Abstract

Food—as a special tourism resource—has long enriched lifestyle and traveling. While food is dynamically incorporated into tourism industry as an appeal by several regions and countries, Thailand receives a little emphasis within the parameter of tourist development despite the unique characteristics of Thai food. This exploratory study investigates the Non-Thai diners’ perception of Thai food in Thailand. A quantitative survey research using questionnaire is conducted. A group of 340 Non-Thai respondents provided their responses through the sampling approach. This study finds that two major items in the perception of Thai food show a strong condition in the Non-Thai diners’ interest. Nationality plays an important role in the perception of Thai food. Respondents’ age and travel purpose also influence the diners’ perception. The overall respondents hold a positive image of Thai food, being its exotic, unusual, and culture-based cuisine. The study discovers that Thai food possesses solid characteristics in terms of its appearance, unique flavor, popularity, and services necessary to constitute promising food tourism for the country.

Key words: Food tourism, Perception of Thai food, Thai food, Non-Thai diner, Image of Thai food