

## Consumer Culture Theory: Gastronomy and Cultural Tourism - Case Study of Nakhon Sri Thammarat

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### *Abstract*

*This research is about the meaning, method and importance of consumers who involve in food and cultural tourism. The results showed that, the meanings of cultural consumption is different according to the varieties of periods and environments. The meaning of cultural consumption consists of these important factors 1) Value Creation 2) Meaning Creation and 3) Difference Creation which was developed into strategy tools. Changing the manners of consumers by supporting markets, especially, the relation of food and tourism by using cultural consumption method. Consumers will have alternative consumption, experience and satisfaction which lead to income making and sustainable economy of country.*

**Keywords:** *Consumer Culture, Food, Cultural Tourism.*

### **Introduction**

In the period of Capitalism, which has large producing. Numbers of goods and services become to products and leads to the collecting budget of cultural objects into goods, Featherstone (1991) Therefore, present consumers focus on Hedonistic Consumption more than Useful Consumption, Holbrook (2006) Moreover, all of objects and goods, in this cultural consumption period, were become to unique tools or unique characters of consumers, which lead to consumption leaders including of Consumption Objects that are not only the touchable things but also including the non-touchable things, but can realize by feeling, such as sports, plays, movies etc. Any of consumers will individually characterize their own consumptions and make them more unique, Douglas and Wood (1980) cited in McCracken (1988). These factors show the importance in cultural consumption which was developed beyond the useful consumption, so that, cultural consumptions have more potential for characterize the consumers than useful consumption.

According to the passage, nowadays people do not consume by focus on benefits only. However, there are different destinies of consumption, depend on culture and lifestyle. The progress of Capitalism Period which leads to Consumer Society. The lifestyle of consumers were shifted greatly from the past. Consumption was connected with Difference Creation and Significant Symbol Creation, which are the cost that was connected with characterizing or the unique of consumers that make them outstanding. This process is the adaptation of consumers who want to get along with culture and freedom by using their own style, as same as the food which was originally focused on Useful Consumption for relieving hunger. Cultural Consumption was took into the way of consuming food and become to products and tourism services which can convince lots of tourism for feeling the new experience.

Thus, cultural consumption was reviewed for settle the definition and classified along with the importance of cultural consumption, which involve in food and cultural tourism, for make it to be the format of

developing about consumers in food and the benefits of the interested people. Nowadays, manners of consumers are shifted quickly. Cultural Consumption is the important tool for support and advantage market. Furthermore, if anyone interests in these ideas, they can take it to develop their things effectively.

## **The Meaning of Cultural Consumption**

The study of Consumer Culture for realize the need or manner of consumers. Almost all of the researchers are the Sociologist and Anthropologist instead of Marketing. However, numbers of Academicians defined the definitions differently according to their aspects and backgrounds which were the beginning of Consumer Culture. The results are from the growth of producing, consuming and distributing the products and services under the Capitalism which focuses on quantity. Cultural Consumption is the main factor which leads to the Significant Symbol Creation which was focused on by many consumers' actions for Distinction and Imitation. Consumers believe that they have independence for creating the meaning or activities which involve in any consumption and they are the ones who earn those happiness and independence in consumption and Significant Symbol Creation (Baudrillard, 1970).

Cultural Consumption is the repeatable loops which were conducted by consumers for creating the Sign, Image and Simulation. Therefore, the Same Type Consumption was appeared as same as appearing of Culture in Social such as Thai Culture, Eastern Culture etc. However, the points of view in Consumer Culture are the creating products (Bourdieu, 1984) If Cultural Consumption is the Individual Creation and Public Creation in case of consumers use benefits from products for creating their own with surrounded, McCracken (1988) Cultural Consumption is from the results of expanding of producing products under Capitalism. Products, under the Consumer Culture, become to the main things that people use to transact or interact with the others, and they were used to create the difference for consumers' satisfactions and dreams, Featherstone (1991) However, the applying of Cultural Consumption, for creating the meaning of somethings, make better responding about relation between Social and Sign (Brown, 2004), including of the manners of consumers and relations among the consumers (Arnold & Thompson, 2005).

However, Consumer Culture can manage lifestyles and requirements. The conducting of Producer and Service Providers have to understand the mental needed or mental requirements of those consumers in Middle Level (Hwankaew, 1997). Besides, Cultural Consumption is not only create the Distinction with Products and Services but also focus about Imitation for avoid the repeatability of Products and Services, (Kaewthep, 1998). Nevertheless, Cultural Consumption should be based on the Value Creation and Meaning Creation of products which are different and the conditions the can convince people to involve in Sign Consumption. Products will be defined as the parts of ambiance which can be attract the consumers (Kanokkusollapong, 2004).

Therefore, we can conclude that Consumer Culture is the Culture of community for satisfy the mental requirements more than physical requirements for their enjoyments and creating their own meaning, including the difference. Moreover, not only benefits but also the Sign Consumption of any products and services.

## **Consumer Culture Model**

In case of studying consumer culture. There are lots of Academicians were studied from various activities (see Sport & Holt, 1995; Pongsakornrunsilp & Schroeder, 2011; Healy & McDonough, 2013; McAlexander et al., 2002; Leigh, et al., 2006; Deighton, et al., 2010; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Belk, 1988; Pongsakornrunsilp, et al., 2011). These activities support the research about Consumer Culture more clearly and they have pave the ways to depth study about marketing and consumption including the present manners of consumers were showed clearly too, Pongsakornrunsilp and Pusaksrikit (2012) According to these reasons, Consumer Culture Model was separated into 3 types, Consumption for Value Creation, Consumption for Meaning and Consumption for Difference.

Consumption for Value Creation can be implied that the requirements of consumers is individual and specific. From the quality and service of products can be more advantage than benefits and useful. Only the requirement can lead consumers to be satisfied and feel good about experiencing the products or services. Mental requirements and Mood requirements were appeared as explained by Holbrook (2006) and that is related to the explanation between Consumption for Value Creation and Experience of consumers, and are from Social Values for example, Consumers, who interested in Rolex or Armani, will enhance their consumption for their satisfaction. On the other hand, Consumption for Value Creation is not the one that create the ready-made products for consumers but consumers is the ones who create it by using products or services. Moreover, the importance thing is the value which is not the thing that consumers can touch but it is the thing that consumers can feel it and create it by themselves (Pongsakornrungrungsilp, 2014).

Consumption for Meaning is the important thing because it can express character or lifestyle of consumers. In case of understanding deeply in consumers, we focus on Consumption for Meaning become to Symbol that was consumed and can create the character of consumers, relate to idea of, Holt (1995), defined that Consuming as Integration is that thing that consumer bring the meaning about symbol from consuming products or services and enhance their own characters or enhance their social conditions for example Consumers who use Camel Clothes which can be expressed that consumers are the ones who love travelling and adventuring etc.

Consumption for Difference can be implied that although consumers are in the same community, lifestyle, opinion but want to be different. Thus, difference can encourage their requirements. There are many types of difference such as, Products, Services etc. Consuming as Classification is not only gathering of consumers but it can separate the consumers who are not the real of that Products, Holt (1995) for example real Liverpool FC's fans can separate the fake fans from interacting both offline and online (Pongsakornrungrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011).

## **Gastronomy Tourism**

Before 2553 B.E. Food was considered as one of the parts in tourism for tourist at the restaurant and hotel, Rand & Health (2006) defined the Gastronomy Tourism as the integration of environments, culture, service, facility, accessing, good host, uniqueness and experience that tourist can get there, especially the sense of tasting food and sense of cooking food etc. These can increase value of tourists' experiences. Haukeland and Jacobsen (2001) defined this tourism model that "Tourism that you can feel the real unique of the places which is the consequence of globalization and you can locally reach the community." Gastronomy Tourism is what can completely please the tourists who came to visit and can continuously develop for retain the local arts and cultures. Moreover, it can convince tourists to buy local souvenirs and consume the local restaurants, Dwyer et al., (2009). Similarly, Cohen and Avieli (2004) said that the way of making local food to be outstanding and famous is supporting Gastronomy Tourism Model. Sometimes, local food have to be adapted for tourists, especially the foreigners and meanwhile the interchanging of culture between community and tourists was also appeared in the same ways. Urry (2002) defined that, "tourists who look for the real food experience are the ones who reflect the unique, simplicity, culture and local lifestyle". Therefore, the cultural unique can express itself by its food. However, Gastronomy Tourism which relates to Consumer Culture for expressing the food products to be difference, unique and people's feeling, religion, custom, hobby are the reason of developing tourism (Sormaz, et al., 2016).

## **Consumer Culture with Gastronomy Tourism**

Consumer Culture with Gastronomy Tourism are important agent and can advantage in competition, marketing opportunity and business. Thanks to, consumer culture is the important tool of "agent for expressing social and lifestyle of the community" (Hall, 2003). The same vein, from the oversea information and researches for instance the research of Boniface (2003) showed that local culture both past and present through the touchable experiences and Hall and Sharples (2003) additionally explained the

importance of Gastronomy Tourism or Food Learning Tourism as follows 1) Tourists realize about local culture. 2) To be the important part of supporting Tourism Market. 3) To be the part of developing agriculture and local economy. 4) To be the important part for competition with opponent markets. 5) To be the evaluation of prosperity in World Class, Country Class and Local Class. 6) To be the important products for tourists. The importance points for developing Gastronomy Tourism are the requirements of expected food taste and the facilities which were prepared for tourists by community. Including of protecting local products by community.

Hall and Mitchell (2005) adduced France, Australia, Italy, South Africa, USA that they developed their tourism by drinking wine and Canada for beer etc. Pullphothong and Sopha (2012) studied the lots of famous foods, in Ayuthaya, which was well known by tourists such as Kuay Tiew Rue (Boat Noodle), burnt River Prawn and Roti Saimai and relate them with Cultural Tourism.

### **Food and Tourism's Experience Making**

Nowadays, promoting tourism in any models are equally important. Because tourists can have lots of choices for their tourism. Food is the one that can be attract almost all of tourists. Look like travelling by tasting food in any community. In addition food experience, tourism will experience cooking place, food festival or any activities which relate to food etc.

In order to focus on curious tourists who would like to try new things, new cultures for their new experiences. If some place can give the pleasure experience for tourist by focus on good and satisfied experience, for example Starbuck Coffee can please consumers by its smell, taste, sound, feel and sound, therefore these factors can be attract tourists or consumers well, Moreover, Japanese Café which was call "Cat Café" or "Toilet Restaurant" which was decorated by using sanitary wares, tourists can get new and strange experiences when they consume the drink, products or services (Punturee, 2015).

Food in different community is various, it was considered as cultural heritage, anything that consumers eat or know how to eat, it was considered as basic of telling culture, Fields (2002), including of how to cook exquisitely and outstandingly. For instance, some restaurants which used to settle kitchen at the back and then move it to the front for revealing how to cook to their tourists, Cohen & Avieli (2004).

Especially, foreign tourists who interested in Thai food because Thai food can represent Thai Eating Culture from selecting ingredients, local garnishes such as herbs or spices until how to cook, how to arrange and decorate the plate by Thai knowledge, therefore, Thai food is one of the ancient arts from color until taste (Kijwikran, 2014).

Tourists who look for perfectly between consumption need and food experience (Dan & Puiu, 2013) therefore, food in each communities are the one of factor which can push tourists forward about unique and experience which can be reliable, then tourists can deeply feel the local culture. "Food" was considered as Cultural Tourism, as products for consuming, and become to Symbol of country or community for example, croissant or champagne can be showed about France, (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2013)

Therefore, food can relate to Cultural Consumption in symbol period which was created by consumption of tourists and consequently offer and create for other consumers by base on Meaning Creation of Consumers, for example black eggs in hot springs in Owakudani, Japanese, which has legend and history for creating new experience of tourists and can be attract lots of tourists for visit and try black eggs, whoever eat this egg will be live longer for 7 years, according to legend. Moreover, tourists can enjoy environments and places etc. Thus, applying Consumer Culture Model to mix with Promoting Tourism, especially food, is the interested idea and the important way to create the unique of effective tourism.

## Conclusion

Cultural Consumption is considered to be the important factor to support marketing and increase ability in competition with producers and entrepreneurs. In the present, to understand consumers' need is necessary for satisfy them with products and services. Meanwhile, producers or entrepreneurs have to support on Cultural Consumption. We can see that, the country which has rich resources, such as touchable and non-touchable, can advantage with them. Food which relates to various parts such as literature, history, social, medical, nutrition and agriculture etc. Moreover, food is considered as product and service for satisfy the consumers' requirements. If the relations between food and tourism were created by using Consumer Culture Model such as Meaning Creation and Difference Creation to be the choices of consumers for satisfy their highest need, can lead to income making and sustainability economy.

However, Consumer Culture with Gastronomy Tourism cannot reach the depth of food producers and food entrepreneur. Thus, the necessary is Producers, Entrepreneurs and Community have to create the real character of local food. Furthermore, consumers can mentally accept the character of food.

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