal</b>             | 6.00 |        | 5.71 |        |
| To enjoy food that has a pleasant texture    | 6.08 | (0.89) | 5.56 | (1.15) |
| To have food that smells nice                | 6.05 | (0.94) | 5.61 | (1.15) |
| To have food that looks nice                 | 5.88 | (1.02) | 5.96 | (1.04) |
| <b>Factor 4 – Health Concern</b>             | 4.53 |        | 5.10 |        |
| To have food that helps me control my weight | 4.22 | (1.51) | 4.83 | (1.55) |
| To have food that keeps me healthy           | 4.84 | (1.33) | 5.36 | (1.28) |
| <b>Factor 5 – Change &amp; Escape</b>        | 4.77 |        | 5.49 |        |
| To have/feel some change in my daily routine | 5.13 | (1.41) | 5.56 | (1.23) |
| To escape from my daily life                 | 4.41 | (1.57) | 5.42 | (1.29) |

The third highest factor for customers from both countries was Novelty, Learning and Culture. This is unique factor for ethnic restaurants. Min Kye-Hong and Lee Timothy Jeonglyeol (2014) also argued that Asian restaurants deliver consumers not only alternative cuisine, but also provide experience of the culture of other countries, and this adds a key dimension to any dining experience in Asian restaurants.

For British customers, Health Concern was the next, while Change and Escape was the next for Thai customers. Mintel (2018) also reported in their market research regarding ethnic restaurants that health concern is very important for British customers. Most of British customers agree that menus should display the nutritional content for each dish, and this tendency is strong especially for women aged 16-44. In Thailand, Thai government started healthy policy for Thai people to have healthy eating habits. Thus, Thai customers' interest for health grows, but it seems like Thai customers value more to have a feeling of change and escape while having Asian restaurant experiences.

## IV. Conclusion

The current study examined the measurement scale developed by Jang Seo-Yeon and Kim Yeong-Gug (2015) that is used to measure motivation to visit Ethnic restaurants, especially Asian restaurants. The original measurement scale was developed based on literature review and in-depth interviews with U.K. customers, which was followed by scale refinement using EFA and CFA. The same scale was adopted and applied to Thai customers to examine if it is applicable to other population in another culture, and if there is any difference in terms of visiting Asian restaurants motivation in different culture.

The results of CFA with Thai sample implied that the internal and external consistency of the scale is acceptable, and it indicates that the model fits the data well. According to the results from using the same measurement scale, both British and Thai customers consider that general restaurant attributes such as good service, cleanliness and atmosphere are most important factors when choosing Asian restaurants. Food itself is the next im-

portant factor for customers from both countries, which may indicate that when choosing Asian restaurants, restaurant itself influence customers to visit Asian restaurants, then food itself. Thus, when running Asian restaurants, the restaurant operators should provide customers more tangible reason to visit their restaurants, such as exterior, interior/decoration, atmosphere. In addition, they should stress the importance of service and food to the staff of the restaurants.

This study was the first step to generalize the developed motivational scale to measure motivation for people to visit Asian restaurants in their home country. Thus, a primary contribution of the current study is that it adds to a growing body of literature on Asian restaurants especially in cross-cultural approach. Studies to compare totally different cultural background such as U.K. and

Thailand is scarce. This kind of approach is fundamental in terms of global marketing strategy to understand customers from different background. Even though the origin countries of Asian restaurants such as Korea, Japan and China are geographically much closer, and culturally more familiar to Thailand, what customers consider important seems not so much different.

Although this study is one of the first to examine a developed measurement scale in cross-culture study approach, there are limitations need to be taken into consideration. This study focused on only two particular populations in different cultural background. Future study should examine the measurement scale in other population. In addition, it would be ideal to establish measurement invariance when applying other population (Eertmans et al., 2006).

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