

Consumer Perception and Acceptability of Foreign Authentic Cuisine at Valencia Sunday Market Negros Oriental

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Abstract

This study explores how consumers perceive and accept foreign authentic cuisine at the Valencia Sunday Market in Negros Oriental—a growing culinary hotspot that blends local tradition with international flavors. As global dishes find their way into local markets, understanding what influences consumer choices has become increasingly important for food vendors, entrepreneurs, and tourism stakeholders. Grounded in the SERVQUAL model and Self-Determination Theory, the research examines five key factors that shape consumer acceptance: perceived cultural value, healthiness, food neophilia, social influence, and affordability. A descriptive-correlational design was used, with survey data gathered from 100 market-goers who had sampled foreign cuisine at the site. Findings show that younger, economically active consumers are the most open to trying foreign dishes, especially when these are seen as affordable, hygienic, and culturally meaningful. Social factors—like peer recommendations and online influence—also played a strong role in shaping decisions. The study further highlights meaningful relationships between consumer demographics and their perceptions, suggesting that values and behaviors shift across age, income, and visit frequency. Overall, the research offers insights that can help local vendors and market organizers improve customer experience, encourage culinary diversity, and support food tourism initiatives in the region.

Keywords: Consumer perception, foreign authentic cuisine, food neophilia, affordability, SERVQUAL, Valencia Sunday Market, food tourism

Introduction

The landscape of food consumption around the world is undergoing a significant transformation, which is characterized by an increasing interconnectedness and a heightened curiosity towards a variety of culinary traditions (Smith, 2023). The globalization of food has led to an increase in interest in foreign cuisines across a broad spectrum of cultures (Lincicome & Bagley, 2023). According to Innova Market Insights (2024), the increasing number of customers seeking out new gastronomic experiences through their purchases is driving the demand for a greater range of international flavors and dishes. It is not just the major metropolitan areas that are experiencing this trend; rather, it is also visible in the regional and local food systems all over the world.

Within the framework of this global context, the Philippines gives rise to a case study that is both singular and compelling. With influences from centuries of trade and colonization by cultures from Spain, China, and the United States, the country's culinary heritage is a rich tapestry made from native ingredients and cooking methods. There is a compelling argument that the Filipino people's long history of cultural exchange has contributed to their degree of openness and adaptability toward new and different culinary experiences. It is possible that the population of the Philippines is more likely to be receptive to the introduction of foreign culinary offerings due to the very nature of Filipino cuisine, which is a fusion of various traditions (Paredes, 2024).

Over the course of the past few years, the Philippines has witnessed a significant increase in the number of people attending local markets and food fairs. These locations are intended to be lively centers for gastronomic exploration, offering easily accessible platforms for regional and foreign food vendors to display their goods. Different from traditional dining establishments, they offer patrons the chance to sample and learn about a wide range of dishes, often in a more casual and community-focused setting. This trend suggests that Filipinos have a growing appetite for immersive culinary experiences outside of traditional dining venues. Because it is a specific place to focus on, the Valencia Sunday Market, located in Negros Oriental, serves as the main focus of this investigation. From a traditional farmers' market, this one has expanded to include vendors selling international specialties (Flores-Partlow, 2022). Understanding how customers at this market view and accept authentic cuisine from other nations can provide important insights into broader trends in food consumption and cultural exchange within the Philippines. As a result, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the consumer perception and acceptance of authentic cuisine from other countries at the Valencia Sunday Market in Negros Oriental.

On the other hand, despite the fact that the market is becoming increasingly important as a cultural and culinary hub, there is a dearth of specific research that investigates the factors that influence consumer perception and acceptance of the foreign cuisines that are offered. This gap calls for a targeted study to be conducted in order to

gain an understanding of the ways in which factors such as perceived cultural value, healthiness, food neophilia, social influence, and accessibility influence consumer acceptance within the context of this particular regional setting.

Literature Review

Research on how consumers view foreign food is widely available, but there aren't many studies that explicitly look at how acceptable real foreign food is in the distinctive setting of regional markets like the Valencia Sunday Market in Negros Oriental. By examining pertinent research on food tourism, cultural authenticity, and consumer behavior, this chapter aims to close this knowledge gap and lay the groundwork for comprehending how foreign culinary experiences are received in this particular context.

Overview of Consumer Behavior and Food Choices in the Philippines

Research on the decision-making process of individuals and groups regarding food consumption is crucial, especially in emerging economies. Companies, lawmakers, and public health initiatives can all gain from understanding the factors that influence these decisions, claims Dr. Martinez, M.G. (2023). The dynamics of food consumption in these economies are often characterized by shifting dietary patterns that are influenced by a number of variables, such as rapidly increasing income levels, urbanization, and exposure to global trends. This dynamic environment necessitates a greater understanding of consumer preferences and behaviors in order to effectively meet customer demands and expectations while also promoting sustainable development. In this broader context, the Philippines provides a unique and rich setting for researching food culture and eating practices. In Filipino cooking, rice is a staple food that is often served with a variety of delicious dishes. The nation's deeply ingrained traditions of family-style dining and communal eating emphasize the social aspects of food consumption.

Filipino cuisine has historically been influenced by a variety of indigenous ingredients and cooking methods as well as significant elements from Chinese, Spanish, American, and Malay culinary traditions. Examining how Filipino consumers viewed food prior to 2020 reveals a number of pertinent trends. Concerns regarding food safety and the application of safe food handling practices have been voiced by customers (Salvador, 2024). Additionally, studies show that while the Filipino diet is evolving, it might be lacking in some essential nutrients, which may cause consumers to look for more diverse or purportedly healthier food options (Adamos, 2022).

The "millennial" effect on food consumption patterns suggests that younger populations are more open to trying new foods (Daryl, 2020). The increasing popularity of street foods in the Philippines also suggests a general acceptance of a range of culinary offerings in informal and accessible settings (Tacadon, 2023). Furthermore, the favorable experiences of foreign tourists in gastronomic hotspots such as Binondo (Chinatown) suggest that at least some forms of foreign cuisine are well-liked in the country (Wong et al., 2021). All of these findings suggest that the Philippines' food scene is dynamic and that a number of factors, such as exposure to a diverse range of culinary experiences, food safety, nutritional awareness, and generational preferences, influence consumer choices.

The Significance of Local Markets in Philippine Food Culture and Tourism

Local markets in the Philippines are crucial for maintaining and developing the nation's rich culinary heritage in addition to being significant for business. These markets are the primary source of a wide range of fresh, locally grown ingredients that are vital to Filipino cooking and are often unique to certain regions (Por Unidad Latina, 2024). These markets provide a living link to generation-to-generation culinary traditions by regularly preserving and showcasing traditional foods and cooking techniques (Kelly, S., 2024). In addition to being places where goods are traded, local markets are vibrant social centers that foster cross-cultural interaction and a sense of community among farmers, merchants, and consumers. The Philippines' distinct culinary identity, which reflects the country's rich history and diverse cultural influences, is largely influenced by the unique foods and ingredients found in these markets (Ossowska et al., 2024). Additionally, by buying products from local markets, consumers directly support regional farmers and producers, preserving regional food systems and agricultural communities. Therefore, the Valencia Sunday Market, a significant local meeting spot, offers an ideal environment for studying the introduction and reception of foreign cuisine in an authentic Philippine cultural context.

Food markets are a significant component of culinary tourism in the Philippines (Duterte, 2018). Tourists are actively seeking traditional foods and immersive gastronomic experiences, which are commonly offered at local food markets and from street food vendors. The demand for authentic local experiences is rising globally (IMARC Group, 2024). Culinary tourism is growing as a result of this. Statistics show that the Philippines' culinary experiences contribute significantly to visitor spending, underscoring the industry's economic importance (Adobo Magazine, 2024). Because of this, local markets are evolving into independent tourist attractions that give visitors a genuine taste of the local way of life as well as the chance to try local food.

Understanding consumer preferences in these markets is crucial for empowering local vendors (Gonzales et al., 2023). Research on consumer perception at the Valencia Sunday Market can provide valuable information to assist

vendors in making informed decisions about their product offerings and potentially introduce or modify foreign cuisine to suit local tastes and tourists' interests. The local economy will continue to flourish and the vendors' businesses will expand as a result.

Consumer Perception and Acceptability of Foreign Cuisine

In the Philippines, there has long been a growing interest in international cuisines (Fernandez, 2020). Hilario, J. M. (2024) asserts that Filipino food has steadily gained recognition abroad and that global culinary trends influence the local market for the same reason. Filipino cuisine, a dynamic fusion of indigenous traditions with those introduced by American, Chinese, Malay, and Spanish traders and settlers, exemplifies this historical openness (KGM, 2024). This lengthy history of culinary exchange makes it easier to examine how authentic foreign cuisine is accepted in the Philippines, particularly in a setting like the Valencia Sunday Market.

Studies that focus on food experiences and consumer perceptions in the broader Southeast Asian region help to further clarify this trend (De Castro, 2022). Research indicates that local culinary experiences are highly valued by tourists in this region, which positively affects their perception of the location and their likelihood of returning (Zhu, Y., Zhu, L., & Weng, L., 2024). It has been shown that the quality of street food in countries like Thailand positively predicts tourists' perceptions of reasonable prices and their likelihood of making a purchase and coming back (Henderson, J. C., 2019).

The way that tourists perceive food service and product attributes is a prominent focus of Southeast Asian food tourism research, according to bibliometric analyses (Naruetharadhol, P., Gebsumbut, N., 2020). While these studies are not specific to the Philippines, they do demonstrate a regional trend of valuing a range of culinary options, suggesting that Filipino consumers may also be receptive to and evaluate foreign cuisine based on factors like perceived quality and value, especially in tourist-heavy areas.

The Role of Authenticity in Consumer Acceptance

The way that customers react to foreign food at Valencia Sunday Market is probably significantly influenced by their perception of authenticity. The authenticity of the food and the overall ambiance are two of the most significant factors influencing people's choices of ethnic restaurants, according to research (Premordia, I., & Gál, T., 2023). This desire for authenticity is consistent with more general trends in culinary tourism, where tourists frequently look for culinary encounters that capture the essence of a place's authentic culinary legacy. It is believed that preserving a community's history, customs, and cultural identity depends on the promotion and preservation of heritage cuisine (Kelly, S., 2024).

Authenticity in traditional food production is also thought to be a crucial component in fostering client loyalty and trust (Ossowska, et.al., 2024). Customers at the Valencia Sunday Market might therefore be more receptive to and appreciative of foreign food that they believe to be authentically prepared and representative of its cultural roots. Their expectations may center on using traditional ingredients, using real preparation techniques, and having flavors that are similar to the food as it is consumed in its home country. A crucial component of this research is comprehending how these views of authenticity are created and how they ultimately affect the acceptability of foreign cuisine in the particular market context.

Influence of Prior Experience and Awareness on Food Choices

Being familiar with the cuisine or having had positive experiences with it in the past can lead to a greater openness and willingness to try new dishes from a particular culinary tradition. However, ignorance or negative past experiences can cause hesitation. This study is based on Davis' 1989 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits a relationship between familiarity and "perceived ease of use" (Marikyan, D. & Papagiannidis, S., 2024).

Consumers who are familiar with some foreign cuisines may find them easier to understand and, therefore, more acceptable. Increasing awareness can also change people's opinions and spark a greater desire to try different foods, maybe as a result of media exposure or social interactions with people from different cultures. Finding out how consumers' past experiences and knowledge of foreign cuisines impact their willingness to try and accept real foreign food at the Valencia Sunday Market is the aim of this study.

Social Media's Impact on Food Perception and Consumption

Social media has developed into a powerful instrument for influencing consumer attitudes and buying patterns, particularly in the Philippines, where there is a high level of online engagement (Marie, Alyssa, 2024). Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram significantly influence consumer behavior, especially among younger audiences. Social media marketing strategies like influencer partnerships, content marketing, and targeted

advertising effectively increase brand awareness, cultivate brand loyalty, and expedite consumer decision-making by leveraging peer recommendations and social proof (Andrada, 2021).

When it comes to food, visually appealing content that showcases different cuisines can spark trends and attract customers. Positive reviews and endorsements from peers or influencers on social media can further boost the perceived acceptability and desirability of trying new foods.

Research indicates that social media is a significant source of information about local and, by extension, potentially global cuisine. By encouraging others to try a range of gastronomic options, social media, where visually appealing food experiences are widely shared, helps to explain why culinary tourism is becoming more and more popular in the Philippines (IMARC Group, 2024). Therefore, it is plausible that social media exposure significantly influences the perceptions and acceptance of foreign authentic cuisine among Valencia Sunday Market patrons, perhaps through increasing awareness, fostering positive associations, and providing social validation for experimenting with new foods.

Food Neophobia as a Barrier to Trying New Cuisines

Food neophobia, or the hesitancy to try new or unfamiliar foods, is a significant psychological factor that can influence consumer behavior when it comes to trying authentic foreign cuisine. This intrinsic trait may act as a barrier, preventing people from trying new foods due to taste concerns or other concerns (Siddiqui, S. A., Zannou, O., Karim, I., Kasmia, Awad, N. M. H., Gołaszewski, J., Heinz, V., & Smetana, S., 2022). A person's degree of food neophobia can be influenced by a number of factors, including age, education, prior exposure to a range of foods, and underlying personality traits. Studies have shown that high levels of food neophobia may increase the consumption of comfort foods and snacks while decreasing the consumption of certain food groups, such as legumes and vegetables (Albitos, B.F.A., Albitos, A.S., 2023). (Siddiqui, S. A., Zannou, O., Karim, I., Kasmia, Awad, N. M. H., Gołaszewski, J., Heinz, V., & Smetana, S., 2022). Common strategies for reducing food neophobia include increasing exposure to new foods through tasting opportunities, educating people about their origins and preparation, and using positive social influences.

Customers' degree of food neophobia is probably going to have an impact on their willingness to try real foreign food at Valencia Sunday Market. Those who are more adventurous with their culinary tastes may be more open to trying new foods than those who are more likely to be food neophobic. Understanding the prevalence and effects of food neophobia in this specific consumer group is crucial to understanding the general market acceptability of foreign cuisine.

Contextual Factors: Valencia, Negros Oriental

Because of its highland location, Valencia, a municipality in Negros Oriental, is known for its scenic beauty and relatively cool climate. It is also referred to as the province's "greenest and cleanest" town. Valencia benefits from being near a big city without compromising its distinct local identity. The Valencia Sunday Market is a significant weekly gathering spot that attracts both locals and potential tourists with its selection of fresh produce, regional specialties, and an expanding number of international food options (Tonggo Traveler, Youtube, 2025).

Dumaguete City likely influences the food options and trends in nearby Valencia due to its well-established culinary scene and diverse population. In Negros Oriental, visitors often notice how friendly Filipinos are in general, which could contribute to a welcoming atmosphere for experimenting with new foods, including those from other countries (Ellen, Earth Vagabonds, 2020). For tourists, travel blogs highlight Valencia's natural charms and ease of access (Castillo, L., Castillo, N., The Shoestring Diaries, 2019). The larger food trends observed in Dumaguete, such as the growing popularity of East Asian cuisine and a growing preference for spicy flavors, may also be reflected in Valencia's culinary scene. Understanding these contextual factors, Valencia's local identity, its relationship to Dumaguete, the presence of tourism, and the prevalent Filipino culture of hospitality and openness is necessary to interpret consumer perception and acceptability of foreign authentic cuisine within the specific setting of the Valencia Sunday Market.

The literature currently in publication provides a strong foundation for comprehending how potential customers might view and accept genuine international food at the Valencia Sunday Market. The environment is conducive to the introduction and acceptance of new culinary experiences, as evidenced by the fact that Filipino cuisine has historically been open to outside influences, the growing popularity of culinary tourism, and the important role that local markets play in showcasing the diversity of Filipino cuisine.

Several elements are probably going to have a big impact on how customers react. These include the perceived authenticity of the food, the consumers' prior exposure and awareness, the impact of social media, the perceived value and cost, and the degree of food neophobia that each person has. This dynamic is further complicated by Valencia's unique context, which includes its local market, its proximity to Dumaguete, and the hospitality-oriented Filipino culture in general. Consumer behavior, food culture, and culinary tourism in the Philippines could all benefit

from this study's potential contributions. The study focuses on a specific local market that stands out due to a unique combination of variables.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research methodology to collect and analyze numerical data related to consumer perception and acceptability of foreign cuisine at the Valencia Sunday Market.

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive and correlational research design. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of consumer demographics and their perceptions of foreign cuisine. Correlation analysis was also employed to examine the relationship between the independent variables (perceived cultural value, perceived healthiness, food neophilia, social influence, and accessibility) and the dependent variable (consumer perception and acceptability).

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative data were collected through surveys administered to a sample of visitors who had purchased foreign cuisine at the Valencia Sunday Market. The survey included closed-ended questions with Likert scales to measure the variables.

Sampling Method

A convenience sampling method was employed for this study. The respondents were consumers who were readily available and willing to participate in the survey at the Valencia Sunday Market during the data collection period. While this method does not allow for generalization to the entire market visitor population, it provided a practical approach to gathering data within the given timeframe and resources. The sample size is a total of one hundred (100) respondents and was determined based on the number of available participants during the data collection period, to gather as many responses as possible to increase the representativeness of the sample within the limitations of convenience sampling.

Research Environment

The research was conducted at the Valencia Sunday Market, situated in the municipality of Valencia, Negros Oriental, a location recognized as a significant hub for culinary tourism and cultural exchange. It is important to clarify that, while the market attracts visitors from Dumaguete City and other areas, Valencia is a distinct municipality. The Valencia Sunday Market is renowned for its diverse array of food offerings, which showcase a fusion of local and international culinary traditions, catering to both domestic and international tourists.

The Sunday Market itself is a real hub of activity. It started out as a traditional farmers' market, where locals could buy fresh produce, but it has grown into this amazing mix of stalls offering all sorts of food, including dishes from around the world. It's a place where you can really see how much people here are open to trying new things.

Negros Oriental, in general, is known for its warm and welcoming people. That Filipino hospitality makes it a great place to explore new flavors and share a meal with friends and family. If you check out travel blogs, you'll see that Valencia is famous for its stunning natural attractions, which draw in both local and international visitors. Also, food trends from Dumaguete City, like the growing love for East Asian cuisine and spicy food, are likely influencing what's available and what people enjoy at the Valencia Sunday Market.

To really understand how people feel about foreign food here, you have to consider all these things Valencia's unique character, its connection to Dumaguete City, the impact of tourism, and the friendly, food-loving culture of the Philippines.

Research Respondents

The target population for this study comprised of individuals who have engaged in local food experiences, with participant recruitment occurring at the Valencia Sunday Market in Valencia Plaza, Valencia, Negros Oriental. Employing the Convenience Sampling method, there were one hundred (100) total respondents. Inclusion criteria specify that participants must be 18 years of age or older and have made a purchase at the Valencia Sunday Market, specifically at stalls that sell authentic foreign cuisine at the specific time and date of the survey.

Research Instruments

The research instruments used in this study are the survey questionnaire. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data on consumer perception and acceptability of foreign cuisine, including perceived cultural value, perceived healthiness, food neophilia, social influence, and accessibility.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study followed a systematic procedure for collecting quantitative data. The procedure involved the following steps:

Before initiating data collection, ethical approval was secured from the Foundation University Graduate School, guaranteeing adherence to ethical standards for research involving human subjects. To refine the survey questionnaire and ensure its clarity, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of consumers who had previously purchased foreign cuisine at the Valencia Sunday Market, allowing for necessary revisions. Participants were recruited directly at the market, where the study's purpose was thoroughly explained, and informed consent was obtained before their participation, emphasizing their voluntary involvement and right to withdraw without consequence. The survey was administered, either through face-to-face interviews or independent completion, over a specified period to achieve a representative sample.

Following data collection, completed questionnaires will be entered into a statistical software program for analysis, with meticulous checking and cleaning to ensure accuracy. All collected data were securely and confidentially stored, complying with ethical guidelines and data protection regulations. Informed consent forms were provided to consumers, vendors, and Valencia Market Department staff, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to voluntary participation or withdrawal, with respondents asked to sign as confirmation of their willingness to participate.

The identities of all respondents were kept strictly confidential. Personal information such as names, job titles, and institutional affiliations was not disclosed in any part of the research. Responses were presented in a generalized manner, ensuring that no individual or business could be identified. Data were coded to maintain anonymity.

When the survey was finalized, the main data collection phase commenced. Consumers who had purchased authentic foreign cuisine at Valencia Sunday Market within the timeframe of when the survey was conducted are included. This involved approaching potential participants at the Valencia Sunday Market. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before they were given the survey.

Finally, the cleaned data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. These statistical techniques helped identify key characteristics of the products that were sold, examine the relationship of the acceptability of foreign authentic cuisine at Valencia Sunday Market, and assess its impact on tourism development indicators. The findings were interpreted about the research questions and hypotheses to draw meaningful conclusions about consumer perception and the acceptability of foreign authentic cuisine at Valencia Sunday Market in Negros Oriental.

All collected data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. Digital files were also password-protected, and any physical documents were kept in a secure location. After the completion of the study, the data were disposed of properly to prevent unauthorized access.

Respondents were not coerced or pressured to participate. They were informed that participation is completely voluntary, and they have the right to decline or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. For respondent who wish to retract their responses, their data were excluded from the final analysis.

The researcher has maintained objectivity in analyzing and interpreting the data. Personal biases and external influences will be avoided to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the perspectives of the respondents.

Ethical Considerations

Before the study was conducted, approval was sought from the research ethics committee of the Foundation University Graduate Program to ensure that the research adhered to ethical standards and guidelines.

Prior to participating in the study, all respondents were provided with an informed consent form. This document outlined the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to voluntarily participate or withdraw at any time without consequences. Respondents were asked to sign the consent form as confirmation of their willingness to participate.

The identities of all respondents were kept strictly confidential. Personal information such as names, job titles, and institutional affiliations was not disclosed in any part of the research. Responses were presented in a generalized manner, ensuring that no individual or business could be identified. Data were coded to maintain anonymity.

All collected data, including survey responses, interview transcripts, and observation records, were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. Digital files were password-protected, and any physical documents were kept in a secure location. After the completion of the study, the data were properly disposed of to prevent unauthorized access.

Statistical Treatment of Data

This study utilized quantitative statistical techniques to analyze the collected data from the Likert scale questionnaires and demographic profiles. The following statistical treatments were employed:

The quantitative data gathered in this study were subjected to a two-pronged statistical analysis, encompassing both descriptive and inferential techniques. Firstly, descriptive statistics were employed to provide a comprehensive overview of the respondent group.

Frequency and percentage distributions were utilized to delineate the demographic characteristics of the participants, including their gender, age brackets, employment status, income levels, and the frequency with which they visited the Valencia Sunday Market. This enabled the construction of a clear and detailed profile of the consumer base under investigation.

Furthermore, the weighted mean was calculated for each individual item on the Likert scale, as well as for each of the broader sections assessing perceived cultural value, perceived healthiness, food neophilia, social influence, and accessibility. This yielded a quantitative measure representing the average level of agreement or perception for each of these key variables, facilitating direct comparisons between them and allowing researchers to identify which factors were perceived most and least favorably by consumers.

Chi-square was used to assess the significant relationship between the demographic profile of consumers and their perception of the cultural value of foreign cuisine, perception of the healthiness of foreign cuisine, food neophilia, social influence on food choices, and perception of the accessibility of foreign cuisine.

Results

The statistical results reveal patterns in how demographic variables relate to consumer perceptions of foreign authentic cuisine at the Valencia Sunday Market. The following interpretations are drawn from the significance levels (p-values):

Age is significantly associated with perceptions of cultural value, food neophilia, and accessibility, but not with healthiness or social influence. This suggests that younger or older consumers may differ in how they value cultural representation in cuisine and their willingness to try new foods, while health and social motivations appear more uniform across age groups.

Sex shows a significant relationship only with social influence ($p = 0.043$), indicating that males and females might differ in how peer and digital influences affect their food choices. This could be due to differences in social media usage patterns or cultural expectations around food exploration.

Employment Status is significantly related to cultural value, food neophilia, and accessibility, which may reflect the role of time flexibility and disposable income in shaping food preferences and openness to novelty.

Income is the most influential demographic factor, showing significant relationships across all five consumer perception dimensions. This highlights how socioeconomic status deeply shapes consumer priorities—from valuing health and cultural diversity to responding to social trends and assessing price affordability.

Frequency of Visit is also strongly correlated with four out of five dimensions (excluding accessibility), suggesting that consumers who frequent the market more often are more adventurous, socially responsive, and aware of cultural nuances in cuisine.

These findings underscore the importance of market segmentation and targeted marketing strategies for vendors and organizers of the Valencia Sunday Market. Specifically:

Younger consumers and frequent visitors, who exhibit higher cultural sensitivity and food adventurousness, represent a prime audience for rotating, experiential, and culturally-rich food offerings.

Higher-income and employed individuals tend to place more emphasis on authenticity, health, and novelty. Vendors targeting this group should highlight premium ingredients, transparency in preparation, and the cultural backstory of dishes.

The influence of gender on social dynamics suggests that marketing through influencers, peer recommendations, and visual storytelling may be more effective among certain gender groups, particularly women, who studies show are more engaged in food-related social media sharing (Zhang et al., 2022).

For less frequent visitors or low-income consumers, pricing strategies and value-oriented menus could improve inclusivity and broaden the customer base. Programs such as loyalty incentives or budget-friendly "taste samplers" could help bridge the gap.

Recent studies have emphasized the growing influence of demographic factors on consumer perceptions of culturally diverse food experiences. Zhou and Liu (2022) highlight that income levels play a critical role in shaping openness to foreign cuisine, noting that consumers with higher financial capacity are more likely to engage in culinary exploration and perceive food as a form of cultural and personal expression. This is reinforced by Chung et al. (2021), who found that the frequency of market visits is directly linked to food neophilia, as repeated exposure to novel foods fosters familiarity, curiosity, and confidence in trying unfamiliar dishes. Park and Kim (2021) also identified age as a key factor in food perception, with younger consumers seeking cultural enrichment and new experiences, while older consumers often prioritize health and dietary consistency. Meanwhile, Gupta and Singh (2023) examined gender differences in food-related behaviors, revealing that women are generally more responsive to social influence—particularly through digital media platforms—when making food choices. These studies collectively support the findings of the current research, which suggest that age, income, gender, employment status, and market engagement significantly shape how consumers perceive and accept foreign authentic cuisine, especially in culturally vibrant settings like the Valencia Sunday Market.

Discussion

The study aimed to explore the demographic profile of respondents and their perceptions of foreign authentic cuisine. The findings are summarized into two key areas: the demographic characteristics of the participants and their views on various aspects of foreign cuisine.

- 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents:** The study included 100 respondents. There was a slightly higher number of female respondents (53%) compared to male respondents (44%), with 3% identifying as "Others." The age distribution of respondents showed that the largest groups were between 18-24 years old (30%) and 25-34 years old (31%), indicating a younger consumer base. A significant portion of the respondents (39%) had an estimated monthly income below ₱10,000. Many respondents visited the Valencia Sunday Market frequently, with 39% visiting more than 4 times a month and 28% visiting 1-2 times a month.
- 2. Perception of Cultural Value:** Consumers generally had a positive perception of the cultural value of foreign cuisine at the market. They agreed that trying foreign cuisine is a valuable cultural experience and that the market offers an opportunity to learn about different cultures through food. Respondents appreciated the cultural diversity represented by the foreign cuisine. However, while still positive, the perception of vendors accurately representing the origin of their cuisine received a slightly lower rating compared to other cultural value aspects.
- 3. Perception of Healthiness:** Consumers generally perceived the foreign cuisine at the market to be healthy. They expressed confidence in the sanitation and food safety practices of the vendors. Respondents believed that the cuisine offered at the market was healthy and made with natural ingredients. They were also satisfied with the balance of flavors and nutritional content.
- 4. Influence of Food Neophilia:** Consumers showed a considerable degree of food neophilia. They were open to trying foods they had never heard of before and felt that trying new foods added to their culinary knowledge. Respondents indicated they were more likely to try foreign foods that are highly recommended, demonstrating the influence of social factors on their food adventurousness.
- 5. Influence of Social Factors:** Social influence significantly affected consumers' perception and acceptance of foreign cuisine. Respondents reported enjoying trying new and unfamiliar foods. Recommendations from friends and family strongly influenced their decisions to try foreign cuisine at the market. Social media reviews and posts also played a role in shaping their food choices.
- 6. Influence of Affordability:** The cost and prices of foreign cuisine influenced consumer perception and acceptance. Consumers generally agreed that the prices of foreign cuisine at the market were reasonable. The market offered foreign cuisine options that fit their budget.
- 7. Relationship Between Demographics and Perceptions:** There were significant relationships between consumer demographics and their perceptions of foreign cuisine. Age was significantly related to the perception of cultural value, food neophilia, and accessibility. Gender was significantly related to social

influence. Employment status was significantly related to the perception of cultural value and accessibility. Income was significantly related to the perception of healthiness.

Conclusion

The Valencia Sunday Market attracts a predominantly young and female customer base, many of whom are employed or self-employed. Despite having limited income, these consumers exhibit a high level of engagement with the market, as reflected in their frequent visits. This suggests that foreign authentic cuisine remains accessible and appealing even to modest-income individuals, so long as pricing aligns with perceived value. One of the most compelling drivers of consumer behavior is the cultural value attached to food. Respondents strongly agree that the market offers a meaningful cultural experience, with foreign cuisine appreciated not only for its taste but also for its authenticity and the opportunity it provides to learn about different cultures. This highlights the important role that food plays as a medium for cultural exchange within local market settings.

Health perceptions of the foreign cuisine are also notably positive. Consumers generally believe that the offerings are nutritious, made with natural ingredients, and handled hygienically. This indicates that vendors are successfully meeting modern consumer expectations regarding food safety and wellness, which are especially important to today's health-conscious public. Moreover, consumers demonstrate a high level of food neophilia, expressing a strong willingness to try unfamiliar dishes, particularly those that are recommended by others. This adventurousness reveals a readiness to explore culinary diversity, making the market a promising venue for introducing lesser-known international cuisines.

Social influence plays a significant role in shaping food preferences and choices. Respondents report being influenced by recommendations from friends and family, by food trends, and by content seen on social media. This suggests that peer validation and digital presence are critical drivers of consumer behavior and should be strategically harnessed by vendors to boost engagement. While affordability remains essential, it is not a limiting factor; although many consumers earn below the national average, they do not perceive the prices of foreign cuisine at the market to be prohibitive. This balance between cost and perceived value contributes to the market's inclusivity and supports sustained consumer satisfaction.

Finally, the demographic profile of consumers significantly influences how foreign authentic cuisine is perceived in terms of its cultural value, healthiness, novelty, social relevance, and accessibility. Therefore, aligning food offerings, communication strategies, and pricing with these demographic insights can greatly enhance the overall market experience, deepening both consumer engagement and cultural appreciation.

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