

TripAdvisor Tourist Experiences of Local Cuisine in Battambang Province, Cambodia

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Abstract

Food tourism significantly impacts the economy, socio-culture and the development of tourist destinations. Research in this area has identified that local food is perceived to be a peak experience for many tourists. In that way, food that allows tourists to experience more memorable cuisine can attract tourists to particular destinations. Specifically, my research dissertation asked in what ways do international tourists, using TripAdvisor, express their experiences of Cambodian cuisine in Battambang Province. Responding to that question was my qualitative inquiry into 118 TripAdvisor uploads about seven different Cambodian restaurants in Battambang Province, Cambodia. To understand those uploads I used thematic analysis to identify the key tourist themes that emerged from their data.

My research found that several factors impacted international tourists' food experiences in Battambang Province. Of particular note in my research findings was the importance tourists placed on: Cambodian food taste; the service encounter and servicescape; value of money; food as commensal experience; and learning about wider aspects of Cambodia, and its history through food experiences, experiencing authenticity and helping community. Adding to that is the timeliness of this work. The Government of Cambodia has recently begun initiatives that encourage food tourism. With that in mind, my research provides a timely insight into international tourist food experiences in Battambang that may benefit government agencies and small business enterprises alike.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature

19/06/2019

Date

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I dedicate my achievement to my great-grandmother, Hoeur Kim Ang, who passed away nine years ago. My grandmother looked after and cared for me from my birth, guided me to my first day at school and was there for me when I finished high school.

Ethics Approval

My research did not involve primary research or data gathering. Consequently, it was not necessary to apply to AUTECH (the Auckland University of Technology's Ethics Committee) for ethics approval.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Opening Remarks

Three factors have driven my passion for this research. Firstly, I am interested in this topic because of the significance of food tourism and its development in Cambodia. Underpinning that interest is the reality that food tourism generates employment and stimulates economic activity (World Tourism Organization, 2012). Additionally, the emergence of ‘foodie’¹ tourists within “tourism”² has resulted in more food businesses such as restaurants, wineries, bars, food producers, and food events (Carmichael, 2010) emerging to cater for those interests. As Kim, Eves, and Scarles (2009) and the World Tourism Organization (2012) observed, the food spend for tourists during travel is approximately one-third of their total travelling expenditure. Those researchers continued to note that some tourists are unlikely to minimise their food budget while travelling. Recognizing that, the World Tourism Organization claimed that food tourism generated income and employment opportunities for chefs and has provided market opportunities for food producers and the agricultural sector.

Additionally, in the Rectangular Strategy Study conducted by the (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2014), the tourism sector and agriculture were identified as two main sectors earmarked for priority development. This makes my research very timely. Cambodia is just beginning to realise the importance of and the benefits inherent in the tourism/food nexus. Finally, I am interested in this topic because I want to contribute toward the recognition of a Cambodian food identity by linking tourism within the food offerings of Battambang Province. Reflecting that, and also prompting my enthusiasm for my topic is the observation in the *Asialife Magazine* article that Cambodian dishes and cuisine remain relatively unknown compared to the cuisines of Thailand and Vietnam. With those factors in mind, it is my hope that my dissertation will add to the knowledge, activities and appreciation required to recognise the potential for tourist experiences in Cambodian cuisine, particularly in Battambang Province.

¹ A person who is very interested in food (Barr & Levy, 1985).

² Tourism has been defined as “a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes” (World Tourism Organization, n.d, p. 1)

1.2 Research Aim and Question

My research dissertation explores a selection of TripAdvisor commentaries reflecting international tourists' experiences of Cambodian cuisine in Battambang Province, Cambodia. To achieve this, my research considers the following primary question:

In what ways do international tourists, using TripAdvisor, express their experiences of Cambodian cuisine in Battambang Province?

To promote a deeper understanding of that question it is necessary to consider three underpinning questions:

1. What primary themes are important for international tourists in their considerations of local food in Battambang Province?
2. In what ways were those themes and experiences expressed through TripAdvisor?
3. What sensory elements were important to international tourists in their food experience considerations?

While I have identified one primary question and three underpinning questions, my three underpinning questions cumulatively inform my primary question. In that way, my research questions are positioned as noted in Figure 1. Research questions

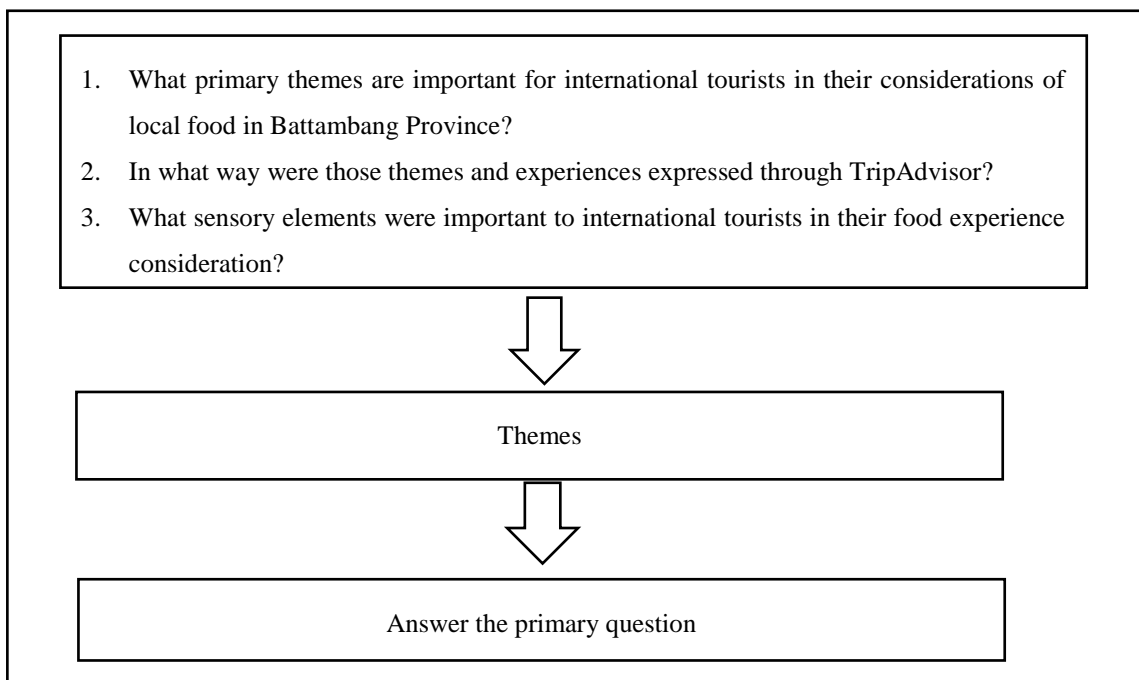


Figure 1. Research questions

1.3 Research Rationale

Tourism generally, and food tourism specifically, generate employment opportunities in the restaurant sector and, through product sales, the agricultural sector (World Tourism Organization, 2012). Food tourism is closely associated with constructs of authenticity. As Richards (2015) related, food tourism encourages residents to conserve local culture including its gastronomic components. Considering these points, food tourism has a positive influence on local, national and international economies, socio-cultures and employment opportunities.

Cambodia's main tourist destination is Siem Reap Province. Siem Reap is particularly well known because of its Angkor Wat world heritage site (Ministry of Tourism, 2012). While much of the focus for tourism in Cambodia is concentrated within Siem Reap, the (Ministry of Tourism, 2012) has realised that the development of neighbouring provinces can reduce tourist overcrowding. As a result of the reduced overcrowding, it is possible that tourists will extend their stays, participate in more experiences and consequently spend more money. Thus, the minister of Ministry of Tourism has recognised Battambang Province, as one of Siem Reap's key neighbouring provinces, to be a prioritised zone for future tourist development (Ministry of Tourism, 2012).

Supporting that development is the fact that Battambang Province is renowned for its agriculture (Ministry of Planning, 2013). Consequently, the natural association between growing food products, their local availability and local Cambodian cuisine can be realised. That combination makes Battambang Province an ideal location within which tourists can explore Cambodian cuisine and terroir.³ The benefit of the grower/tourist nexus for Battambang reflects the fact that because local food and agriculture are closely linked, the distance between gate and plate is minimised (Martinez et al., 2010). Consequently, those considerations make Battambang Province an ideal location for international tourists to explore and experience local expressions of authentic, fresh Cambodian cuisine.

Additionally, the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism's Strategic Plan 2012-2018, has only focused on food safety and food hygiene. That plan does not focus on food as a tourist

³ The combination of geographical conditions (the specific geological, hydrological, soil and climate characteristics) and the strong cultural side that reflects the human societies that work on its land that together shape the taste of the grown products (Franch Food in the US, 2015)

experience (Ministry of Tourism, 2012). Reflecting that void, and the potential scope of my research, on September 12, 2018, the Ministry of Tourism and Cambodia's Tourism Federation held its first meeting. That meeting introduced food tourism as a topic for ongoing discussion. That decision and on-going discussion reflects the importance of my research and potentialises its contribution toward the development of food tourism in Cambodia. Consequently, my research into international tourists' food experiences in Battambang is both timely and well considered because it provides valuable insights into existing food/tourist experiences in Battambang Province.

1.4 Research Significance

My research dissertation is significant for three reasons.

- Firstly, my research is the first study to explore the food experiences of international tourists in Battambang Province, Cambodia. Consequently, my dissertation contributes to food knowledge about an underdeveloped area that has been realised as having tourist potential.
- Secondly, my research facilitates a body of knowledge that can be leveraged by restaurateurs and entrepreneurs in Battambang Province. For that group, my research promotes competitive business practice and may facilitate competitive advantages for businesses in their future considerations of the food/tourist nexus.
- Finally, my research contributes toward a more holistic understanding of tourist experiences generally, and specifically food tourism in Battambang Province, Cambodia.

1.5 Research Methodology: An Overview

To achieve my research aims and to answer my research questions, I used qualitative description as my methodology. Considering Sandelowski (2000) qualitative description allows me, as a researcher, to report my participants' data without my over-interpretation of it. Additionally, qualitative description facilitates a close relationship between my readers and my participants through my accurate description and limited interpretation of my participants' TripAdvisor uploads. However, before deciding on qualitative description, I considered several other research methodologies. For an overview and

rationale of the methodologies that I considered, yet decided were unsuitable, refer to Appendices 1.

Complementing qualitative description, I used thematic analysis to identify the themes that emerged from my participants' data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Those themes provided rich information that not only constituted my Findings Chapter but also provided the information that I used within my Discussion and Conclusion Chapter.

1.6 Dissertation Structure

My dissertation is presented in six chapters. My first chapter introduces my topic, my research aims and questions, the significance of my research, and a short summary of my research methodology. Chapter 2 provides background information relating to Cambodia and Battambang, and also includes information TripAdvisor platforms. By addressing these topics, Chapter 2 provides important background and contextual information.

Chapter 3 presents my literature review. My literature review outlines and synthesises relevant research publications and other literature related to the tourist food experience and tourists' gaze. Adding to those domains, my literature review also discusses tourism and internet and online food review.

Chapter 4 overviews my research methodology and the operationalisation of methodological theory within method. Specifically, I used qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Those approaches facilitated the writing of Chapter 5, my Findings Chapter.

Chapter 6 concludes my work within my presentation of the discussion and my conclusion. Here, I compare and contrast my findings to the data I collated within my literature review. Within that process I not only compare my work to existing knowledge, but also identify my contribution to that corpus. Additionally, I identify and discuss my research limitations, prospects for future research and end my dissertation with a short concluding reflective statement.

Chapter 2 Contextualising my Research

In this Chapter, I provide some background and contextual information that provides my readers with a deeper understanding of my topic. In facilitating that, I include an overview of Cambodia; sections on getting to know Cambodian food, tourism in Cambodia, and food tourism in Cambodia; and overviews of Battambang Province and its tourism development, and the e-platform TripAdvisor.

2.1 An Overview of Cambodia

Located in Southeast Asia, the official name of Cambodia is the Kingdom of Cambodia. Cambodia has a total land area of 181,035 square kilometres (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2014). Cambodia is bordered, to the west and northwest, by Thailand; the southwest by the Gulf of Thailand; and to the northeast by Laos. To the east and southeast of Cambodia is Vietnam. Cambodia's significant landmarks include the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap. The Tonle Sap Great Lake contributes to the livelihood of many Cambodians through fishing and also through agriculture because of the availability of copious amounts of fresh water (Arias et al., 2012). Five provinces border the Tonle Sap Great Lake. They include Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang, Siem Reap and Kampong Thom (Asian Development Bank, 2012).

Cambodia enjoys a tropical monsoon climate of alternating wet and dry seasons. That combination ensures that Cambodia is warm all year. The wet season is from May to October and is characterised by rain, and the dry season lasts from October to April. While November to January are quite cool (around 20°C), in April the weather is very hot (Ministry of Tourism, 2019b).

2.2 Getting to Know Cambodian Food

In Cambodia, food recipes are rarely written down. Most recipes and culinary practices are passed down from one generation to another through home cooking and consequently by word of mouth (Ministry of Tourism, 2019a). The taste of Cambodian cuisine reflects the blend of ingredients that combine to produce its unique flavour. The Ministry of Tourism (2019a) suggested that prohok, fermented fish, and kapi, a fermented prawn paste, are the two main ingredients distinguishing Cambodian cuisine. Additionally, Cambodian food combines many local ingredients. These include ginger, turmeric,

lemongrass, garlic, kaffir lime leaves, mint leaves, and other herbs (Ministry of Tourism, 2019a). Cambodian cuisine includes a range of soups, grills, stir-fries, salads and rice. Three flavour profiles, salty, sweet and sour dominate Cambodian cuisine ("Cambodia Recipes", 2019; Ministry of Tourism, 2019a). However, Cambodia's cuisine has been influenced by those of Thailand, Vietnam, France and China (Special Broadcasting Service, 2019). Within the hierarchy of global cuisines CNN (2013) proposed that Cambodian food was overshadowed by those of Thailand and Vietnam.

2.3 Tourism in Cambodia

Tourism is a significant contributor to Cambodia's economy. The World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) noted that the direct contribution of tourism to Cambodia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016 was US\$2.4 billion. That represented about 12.2% of the nation's total GDP for that period. In 2017, tourism's direct contribution to GDP was around US\$3.1 billion. That amount represented 14.1% of total GDP (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018). Tourism has also created indirect and direct employment opportunities. The World Travel Tourism Council (2017, 2018) noted that tourism has created approximately 2.2 million employment opportunities in Cambodia in 2016, increasing to 2.6 million employment opportunities in 2017 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017, 2018).

As those statistics demonstrate, Cambodia's tourism sector is a growth industry. According to the World Travel Tourism Council (2017) the number of international tourists visiting Cambodia has increased from around 5.1 million in 2016 to approximately 5.6 million in 2017. The World Travel Tourism Council (2018) anticipated that, by 2028, 7.9 million international tourists will visit Cambodia. In 2016, the three major source markets for international tourism to Cambodia included Vietnam (959,663 tourists), China (830,003 tourists) and Thailand (398,081 tourists) (Ministry of Tourism, 2017). In 2017, the top three source markets included China (1,210,782 tourists); Vietnam (835,355 tourists) and Laos (502,219 tourists) (Ministry of Tourism, 2018). Consequently, the Asian region currently provides the base for Cambodia's international tourist market. September to April is the peak tourist season in Cambodia because this period is the dry season.

2.4 Food Tourism in Cambodia

Food tourism in Cambodia is in its initial stages of development. As a nation, Cambodia's leaders are preparing to promote a Cambodian food identity (Thong, 2019). That promotion will help to raise the profile of Cambodian food. The Ministry of Tourism is preparing to host the country's first gastronomic fair in May 2019 (Thong, 2019). The importance of street food has been realised and has become a key part of the National Clean City Contest (Manet, 2019). That contest aims to improve the beauty, sanitation, general environment and living standards in each city. Those aims contribute toward making Cambodia an attractive tourist destination (National Committee of Clean City, 2019). Echoing that, The Minister of Tourism proposed that the contest provided a base from which city cleanliness, waste management, urban planning and public health and safety could be maximised (Vong, 2012, February 28).

Although food tourism has not been officially planned and implemented by the government, there have been some organised activities related to food tourism in Cambodia. The private sector, the Cambodia Tourism Federation, Cambodia Chefs Association, Cambodia Hotel Association and Cambodia Restaurant Association have, since 2010, combined to organise a Cambodian food competition every two years during the Food and Hotel industry exhibition (CAMFOODCAMHOTEL) (Cambodia Restaurant Association, 2015). In 2013, the French organisation, Pour Un Sourire d'Enfant, hosted the first Cambodia Cuisine Festival (Murray, 2015, March 27). That event highlighted Cambodia's provincial food (Murray, 2015, March 27). Additionally, in 2018, another food festival was introduced and organised by Slaprea in the capital city, Phnom Penh. That event attracted almost 14,000 visitors (Slaprea, 2019).

2.5 An Overview of Battambang Province and its Tourism Development

Battambang is Cambodia's second largest province. Battambang Province is located in the country's northwest. The province is well known as Cambodia's main rice-producing area (Ministry of Planning, 2013). Battambang Province is also a hub region connecting the northwest region of Cambodia with Phnom Penh and Thailand (Ministry of Planning, 2013). Battambang Province is bordered to the north by Banteay Meanchey Province, and to the west by Thailand. To the east and south, Battambang Province links with Pursat Province and the Great Lake Tonle Sap (Ngin, Naret, & Try, 2015). Battambang Province

is approximately 11,803 square kilometres and comprises 13 districts,⁴ one municipality,⁵ 96 communes⁶ and 741 villages (Nigin, Naret, Try, & Nong, 2015).

Battambang city began as a small fishing village during the 11th Century (Battambang Municipality, 2015 as cited in Han & Lim, 2018). Battambang was acquired by Thailand in 1809 and then in 1907 it was returned to Cambodia (Battambang Tourism Department, 2018a). During that time, several pagodas, Chinese temples and open-air markets were built (Battambang Municipality, 2015 as cited in Han & Lim, 2018). Between 1907 and 1953, the French developed Battambang. After Cambodia gained independence in 1953, Battambang created a master plan designed to develop the industrial and commercial centre of northwest Cambodia. Also, an airport, a university, schools, a sports centre, a museum and an administration building for the province were established. Additionally, a railway line was built that extended to the Cambodian/Thailand border.

During the Khmer Republic (1970 to 1975) and Khmer Rouge (1975 to 1979), and the People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979 to 1989), Battambang experienced civil war. War negatively impacted the region's economic and urban development. Then, many residents were asked to relocate to rural areas to work the land. At that time, no land was in private ownership as land was controlled by the state. In 1980, the civil war ended and Battambang began to plan for a brighter future (Battambang Municipality, 2015 as cited in Han & Lim, 2018).

From 1990, many development projects in Battambang began when private property rights were re-established. That change positively impacted agricultural products and small-scale businesses including grocery shops, retail vendors, small scale restaurants and guest houses. Hotels, markets and schools were constructed (Battambang Municipality, 2015 as cited in Han & Lim, 2018) and the Battambang Municipality began to develop. That body emphasised the economic potential within the agricultural, industrial and tourism sectors. Over time, the Municipality developed Battambang city's commercial, service, business, employment, educational, and entertainment centres.

⁴ The territorial division that includes several communes.

⁵ A municipality is usually the capital city of a province.

⁶ The combination of several villages.



2.6 An overview of TripAdvisor

The internet has democratised opinions on food (Vasques & Chik, 2015). In regard to my research, democratisation implies that anyone with access to a computer and the necessary computer skills can post an online opinion, review or experience for others to read and comment upon. There are many online platforms providing this capacity. They include Amazon customer reviews, TripAdvisor, Twitter, Facebook, Trustradius, Glassdoor, Yelp and G2 Crowd (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). TripAdvisor was chosen for my research because, as Cordato (2014) reported, TripAdvisor is the most popular and largest online website that is used by consumers to provide feedback on their hospitality experiences. Additionally, TripAdvisor is the most prominent online travel review platform in terms of use and content availability (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). Furthermore, Schuckert, Liu, and Law (2015) noted that TripAdvisor is one of the world's most popular web sites for travel accommodation. Additionally, TripAdvisor also allows travellers to rate and express their opinions on the platform. TripAdvisor not only helps travellers to plan and book their journeys but also to decide where to stay, eat and travel (TripAdvisor Media Center, 2017) and includes more than 730 million reviews and opinion pieces. That number makes TripAdvisor the world's largest provider of travel listings. TripAdvisor also includes almost 8.1 million accommodation, airline, and restaurants sites (TripAdvisor Media Center, 2017).

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This literature review provides an overview of themes that are directly related to my research. With that in mind, I have included an overview of literature that includes the following topics: food tourism; the social impact of food tourism; the definition of local food; local food and authenticity; tourists' experiences of local food; an introduction to the tourist gaze; the refractive gaze; social and culinary capital; servicescape, tourism and the internet and food review.

Those topics are important because they fulfil three distinct goals. The first goal is to provide an overview of knowledge related to my topic. The second goal is the identification of gaps within existing literature. The third and final goal is to facilitate the discussion that is presented in my Discussion and Conclusion Chapter. In my discussion I expand upon my Findings Chapter and clarify my contribution to knowledge within my topic area.

3.1 Food Tourism

Fischler (1988) proposed that food was essential for humans because it satiated biological, psychological and social needs. Within contemporary tourism, food is an essential component in many tourist offerings and experiences. Hall and Sharples (2003) defined food tourism as an experiential trip to a food region for recreational purposes that included visiting food festivals, food fairs, cooking shows, and other food related activities. Long (2004) pointed out that food tourism was an activity in which travellers engaged with culinary experiences even though those culinary experiences were not the tourists' primary travel motivation. Contrasting that, Hall and Mitchell (2011) defined food tourism as the primary motivation for tourists to experience food in specific locations. World Tourism Organization (2012) concluded that food tourism included tourists or visitors whose travel motivation was partly or completely aimed at tasting the cuisine of the places they visited or to at participating in gastronomic activities. However, Neill, Johnston, and Losekoot (2016) proposed that a food tourist's primary goal was not only leisure activity, but also engagement within multi-sensual and authentic enjoyment experiences of food. For Neill et al. (2016), those experiences were particularly important if that food included elements of risk, and significantly differed from the tourist's regular diet. Consequently, and through the synthesis of these academic positions, the definition

of food tourism considered within this dissertation refers to the activities in which tourists enjoy or engage with food during their travelling and holiday experiences.

3.1.1 The Social Impact of Food Tourism

Food consumption promotes commensality (Fischler, 2011). Consequently, food transcends need through sociability. That sociability is exemplified within the hospitality industry. As Wijaya, King, Morrison, and Nguyen (2017) observed that experiencing food during travel allowed travellers to interact with food providers, and their food companions, friends and family. Within those contacts, travellers created memorable experiences focused within and on food. Complementing that, Richards (2015) proposed that food tourists sought out interactions with local communities through the sharing of food knowledge and culture.

Furthermore, enjoying local food allows tourists an authentic experience representing local communities (Wijaya et al., 2017). That interaction, Richards (2015) proposed, encouraged local communities to conserve their local culture and particularly its food. An exemplar of that is tourist cooking classes in Thailand. There, local culinarians demonstrate and teach tourists about Thai food and its important link to place and Thai culture (Walter, 2017). Walter (2017) also proposed that authentic experience was achieved through tourist exposure to traditional cooking methods, cooking equipment, cooking ingredients, serving techniques and food-related stories. However, those exposures can promote cultural and culinary commoditisation. For example, in Thailand, some modern food markets have been constructed to represent an older and more traditional Thai lifestyle (Lunchprasith & Macleod, 2018). In those food markets, many food sellers are required to wear authentic traditional clothes and to adjust their food offering to better suit the tourists' taste expectations (Lunchprasith & Macleod, 2018). While creating a point of interest for tourists, such innovation can cloud the uniqueness of an authentic Thai food and cultural experience.

Food tourism has also generated other negative situations. While it is common for many Chinese diners to view the animal they are about to consume while it is still alive, Cohen and Avieli (2004) proposed that many Western tourists find that option distasteful. Additionally, those authors also observed that in some cultures, eating dogs, cats and animal offal were regarded as being highly acceptable. Again, such consumption may not appeal to many Western tourists' taste sensibilities. Therefore, when a tourist eats 'new

food’ that may not be acceptable to their framework of edibility, that consumption can create cultural conflict. However, Neill et al. (2016) claimed within their analysis of the “refractive gaze” that many Western tourists took delight in eating items outside their usual framework of edibility. Such consumption fuels a tourist’s “cultural capital”⁷ and “culinary capital”⁸ (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012) and can culminate in the ‘bragging rights’ garnered by eating different and often high-risk food items.

3.2 Local Food

Hughes et al. (2007) perceived local food to be food that was produced within a community and that its production benefitted the community in social, cultural and/or economic ways. Sims (2009) suggested that, for tourists, local foods symbolised place and in doing so helped to identify cultural destinations. Thompson, Harper, and Kraus (2008) proposed that if a food product was produced by using traditional methods and if it has a supporting narrative, then it ‘is’ local food. However, Martinez et al. (2010) argued that local food reflected a relationship of geographic distance between food producers and its consumers. Regarding geographic distance, they suggested that if food consumption occurred near its site of production, then that food could be considered to be local food. The academy has also contributed toward a further understanding of local food within the terminology of locavore⁹ and terroir¹⁰ (Tomasi, Gaiotti, & Jones, 2013).

3.2.1 Local Food and Authenticity

Historically, Boorstin (1964) claimed that authenticity, as an objective concept, was based within a wider understanding of place and culture. However, Jackson (1999) focused on authentication. Authentication references the process whereby people make claims of authenticity and hold an active interest in validating those claims. Yet Meethan (2001)

⁷ The accumulated knowledge and behaviours that aid people’s effectiveness within their socio-cultures (Bourdieu, 1986).

⁸ Culinary capital refers to the form of status that accrues to individuals who conform to their culture’s food and food-related norms and expectations. This notion allows us to understand how and why certain foods and food-related practices mean what they do, and by extension discuss the status and power of those who know about and enjoy them (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012).

⁹ A person who prefers to purchase food from local sources that are around 50 to 200km from home (Jacobsen, 2010).

¹⁰ The complete natural environment that can shape the taste of grown products or the taste of place (Jacobsen, 2010; Trubek, 2008)

and German Molz (2004) argued that, as cultures changed, there were no pure societies and consequently claims of authenticity were to be questioned. In tourism, Wang (1999) stated that “tourists are not merely searching for authenticity of the other. They [are] also search[ing] for the authenticity of, and between, themselves” (p. 364). More recently, Yeoman, Brass, and Beattie (2006) echoed a similar sentiment by suggesting that “consumers [are] searching for authenticity from a range of products, services and experiences, and [are also] looking for it within themselves” (p. 1128). According to Sims (2009), consumers’ demands for foods perceived to be traditional and “local” can also be viewed as reflecting the quest for authenticity. Sims (2009) suggested that tourists construct authentic relationships between local food and place in three ways. Firstly, tourists question authenticity against their preconceptions about what a typical food experience will ‘look like’. Secondly, tourists judge authenticity within considerations about surrounding environments. Finally, tourists consider elements of tradition and naturalness when considering authenticity.

3.2.2 Tourists’ Experiences of Local Food

Guan and Jones (2015) recognised that local food was strongly linked to tourists’ experiences because tourists who valued local cuisine tended to perceive that local food destinations were attractive. Additionally, Sengel et al. (2015) claimed that tourists were keen to experience authentic products. In that way, local food has the potential to attract new or repeat tourists. Supporting that idea, Neill et al. (2016) proposed that many tourists maximised their desire for pleasure by making every excursion and experience a memorable one. Neill et al. (2016) also noted that the pleasure experienced by tourists occurred through multi-sensual arousal, particularly to novel food stimuli and environments that tourist gastronomes viewed refractively which is discussed in the next session. Neill et al. (2016) agreed with Quan and Wang (2004) that food was a peak tourist experience, extending that suggestion through the poly-sensual experiences it facilitated. For Neill et al. (2016), tourists sought happiness through food experiences, particularly in foreign cultures that created new and exotic experiences.

3.3 Introducing the Gaze

The ways in which tourists come to know and understand their tourism experiences are best explored within the construct of the gaze. Pragmatically, a gaze provides a view of something. Metaphorically, the gaze includes understanding, thinking, comparison and

opportunities to accumulate knowledge. Yet, within those understandings, the gaze is permeated by power. International tourists look (gaze) at people and places that are ‘foreign’ to them. Maoz (2006) proposed that the ‘locals’ look back. Consequently, the mutuality of the gaze can lead to tensions.

The construct of the gaze was introduced by Foucault (1963). Foucault realised the physicians gaze within medical practice. There, the gaze referenced the way in which doctors viewed their patients and the way patients saw themselves as patients through their doctors’ eyes. In 1990, Urry adapted Foucault’s (1963) notion of the gaze to tourism (Urry, 1992) and developed the idea of the tourist gaze. That gaze was passive and one way: tourists observed or looked at ‘others’ (Urry, 1992). Additionally, Bell (2005) developed two gazes – the prescriptive gaze and the nervous gaze. For Bell, the prescriptive gaze reflected tourists who compiled busy schedules of ‘must-do’ activities that did not allow them any free time or spontaneous decision making. Bell’s nervous gaze proposed that tourists, particularly white middle-class tourists, often felt uncomfortable in ‘dark-skinned’ countries because they felt unsafe. For Bell, those negative tourist perspectives thinly veiled the tourists pre-existing prejudices.

Following Urry’s (1990) gaze, Maoz (2006) introduced the mutual gaze. The mutual gaze posits that both hosts and tourists gaze at each other. However, Maoz (2006) gaze also evidenced dislike, as locals came to resent visiting tourists. Most recently, through the gazes of Foucault (1963), Urry (1990), Maoz (2006) and Bell (2005), Neill et al. (2016) conceived their concept of the refractive gaze.

3.3.1 The Refractive Gaze

The refractive gaze “incorporate[s] the subjectively experienced cognitive and sensuous elements that tourists – gastronomes encounter in their quest for out of the ordinary food experience[s]” (Neill et al., 2016, p.138). In seeking happiness, and the enhancement of cultural and culinary capitals, food tourists take risks by eating exotic foods within ‘foreign’ cultures (Neill et al., 2016). In the refractive gaze, tourist gastronomes seek novel stimulation in as much as they want to see, hear, touch, smell and enjoy new kinaesthetic experiences (Neill et al., 2016). Those experiences may negate their concerns for hygiene and the fear of new or unknown food, particularly in the tourist’s quest for enhanced social and culinary capitals (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012) which are discussed below.

3.4 Social Capital and Culinary Capital

The concept of ‘capital’ originated within the works of Karl Marx (1990). For Marx, capital referenced the cyclic nature of making money within the exchange of commodities (Felluga, 2002). For Marx, that exchange facilitated the perpetual motion of making money within capitalist societies (Felluga, 2002).

For Bourdieu (2011), capital was represented in three ways: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. Simply explained, Bourdieu (2011) perceived economic capital as representing money that may be institutionalised in the form of property rights. Social capital reflects the common resources that connected individuals with group membership and social networks. However, for Bourdieu, cultural capital reflects how people accumulate knowledge and behaviours that aid their effectiveness within their socio-cultures.

Considering that evolution of the notion of capital and given the popularity of food as a marker of distinction and identification, it is unsurprising that Naccarato and Lebesco (2012) introduced a new type of capital: “culinary capital” (p. 3). With culinary capital having similarities to Bourdieu’s constructs, particularly social capital, Naccarato and Lebesco (2012) claimed that food and food practices played unique roles as markers of distinction and knowledge. For Naccarato and Lebesco (2012), culinary capital reflected the ‘knowing and showing’ of knowledge and ways of being and becoming that embodied food knowledge, food practices and rituals within socio-cultural settings. Vernacularly, culinary capital is often displayed as consumers brag about their unique food experiences and knowledge to others who lack those experiences.

As Naccarato and Lebesco (2012) explained, “the concept of culinary capital is used to understand how and why certain foods and food related practices connote and by extension, confer status and power on those who know about and enjoy them” (p. 3). Consequently, people can use their culinary capital to create and sustain their food identities that either align them to or differentiate them from culinary norms and eating expectations (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012).

3.5 Tourism and the Internet

For many people, particularly those in the Western world, including tourists, daily life is mediated by e-platforms and interactions on them. The Internet has become an effective

way to search for tourism information because the Internet offers a global reach and, sometimes, multimedia experiences (Everett, 2016). While the Internet has helped many tourists to make more informed traveling decisions, it has also provided a platform for them to express their opinions. User-driven Internet content has allowed Internet users to not only engage with each other in generating that content, but also to rate their own experiences and comment upon the experiences of others (Miguens, Baggio, & Costa, 2008). Thus, travellers can obtain information from online reviews that may help and guide their own travel decisions (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Reflecting upon that, Dickinger and Lalicic (2017) proposed that travellers become independent players, acting, working and interacting through travel platforms such as TripAdvisor and Yelp. Using those portals, tourists communicate within social hubs by exchanging knowledge and related travel experiences including food experience.

However, prior to the Internet, the rating, evaluation and critique of food was usually undertaken by food experts, professional food critics or elite guides best exemplified by the *Michelin Guide* (Mellet, Beauvisage, Beuscart, & Trespeuch, 2014). Arguably, the *Michelin Guide* is ‘the’ leading judge of restaurant excellence (Snyder & Cotter, 2008). At its peak, the *Michelin Guide* sold more than 800,000 copies annually (Snyder & Cotter, 2008). However, it is important to remember that the *Michelin Guide* generally reflects constructs of haute cuisine¹¹ (Goodsir, Neill, Williamson, & Brown, 2014). Today, the Internet has facilitated a more democratic and less plutocratic forum for food evaluation and feedback. Because of the Internet, more people can express their opinions freely and easily and on a global stage (Dellarocas, 2003). According to Goodsir et al. (2014), the work and review styles of two restaurant critic pioneers – Craig Claiborne and Ruth Reichl – have encouraged people to participate in online food reviews. Consequently, because of interactive technologies, it seems that almost anyone has the potential to become a restaurant critic or food reviewer (Goodsir et al., 2014). Reading and scanning for dining information and other activities have increasingly become a key part of a tourist’s pre-trip research.

Online food reviews have provided some key themes that aide an understanding of tourist experiences. According to Goodsir et al. (2014), there are two main types of review styles namely connoisseurly review (the detailed descriptions that are viewed as being by an

¹¹ Food that is prepared in restaurant by trained or expert chef as elite cuisine (Trubek, 2000).

experienced and knowledgeable person) and procedural review (quantitatively rate restaurant experiences, their findings numerically, or through icon use). Pantelidis (2010) found that food, service, ambience, price, menu and décor were important tourist themes. Similarly, Gan, Ferns, Yu, and Jin (2017) found that food, service, ambience, and price were fundamental elements within dining experiences. Consequently, as Goodsir et al. (2014) suggested, restaurant reviewers, whether they are *Michelin Guide* judges or online restaurant reviewers, play a vital role in constructing themes of taste, “culinary capital” (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, p. 3), “social capital” (Bourdieu, 2011), authenticity, terroir, individual identity and national identity. Those developments and the hospitality experience, particularly food and beverage consumption, occur in what (Bitner, 1992) referred to as “servicescape[s]” (p. 58) and in the service encounter (Lin & Mattila, 2010).

3.5.1 Servicescape and Service Encounter

Servicescape refers to the physical environment within commercial business operations where the service and hospitality transactions occur (Bitner, 1992). Servicescape includes ambient conditions (temperature, air quality, noise, music, lighting), spatial layout and functionality (how furniture and equipment is arranged), and signs, symbols and artefacts (colour, music, scent, layout and design) (Bitner, 1992). Service encounter refers to “the interaction between service staff and customers throughout the entire service process” (Lin & Mattila, 2010, p.3). According to Lin and Mattila (2010), food consumers evaluate service consumption experience by evaluating to both the servicescape and the service encounter. The servicescape potentialises positive service quality in a restaurant (Lin & Mattila, 2010). Lin and Mattila (2010) proposed that the servicescape influenced customer thoughts and feelings within moments of their arrival in a commercial hospitality setting. Lin and Mattila (2010) claimed that both the servicescape and the service encounter influence pleasure and satisfaction within consumer food experiences.

3.6 Concluding the Literature Review

In my review of literature, I have synthesised a ‘working’ definition of food tourism best suited to my research. Additionally, I have identified the relationship between local food and its importance within authentic tourist experiences. Furthermore, within my literature review, within my discussion of the ‘gaze’, I have identified that while a lineage of gaze concepts exists, it is the “refractive gaze” (Neill et al., 2016) that best suits my understanding of my participant TripAdvisor uploads. The refractive gaze explains how

tourist gastronomes seek poly-sensual and novel stimulation in as much as they want to see, hear, touch, smell and enjoy new kinaesthetic experiences that enhance their 'capitals' particularly their culinary capital.

Additionally, within my exploration of the Internet's impact on travel, particularly the sharing of tourist experiences by the tourists themselves, I have come to realise the potency of sites like TripAdvisor and how access to such sites has not only democratised food opinions, but also facilitated my research.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

This chapter presents the philosophical and methodological perspectives of my research. To begin, I present a brief discussion on my understandings of ontology and epistemology. Following on from that, I present my methodology: qualitative description. This chapter also presents my research method information outlining on how I selected my research participants, engaged in my data collection process and completed my data analysis. Those processes facilitated the development of my Findings and Discussion and Conclusion Chapters.

4.1 Ontology

Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed that ontology reflected four philosophical positions. These are naive realism, critical realism, historical realism and relativism. Sequentially, naive and critical realism view reality being externally objective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Historical realism proposes that reality is shaped by gender, social, cultural, and economic factors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Relativism suggests that reality can be understood from multiple perspectives including those of the individual or group. Within those considerations, ontology asks “what ‘things’ are there in the world” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 25) and, as Gray (2014) proposed, asks what is the nature of reality?

My research is an ontologically based exploration of how different tourists expressed their experience of food in Battambang Province via TripAdvisor uploads. Those experiences reflected their lived realities and actively compounded their levels of existing and new knowledge consequent to their Cambodian food experiences in Battambang Province. In short, what they write about food not only reflected what they already knew but also what they had come to learn about Cambodian food during their stay in Battambang Province.

4.2 Epistemology

Epistemology asks, “how [do] we know what we know[?]” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 25). According to J. Creswell (2013), epistemological philosophy asks, “what counts as knowledge? How are knowledge claims justified? [And] What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?” (p. 21). Additionally, Gray (2014) proposed that epistemology provides a philosophical background for deciding what kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate (p. 19). For my research, epistemology was

important because it informed me and my readers about how tourists' experiences and coming to know Cambodia food in Battambang Province were conveyed, interpreted and presented, particularly for my readers' understandings. My participants' prior knowledge about local Cambodian food was enhanced after they had experienced it within authentic Cambodian "servicescapes" (Bitner, 1992). Consequently, the tourists' knowledge base reflecting Cambodian food was perceived by me to be a dynamic synthesis of ontology and epistemology. In these ways, ontology and epistemology have direct connections in as much as these domains helped my participants, through knowledge, make sense of their world.

4.3 Research Methodology

Next, I present my methodological considerations. This section begins by identifying the most suitable research methodology for my work, qualitative description. In this section, I also present how I selected my research participants, engaged in my data collection processes and completed my data analysis. These activities contributed toward my compilation of my Findings and Discussion and Conclusion Chapters. In considering my methodology, I draw my readers' attention to Appendices 1. In Appendices 1, I present an overview of the methodologies that I considered but later rejected because I found them to be unsuited to my research.

4.3.1 Introducing Qualitative Description

As a methodology, qualitative description has been considered the least theoretical method within the spectrum of qualitative approaches (Sandelowski, 2000). While easily perceived as a limitation, that, as Sandelowski (2000) reminded us, is important because researchers conducting qualitative descriptive research are not as encumbered by the pre-existing theoretical and philosophical commitments inherent in other methodologies. Consequently, qualitative description presents research in descriptive and straightforward ways (Sandelowski, 2000). Over time, qualitative description has become synonymous with Sandelowski (2000), despite her admission that the technique is 'not hers'. Sandelowski (2000, 2010) has clarified her understanding that qualitative description's reputation has been misrepresented within the academy and that qualitative description previously existed before the academy linked it with her. Despite that, for Sandelowski (2000, 2010), qualitative description was important because it allowed researchers to become close to their data. That closeness promoted the reporting of research in ways that

avoided its over-interpretation. That, and qualitative description's emphasis on the who, what, where and why of events (Bolyai, Bova, & Harper, 2005), combine to make qualitative description the best methodology for responding to my research questions.

4.3.2 Research Methods

Qualitative description and thematic analysis provided the framework within which I responded to my research questions. Those questions included:

In what ways do international tourists, using TripAdvisor, express their experiences of Cambodian cuisine in Battambang Province?

- What primary themes are important for international tourists in their considerations of local food in Battambang province?
- In which ways were those themes and experiences expressed through TripAdvisor?
- What sensory elements were important to international tourists in their food experience considerations?

4.3.2.1 *Research Sampling Approach*

I used purposive sampling to identify and glean data from my participants via TripAdvisor. Creswell(1998) proposed that purposeful sampling was a crucial component within qualitative research. According to Gray (2004) and Leary (2010), purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants who are believed to represent the characteristics of the desired, larger research population.

For my research, the restaurants and their customer reviews on TripAdvisor constituted a purposeful sample because they represented a population of people experiencing Cambodian cuisine, then providing feedback on it through TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor added validity to their data because of its interactivity. Consequently, posted comments may be added to, contradicted or otherwise enhanced. TripAdvisor is also the largest and most popular forum where consumers can provide online feedback about their hospitality experience (Cordato, 2014).

TripAdvisor listed eighteen Cambodian Restaurants in Battambang Province. For my research, I narrowed my restaurant list to explore only restaurants that had 10 or more uploads on TripAdvisor about food. Table 1 outlines the restaurants (seven restaurants) and the number of reviews (118 reviews) that I used in my research.

Table 1 *Selected Restaurants*

Restaurant names	Number of reviews between January and March 2019
Coconut LyLy Restaurant	11
Nary Kitchen	15
Smokin' Pot Street food and Cooking School	16
Hoc Café	14
Jaan Bai Restaurant	36
White Rose	10
Bar Ang Restaurant & Bar	16
Total	118

Then, after selecting my restaurants I found that some of them offered more services than others. Consequently, I categorised my 'participating' restaurants in the following ways:

- Restaurants with cooking classes,
- Restaurants engaged in social enterprise, and
- Restaurants with no 'extra' activities.

Table 2.

Profile of Selected Restaurants

Restaurant Name	Categorisation	TripAdvisor Review Uploads
Coconut LyLy Restaurant	Cooking class and restaurant	11
Nary Kitchen		15
Smokin 'Pot Street food and Cooking School		16
Hoc Café	Restaurant as social enterprise	14
Jaan Bai Restaurant		36
White Rose	Restaurants with no 'extra' activities	10
Bar Ang Restaurant & Bar		16

Interestingly, of my seven selected restaurants, five of them were engaged in extra activities that sat 'outside' normal restaurant business. Those extra activities ranged from cooking classes to social enterprise. The need for many small businesses, like these

restaurants, to engage in extra activities was identified by Khieng and Dahles (2015). They proposed that in countries like Cambodia, my two restaurants which are operated by non- governmental organization (NGOs), were proactively engaged in community activities in an attempt to rectify social issues including sexual trafficking, health and environmental concerns, children's' rights and education. Many of those issues had evolved as the negative consequences of civil war. Additionally, as Khieng and Dahles (2014) identified, many small businesses were actively engaged in vocational training, particularly in hospitality.

4.3.2.2 *Data collection and analysis*

a) Data collection

This research obtains secondary data from online review, TripAdvisor uploaded reviews by printing the restaurant posts, and then read and reread. To ensure that those data sets were written by international tourists, I looked for key terms (such as 'during my holiday', or 'during my stay') within those uploads, and the nationality of the upload participant on their profile. That was an important consideration given that my research focused on international tourist inputs. However, some uploads did not contain information that would distinguish its author as an international tourist. That noted, I did exclude any upload that identified its author as a local, and not an international tourist. I did this by looking at their profile information on their TripAdvisor account. I excluded those reviews if I found the author to be a resident of Cambodia.

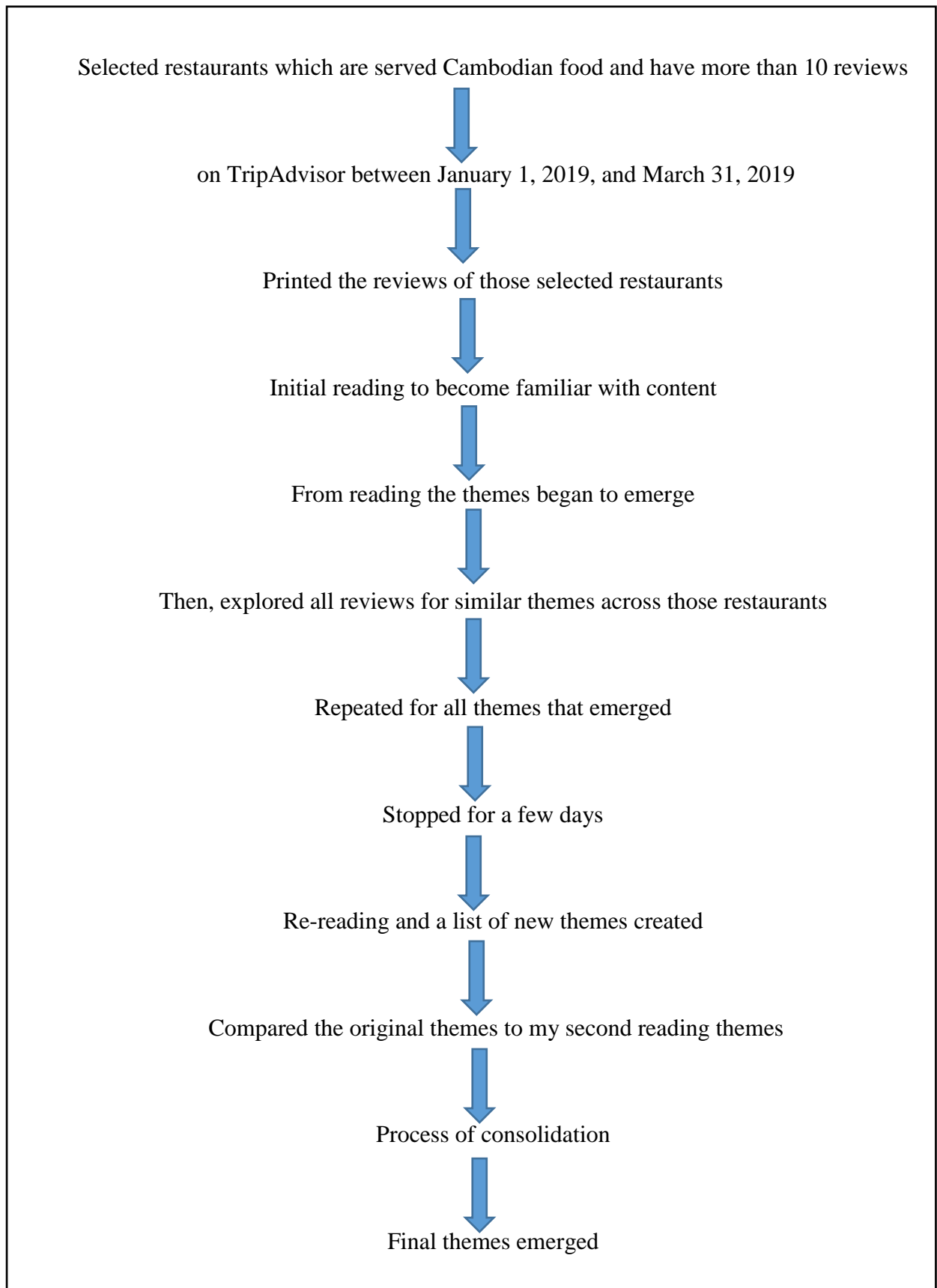
b) Data analysis

To understand what my tourist posts meant, I used thematic analysis. According to Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013), thematic analysis is an iterative process whereby themes emerge within qualitative data as the researcher explores, reads and rereads participant positions (uploads). The combination of qualitative description and thematic analysis allows researchers some flexibility in the formation of themes and the write-up of their findings. That flexibility reflects the iterative nature of thematic analysis because within thematic analysis data themes emerge from within the data itself, not within the predetermined categories set by the researcher. That benefit promotes a dynamism within the evolution of the research findings. In that way, my use of thematic analysis promoted the meanings and experiences and the lived reality of my participants in effective, meaningful and understandable ways. My use of qualitative description and

thematic analysis also helped me to resist my urge to over-interpret what my participants said.

For my research, in order to identify the themes within the TripAdvisor restaurant posts,. Reading promoted my familiarity with their content. That process enabled me to get a rough idea about the key themes in the posts that emerged for me during those readings. Then, I created a list of the themes that my reading had identified. Then, several days later, I reread the data and created yet another list of themes. Following that, I compared my original themes to my reconsiderations of them. Then, I finalised my themes by synthesising the two lists. Having finalised my themes, I then differentiated the positive, negative and other compositional aspects within each theme. That process provided me with a deeper understanding of and other ways to explore my data in rich and meaningful ways. Then, within each theme and its subset of positive, negative and/or compositional content, I populated my themes using my participants' quotes. That process began the write-up of my Findings Chapter. As I began my write up, I followed the principles of qualitative description in as much as I resisted the urge to deeply interpret my data but instead concentrated upon relating what my participants and their data 'said'.

Figure 3: The process of data collection and analysis



Chapter 5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my research findings. I collected my data from TripAdvisor uploads of customer feedback about their Cambodian dining experiences in Battambang Province. I selected my research data between January 1, 2019, and March 31, 2019. That time frame coincided with Cambodia's dry season and its peak tourist time.

The data was collected in response to my three underpinning research questions: What primary themes are important for international tourists in their considerations of local food in Battambang province? In what ways were those themes and experiences expressed through TripAdvisor? What sensory elements were important to international tourists in their food experience considerations? By synthesising my participants' data, my research findings respond to the above research questions. To expand upon that, I perceived that my three underpinning research questions provided the information necessary to answer my primary question (see Figure 1. Research questions).

Consequently, the conceptual themes identified in my participants' data expanded and were illuminated within their direct feedback to cover all the aspects of my research questions. In this way, I also reflect Neill et al. (2016) refractive gaze because I reviewed my participants' data holistically as "peak experiences" (Quan & Wang, 2004).

5.2 Participant Experiences of the Taste of Cambodian Food

From the analysis of my participants' data, within my three restaurant categories, it is possible to state that tourists generally enjoyed Cambodian food. Reflecting that enjoyment, participants realised the uniqueness of the cuisine's taste. They exemplified that within the range of adjectives they used; their descriptors included: excellent, great, amazing, delicious, so good, tasty, and fresh. However, some tourists did not enjoy their Cambodian food experiences. The following section explores both domains.

Estonia commented on the food's taste;

*From the simple dish I ordered, I can guarantee the chef knows what he is doing, it was **excellent**.*

Kiwi noted:

*For food- several of us had the vegetable spring rolls, they were **great**, nice and crispy. The chicken amok was also **delicious** and my friends enjoyed their Khmer curry.*

Diederik's experience noted:

*I had the chicken amok and it was **absolutely amazing** beyond all belief.*

Another example that held a high appreciation of Cambodian food was posted by Lususan:

*Food is **amazing**, orders the chicken amok and it was just **delicious**.*

Michelle reported:

*What a wonderful afternoon we just spent with Toot learning how to make some **amazing** traditional Cambodian dish.*

Stephen remarked:

*Then we go to the house and cooking school and (with help) made a delicious lunch of Lok Lak beef with local pepper and fish amok which was **delicious**.*

Rachel commented:

*The food was **so good**: fresh spring rolls, fish amok, beef Lok Lak and banana tapioca desert.*

Letty wrote:

*We went back to the restaurant to make four **tasty** national dishes which we ate as a group.*

Timo commented about the food's freshness;

*All ingredients are fresh, mean coconut mill we prepared by ourselves. No artificial ingredients. The results of our effort were three **absolutely tasty and fresh dishes**.*

However, some participants had negative food experiences. As Rita noted:

My boyfriend had a curry which was thin, look like soup.

Rin also offered a similar critique:

The coconut and chocolate desserts were not very good.

And, Eddymaya also commented:

We've been in Cambodia for a couple of weeks but haven't tried loklak previously as it is usually made with beef which we don't eat so when we saw they had a tofu version we thought we'd give it a go. I have to say I was a bit underwhelmed as it was a bit flavourless. We also had a veggie curry. Again, rather underwhelming. Too much sauce and not enough vegetables.

While most of my participants enjoyed eating Cambodian food, some of them did not. The range of adjectives that they used to describe the food's taste noticeably reflected their enjoyment, or not, of Cambodian cuisine. Although some participant uploads reflected negative aspects and experiences, the majority of participant comments on Cambodian food were positive.

5.3 Service Encounter and Servicescape

Another theme that emerged from participants' data related to the "service encounter and servicescape" (Lin & Mattila, 2010, p. 824). Again, the majority of tourists' postings on TripAdvisor were extremely satisfied with the service they had received in Battambang restaurants. In their posts, many participants used positive descriptors for their experiences. These included fun, excellent, pleasant, good, impeccable, helpful, great, fast, quick, fabulous, efficient, wonderful, knowledgeable, amazing, sweet, really nice, very welcoming, very good, very attentive and friendly. Additionally, my participants also commented on the surrounding environment or servicescape in their food experiences.

Service encounter feedback included Steve's example:

*We visited for dinner and service was **fast** and the staff [were] **very good**.*

Roving noted that:

We met the owner and he is an unbelievably **awesome** man. He was **friendly** and had great conversation.

Other postings recognised the combination of food and service as a total experience:

*Our food was delicious, presented beautifully supported by **excellent service**.*

Similarly, Rach enthusiastically posted:

*The food is great, and the staff are **fabulous**, happy to talk and chat and really **attentive**.*

Camille was also impressed with the service and the taste of the food. She posted:

*Everything was **perfect!!** From every **welcoming** staff to the delicious and super tasty food we had.*

My participants also were impressed with the service over the taste of the food, as Qwen posted in his comment:

*Food is 4 to 5 stars, service is **excellent**, 5 stars.*

Additionally, Manchester also recognised the service similarly to Owen. He posted:

*The food was superb, the service was **impeccable**.*

While the food and service were clearly “peak experiences” (Quan & Wang, 2014, p. 298), participants also commented on servicescape together with service encounter. Exemplifying that, Meg posted:

The staff were willing to accommodate requests and the vibe was relaxed.

Additionally, Manchester added:

*The restaurant is **clean** and **nicely decorated**. The staff were **attentive, friendly and helpful**.*

Jessie also had positive experiences relating to service encounter and servicescape. She posted:

We had a good service and the restaurant was quiet but had a reasonably nice atmosphere.

Kellee also posted:

Lovely atmosphere with attentive, friendly staff.

Anna also perceived servicescape added to her food experience:

Then, we continued to the charming patio at his home in the village where we start preparing the dishes in the outside kitchen.

Service encounter and servicescape were key indicators that showed that my participants had positive dining experiences in Battambang. In those ways, my participants provided a larger picture in as much as they recognised a clear link in participating in a total experience whereby the combination of food taste and “servicescape and service encounter” (Lin & Mattila, 2010) contributed to highly memorable tourist food related experiences. It seems appear that service is outstanding compared to the food.

5.4 Food and Price or Value for Money

Another noticeable theme from participant uploads was the construct of value for money. While many tourists enjoyed eating local food, its comparative low cost was perceived as a bonus, as May posted:

The food is excellent and surroundings pleasant. Meals start at \$4 with free tea. Great value for money meal in Battambang.

Additionally, Sharon commented that:

The food was food excellent; the staff were friendly, and it was not expensive.

Roy was highly satisfied with value of money, noting:

All three courses were beautifully cooked and delicious. The staff were attentive, friendly and helpful. The price was very reasonable for such high quality.

Lajos also commented that the food was inexpensive within the cooking class experience:

You really can learn to cook serval dishes the traditional way and all of that for a cheap price, I think it was 12\$ for three dishes.

Brandon commented on price and cooking classes:

Three hours of delicious fun for only 10\$.

Others commented on portion size as an adjunct to value for money. As Susan posted:

Food is amazing, ordered the chicken amok and it was just delicious! I couldn't even finish the whole dish; they give a generous amount!

Leefoody also commented on portion size:

The vegetable amok was also very nice. The portions were generous and very reasonably priced.

My participants found that the food offerings in my selected restaurants were both high quality and value for money. Their comments on price reflected related factors that included the quality of the service, food, and their satisfaction within their overall dining experiences. Adding to those experiences, participants found the food to be generously portioned. The combinations of quality, value for money and positive experience generated positive tourist feedback. There is no negative expression regarding the price of Cambodian food from my participants' reviews. Overall, Cambodian food was perceived, within the uploads explored in my research, to be excellent value for money.

5.5 Socialisation

One theme that my tourist data revealed was that many tourists not only enjoyed eating Cambodian cuisine, but also took time within their vacations to enjoy Cambodian cooking classes. Many of the cooking classes that tourists enjoyed were hosted by the restaurants that the tourists had also dined in. In those classes, the tourists were not only impressed with the food taste, service encounter, "servicescape" (Bitner, 1992, p. 58), and food price, but they also enjoyed how those experiences added to their engagement within social interaction experience.

Jason posted his experience about getting to know food providers:

We went to for food and found friends. What a cool couple that run this place.

Daniel commented:

My girlfriend and I from UK went for lunch and a drink. Our visit was purely by chance, but we were really glad we did, as the owner and his wife were great.

Jessie noted:

My boyfriend orders three dishes and he had plenty to eat. We had a good service.

Joseph particularly enjoyed the friendly welcome and engagement that he experienced:

We then attended Vannak's home for the cookery school, and [we] were greeted with smiles by the rest of his family.

Zari noted her enjoyment:

He (cooking teacher) took us to the market outside of town by Tuk Tuk and we conversed with the sellers and learned about the local products. We ate our meal with his family and those in the area.

Manchester's post reflected meeting the locals and other tourists:

The class was most enjoyable, teacher is an excellent teacher, funny, patient and personal able. And it was also a nice way to meet and chat with other tourists.

Consequently, these tourist experiences enhanced interactivity, communication and commensality. That was evidenced in the enjoyment participants expressed within group activities that included eating together and the social interaction that occurred between tourists and locals.

5.6 Food As Educational knowledge

Additionally, my participants also enjoyed how their cooking class experiences added to their culinary knowledge and acted as an educational opportunity, as Danie's upload noted:

We did Tofo LokLak, Mango salad, fried spring rolls and a wonderful coconut dessert.

Marko was equally proud of his experience, relating that:

We prepared fresh spring rolls, fish amok, beef Lok Lak and a dessert together with [the] chef. No preliminary knowledge or cooking skills [were] required.

Dinna, realised that by attending the class she could develop her culinary skills as well as her “culinary capital” (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, P. 3):

The cooking class it [was] perfect to learn to cook and to bring back something from our trip.

Nomad added:

She [the chef] also gives you tips to substitute the ingredients you cannot find in your country.

Enhancing that, Manchester wrote:

We were given a recipe book to take away with us, so I will definitely be practicing my Cambodian cookery skills when I return to the UK.

Through cooking classes, tourists learned about local food, its supply chain, history and Cambodia itself, as Slovenia observed:

With a small group we went to the local market where we learned about different vegetable, fruit and other food. We get to know the surroundings, the fruit trees, the traditional food and some history as well.

Stephen posted a similar experience. He related:

Van (cooking teacher) explained how the seasons, local economy and regulation of the custom affects what is available [in the market].

Additionally, Steinfeld wrote:

We got very detailed answers in a perfect English for all the questions we had about the products, e.g. growing, harvesting and storing. We had a great chat about his life, history of Cambodia and food that we made. Because he explained the history of the country regarding to cooking techniques, we very quick realized why the dishes are prepared how they are.

Knowing about Cambodian food and learning to cook gave many tourists an opportunity to learn more not only about Battambang, but Cambodian culture, food and history. In that way, cooking classes ‘opened a door’ to knowledge for many tourists. That knowledge not only added to their culinary capital but also provided them with a wider worldview of Cambodia, and, in particular, Battambang Province. The experiences that my participants engaged in added to their knowledge on Cambodian food. That enthusiasm contrasted their experiences back home because of the newness and excitement that my participants expressed about learning to cook and consume Cambodian food.

5.7 Authenticity

Another noticeable theme within the TripAdvisor reviews was the emphasis that tourists’ uploads placed on authentic experiences. My participants related authentic food experience to traditional material, engagement and to the surrounded environment. My participants also mentioned that food and cooking classes, combined with knowledge about the cooking methods, cooking equipment, food ingredients, and cooking spaces, reflected their perceptions that they were engaging in an authentic Cambodian culinary experience.

With regard to the traditional material and traditional engagement, Brandon commented:

The chef was extremely friendly and patient in guiding us through the steps of making several traditional Cambodian dishes, in addition to her original signature coconut dessert.

Stephen posted similar view:

We go to the house and cooking school and (with help) made a delicious lunch of lak lok beef with local pepper and fish amok which was delicious. Everything is made from scratch with local ingredients using only traditional methods.

Lincoln commented that:

Vannak made the whole process easily accessible and enjoyable, showing us how to make traditional meals with the traditional methods and utensils.

Vjoseph added:

This restaurant specialises in authentic, traditional home cooked Khmer food. Chef use traditional method and recipes, making the food extra delicious.

Lajos wrote:

True authentic cooking class outside of the town. You get to know the surrounding, the fruit tree, the traditional food and some history as well.

Timo wrote his view

We had a tour round a local market. Be warned, this market is not for the faint of heart. Rats, frogs, live birds' and fish in baskets sit along site, the most expected fruit, vegetables.

My participants related their authentic experiences in Battambang to the ways in which traditional food were made by using traditional cooking methods, utensils, fresh local ingredients and home-based rural and market kitchens. Their involvement in traditional cooking classes combined with traditional cooking methods, equipment, cooking spaces and food ingredients came to reflect their perceptions that they were engaging in an authentic culinary Cambodian experience.

5.8 Helping the Community

Two of my selected restaurants were also engaged in social enterprise. Participant uploads reflected these initiatives, as Jessie exemplified:

We had food service and the restaurant was quiet but had a reasonably nice atmosphere. By visiting you are also helping to contribute to the Hope of Children Charity.

Another tourist, Kaitly posted:

This restaurant is not only amazing quality but is a social enterprise that gives locals jobs and education.

Additionally, Kindey positively commented:

This is a social enterprise restaurant helping youth. The staff were all amazing. So was the food price [which] is cheap. Please go and support this wonderful place.

Myhatmyhome recognised the importance of helping these ventures:

The kids that run it have the local warmth, but the pride in doing it all to help the upkeep of their orphanage, which gets not charity/government help.

Lisa was another tourist happy to support these initiatives. She noted:

All our food was delicious, presented beautifully supported by excellent service. I had a personal favourite for starter, green papaya salad. To boost our experience further it was a pleasure to find the restaurant [which] run as a social enterprise for young people, hats off to all concerned.

Participant feedback was very supportive of the initiatives of socially aware restaurants that help local people. Tourists not only enjoyed the food in Battambang, but also valued the opportunity to contribute toward something ‘bigger’. In that way, restaurants engaging in social enterprise gave diners a value-added experience and exposed them to another side of Cambodian culture. That exposure created a wider social awareness of what it might be like to live in Battambang.

5.9 Summary of Findings

This chapter presented my themed research data, which originated from my participants’ TripAdvisor uploads about their food experiences in Battambang Province from restaurants, restaurants as cooking classes, and restaurants as social enterprises. Being presented experiences by theme, my Findings Chapter has responded to my primary and underpinning research questions.

This chapter presented the seven main themes arising from tourists' experiences. The research found that my participants' TripAdvisor uploads covered seven main themes that included Cambodian food taste, "service encounter and servicescape" (Lin & Mattila, 2010), value for money, the socialisation experience, learning about Cambodian food, authenticity and helping community. While the majority of my participants promoted positive food taste experiences in Battambang, that perspective was not shared by all respondents. However, what was of particular interest in my findings was that those who did enjoy Cambodian food enjoyed it with enthusiasm. Service was the outstanding factor contributing toward that enjoyment, and that my tourists enjoyed what they considered to be an authentic Cambodian experience. That authenticity was compounded by the wider social realities that my tourists were exposed to through the social enterprise of the restaurants and cooking classes that they visited. Mediating those experiences were the encounters my tourists experienced with locals and with other tourists. That reflected the social and commensal nature of food, not only in Battambang, but also as a wider construct common to many socio-cultures. My participants also perceived that Cambodian food has value for money. Additionally, food experiences in Battambang Province enhanced my participants' culinary knowledge on Cambodian food. Participants enjoyed learning about cooking methods, food ingredients and food-related history. Additionally, experiencing Cambodian food in Cambodia promoted my participants' "culinary capital" (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, p. 3). Finally, my research also illustrated that my participants were very positive and willing to help the local community through supporting their social enterprise through restaurant initiatives.

Through my participants' experiences noted in this chapter, it is apparent that they have come to enjoy Battambang and its food in poly-sensual ways. The food itself contain some sensory attributes such as flavour (salty, bitter, sweet, sour and umami), aroma, texture and appearance. Additionally, my participants were 'involved' with the sensory experiences through socialization, location, ambiance and "servicescape" (Bitner, 1992, p. 58).

In my next chapter, the Discussion and Conclusion Chapter, I will synthesise the themes I have identified here and then actively compare and contrast them with the information from my literature review in Chapter 4. In that way, my discussion will not only contextualise my findings within the existing research but, most importantly, identify my

research contribution to the existing knowledge on food tourism. The next chapter presents my discussion part between finding and literature reviews.

Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of my study was to understand the food experience of international tourists visiting Battambang Province Cambodia. Particularly, my research questions asked:

1. What primary themes are important for international tourists in their considerations of local food in Battambang Province?
2. In what ways were those themes and experiences expressed through TripAdvisor?
3. What sensory elements were important to international tourists in their food experience considerations?

To respond to those questions, I analysed 118 feedback uploads to TripAdvisor posted by international tourists between January 1, 2019, and March 31, 2019.

My Findings Chapter identified seven central themes that were important to my participants. They are:

- Experiencing Cambodian food
- “Service encounters and servicescape” (Lin & Mattila, 2010).
- Food prices and value of money.
- Socialisation with local and food tourists.
- Learning about Cambodian food and education.
- Authenticity.
- Helping the community.

Here I will sequentially work through these themes within my considerations of the similar themes that I presented in my literature review (refer Chapter 3). Finally, I will conclude this chapter and my dissertation by identifying the limitations of my research and the opportunities for future research, before concluding my writings with some final reflections.

6.2 Experiencing Cambodian Food Taste

As my literature review noted, food tourists include those whose motivation in travelling is to enjoy and experience the multi-sensual and authentic enjoyment of the cuisine of the place they visit (Long, 2004; World Tourism Organization, 2012; Neill et al., 2016).

While my participants did not describe themselves as tourists, foodies or any other identifier, their activities and comments have revealed much about how they see themselves and how they allow others to see them. Consequently, it would be fair to say that my participants were food tourists because of their multi-sensual enjoyment of the food and how that enjoyment (and, in some cases, disappointment) prompted them to write about their Battambang food experiences on TripAdvisor. In that way, my participants reflected that local Cambodian food was but one “peak experience” (Quan & Wang, 2004) within their wider tourist experiences.

As noted in Sengel et al. (2015) and my participants revealed, food tourists are keen to consume local food within authentic experiences that elevate both the food and its enjoyment to become “peak experience[s]” (Quan & Wang, 2004 ,p.298). Those experiences, as the descriptors participants used on TripAdvisor to describe their food, reflected more than a peak experience, but the multi-sensual arousal that Cambodian food promoted for them. In those ways, my participants were aligned to the constructs of Neill et al. (2016) refractive gaze. Additionally, my participants’ Cambodian food experiences also reflected the refractive gaze because Cambodian food sat outside my participants’ regular diets. In those ways, their food experiences in Cambodia incorporated their development of social and “culinary capital” (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012,p 3). While it was not directly noted in my participants’ TripAdvisor uploads, my participants set aside any hygiene and food safety preconceptions in experiencing Cambodian cuisine. That lack of concern was also congruent to (Neill et al., 2016) refractive gaze. Mediating the refractive gaze and also Pantelidis’s (2010) and Gan et al.’s (2017) position was the finding that food taste was mentioned in almost every review my participants uploaded.

6.3 Service and the Servicescape

My literature review also noted that the service and servicescape impacts diners’ perceptions of food (Lin & Mattila, 2010), and pleasure and satisfaction (Gan et al., 2017; Pantelidis, 2010). Those positions reinforce the importance of “service and servicescape” (Lin & Mattila, 2010, p. 824) as customers perceive those aspects of their experiences. These positions were supported by my participants’ experiences. For them, service was the ‘star’. However, it should be noted that my participants, through their uploads, recognised the key elements within successful hospitality experiences. Most notably, my participants recognised how the blend of food, its cost, the service of it and the

environment within which it was consumed combined to create positive and memorable culinary adventures.

6.4 Food as Value for Money

An important companion to the participant experience of “service and servicescape” (Lin & Mattila, 2010, p. 824) was the price of the food in Cambodia, particularly Battambang Province. My participants’ uploads noted that Cambodian food was both reasonably priced and amply portioned. As Kim et al. (2009) and the World Tourism Organization (2012) observed, food tourists are unlikely to minimise their expenditure on food while they are travelling. That claim was supported by my participants’ comments that the food in Battambang was excellent value for money. Underpinning their enthusiasm for the comparatively inexpensive food in Battambang was the possibility that most of the tourists whose TripAdvisor uploads I explored came from countries that were more economically developed than Cambodia. In that way, Cambodian food, compared to the tourist’s home countries, was considered to be inexpensive.

6.5 Socialization with Local People and Other Tourists

Adding to the enthusiastic participant uploads incorporating service encounter and , servicescape value for money and large portion sizes was that my participants, in accord with Fischler’s (2011) position, used their Cambodian food experiences as expressions of commensality. Experiencing and enjoying new food during travel allowed my participants to create multiple social connections. Those connections included how my participants interacted not only with food providers and the local community, but also with fellow tourists. Within the literature, Wijaya et al. (2013) and Richards (2015) make that very point. Consequently, my research supports those established research positions and reinforces the commensal nature of food experiences (Fischler, 2011). Thus, my participants’ Cambodian food experiences became a potent part of their integrated tourism experience in Cambodia. Again, that reflected Neill et al.’s (2016) notion of the refractive gaze because it highlighted how food engaged all the senses and created stronger connections between place and personal and sensory memories within consumption.

6.6 Cambodian Food and Education

My participants' compounding Cambodian food experiences reflected their ongoing, 'hands-on' food education. All of my participants learned something about Cambodian food during their time in Battambang. It was within the combination of restaurant dining, cooking classes and social enterprise that my participants came to know Cambodian food and culture. The ease of the commensal experience added to that dynamic. Consequently, through learning about Cambodian food, my participants developed and enhanced their "culinary capital" (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012 ,p. 3). However, my participants' development of culinary capital also included elements that supported food knowledge. Those elements included culture, history, the food supply chain and local life in Battambang Province. For my participants, Cambodian food also incorporated domains that reflected local culture, traditional methods of food preparation, traditional cooking equipment and the story behind the food itself. Those domains reflected how food introduced people to wider issues that were associated with food. Therefore, it was through interaction, experience and education, expressed within accumulated culinary capital that my tourist participants learned about Cambodian food in Battambang Province.

6.7 Authenticity

The learning described in the previous section emphasised authenticity and aligned with the authors in my literature review who stressed the connection between authenticity and tourist food experiences (Walter, 2017; Wijaya et al., 2013). My participants' authentic food experiences were enhanced by the contacts and experiences they gained, particularly in the cooking classes and the restaurants that engaged in social enterprise. That connection reflected Sims's (2009) ideas about the three ways in which tourists construct authenticity. While Sims (2009) pointed that tourists question authenticity against their preconceptions about what a typical food experience will 'look like', tourists in my study may or may not have any perception of what authenticity should be look like because they did not remark upon it which reflect in Sims (2009). Possibly, when the food experiences happen in the originated country, food tourists absolutely perceived is as an authenticity. Additionally, in the second and third points of Sims (2009) mentioned about the surrounding environments and the traditional materials which are the contribution toward authenticity. These absolutely reflect with what my participants perceived

authentic Cambodian food because cooking class environment and the traditional cooking methods and materials constructed the authenticity experience for my participants.

Similarly, enjoying local food, and its preparation represented an authentic experience for my participants. In those ways, my participants, through their increased “culinary capital” (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, p. 3), came to know more about authentic Cambodian food. That knowledge might well be part of the stories they tell other people ‘back home’, as they ‘know and show’ their culinary capital to others through their narratives.

6.8 Social Enterprise: Helping the Community

My participants posted on TripAdvisor that they were pleased to contribute to the local community by engaging with restaurants which offered cooking classes as a social enterprise. By participating in those activities my participants not only enhanced their “culinary capital” (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, p. 3) but also acknowledged, via their participation, some of the negative elements within Cambodian life that have been caused by years of civil war. Those experiences actualised the theoretical perspectives of Khieng and Dahles (2015). For tourists from more well-off nations who visited Battambang, the engagement with social enterprise could also reflect their assuagement of the guilt they might feel consequent to their relative wealth. While that is an interesting observation, its discussion sits outside the scope of my research.

6.9 Theoretical and Practical Implication

The findings of this research responded to and adequately answered my research questions. In doing so, my research has made a significant contribution to the existing, but limited knowledge about international tourists’ food experience in Battambang Province, Cambodia.

6.9.1 Theoretical Implications

My research maximised the subjective experience of international tourists in Battambang who reported their food experiences on TripAdvisor. In reporting their experiences, I became increasingly aware of how theory can both restrict or enhance research. Best exemplifying the theoretical implication of my work were two key elements: my use of qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000) and my use of the refractive gaze (Neill et al., 2016)

Qualitative description was vitally important to understanding my participants' experiences because it allowed me to report what participants said, not my interpretations of their TripAdvisor uploads. Additionally, the notion of the refractive gaze was important as it allowed me to recognise food as being more than "peak experiences" (Quan & Wang, 2004) because the refractive gaze encompassed the poly-sensual elements of my participants' food experiences that in turn enhanced their cultural and culinary capital. Consequently, my research helped me to realise the importance of selecting the theoretical positions that best illuminate participant realities. In selecting those theories, I have added a depth of understanding and a wider view of international tourists' food experience in Battambang Province, Cambodia.

6.9.2 Practical implications

My research has important practical implications as noted in section 2.4. Food Tourism in Cambodia is in its infancy. Additionally, the local Cambodian government is urging tourist markets to be spread more throughout the country. That spread would ease the pressure of popular attractions including Angkor Wat in Battambang's provincial neighbour, Siem Reap. Therefore, Battambang has been earmarked for local development which means my research is timely. Potentially, my research can benefit Battambang province, and Cambodia more generally, in the following way:

By providing insight into tourist food experience that might

- Aided the development of food tourism businesses in Battambang Province and Cambodia more generally.
- Increased an understanding of international tourists' food experiences in Battambang.
- Provided incentives, via those experiences, for an enhanced food offering into tourists' experiences.
- Realised the important nexus between international tourists' own experiences and their social experiences.
- Realised the significance of food as a poly-sensory international food experience.

- Provided confirmation that many providers of food for tourists are doing the right things by offering a poly-sensual and cognitive food experience in Battambang.
- Shown that Cambodian food has the potential to be developed and attract tourists.

6.10 Research Limitations

My research has revealed some research limitations. Firstly, while I did my best to sort out non-international tourists, my upload sample may contain participants sitting outside the scope of my research. That possibility suggests that taking secondary data, as I have done, may not represent a ‘pure’ sample. Secondly, some of my selected restaurants also sold ‘international food’. That noted, I was keen to only select uploads noting local Cambodian food commentary. Additionally, it could be argued that my sample size may be too small, and that I should have included more restaurants. That possibility, I suggest, is a domain for future research.

6.11 My Contributions to Research and Knowledge

The results from my research are of significant importance for private and governmental sectors that are keen to develop and promote Cambodian food tourism, particularly in Battambang Province. My research provides those agencies with many valuable insights into how tourists currently perceive Cambodian food in Battambang and also, through that knowledge, promote ways to enhance future food offerings and tourist experiences in Battambang. For the private sector, my research found that the service encounter and servicescape and the taste of Cambodian food were the most important factors in creating positive tourist food experiences. Therefore, the taste of Cambodian food and its service and servicescape are potent elements that local restaurateurs and entrepreneurs can turn to their advantage in future offerings of Cambodian food and experiences.

Additionally, scope exists for restaurants to enhance their social enterprise offerings. The tourist uploads mentioning social enterprise indicated that participants not only enjoyed those experiences, but that within their enjoyment they came to know more about Cambodia than a glossy tourist brochure might promote. In that way, and for both government and local businesses, the strength of my research offering is the

acknowledgement of and encouragement for the idea that Cambodian food provides an invaluable portal to the tourist experience of Cambodia. That portal and the experience it provides moves tourism in Cambodia away from the passive gaze of Urry (2006), toward the poly-sensual and educational elements within the refractive gaze of Neill et al. (2016). In those ways, my research contributes a positive overview of the tourist experience within a platform of knowledge designed to enhance future international (and domestic) tourist experiences.

6.12 Suggesting Future Research

According to the results from this study, the existing literature on local food experience and online local food reviews as well as the research limitations described above, further studies are required. Some recommendations for further research in this similar area are (a) the impact of online food reviews on dining decisions, (b) the impact of local food on community economy, and socio-culture, (c) the impact of online food reviews on national food image, and (d) an exploration of how wealthy tourists defer feelings of wealth-guilt by ‘helping’ poor people while holidaying. Additionally, an exploration of the impacts of online food reviews on food tourism development would be a necessary area to study.

6.13 Concluding Reflections

I began my research by wondering how I might be able to make sense of two particular topics that I was passionate about, food and my homeland Cambodia. Compounding that was my desire to explore those topics from someone else’s perspective: the international tourist. These passions and my research perspective, viewing my topic from someone else’s perceptions, were sometimes in conflict. My own experiences as a Cambodian were different to those of my participants. My life has been immersed in my culture. By comparison, I felt that international tourists held metaphoric snapshots of what it was like to be Cambodian. Those perceptions mirrored my own bias in my thoughts about those tourists. However, as my work progressed, I began to see my own shortsightedness. My participants opened my eyes, not only within their generosity in their appreciation of their Cambodian experiences, but more so by how they realised how ‘being a tourist’ could help local communities.

Oddly, I have felt close to my participants. That's a strange statement considering that I have never met any of them. However, through their TripAdvisor uploads I have come to know them in deep and meaningful ways. What has made this experience 'real' for me is the enjoyment I have felt, particularly in the posts of participants who meaningfully engaged in a 'wider' Cambodian experience. That was made real for me through their participation within restaurant businesses embracing social enterprise. For me, those participants realised the most positive implications of 'being a tourist' and how concepts of being hospitable are embodied in meaningful and mutual ways.

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Appendices 1: Methodologies Considered, But Rejected

Methodology	Attributes	Suitability	Rationale
Narrative Enquiry	Studies the experience or story of an individual or several individuals.	No	While this methodology is suitable because it conveys individual or group information, my access to those groups is limited since my data sources is via TripAdvisor and not direct participant contact.
Phenomenological Research	Studies individual experiences of phenomenon.	No	This research methodology is not applicable because it places the participants with the phenomenon.
Grounded Theory	This research methodology aims to create a theoretical framework from the research study.	No	A theoretical framework is not the aim of my research result, and so I exclude Grounded Theory.
Case study	An empirical study of a real-life context.	No	Because my data base is derived from a secondary source (TripAdvisor), a case study methodology is not applicable.
Ethnography	The methodology requires close engagement with the field study and participants. Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities.	No	Ethnographers typically gather participant observations, necessitating direct engagement and involvement with the world they are studying.
Qualitative description	Focuses on participants' experiences, the description and limited interpretation of that data.	Yes	It is the most appropriate methodology because it allows me to interpret the information from the participants without over-interpreting or misinterpreting.

