LOCAL FOOD IN CARIBBEAN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS) DESTINATION MARKETING – THE CASE OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

by

Winston Mohammed

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Trinidad & Tobago is a Caribbean and Small Island Destination State (SIDS) tourism anomaly because it is neither a mass leisure nor a traditional (3S) sun, sea, and sand tourist destination. There is growing scholarly attention on food-related destination marketing in the most successful and attractive tourist destinations globally. Despite the influence of food on a destination's competitiveness and attractiveness, policymakers and tourism organizations of the Caribbean and Trinidad & Tobago have at best underutilized and even ignored the potential of local food because they poorly understand its capacity and capability. Traditional destination marketing treats food merely as a complementary attraction and one of several brand image elements and objectifies it as functional and an element of culture. A 3C destination experience featuring Trinidad & Tobago Carnival, chocolate, and cuisine is more authentically and uniquely competitive than merely homaging ubiquitous 3S brand loyalty. Achieving a deeper understanding of the contemporary leveraging of Trinidad & Tobago's local food and its albeit unofficial status as the culinary capital of the Caribbean as a destination marketing pull is pivotal. A food tourism strategic marketing plan incorporating the facets of Trinitario fine chocolate food souvenirs targeted to the Caribbean cruise tourism industry and destination food safety and hygiene is a crucial cornerstone of contriving future Trinidad & Tobago destination loyalty strategies. However, leveraging an expansive diaspora as destination ambassadors and the growing popularity of Trinidad & Tobago-styled carnival festivals held predominantly in major North American and U.K. cities are the key destination loyalty success pivots.

Keywords: Trinidad & Tobago, Small Island Destination States (SIDS), destination marketing, food tourism, food souvenirs, Trinitario fine chocolates, food safety and hygiene, Carnival

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Approvals

________________________________ ____________________

Winston Mohammed, Doctoral Candidate Date

________________________________ ____________________

Dr. Ashlie Roeder, Dissertation Chair Date

________________________________ ____________________

Dr. Lorna DeShay, Committee Member Date

________________________________ ____________________

Edward M. Moore, Ph.D., Director of Doctoral Programs Date

Dedication

To my children, Johnathan and Caresse, do not dwell on your successes or failures, embrace both, live and enjoy gratefully the gifts you are blessed with and the remarkable life that God has bestowed you. I pray that I have led by example.

To my late mother, Zubida, and father, Winston, you have been my everything. Your lifelong unconditional love, support, and encouragement are the source of my persistence and determination. To my sisters, Andrea, Cyd, and Dolly, my nieces Samantha and Karina, and my nephews Kadeem and Nicholas, family is forever.

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To Celio, Rudy, Lisa, and Garvin, you are all true friends and like family. I would not have been able to complete this frequently lonely journey and grapple with life's many challenges without your wise counsel and almost daily talks and words of encouragement. A special thank you to Ann Marie for the many times you prayed with me when I felt like giving up.

To Shelley, I love you. You are my Godsend.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Trinidad & Tobago is a Caribbean and Small Island Destination State (SIDS) tourism anomaly because it is neither a mass leisure nor a traditional sun, sea, and sand tourist destination. The most lucrative global tourism destinations in the USA, Europe, and Asia have effectively leveraged food as an integral aspect of their destination marketing and management strategies. Accordingly, there is growing scholarly attention on food-related destination marketing in these more successful and attractive tourist destinations. However, there is a lack of scholarly research on the potential of local food in the Caribbean region despite its inherent status as a high tourism penetration and popular destination. Accordingly, achieving a deeper understanding of the contemporary use of local food as a destination marketing tool is pivotal in contriving future destination marketing strategies that would foster enhanced competitive advantage and increase the profile of Trinidad & Tobago as a unique tourist destination (Stalmirska, 2017).

This exploratory qualitative case study approach was conducted to uncover learnings from scholarly literature and document reviews regarding local food in destination marketing in other markets, coupled with Trinidad & Tobago stakeholder and actor interviews. Accordingly, Section 1 detailed several key Trinidad & Tobago case study components, including the Background to the Problem, The Problem and Purpose Statements, and Research Questions. Secondly, the Nature of the Study discussed all primary research paradigms and design methods, including their inherent challenges, and a rationale for selecting the Flexible Case Study approach regarding this dissertation. Thirdly, a Concept Framework Diagram presented the dissertation aims and objectives flow. Fourthly, an Outline Review of the Professional and Academic Literature presented contextual business practices and problems, food and tourism-related jargon concepts, actors, and constructs expounded and anticipated and discovered study themes. Lastly, several key terms were defined as they arose throughout the Dissertation. Also, inherent underlying assumptions, limitations, and delimitations as critical components of an acceptable research proposal to preempt critics raising any justifiable questions regarding the credibility of the research and elements of the significance of the study, such as reduction of literature gaps, implications for biblical integration, and the benefit to food tourism-related business practice and relationship to the marketing cognate were expounded.

Background of the Problem

Caribbean tourism's inherent selling proposition regards promoting its sand, sea, and sun attributes coupled with affordable high-end hotels and individual island attractions. However, tourism marketing typically homage brand loyalty to the detriment of destination loyalty. The main casualty is the socioeconomic sustainability of the destination regarding, for example, local culture, products, and gastronomy (Goffi et al., 2019). Notwithstanding this ongoing scenario, the Caribbean region surpassed the 30-million visitor mark and a revenue generation of $37 billion in 2017 (Huntley-Lewis, 2019).

The major sources of Caribbean tourists attribute to the mass tourism stereotypes of large-scale coastal package tourism and cruise tourism. Accordingly, the Caribbean ranks as the premier cruise destination, accounting for over 40% of global itineraries. However, the Caribbean cruise lines industry's direct expenditure is estimated at a meager $2 billion, of which more than half is spent onshore by over 16 million cruise visitors annually (DiPietro & Peterson, 2017). Cruise packages are typically all-inclusive regarding accommodation, meals and beverages, and many packages include island attraction tours.

Consequently, cruise passengers spend the least of all tourists at a destination, primarily attributed to the limited time they spend ashore and the cruise ship itself as the primary destination. A closer industry scrutiny revealed that typical cruise passengers estimated discretionary spending is between $94 and $140 per head, with approximately 82% onboard, and the remaining 18% spent ashore in local bars, restaurants, and hotels (Römhild-Raviart et al., 2019).

In contrast, food and beverage experiences generally have become economically significant to travel destinations as they may account for about 25-35% of travel expense spending. The role of food and beverages has evolved beyond mere inconsequential necessity to become a distinct sector known by several and often interchangeable names, including culinary, gastronomy, and food tourism. Accordingly, memorable food and drink experiences significantly leverage travel satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth advertising and strongly impact destination image (Stone et al., 2018).

Food in general and local food can foster destination differentiation and spur destination marketing to contemporary tourists. However, there is an inherent resistance in the hotel industry towards incorporating local food in the restaurant menus, especially regarding more prestigious class-rated hotels (Santos et al., 2020). Other researchers surmised that not all destinations have the appropriate expertise to utilize local food to leverage their destination promotions (Okumus et al., 2018). This dissertation explored local food potential regarding destination marketing in Caribbean SIDS – the case study of Trinidad & Tobago. Of the 13 global regions tracked by the World Travel and Tourism Council, the Caribbean remains entrenched as the most tourism-dependent region regarding GDP contributions, employment, tourism-related investment, and visitor exports (Huntley-Lewis, 2019).

Problem Statement

The general problem addressed is the failure of tourism destinations to promote local food as an integral aspect of their destination marketing initiatives to enhance tourism experiences and destination decision-making resulting in the potential loss of destination competitiveness and attractiveness. Bondzi-Simpson and Ayeh (2019) posited that hotels' inherent resistance to promoting local food suggests that many tourists prefer not to change their eating habits when away from home. Notwithstanding this preference, local food holds enormous strategic marketing potential regarding destination experience attraction and destination decision-making. Accordingly, Bondzi-Simpson and Ayeh surmised that local food can significantly improve the destination image and enhance the overall tourism experience. However, Bukharov and Berezka (2018) questioned the level of competence and knowledge of local hospitality industry specialists to create a well-differentiated tourist value proposition to take advantage of their culinary heritage tourism marketing opportunities despite a high resource potential.

Okumus and Cetin (2018) noted that coastal tourism promotional strategies myopically highlight the ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea tourism rather than unique destination characteristics such as local food. Accordingly, the specific problem addressed in this research is that SIDS and the case study candidate – Trinidad & Tobago, continue with loyalty to the ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea tourism brand marketing versus nurturing loyalty destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago. In this regard, Trinidad & Tobago is failing to promote local food as an integral part of its destination loyalty marketing to enhance tourism experiences and destination decision-making resulting in the potential loss of destination competitiveness and attractiveness.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this flexible design case study dissertation was to explore the pedestalling of local food in Caribbean SIDS with a case study focus on the country of Trinidad & Tobago. The dissertation explored how and why the impact of local food on tourist experiences and destination decision-making can potentially enhance the destination competitiveness and attractiveness of the Trinidad & Tobago destination. Accordingly, this research explored traditional brand loyalty marketing regarding the ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea context against an inherent failure regarding a more contemporary destination loyalty marketing approach by leveraging local food to reinvigorate a stagnated destination appeal and destination visitation strategically.

Research Questions

This dissertation methodology proposed its scholarship be conducted via an embedded single-case study with multiple units of analysis. The general problem statement research context reflects the background and explores how and why local food can leverage destination marketing and potentially impact destination competitiveness and attractiveness. Regarding the specific problem statement, embedded units of analysis - resident in the case subject of Trinidad & Tobago, opined various destination marketing stakeholders to garner multiple perspectives on the issues systemic to the following primary research questions proposed regarding this dissertation:

RQ1. What are the inherent challenges and opportunities of marketing Caribbean small island destination state (SIDS) tourism?

RQ2. What is the marketing impact of food on tourism experiences and destination selection decision-making?

RQ3. What are the Caribbean SIDS (Trinidad & Tobago) destination marketing opportunities and challenges regarding promoting local foods?

Nature of the Study

The nature of the research study encompasses choices regarding philosophical worldview and research design options. Philosophical worldviews regard a basic series of beliefs or philosophical preferences about the world which guides action regarding the nature of the research and systemically coupled to the researcher. Research designs or inquiry strategies regard the type of study inquiry procedures and are bannered as fixed, flexible, or mixed designs.

Discussion of Research Paradigms

Philosophical worldviews are otherwise referred to as paradigms, epistemologies, or ontologies. Worldviews inherently arise from individual discipline orientations, research communities, advisors and mentors, and previous experiences. The larger philosophical preference espoused by the individual regarding a research scholarship helps articulate the research approach choice from qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods—accordingly, the four most popular worldviews in academe regard postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic.

Postpositivist Worldview

The postpositivist worldview is also referred to as the scientific method, science research, positivist/postpositivist research, empirical science, or post-positivism. Post positivist research philosophy inherently pedestal meaning and the creation of new knowledge (Ryan, 2006). The postpositivist researcher starts with a theory and seeks data that either supports or does not support the theory and subsequently makes appropriate revisions and conducts necessary additional tests from the scientific method approach lens. Creswell and Creswell (2018) asserted several fundamental assumptions regarding the postpositivist worldview, inherently more compatible with qualitative research than quantitative research.

First, absolute truth is a mirage, and evidence derived from research is inherently imperfect and questionable. Accordingly, researchers note a failure to reject the hypothesis rather than not proving a hypothesis. Second, Research inherently regards the manner of making assertions and then tweaking or disregarding them in favor of more assured and warranted claims. Third, data, evidence, and rational scrutiny embody knowledge. Practically, however, the researcher gathers information via instruments based upon measures undertaken by subjects or via observations noted by the researcher. Fourth, postpositivist research pursues the development of relevant, accurate statements to most aptly explain the research situation or detail relevant causal relationships. Lastly, researchers must probe methods and conclusions as a critical aspect of scholarly rigor. For example, in quantitative research, the standard of validity and reliability are critical.

Constructivist Worldview

Creswell and Creswell (2018) surmised that the constructivist worldview is perceived as an approach to qualitative studies. The research intent is to make sense or interpret the meaning of others regarding the world. Rather than begin with a theory as in post-positivism, constructivist research articulates or inductively formulates a theory or model of meaning based upon participant opinions of the situation under consideration. Accordingly, the questions are highly open-ended, broad, and very general to construct the meaning of the situation directly from interactions and discussions with other individuals. A constructivist worldview is thus inherently based on the following fundamental assumptions.

First, people forge meanings as they interact with the world they are interpreting. Accordingly, open-ended questions are employed by qualitative researchers to encourage participants to share their views. Second, qualitative researchers intentionally visit the context to gather first-hand information personally. Accordingly, the researcher's interpretations of their findings are systemically impacted by the personal experiences and background of the researcher. Finally, interaction with other community individuals systemically generates meaning in a social context. Because the research inquirer derives meaning from field-sourced data, the resulting qualitative research process is inherently inductive.

Transformative Worldview

The transformative worldview posits a research agenda reform that impacts the lives of both the participants and the institutions where they work and live and the researcher. Accordingly, the fundamental transformative worldview regards three features. First, the focal point of research significance regards the study of the lives and experiences of diverse groups formerly marginalized. Second, the research on these marginalized diverse groups focuses on various aspects of inequalities, resulting in unbalanced power relationships. Finally, transformative research is based upon a program philosophy of beliefs regarding how a program works and why the consequential issues of oppression, domination, and power relationships happen (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Pragmatic Worldview

Scholars posit that there are several forms of this philosophy but agree the genesis typically spawns from actions, situations, and consequences but not earlier or past conditions as with post-positivism. Furthermore, the primary focus regards what works and the associated solutions rather than methods. Thus, pragmatic worldview researchers focus on the research problem and research question and enlist all approaches at their disposal to comprehend the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The tourism research context is inherently multidisciplinary because of the different types of knowledge ranging from numerical to textual and visual data, from facts to interpretations and narratives. Research philosophies articulate different approaches to undertaking research. This dissertation was not constrained within a specific philosophy because no singular viewpoint could appropriately portray the entire landscape of the phenomenon under exploration – local food and destination marketing (Stalmirska, 2017).

Accordingly, this research study was based upon the pragmatism philosophy or paradigm. It needed to be free to choose the appropriate methods, techniques, and procedures most appropriately suited to the research, especially because of SIDS destination marketing's multifaceted context regarding local food. Pragmatism is inherently not tied to any one system of philosophy or reality. Pragmatists also do not perceive the world as an absolute unity. Accordingly, researchers may look to several approaches of collecting and analyzing data instead of subscribing to only one way, for example, multiple qualitative approaches. For pragmatists, truth is what works and is appropriate at the time. Accordingly, it is not based upon dualism between reality independent of the mind or within the mind. Pragmatic researchers inherently consider the 'what' and 'how' of research-based upon its intended consequences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Discussion of Design

The researcher's research decisions do not only merely regard selecting from qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Decisions also critically include choosing from designs amongst the three research methods. Some scholarship also refers to these types of study choices as 'strategies of inquiry' (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Mixed-Method Design

Sahin and Öztürk (2019) surmised that mixed-method design regards the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methodology to better grapple with and understand research questions that cannot be adequately answered via a single-method perspective. Accordingly, there are several stages regarding mixed methods research. At the onset, the researcher must determine the research question as it is the crux of the research.

The research question's inherent structure is the next step regarding determining if the research is best done via a mixed design. Accordingly, there are five basic rationales regarding mixed-methods research. First, triangulation regards the testing of the validity of the findings of the independently obtained qualitative and quantitative data. Second, complementarity regards conducting quantitative research first and subsequently using qualitative results to enhance interpretability. Third, development regards the qualitative method which is used first, after the results are used to leverage the enhancement of the quantitative research process. Fourth, initiation regards the consequential inconsistencies arising from quantitative and qualitative methods that point the research study in a new direction. Fifth, expansion: the expanded scope of the research inherently requires examining other phenomena associated with the research.

Additionally, beyond the above rationale, four issues instruct the type of mixed study method. The first issue is deciding which of the qualitative and quantitative methods to lead with first and which type of data to prioritize or making both equally significant. The second issue regards the relative sequence of qualitative and quantitative data collection – simultaneously or sequentially. Alternatively, if data are to be collected at different times, the first collected must be noted accordingly. The third is the process of data analysis by the researcher which regards the determination of whether the data are combined to facilitate a single analysis or separately for individual analysis. Fourth is determining which aspect of the research will be mixed – possible mixing choices during data collection, analysis, or interpretation.

The above four issues spawn the following types of mixed-method research designs: convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, and embedded are the most widely used. However, the transformative and multiphase mixed-method design type methods are based on the first four methods but with a more complex structure. Although less used, they are becoming increasingly popular (Creswell, 2012).

1. **The convergent parallel design** – the fundamental assumption of this approach type is that the simultaneous collection and combination of both the quantitative and qualitative data yield different types of information, which articulates the research problem better. Accordingly, one set of collected data offsets the weaknesses of the other. However, in the parallel method, the researcher still examines the situation regardless of whether the results support or contradict the qualitative and quantitative data sets.
2. **Explanatory sequential design** – sometimes it may not be possible to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. Accordingly, explanatory design inherently regards collecting quantitative data first and separately from the qualitative data collection process, which subsequently helps explain the quantitative data results.
3. **Exploratory sequential design** – conversely regards collecting the qualitative data first and then collecting quantitative data. Subsequently, the quantitative data are used to explain the relationship regarding the qualitative data. Thus, the exploratory method

focuses more on the qualitative method than the quantitative method and can accordingly discern phenomena, identify themes, and enhance a data collection tool.

4. **Embedded design** – inherently has similar characteristics of the parallel and sequential methods but has differences regarding the purpose of using both the quantitative and qualitative methods. Accordingly, the difference is that one set from either quantitative or qualitative data are collected simultaneously or sequentially and combined to reinforce each other's strengths.

Fixed Research Design

The fixed design model was spawned from the quantitative research tradition and surmised that the researcher must be thoroughly clear regarding what they will do prior to collecting the data intended to be analyzed. All this data must be accumulated prior to its analysis. Fixed design research is an inherently theory-driven and immediately accessible process that does not require specific customization and is chosen from a spectrum of well-defined alternative designs hence its reference as fixed design. Still, it requires a full and comprehensive articulation of the theory of the phenomenon under research. Of necessity, fixed research will engage in an exploratory or pilot phase as a prerequisite before any commitment to full-scale research. A pilot phase facilitates the opportunity to address any shortcomings regarding methods of data collection.

Thus, the researcher inherently requires a good conceptual grasp of the research beforehand and familiarity with the exact procedures needed to be followed to mitigate against time and resource wastage. Realistically then, in the fixed research design study, the researcher must be inherently clear regarding the operational mechanism to be employed and the associated specific context where the operational mechanism will or will not be engaged. The researcher must accordingly know the target variables: which are to be manipulated or controlled during the experiment and which are to be included in non-experimental research. The researcher must also inherently know the kinds of results to expect and how to analyze these results before proceeding with data collection.

While fixed design methods primarily regard a confirmatory exercise, exploratory data analysis is also possible. If perhaps initial understanding of the phenomenon yields unexpected patterns or relationships, these are the basis of subsequent further research. Herein lies the systemic weakness of fixed designs, as they cannot rationalize the subtleties and complexities regarding individual human behavior. Fixed designs further require the researcher to hedge against impacting the findings of the study. Therefore, although not simple, potential biases require full disclosure and validity and reliability issues comprehensively addressed via appropriate remedial measures adopted accordingly (Sahin & Öztürk, 2019).

Quantitative strategies of inquiry choices regard, survey, experimental or longitudinal research. Survey research regards a quantitative or numerical articulation of tendencies, position, or viewpoints by pondering a sample from a population and generalizing based upon the sample study. Experimental research investigates to find out if a specific treatment alters an outcome. Accordingly, the researcher applies a specific treatment to one group while withholding from another group to determine the relative performance of both groups regarding an outcome. Finally, longitudinal research employs data collection over time to discern the development of thoughts and trends (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Flexible Research Design

The crux of flexible research design inherently regards constructing a qualitative-based one-off design apt to answer real-world research questions. Notably, flexible designs are inherently a work in progress. They can accordingly adapt to the evolution of the research during data collection as the research question changes or is further clarified. There are three main flexible research approaches: ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. However, other flexible research approaches more appropriate to specific research questions include Narrative and Phenomenological approaches (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Narrative Research Design

A narrative design may be either a phenomenon being studied or the study method regarding analyzing stories told. Narrative design is inherently a highly encompassing term. It accounts for a single or chain of incidents or feats regarding a single or a few limited numbers of chronologically or stage-related individuals. Narratives may be articulated in a spoken, written, or video format; it regards personal and human dimensions of experiences over time and in a cultural context. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narratives distinguish themselves from other discourses in three different ways: temporal, meaningful, and social. In this regard, narratives are portrayed as segments or chapters of sequences. Accordingly, narratives have a specific resolution or conclusion as a causal dimension produced for a targeted audience. Hence, they are only significant for those audiences (Elliott, 2005).

There are four types of narratives: biographical, autoethnography, life history, and oral history.

1. **Biographical** -The biographical technique regards an established set of practices for creating and producing the stories and discourse regarding a person's life to facilitate learning about a person's existence and learning from the person's existence and is based upon researcher interpretation and synthesis (Hallqvist & Hydén, 2013). The biographical

study establishes a sense of distinctiveness because it records contextually biased key events and happenings of another individual's life story (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2. **Autoethnography** - Creswell and Poth (2018) surmised autoethnography as being penned and chronicled by the individual who is also the subject of the study. Autoethnography is unique from the perspective that it is both process and product. It seeks to articulate and chronologically stage the analysis of an individual's experience to appreciate and grasp contextual and cultural experience (Ellis et al., 2011).
3. **Life History** - depicts a person's life. It may regard an individual's personal experiences regarding various periods and settings in shared traditional beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Life history has three significant nuances. Firstly, the entire life history, the totality or combination of every important incident or occurrence the person remembers, constructs a life narrative. Secondly, an identifiable story with specifically selected contextual characters, settings, and plots may be singular examples of coincidence or epiphanies which give significance to the entire lifetime regarding the storyteller. The third approach visions personal narratives as abbreviated stories of life, condensed sections of life stories told over a lengthy period with question-and-answer sessions (Germeten, 2013).
4. **Oral history** - a recorded history based on gathered individual interpretive thoughts regarding events and their resultant causal actions and reactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Put another way, oral history is a means of collecting, saving, and understanding the recollections of persons, communal society, and contributors regarding bygone events (Scârneci-Domnişoru, 2013).

Narratives have a familiar everyday sensibility because they communicate stories in a very real-world way by recounting various experience plots in typically three stages. Narratives have a beginning, middle, and end, or they may have a past, present, and future. Storied accounts regard the storyteller and or other persons and act to assimilate previous experiences into evocative learning. They communicate meaningful and evaluative learning experiences within a temporal and contextual backdrop of physical, emotional, and social settings to ultimately reveal a coherent story to an audience (McAlpine, 2016). The coherent end-game story is because of the re-storying efforts regarding lucidity restructuring the various facets of the stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Challenges of Using Narrative Methodologies. Participant narratives will inherently only portray a subset of experiences that the researcher will articulate into a summarized coherent discourse. In this regard, the researcher must be conscious of the likelihood that there may be deliberate or inadvertent omissions and other forms of discrepancies from the resource individual. One useful way to hedge this situation is to resource a larger number of participants to confirm that the fullest range of representative experiences and interpretations are factored in to develop and produce a consistently accurate and coherent story. Narratives may also focus on localized or blinkered experiences and may overlook wider and broader fundamentally significant influences. Accordingly, the researcher should strive for a large relatable database to properly contextualize the accounts (McAlpine, 2016). Active collaboration and a keen eye for selecting quality sources of information and active re-storying of the accounts by the participants will also contain other potential challenges of the Narrative research methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenological Research Design

A phenomenological design is a comprehensive account of how several individuals discourse their first-hand common familiarity regarding an experience or a phenomenon. (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology seeks to study a specific pool of people and scrutinize and review their convictions and understandings regarding their shared experience of other humans, morals, law, beauty, and architecture in its various incarnations (Ellis, 2016). A phenomenological study typically includes the following characteristics (Creswell, 2016). Phenomenological design study regards a single notion, and focal point investigated to accumulate the viewpoints of several individuals (3-15) who have personal common first-hand experience of the phenomenon under consideration. The data collected to articulate this discourse can be varied and may include one-to-one interviews, opinions, records such as poetry, written mail communications, songs, and jingles as a collective means of having first-hand interaction with the phenomenon.

In this regard, the distilled version or 'essence' of the common experience is reported without justifications or evaluations. Therefore, the experience must have a contextual background, involving other persons, engaging in dialogues at work, study, or residence. Phenomenology may have a very diverse range of philosophies but still inherently includes the subjective first-hand experiences of the study group while attempting to communicate and share their common objective experience with others. To better capture the understanding of the most authentic discourse of the phenomenon as possible, the researcher tries to avoid any personal and previous bias by attempting as far as practicable to divorce all prior preconceived notions regarding the phenomenon. This concept is referred to a 'bracketing' (Ellis, 2016). Essence, then, is the condensed description of the common thread of the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon first-hand. Accordingly, this primary or simplest form of phenomenology is called descriptive phenomenology. Its focus is to articulate the world from the first-hand vantage of the person who has directly experienced the phenomenon.

The two other main types of phenomenology are hermeneutics; and empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hermeneutics is based on the analysis or interpretation of the experience of the phenomenon. That experience is spawned by what is occurring and the personal articulative understanding of the experience by an individual (Ellis, 2016). Hermeneutic phenomenology attempts to understand through interpretation and embraces a course of action that clarifies the subject phenomenon within its contextual background (Dowling & Cooney, 2012).

IPA or interpretive phenomenological analysis is a relatively recent refinement iterative of hermeneutics that considers the researcher's efforts to appreciate the subject's efforts to comprehend the phenomenon. Suppose the research requires more focus on the depiction and understanding of the participants' discourses and less on the portrayal of the researcher. In that case, this type of phenomenological research is regarded as transcendental or psychological phenomenology. This type of phenomenological study is therefore intimately intertwined with the phenomenological characteristic of 'bracketing.' Transcendental or psychological phenomenology, therefore, requires avoiding any personal and previous bias by attempting as far as practicable to divorce all prior preconceived notions regarding the phenomenon to present a different outlook regarding the phenomenon (Ellis, 2016).

Challenges of Using the Phenomenological Methodology. Phenomenological study challenge is based on the fundamental fact that understanding an understanding is limited by language, which, itself, is arguably also open to understanding (Ellis, 2016). Capturing the understanding of the most authentic discourse of the phenomenon as possible is an inherently tricky task. The researcher is trying to avoid any personal and previous bias by attempting as far as practicable to divorce prior preconceived notions regarding the phenomenon. However, the researcher is still challenged regarding how, where, and when to input their understandings into the study.

Additionally, because the language is sometimes abstract, persons new to the subject may toil to comprehend how phenomenology can enlighten research strategy (Dowling & Cooney, 2012). Identifying an adequate size pool of individuals who have experienced the specific phenomenon may prove to be quite tough based on the particular subject matter (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this regard, deriving the distilled 'essence' requires a certain minimum number of first-hand interviewees (and other resources) to satisfy research rigor and then the challenging task of continuing to interview until the 'clusters of meaning' are figured out and generated as a result of the interpretive process regarding the diverse data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethnography Research Design

Ethnography is a design of inquiry with roots in anthropology and sociology. Ethnographies are used primarily to conduct qualitative research in the social and health sciences, especially regarding the provision of health care and nursing, social care, and delivery by professional practitioners (Ellis, 2015). The researcher reports the common relationships of deeds, language, and activities of a group of people in their element over a protracted period. Data aggregation is primarily by surveillances and question and answer sessions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Accordingly, ethnographic research is to uncover and learn about the collective mental and emotional philosophy prevalent within a group of people (Ellis, 2015). The crux of ethnographic data aggregation is that the researcher acquires an awareness of the world from the group members' perspective – emic, and unavoidably from the researcher - etic (Creswell, 2016). Ethnography has a few distinctive attributes, such as seeking to discover the mutual perception of a group of people.

Conversely, other research methodologies attempt this from an alternative strategy of aggregating together the cumulative experiences and understanding of the subject persons of the study. However, it takes substantial time to amass the quantum of data for the study and cannot be achieved quickly and simply with a few interviews of the group members. Success can only be achieved via comprehensive interviews derived from the researcher being embedded or immersed with the group and participating and observing the group to get a first-hand appreciation for their ideas, customs, and social behavior (Ellis, 2015). In this regard, ethnography is both the process and outcome of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When the researcher becomes immersed within the group, they become the conduit tool of data collection. The result of this intimate immersion is termed 'going native' in ethnographic jargon, and there are a few stages or degrees of this immersion spectrum from total immersion to a 'professional stranger' (Ellis, 2015).

There are several types of ethnographies, but two of the trendier forms are the realist and critical ethnography. Realist ethnography regards the specific position of the researcher towards the members of the group being studied. It provides an unbiased first-hand version of the situation and place, presented in third-person language to communicate the knowledge of the situation. Critical ethnography focuses the researcher's support regarding ostracized groups of people in society from a political perspective to champion against various forms of inequality, supremacy, discrimination. The strategy of critical ethnography here is to empower other people to challenge the status quo (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Challenges of Ethnographic Study Methodology. The ethnographic researcher needs to be embedded or immersed with the group to participate and observe the group to get a first-hand appreciation for their ideas, customs, and social behavior. Accordingly, the researcher is virtually always on patrol and must avoid any distractions which might compromise data collection opportunities. Additionally, the researcher has to become familiar with the group and capture its many nuanced behaviors, which requires a prolonged field research time to collect sufficient data. The data collection and interpretation must be current and not overly delayed. Failure to do so may result in the researcher missing opportunities and becoming swamped with a backlog. Accordingly, the researcher must be reflective, reflexive, and interpretive regarding their observations and factor the potential impact of their looming presence on the group's culture and its members' behavior. The subject group's members may alter their behaviors when the researcher is around and portray varying degrees of non-genuineness (Ellis, 2015).

Grounded Theory Research Design

Grounded theory is the most systematized qualitative research methodology (Ellis, 2017). It revolves around the researcher coming up with a comprehensive explanation or theory regarding a process, action, or interaction fashioned from a significant number of persons (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The objective of grounded theory is to detect theoretical elucidations for and about a specific phenomenon. The gist of the grounded theory is derived from the phenomena under review versus evidencing a theory or hypothesis. In the conduct of grounded theory, then, inductive reasoning guides researchers to a standpoint where they can come up with a new or an augmentation of a prevailing theory regarding a phenomenon under review. The data collected are grounded in what the researcher discovers, and these findings are the basis for articulating a new theory from the ground up, hence the name grounded theory (Ellis, 2017).

Accordingly, there are several grounded theory characteristics of research. Research attentions a certain dynamism that has discrete segments, transpire over time, and is attempted to be explained. The ultimate end game is to expound a theory illustrating simply how the theory functions regarding this dynamic process, action, or interaction. The practice of writing memos on articulating ideas as they become inspired during the process of data collection and analysis in the form of a process flow framework. Data and data analysis are actively undertaken concurrently, meaning there is alternating between the participants, conducting new interviews, and incorporating accordingly to detail how the process works.

The inductive techniques used are correlated to the type of grounded theory approach (a) choosing a single structured pattern from a pool of such – category, (b) specifying additional categories to cumulate a theoretical model, (c) the juncture or node of the specific categories becomes theory – selective coding, and (d) the theory can be denoted as drawings, hypotheses, or propositions, or as a dialogue. The two most prevalent types of grounded theories are the systematic and constructivist approaches. The systematic approach includes categories, codes, and coding, and the practices are directed by the continuous contrast of field data with evolving categories. The constructivist approach perspective is from the co-construction route based upon researcher collaborations with contributors and the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Grounded theory as a methodology has its genesis in sociology as a theoretical means to comprehend the link between humans and society and several practical applications (Ellis, 2017). Grounded theory research applications are quite varied across several fields such as health, engineering, education, and business and spawn theory pertinent to the scholarship of contextual situations and offering adaptability to tackle real-world issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Challenges of Using Grounded Theory Research Design. The grounded theory researcher faces the inherent challenge of defining when the identified and selected categories have reached satiety or when the theory is sufficiently expounded. One tactic to approach this juncture of satiety is to use discriminant sampling. Further information is accumulated from persons other than the preliminary interviewees to ascertain if the theory is consistent with the perspectives between the two groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While coming up with the new theory, it is imperative that the researcher, consistent with other qualitative methodologies, remain unprompted always. Accordingly, the researcher must be forthright and sincere regarding any biases, opinions, and beliefs they may have infiltrated the study and forewarn the prospective reader of potential biases regarding how the researcher may portray a hypothesis (Ellis, 2017).

Case Study Research Design

The fundamental idea of a case study is to pick a case or several cases – a multi-case study and articulate how the case portrays a real current problem or issue. Accordingly, this results in an extensive review of the case within a defined contextual setting (Creswell, 2016). Therefore, case study research can contend with the full gamut from the simple and single case through complex and multiple scenarios as a collective case study. Accordingly, it facilitates the researcher to address 'how' and 'why' questions regarding complex phenomena within their contextual situation.

In this regard, it is invaluable from the novice to the experienced researcher, as a case study provides a tremendous opportunity to gain a comprehensive awareness of a case. The researcher can gather data from several sources and synthesize this data to articulate the case coherently. Thus, the researcher can survey individuals to groups or organizations, basic through multifaceted interventions; relationships; societies or programs, and the disaggregation and restoration of various phenomena. The case study also has the inherent potential to advance theory, investigate programs and facilitate interventions because of its adaptability and thoroughness (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Case study research has five logically sequenced components regarding its design. First, the case study research form asks questions such as "how" or "why" to articulate the nature of the study. Second, the case study proposition focuses on the direction of research towards something worthy of examination. Third, the case definition and 'bounding' choose what is to be studied and is bounded by individuals depending on whether it is a single or multi-case study, a group, community, program, organization, and time and place. Bounding delimits the scope of the data compilation, the relationship between the data and the subject, and the associated contextual situation; the case study also needs to define a current real-life abstraction. Fourth, linking data to propositions relates and connects the data choices and their inherent suitability to the case study. Fifth, the criteria for interpreting the case study's findings regards statistically relevant benchmarks and determining and articulating other possible contradictory explanations of the conclusions noted by the researcher.

Baxter and Jack (2008) surmised the type of case study is decided after the determination that the research topic may be best studied from the perspective of a qualitative case study, and the case boundaries are delimited. The type of case study chosen is determined primarily by the general study purpose, such as depicting a case, investigating a case, or contrasting cases.

- **Explanatory** – used when attempting to address a question that seeks to explain the likely contributory links in real-world interventions, which are too complicated for survey or experimental approaches.

- **Exploratory** – used to survey those settings where the involvement with a difficult situation being considered does not have a specific solitary outcome.
- **Descriptive** – used to describe a difficult situation or phenomenon and the real-world context in which it happened.
- **Multiple or collective case** – enables differences to be surveyed by the researcher between and amongst cases while reproducing similar findings across cases.
- **Intrinsic**- used when the desire is to comprehend better a case where there is interest despite its specificity and simplicity. It is not used to comprehend abstract or general phenomenon.
- **Instrumental** – used to advise awareness of an issue or enhance a theory and not a specific situation.

Challenges of Case Study Methodology. A case study is not the simplest of the five qualitative research methodologies to undertake due to the fundamentally complex nature of its varied theoretical objectives and the underlying fact that there is currently no single agreed way to report a case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this regard, Creswell and Poth (2018) posited some challenges regarding case study research. At the onset, the researcher must pinpoint the case which could have a gamut of scope from wide to restricted. Next, determine what the case study will not examine and hence not have too many objectives, and then determine and define the case/unit of analysis. The researcher must determine which of the several bounded systems they will elect to report: studying a single individual, several persons, a set of persons, a total program, or doings. The researcher must also choose from amongst the alternatives of the intent of the case analysis such as single instrumental, collective/multiple, and intrinsic or instrumental.

The researcher must decide whether to elect for a single or a multiple/collective case study. As the number of multiple case studies expands, the extent of resource availability likely decreases regarding time and finances. The larger the number of multiple cases then the lesser the extent of research. The researcher must determine the sampling approach's logic as acquiring sufficient information to depict the case study may restrict its value. However, the delimiting of the boundaries regarding time, happenings, and practices may be complicated due to an ambiguous time interval definition. The rigor of the research is also challenging due to the practice of triangulating or combining various data sources such as interviews, papers, and observations during the data accumulation process (Ridder, 2017).

Discussion of Method

This dissertation proposed to use a flexible case study research methodology. The flexible design origins are derived from the qualitative research tradition. Accordingly, flexible design inherently requires that the researcher develop the design via interaction with whatever the researcher is studying, but the data collection and analysis are instead intertwined. However, flexible designs can include a small amount of quantitative data. The systemic weakness of fixed designs regards its inherent inability to grapple with the complexities and nuances of individual human behaviors. However, flexible designs are more apt for that. Although with a flexible design, the purpose of the study is usually well-articulated, flexible designs are inherently customizable due to their work-in-progress attribute and thus adaptable to the research. Research questions may thus be underdeveloped and unsettled at the onset, so too are methods options despite any early research start-up decisions regarding data collection.

Accordingly, during early data collection, the researcher's approach and the research questions may change. A case study approach is preferred when one wishes to understand a real-world case. Accordingly, it is assumed that its inherent understanding likely includes significant contextual factors pertinent to the case (Yin, 2018). Thus, the crux of a case study research is to select a case or several cases, multiple case studies, and articulate how the case(s) illustrate(s) a problem or issue and leads to a detailed and extensive analysis of the case. Accordingly, the researcher would clearly describe the case identified in the study. Therefore, the case should regard a clear entity such as a group, individual, organization, community, relationship, decision process, or specific project and typically be used to study or evaluate programs. A case study can also regard many or a few people or a long or short span of time and is inherently bounded by time and place.

However, the case borders demarcate the case under investigation from a larger context of which it is a subset. The researcher should select the case to provide insight into an issue or a problem, which may be broad in scope or limited to a small geographic area. Significantly also, the researcher accumulates and analyzes multiple data sources to provide a comprehensive perspective regarding the issue within the case boundaries. Accordingly, case study academic rigor inherently regards multiple qualitative data sources, for example, interviews, observations, documents, and visual materials.

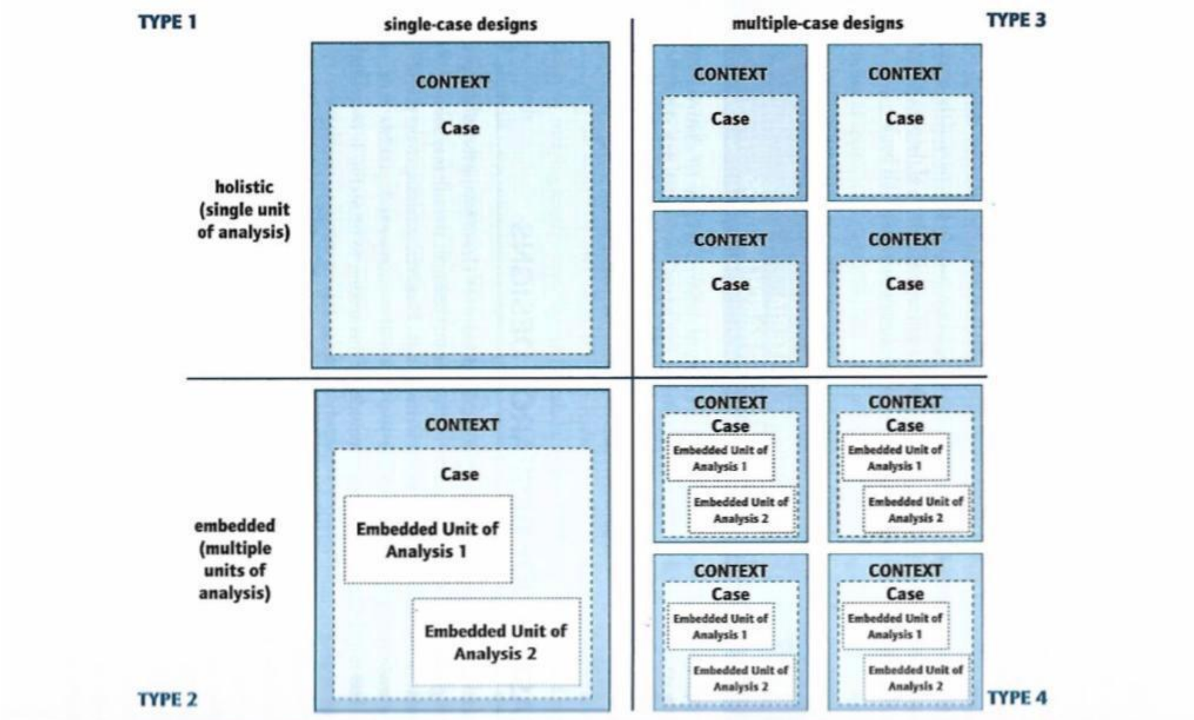
The consequence of a case study is thus a case. Accordingly, the inherent analysis of the myriad sources of information results in a comprehensive description of the case with the emergence of data themes, generalizations, or assertions regarding the case. Moreover, generalizations inherently regard how the issue is explored and better understood by learning about the case. Accordingly, the reader can emerge with an in-depth appreciation of the issue explored by the case study (Creswell, 2016).

This dissertation topic explored and investigated the Caribbean SIDS local food and destination marketing phenomenon, characterized by a detailed preliminary research paucity. The essence of this study was on exploration rather than explanation. A pragmatic approach to case study sampling in this dissertation was adopted because of the systemic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the selection factors of travel access and time and financial constraints of the researcher. Accordingly, the research was done in one SIDS country - the twin-island state of Trinidad & Tobago in the Caribbean, hence a single-case design. Notwithstanding the single case approach noted above, multiple units of analysis regarding relevant destination marketing stakeholders were included, which allowed for more in-depth exploration to be undertaken.

Noted in Figure 1 below, Yin (2018) posited four case study designs as a two-by-two matrix. The first dimension regards the use of either single or multiple cases. The second regards using either a single-holistic unit of analysis or multiple embedded units of analysis, potentially providing significant opportunities for extensive analysis, thus enhancing insights into the single case. Accordingly, Yin (2018) posited that the preferred choice of case design inherently depends on the type of question the research is investigating, the degree of control exercised over the case, and the focus on current or previous phenomena. This dissertation study, therefore, elects for a single case with multiple units of analysis.

Figure 1

Case Study – Four Basic Design Types



Source: Yin, 2018, p. 48.

Summary of the Nature of the Study

This paper discussed the nature of the dissertation study and accordingly expounded on philosophical worldview and research design options. The worldview paradigms in academe include postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic. The mixed, fixed, and flexible research design method options are inherently based on qualitative and quantitative research traditions. Mixed-method design regards the use of quantitative and qualitative research methodology to better grapple with and understand research questions that cannot be answered adequately via a single-method perspective. The mixed-method research designs consist of the more frequently used convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, and embedded are the most widely used with the transformative and multiphase mixed-method design type methods enjoying increased popularity.

The fixed design model was spawned from the quantitative research tradition. While fixed design methods primarily regard a confirmatory exercise, quantitative strategies of inquiry choices regard survey, experimental or longitudinal research. The crux of flexible research design inherently regards constructing a qualitative-based one-off design apt to answer real-world research questions. Three main flexible research approaches are ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. However, other flexible research approaches more appropriate to specific research questions include Narrative and Phenomenological approaches. This paper further notes and discusses why this dissertation scholarship prefers the pragmatic and flexible exploratory case study approaches.

Conceptual Framework

Antonenko (2015) surmised that a conceptual framework regulates the researcher's thinking about the study and accordingly aligns and communicates the key aspects of the investigation to readers. Thus, the conceptual framework inherently works as a practical tool, process, and product regarding the organization and aligns all aspects of an empirical inquiry. Furthermore, the conceptual framework visually depicts a logical sequence of propositions that demonstrate the inquiry's importance and academic rigor from a superficial perspective. Accordingly, the conceptual framework is a theory and evidential proposition to justify a research problem based upon defined relevant concepts, thus establishing the theoretical and empirical rationale and incorporates a scaffold regarding the appropriate research design strategy followed by associated data analysis and interpretation.

The conceptual research framework facilitates an auditable process to address how the researcher arrives at its visual representation. Thus, the conceptual framework inherently requires the researcher to be explicit regarding their thoughts and what they intend to do. Accordingly, the researcher must make selective decisions regarding the most significant features, the relationships likely to have the most meaning, and what data the researcher will collect and analyze. Therefore, a conceptual framework is inherently a work in progress for much of the duration of an investigation. Thus, it reflects the current version of the investigator's research map and implicitly evolves as the research evolves within the confines of stipulated research boundaries (Leshem & Trafford, 2007).

Berman and Smyth (2015) surmised that doctoral research students exemplify a cultivated practical knowledge and an academic knowledge naivete reflected in their initial research problem. Under the guidance of their supervisor, the research student thus unpacks the implicit understanding and reconstructs it as explicit knowledge appropriately referenced to academic literature and scholarly research methodology. Accordingly, a conceptual framework is a scholarly task characterized by deep thinking and reflection. It thus acquires scholarly rigor, explicitly clarifies boundaries, delineates ideas and their relationships, and accordingly provides the scholarly schematic regarding the definition of the research problem and research methodology intended to investigate the problem.

Conceptual Research Framework

This qualitative flexible exploratory case study dissertation research explored how and why local food can leverage the competitive advantage and destination marketing opportunities of Caribbean SIDS and focuses on the twin-island Republic of Trinidad & Tobago – the home of this dissertation author. Consequently, this study aimed to develop recommendations for major destination marketing and hospitality stakeholders to foster better planning and local food utilization as an inimitable cultural resource that positively impacts tourist destination selection preference. Accordingly, to achieve this overarching aim, this study proposed the following key research objectives, noted in Figure 2, which guide this dissertation's research framework:

RO1: To explore the literature regarding local food and destination marketing. Accordingly, this is intended to establish the research context and pinpoint scholarly academic gaps.

RO2: To design and construct a conceptual research framework to navigate the research and justify the preferred case study methodology approach based upon the literature review and the inherent research gaps.

RO3: To explore how local food is promoted by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and industry stakeholders in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago.

RO4: To investigate and expound on stakeholders' viewpoints regarding the use of local food in destination marketing in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago.

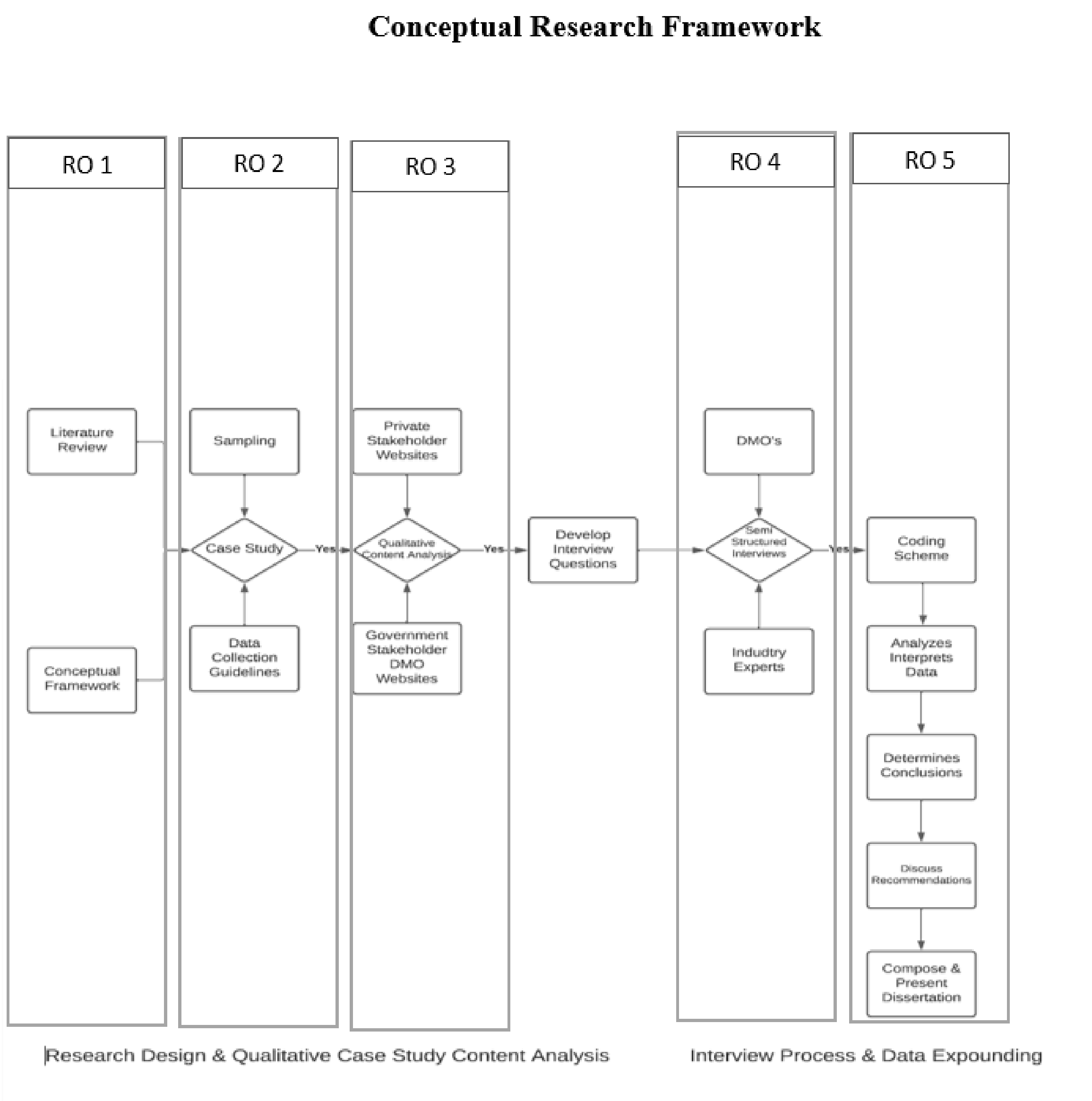
RO5: To articulate creative and practical suggestions and recommendations to guide coherent planning to pedestal local food as an inimitable cultural resource regarding destination marketing.

The first research objective regarded a literature review exploration of local food and destination marketing and a conceptual research framework of the interlinked concepts regarding the dissertation phenomenon. The literature review sought to explore the connection between local food and tourism comprehensively. Accordingly, it included various cultural approaches of food-related tourism, how and why local food is a powerful destination marketing tool, and a potential destination attraction by itself. Local food in destination marketing, the added complexity of small island destination states (SIDS), and destination marketing organizations are the other major literature review subject area. However, during the literature review process, other related broad topics were discovered. Accordingly, this established the research topic and context and pinpointed potential scholarly academic gaps.

The second research objective was to design and construct a conceptual framework to navigate the research and justify the preferred case study methodology approach based on the literature review and the inherent research gaps. The third research objective regarded exploring how local food was promoted by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and industry stakeholders in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago. The fourth research objective regarded the investigation and expounding on stakeholders' viewpoints regarding the use of local food in destination marketing in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago. Finally, the research framework's fifth research objective regarded articulating creative and practical suggestions and recommendations to guide coherent strategic planning to pedestal local food as an inimitable cultural resource regarding destination marketing.

Figure 2

Concept Framework



Concepts

Based upon deconstruction of the specific problem statement, the broad concepts explored in this dissertation regarded small island destination states (SIDS) as the first dissertation delimitation. Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are the main actors in strategic planning and the management and organization of destination resources. They require close working relationships with government agencies and tourism industry business stakeholders. The concept of local food tourism is a key construct of destination marketing policies and strategies. Local food tourism is systemically intertwined with the constructs of destination competitiveness, attractiveness, which can enhance the destination image, and positively influence travelers' destination experiences, and champion destination decision-making.

Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The United Nations (UN) currently notes there are 38 special and distinct countries labeled as Small Island Destination States (SIDS) from three regions - the Caribbean, the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Sea (AIMS), and the Pacific region. Accordingly, the Caribbean region is home to 16 of the 38 SIDS countries. Despite their widespread geographical dispersion, SIDS typically all grapple with common challenges regarding their inherently small populations, deprived diversification options attributed to limited resources, seclusion or limited accessibility, systemic susceptibility to natural disasters, vulnerability to external shocks, and unbalanced dependency on international trade. Despite these several economic development challenges, tourism often grapples as the only viable means of economic survival and growth and to overcome the systemic limitations of SIDS.

The most prevalent destination image of SIDS regards their salubrious 3S endowment resources of sun, sea, and sand. Although SIDS is a staple of the pleasure periphery, tourists have become progressively detached from the destination itself and exacerbated by the huge popularity all-inclusive cruise tourism concept, especially regarding the Caribbean (Walker, 2020). The Caribbean archipelago SIDS are highly fractured and intra-competitive destinations, competing in a world of increasingly aggressive competitiveness and expanding tourism alternatives and substitutes (Miller & Henthorne, 2006). SIDS paradoxically focuses on their ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea as they grapple with differentiating themselves from other competitors. They typically lack the resources and expertise to market their destinations by specifically pedestalling their unique tourism products and services (Okumus et al., 2013).

Many Caribbean tourist destinations compete head-on using highly generic individual marketing promotions campaigns that appeal to a similar target market. As a result, there is little regional and individual country competitive positioning and an ongoing failure to appropriately research, develop and market competitive advantage regarding uniquely authentic attractions and experiences consistent with a highly dynamic global tourism landscape. However, in 2018, the Caribbean tourism sector arrivals were almost 60 million, split almost equally between tourist arrivals and cruise passengers, perpetuating the Caribbean region as the most tourism-dependent region globally (Nair & McLeod, 2020). Despite the progressive Caribbean-wide penetration and diffusion of tourism regionally, there are worrying signs regarding systemic economic stagnation and market share growth (Peterson et al., 2017).

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)

Sheehan et al. (2016) surmised that the traditional focus of DMOs has been on destination marketing. However, the contemporary tourism industry is shifting from marketing functions to a greater focus on management functions. DMOs are the main actors in strategic planning and the management and organization of destination resources and require close working relationships with government agencies and tourism industry business stakeholders. Consequently, while the DMOs fundamental aim is to facilitate tourism enhancement and destination development, they do not produce or own the destination's tourism product. However, DMO success is systemically elusive because of the various stakeholders' inherently conflicting and disparate interests. Accordingly, DMOs feature a spectrum of non-profit incarnations and governance structures ranging from public authorities to public-private entities.

However, this spectrum of entities inherently has similar political and resource challenges typical of public sector organizations. Therefore, the destination management organization concept regards a network perspective that incorporates various stakeholders and their interdependencies and seeks a balance between competition and cooperation. Accordingly, a destination management focus encompasses switching away from a marketer towards a market-oriented focus and transitioning from an increasingly irrelevant intermediary in the tourism value chain to a facilitator of opportunities. The destination management organization also inherently morphs from a commercial promoter into an intelligence promoter by strategically harnessing the ideas and creativity of all tourism community members (Vargas, 2020).

Local Food Tourism

Local food regards food preparation, including beverages via traditional methods or with key ingredients of a particular locale. Thus, local food can have substantial economic multiplier effects on the local economy network of farmers, retail and street restaurant establishments, hotels, and food processing businesses. Accordingly, scholarship posits that up to 30-40% of a tourist's budget is spent consuming food and beverages or purchasing it as a gift or souvenir at a tourism destination (Choe & Kim, 2019). Ellis et al. (2018) surmised a close relationship between food and tourism and that tourism literature regarding food scholarship frequently articulates the concept of food tourism, gastronomy tourism, and culinary tourism interchangeably.

However, some scholars posit there are slightly different contexts and meanings regarding each term within the host-guest framework of tourism. Accordingly, culinary tourism regards food consumption by the tourist within a cultural experience, while food tourism regards food's physical and sensual experience. However, both culinary and food tourism help to explain tourists' desires and food activities. On the other hand, gastronomy tourism is considered more a host-driven focus and inherently regards the place of food in the culture of the Host. Therefore, this dissertation opts to interchangeably use food, gastronomy, and culinary terms regarding its local food scholarship.

Levitt et al. (2019) surmised that food tourists are not a homogenous group. Kyriakaki et al. (2016) surmised that tourist food preferences accordingly articulate four categories of gastronomy tourists: existential, experimental, recreational, and diversionary. The existential gastronomy tourist seeks out experiences beyond mere biological needs to satisfy a desire that pedestals authentic local cuisine prepared using traditional recipes. Accordingly, existential tourists preferentially patronize places that boost their knowledge of local food instead of mundane and sterile tourist restaurants. In stark contrast, the experimental gastronomy tourist mirrors their trendy lifestyle.

Accordingly, they pedestal glitzy and fashionable restaurants, reflected in their innovative design architecture, menus, and service consistent with their social image and prestige. Experimental gastronomy tourists are therefore not inherently loyal regarding their food and eating habits. The recreational gastronomy tourist does not pedestal food during their travels and tends not to deviate away from familiar food and drinks for familiarity reasons. Accordingly, they are not inclined to experience foreign foods which are not previously part of their everyday eating habits. Finally, the diversionary gastronomy tourist perceives food as mere sustenance, and accordingly does not seek out any special food, and is found in popular chain restaurants or functional settings.

Food tourism inherently incorporates the concept of gastronomy in destination restaurants, street food establishments, attending cooking classes, visiting local food markets food, and food exhibitions and festivals. Accordingly, The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) posits that gastronomy tourism is a niche aspect of the tourism industry and is a dynamic force contributing systemically to a destination's competitiveness and attractiveness (Leong et al., 2017). Furthermore, because food is a key attraction for travelers and an indispensable aspect of tourism, the special culinary experiences systemic to local food can be used by destinations to enhance their image, positively influence travelers' destination experiences, and champion destination satisfaction. Accordingly, the concept of local food is a key construct of destination marketing policies and strategies (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020).

Tourism Experiences

Sthapit et al. (2017) surmised that a destination's attributes are typically the first attraction to potential tourists who are tempted by the tourism-related activities and travel within the destination. The destination attributes are thus the source experiential components that spawn the visitor's experiences. Thus, tourism experiences are an inherently complex web of subjective factors regarding emotions and attitudes associated with the vacation. Accordingly, the destination experiences increase pleasure feelings and create positive emotions via emotional arousal. However, when tourists consume various tourist services, they systemically experience the destination's attributes as a total touristic product. Therefore, destination experiences can significantly contribute to spawning a positive or negative destination image, which subsequently impacts future destination selection or loyalty and post-experience behaviors.

Satisfied tourists accordingly leverage superior competitive destination advantages manifested as increased tourism revenues, repeat tourism visits, and recommend the destination to others. The ultimate goal of satisfied tourism consumers pedestals interesting stories and experiences over mere products. Thus, a holistic tourist experience is a combination of products and experiences. Tourists can shape their own uniquely memorable experience via their consumption of component elements of a destination, such as captivating geography, fascinating local culture, tantalizing gastronomy, interesting recreational activities, and enticing shopping. Memorable tourist experiences become forged from memorable tourism destinations and result in satisfied tourists (Şahin & Güzel, 2020).

Food is an essential pillar of tourism, along with transportation, accommodation, and destination attractions. Accordingly, the several facets of local food experiences are a gateway to destination culture, meeting and engaging with locals at food festivals and street food vendors and restaurants. The local gastronomic experience is the core of a destination's culinary tourism. Thus, locally produced food and beverages are used to tell a story or portray some cultural aspect of the destination (Wijaya et al., 2017). Accordingly, tourists are inherently motivated by the desire to experience the destination locals' authentic lifestyle and culture, a significant aspect of which is partaking in local food. Hence gastronomy is a key motivator and pull factor of tourism, and tourist destinations are where food and beverage rendezvous with travel and hospitality (Antón et al., 2019).

Accordingly, Sthapit (2017) surmised that memorable food experiences are a contemporary benchmark of destination managers and tourism stakeholder businesses. On-site tourism experiences are fleeting and only provide fleeting feelings. However, because tourists generally reflect on their trip experiences, the memorability and intensity of experiences etched in memory are lasting and of special significance. Accordingly, if food consumption is a peak touristic experience, this results in a memorable experience or merely a supporting experience if it is not.

The range of international visitor food experience is therefore not a unidimensional construct. Accordingly, Mohamed et al. (2020) surmised scholarship regarding the multidimensionality of food tourism experiences and posits key food experience elements, including sensory, intellectual, affective, and behavioral food experiences.

1. **Sensory food experience** – food is perhaps the only product that arouses all human senses: sight, smell, taste, and tactile senses. So, apart from the food itself, the sensory food experience is also attributed to the food consumption environment. Accordingly, the psychological and physiological appreciation of food leverages tourist motivation to experience local food and helps to brand the total customer experience and are compelling determinants of tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions.
2. **Intellectual food experience** – local food is a powerful medium to facilitate awareness and knowledge regarding the destination and its culture and foster a connection between tourists and destinations.
3. **Affective food experience** – regards the emotions, sentiments, and feelings aroused from consuming the destination products during the visit. So, while tourists may not be able to recall the places and time regarding their experiences, they can typically recall positive or negative feelings. Accordingly, food experiences are a powerful destination marketing tool that should not be underestimated and overlooked. It significantly impacts tourist evaluation, memories, and attitude towards the destination's food image and local food offerings.

4. **Behavioral food experience** – regards the tourists' experiences of consuming the food itself and how and where food is served to the tourist at a destination. Accordingly, food-related behaviors and activities are a powerful pleasure and entertainment medium.

Destination Decision-Making

Piramanayagam et al. (2020) surmised destination scholarship from a geographical and perceptual perspective. The geographical destination is synonymous with well-defined boundaries such as a country, region, or city. However, from the perceptual perspective, tourist destinations encompass an amalgam of goods, services, and products consisting of the elements of attractions, accessibility, amenities, travel packages, and ancillary convenience services necessary to meet travelers' necessary needs. Many destinations, other than the Caribbean with its sun, sea, and sand attributes, have similar products; therefore, making a decision and choosing a destination can be a big challenge for potential tourists. Accordingly, the destination image, which regards an amalgam of beliefs, ideas, and impressions, is a critical aspect of destination decision-making.

However, a positive destination image and expectations is a pivotal precursor to the destination-making process as it arouses awareness and stokes interest as a distinguishing feature amongst competing destinations. Typically, destination selection is heavily influenced by previous travel experience and opinions, especially word of mouth (WOM), which can leverage various forms of electronic media and thus better find and retain customers. However, WOM can either positively or negatively impact destination image and thus destination selection (Jalilvand, 2017). Therefore, it is the purview of destination managing/marketing organizations (DMOs) to enhance the attractiveness of a destination-by-destination positioning, which inherently regards the process of developing and nurturing a unique image in the minds of prospective visitors.

However, destination positioning is inherently intangible. Accordingly, destination marketers also utilize mass media destination visualization via contemporary visual social media such as Instagram, Flicker, and Pinterest to share videos and photos to augment further the destination image (Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019).

Özdemir and Çelebi (2018) surmised scholarship that motivation is inherently based on a pull-push construct related to the tourist and the tourism destination itself. Accordingly, the push construct governs whether the tourist goes on vacation travel or not. In contrast, the pull construct dictates the destination selection and where the tourist prefers to go. There is only minimal management potential to influence push factors. However, there is much leverage that managers can exert over destination pull factors. Therefore, motivation is a key element regarding destination decision-making that destination managers factor when deciding what products to offer and how to promote them.

Accordingly, destination managers seek to promote destination attributes that best match potential visitor motivations or focus their efforts on the market segment, which best matches the destination resources with tourist motivations because destination attributes sway tourists to visit particular destinations. However, tourists need to become informed that a given destination product meets their needs and desires. Consequently, if destinations successfully promote a desirable image, more tourists will actively seek out those destinations. In this regard, food is a powerful, multifaceted destination icon image that can leverage tourist satisfaction and destination decision-making (Seo et al., 2017).

Destination Competitiveness

Dalakis et al. (2018) posited that many tourism destinations have similar destination attributes, promotions, and target market segments. While a destination inherently thrives on natural and cultural resources, these are only mere comparative advantages and insufficient by themselves to become competitive if left unleveraged. However, a competitive destination is inherently more successful than its competitors if its destination brand is clearly articulated, more innovative, distinctive, and continuously enhances tourist experiences and satisfaction. Accordingly, Bukharov and Berezka (2018) posited that as competition amongst destinations becomes more intense, a better appreciation of tourists' preferences and contemporary trends becomes even more critical to nurturing value propositions that can enhance tourism and destination attractiveness (e.g., if a destination's local gastronomy has inherently distinct features, it can be a means of potential destination differentiation and thus competitive advantage).

Abreu Novais et al. (2018) surmised that destination competitiveness conceptualization is as multifaceted as the perspective focus of the different destination stakeholders. Therefore, the qualitative research concept of phenomenography can explore different aspects of individual and consensus regarding various complex aspects of the world and provide a holistic understanding, such as tourism destination competitiveness. Accordingly, phenomenography analysis reveals three different hierarchical stakeholder perceptions regarding the characteristics and dimensions of destination competitiveness: perception as a destination, performance focus, and long-term process.

Firstly, perception as a destination regards the individual relationship between the destination and the tourist or prospective tourist and is related to the notion of destination potential and attractiveness and accordingly determines the desirability of the destination based upon the availability of the products, experiences, or attributes that is wanted or needed. The orientation is one of demand. Secondly, destination competitiveness as performance focus is on the actual destination and the desirable outcomes that arise from competitiveness or the viability of the destination to attract and distinguish between visitors and tourists.

Accordingly, the destination focus is not on experiences but destination marketing and consumption, shifting from a demand orientation to a supply orientation. Therefore, this destination competitiveness context regards achieving certain goals based upon the destination target market by transforming destination characteristics into measurable parameters such as tourist and visitor arrivals, market share, tourist expenditure, number of stayover nights. Thirdly, destination competitiveness as a long-term process implies that the destination in its entirety is concerned with everything social, economic, political, and even the steps combined as a process to allow for the destination to achieve particular goals and the effects of these goals. There is an inherent time dimension to the long-term process of destination competitiveness and ongoingly sustain competitiveness. Accordingly, the long-term priority well-being of the destination as a whole requires a holistic approach by the full spectrum of destination stakeholders.

Destination Attractiveness

A destination's attractiveness and competitiveness are directly related to its tourist activities and attractions mix, which are key motivations regarding destination choice (Nguyen, 2019). Accordingly, augmenting a destination's attractiveness is a critical objective of governments and destination marketing organizations as it reflects its competitiveness. Destination attractiveness spurs tourists to visit and spend time at the destination and significantly influences vacation destination decision-making and satisfaction. Consequently, it enhances destination loyalty and positive word of mouth (WOM). However, price competitiveness has a key influence on destination attractiveness because, generally, travelers are inherently price sensitive. Price sensitivity encompasses the costs regarding transportation services to and from the destination and accommodation, food and beverage, and tour services and entertainment (Bianchi, 2018).

Ma et al. (2018) surmised that destination attractiveness is an inherently multidimensional construct regarding historical, social, and natural factors and shopping, recreational, food, accommodation, and destination infrastructure. Although all the above dimensions need to be present, each dimension's relative significance and extent vary from destination to destination. Destination attractiveness is an important destination marketing 'pull' factor. It is a perception regarding the combined relative importance of benefits to the traveler and the destination's inherent ability to deliver these pedestalled benefits. Thus, the more a destination can satisfy the individual's desires, the more attractive its perception of potential visitors and tourists will be. Contemporary travelers are inherently more experienced in traveling. Their destination attractiveness perception significantly impacts their place attachment, purchase decisions, and post-purchase decisions, thus having long-term implications regarding the destinations' long-term development.

Destination attractiveness and gastronomy have a simultaneous impact on tourist behavior. Travel satisfaction antecedents incorporate destination attractiveness alongside gastronomy attractiveness because the mass tourist market is jaded by many destinations' ubiquitous sun, sea, and sand holiday packages. Accordingly, travelers increasingly seek cultural doorway experiences to purchase feelings from local restaurants, street food sampling, local food markets, exhibitions, and festivals in unfamiliar places. However, the gastronomy spectrum encompasses tourists with a primary motivation for gastronomy sampling and food sampling as a secondary motivation for their travels and vacation (Leong et al., 2017).

Theories

Importance-Performance Analysis

Because local food is inherently inimitable due to its myriad nuances, it can be used as a marketing and branding tool that fosters competitiveness and differentiation. The dining experience is one of the single experiences that can impact the tourists' overall experiential outcome because food significantly affects the tourists' perception of a destination. Accordingly, it is imperative to understand fundamental dining experience attributes of food quality, cultural influence on food, physical evidence, and social factors and their impact on travelers' satisfaction. This understanding can provide highly desirable insights regarding the management and positioning of the different local food attributes.

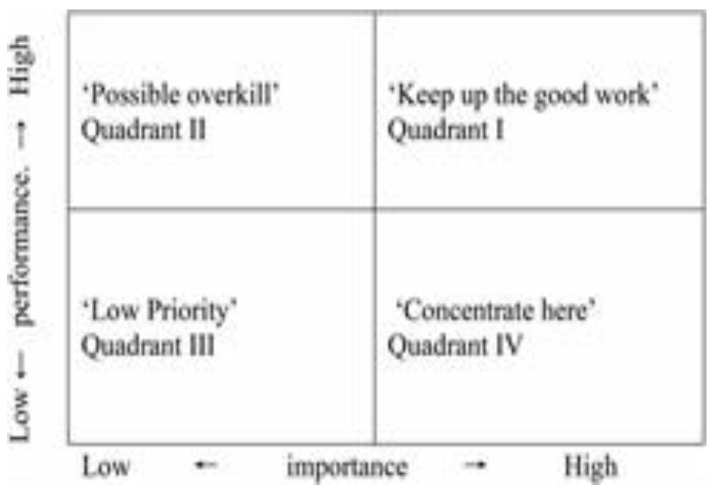
The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) technique is one of the few modern tools that assess satisfaction by comparing actual performance attributes against expectations (Erkmen, 2019). IPA is an inherently well-established analytical tool frequently used to guide the improvement of specific attributes of products and services. Accordingly, conducting IPA requires a customer survey and data collection regarding the perception of the relative performance of focal products or services and the importance of the shortlisted pertinent attributes (Mikulic, 2019).

The IPA method, noted in Figure 3 below, is a two-dimensional importance-performance matrix. Accordingly, the values of importance and performance regarding diversified attributes are plotted against each other, resulting in a 2x2 matrix divided into four quadrants. The horizontal axis regards the measurement of the importance of attributes, including service attributes. The vertical axis regards the measurement of the performance of attributes. Accordingly, Quadrant I pertain to attributes with high performance and high importance.

Attributes that become located in Quadrant I are competitive attributes and should be maintained, leveraged, and intensively promoted encouraged. Quadrant II locates the attributes with low importance but with high performance. These attributes' performance is unnecessarily superior to the competition, meaning that resource allocation is more than is required. Quadrant III regards the attributes which are low importance and low performance, thus implying low priority. Accordingly, an organization should consider redeploying or reallocating resources away from these attributes. Quadrant IV regards high performance coupled with low performance and accordingly plump for top priority focus and earmarked for immediate improvement efforts and resource allocation.

Figure 3

Traditional Importance-Performance Grid



Source: Feng et al., 2014, p. 1025.

Service organizations' service attributes located within these quadrants identify which attributes require appropriate remedial improvement. IPA is therefore popular because it is an inherently effective technique to evaluate existing strategies, pinpoint service attribute candidates for improvement priorities, and help develop new effective marketing strategies. IPA also allows firms to spot areas of high resource consumption and helps to identify which aspects should preferentially receive more attention to enhance customer satisfaction more efficiently. The popularity of the IPA analytical tool is thus based upon its intuitive simplicity and that it does not require significant knowledge and expertise regarding statistical techniques (Feng et al., 2014).

Content Analysis

Content analysis (CA) is perhaps the most frequently used method to explore the ways marketing materials represent aspects of culture or place research via photographic and textual material and coding schemes derived from sources such as brochures, travel guides, and websites. The researcher is thus able to explore conceptual and theoretical issues regarding the understanding of data (Mohd et al., 2014). Accordingly, content analysis can analyze the presentation of food and food culture promoted, the range and diversity of the gastronomic images presented, the role of food tourism regarding promotion and destination marketing and assess the constraints regarding the leveraging of food tourism destination marketing. Therefore, content analysis can assess the frequency and intensity of website visits and the percentage of content devoted to local food culture and cuisine, which is subsequently coded accordingly. Assessment dimensions include cuisine and gastronomy culture, featured foods and recipes, local cuisine, table etiquette, food tourism-related information, food tourism marketing strategies, restaurant guides, and restaurant or establishment certification (Horng & Chen-Tsang, 2010).

CA methodology is used to analyze large amounts of content from various visual and verbal communication data. Accordingly, CA regards the shrinking of phenomena or events into specified categories to facilitate better analysis and interpretation. However, as a methodology, it can be qualitative, especially in the formative stages of research, and quantitative, where it is applied to the statistical frequency of the phenomena. Therefore, CA inherently lends itself to the use of specialized computer software programs for the analysis of data by researchers (Harwood

& Garry, 2003). CA is perhaps the most frequently used method to explore the ways marketing materials represent aspects of culture or place research via photographic and textual material and coding schemes derived from sources such as brochures, travel guides, and websites. The researcher is thus able to explore conceptual and theoretical issues regarding the understanding of data (Mohd et al., 2014).

Stalmirska (2017) surmised that CA can appropriately examine virtually any aspect of creative content, such as magazines articles, movies, books, meeting minutes, phone directories, and web pages. Accordingly, this means content can include words, meanings, pictures, symbols, or other forms of communicated messaging articulated and contained in books, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, official documents, films or video content, musical lyrics, photographs, websites, and other ways. However, the content of the data forms noted above uses CA's coding and interpretive features to identify patterns, themes, and meanings via a meticulously organized and detailed explanation and interpretation of material. The CA approach as a research method can audit communications methodically by expounding answers regarding questions such as what the communicated message indicates about, how, to whom, why, and what is communicated. Accordingly, the CA methodology facilitates the researcher's evaluation of textual and visual information regarding the representation of food on DMO websites or brochures.

Actors

Tourism Demand (push) & Supply (pull) Actors – DMOs & Hotels

Tourism is systemically impacted by both demand (push) actors/factors and supply (pull) actors/factors. Demand push actors inherently regard the tourists' socio-demographic characteristics such as culture - the country of origin and social status, social - familial roles and responsibilities, and personal - age, gender, marital status, occupation, family size, and income and educational level (Mahamadu & Salia, 2020). However, Özdemir and Çelebi (2018) surmised that tourism supply (pull) actors inherently regard those responsible for delivering products and services (e.g., local food) to the destination via the coordinated mobilization of the efforts and resources of destination marketing organizations (DMOs).

The local DMO actors are typically a government and thus publicly underfunded institution responsible for harnessing a diverse mix with a limited overlap of interests by small, medium, and large private hospitality and tourism companies, other public agencies, and non-profit bodies (Elbe et al., 2009). However, hotels are pedestalled as the backbone of the tourism system (Hussain & Khanna, 2019). Destination Hotels are a significant actor of gastronomic branding because they may have one or several restaurants. Tourists typically start their culinary journey and experience local food and culture as the hotel establishment is their primary contact place after a journey (Gordin et al., 2016). Tourists' spending on food and beverage experiences can account for approximately one-third of hotel establishment revenues. However, organizational readiness is inherently tied to any desire to serve local food and cuisine (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017).

The actors related to this dissertation research regards people group actors, meaning tourists and institutional or organizational actors, including:

- **The Government of Trinidad & Tobago Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts** - critically important as it is the fountain of any government national tourism policy and destination marketing-related initiatives. Accordingly, this organization's tourism has several pillar tourism industry partners, including the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), domestic tourism industry stakeholders, and regional affiliates –

the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) (Government of Trinidad & Tobago Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts., n.d.).

- **The THA has its Division of Tourism, Culture, and Transportation** - charged with establishing, standardizing, and sustaining the sister island of Tobago's tourism product in a manner consistent with the repositioning and marketing and promotion strategy for Tobago as a tourist destination (Tobago House of Assembly, n.d.).
- **Domestic tourism industry stakeholders' websites** - discern local food's relative status and eminence in the destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago.
    - **The Small Tourism Accommodation Owners of Trinidad & Tobago (STAOTT)** - a network of Bed and Breakfast, Self-catering, and Host homes property owners with 1 to 20 rooms. This organization seeks to assist its members with managing, promoting, and representing their businesses, thereby creating a successful, sustainable, competitive, and profitable sub-sector of Trinidad & Tobago's Tourism Industry (The Small Tourism Accommodation Owners of Trinidad & Tobago, n.d.).
    - **The Trinidad & Tobago Incoming Tour Operators Association (TTITOA) -** established to foster standards and synergies for tour operators regarding sightseeing, hiking, kayaking, boating, cultural, sporting, mountain biking, birding, natural history, snorkeling, and culinary tours (The Trinidad & Tobago Incoming Tour Operators Association, n.d.).
    - **The Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants & Tourism Association (THRTA)** - a private sector organization representing the hospitality and tourism industry in

Trinidad. Its members comprise accommodation providers (hotels and guest houses, restaurants, and service companies that provide goods and services to the tourism and hospitality industry (The Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants & Tourism Association, n. d.).

  - **The Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI)** - established to address the need for trained professionals in the growing tourism and hospitality industries to compete in a globally competitive market. Accordingly, THTI offers associate degree level courses in Food and Beverage Operations, Culinary Arts, Tourism Studies, and Hospitality Studies (Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute, n.d.).

- **Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO**) – The Caribbean's regional tourism development agency with 24-country membership and a host of private sector allied members. The stated vision of the CTO is to position the Caribbean as the most desirable and year-round warm weather destination via a sustainable tourism marketing strategy – one sea, one voice, one Caribbean (Caribbean Tourism Organization, n.d.).
- **Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA)** – The CHTA was established to be the conduit between the national hotels and tourism associations throughout the Caribbean Island states. Accordingly, the CHTA has approximately 36-member national hotel associations representing over 600 hotel members, over 91,000 rooms, and more than 300 goods and services supplier companies (Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Organization, n.d.). Hotels are typically the backbone service entity of the

tourism industry and the first interaction between tourists and any form of food, local or otherwise.

- **Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)** – The CDB commenced its operations in 1970 with the fundamental objective of strategically contributing to the region's sustainable economic development. Although the bank acknowledges tourism as the dominant economic lifeblood of Caribbean countries for several decades, it only commissioned a tourism industry study after almost 50 years in 2017 to inform its future tourism industry policy and strategic imperatives. However, even then, there is a glaring disconnect regarding the Caribbean destination marketing initiatives and a financing focus on other forms of tourism such as medical, educational, yachting, and disregard for the synergy between local food and tourism culture (Caribbean Development Bank, n.d.).

Summary of the Research Framework

The conceptual research framework presented a diagram illustrating the pertinent elements and their sequential flow of action and information and expounded on its five key research objectives. The specific problem statement deconstruct noted the broad concepts of small island destination states (SIDS), destination marketing organizations (DMOs), and local food tourism. Additional intertwined constructs regarding destination competitiveness, attractiveness, which can enhance the destination image and positively influence travelers' destination experiences and champion destination decision-making, were also expounded. The IPA technique was expounded as an appropriate tool that could assess local food by comparing actual performance attributes against expectations that can impact travelers' satisfaction regarding the destination. Also, the CA was expounded as a popular methodology to facilitates the researcher's evaluation of textual and visual marketing information regarding the representation of food on DMO websites or brochures and assess the constraints regarding the leveraging of food tourism destination marketing. Finally, the main local food destination tourism actors regarding strategic planning and the management and organization of destination Trinidad & Tobago resources, including government agencies and tourism industry business stakeholders, were identified.

Definition of Terms

Destination marketing*:* The undertaking of multifaceted operational activities undertaken in the highly competitive business of attracting visitors to localities via the development of brand identity and destination positioning (Pike & Page, 2014).

Destination marketing organizations*:* The tourism sector organizations that market the destination by coordinating multiple local sectors while balancing the interests of various stakeholders and the sustainability of local resources (Zhang et al., 2018).

Food tourism: A term used interchangeably with cuisine, culinary, or gastronomy tourism as a contemporary buzzword of the travel and tourism industry. It is associated with the history, heritage, tradition, lifestyles, culture, and gastronomy of a particular destination which can be molded as a tourism product like other tourism resources (Mohanty & Sadual, 2019).

SIDS*:* A 38 island grouping of some of the most tourism-dependent countries in the world dispersed across the Caribbean, the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, South China Sea (AIMS), and the Pacific with varied geography, climate, culture, and stages of economic development (Walker, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The inherent underlying assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are critical components of an acceptable research proposal regarding any scholarly investigation. Accordingly, without these considerations being articulated, critics may raise some justifiable questions regarding the credibility of the research. Assumptions are the foundation of any proposed research study. Without a basic set of applicable assumptions, there is no scholarly research study. Assumptions are perceived as something that the researcher accepts as true without evidential proof and inherently regard what the researcher takes for granted or may tacitly assume. However, taking things for granted may lead to many misunderstandings as study evaluators may never have considered them (Ellis & Levy, 2009).

Limitations are factors typically beyond the realm of the researcher's oversight that can potentially affect the research study results or its inherent interpretation. Accordingly, noting the study limitations of the research can be very helpful for readers because they inherently present an opportunity to acknowledge possible errors or challenges regarding the interpretation of the study results. However, limitations may not always be readily discernable at the start of the research and may become evident as the study progresses but should not be considered excuses or alibis (Baron, 2008).

Delimitations are inherently the limitations consciously established by the researcher as the boundaries or limits of their scholarship. Accordingly, the study delimitations help define the scope of the study's aims and objectives to remain feasibly within the researcher's control and not become unrealistic to achieve (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Assumptions

This dissertation on local food tourism assumed the interchangeable use of the terms food or cuisine or culinary or gastronomy tourism, despite the inherent nuances amongst the terms (Ellis et al., 2018). Food tourism assumption also inherently incorporated gastronomy offerings at destination hotel restaurants and independent restaurants, street food establishments, cooking classes, visiting local food markets, food exhibitions, festivals, and food souvenirs at gift souvenir shops (Stone et al., 2019). Also, this dissertation used the term DMO interchangeably regarding destination marketing organizations and destination management organizations (Sheehan et al., 2016).

This dissertation opined various DMOs and tourism industry stakeholders to garner multiple perspectives via semi-structured interviews as noted in the third and fourth dissertation research objectives of the Conceptual Research Framework. Accordingly, it was assumed that sample interviewees would inherently regard people who could provide the typical perceptions and perspectives related to the research questions and overall research problem. The virtual interview, because of COVID-19 protocol, was assumed to be conducive to a more successful interview where the interview process was unlikely to be distracted or interrupted. However, the researcher was mindful of confidentiality and anonymity issues and always treated interviewee responses as perceptions, opinions, and interpretations of events rather than as actual facts and truth.

Accordingly, it is assumed that the interviewees were honest and forthright, replied to the best of their ability and knowledge, and did not feel pressured to provide feedback consistent with what the interviewee felt that the researcher wanted to receive (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). DMOs are the main actors in strategic planning and the management and organization of destination resources and require close working relationships with government agencies and tourism industry business stakeholders (Vargas, 2020). However, obtaining balanced interviewee feedback was an inherent challenge attributed to the balance between competition and cooperation amongst the various DMOs and destination stakeholders.

Limitations

The prevailing limitation to researching any aspect of contemporary tourism was the dramatically systemic but unforeseen and unpredictable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global tourism and hospitality industry. Accordingly, no one could accurately foretell when the pandemic will end and how the multifaceted global tourism industry will transform. However, the main limitations of this dissertation research regarded the grappling within the dissertation course time constraints and contacting and accessing interviewees from the breadth of the Trinidad & Tobago tourism industry stakeholders, especially hotels and restaurants, governmental agencies and DMOs, and a potentially but albeit presently non-existent international visitor pool.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many potential interviewees were not in the office and were remote working. Offices and businesses were closed, and some persons perhaps even furloughed or terminated. Hospitality establishments such as hotels and restaurants were closed for many months until further notice or permanently already, while others perhaps never reopened. Still, many international travelers are highly apprehensive of vacation travel, notwithstanding the global economic devastation attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ideally, this study preferred to use purposive sampling, which inherently regarded interviewees who were chosen on the basis of how much and what types of information they can provide about the topic under investigation. However, convenience sampling, which entails potential interviewees and interview locations that are readily available, was utilized to mitigate against grappling with the dissertation course time constraints and contacting and accessing interviewees (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Additionally, the dissertation time and resource constraints prohibited a multi-case study, hence the single-case approach regarding Trinidad & Tobago, notwithstanding the multiple analysis units that seek to provide more in-depth exploration. Accordingly, this single case study does not suitably enable this research to be applied directly to other countries with different contextual circumstances such as developed versus developing countries or perhaps countries with a more established food tradition such as France or Italy. Therefore, further case studies may be the more apt approach. Finally, another limitation of this dissertation study is that scholarly literature is still grappling with the concept of food-related tourism as a relatively new mode of tourism. Accordingly, there is a lack of primary research regarding the distinct phenomenon of local food and destination marketing hence the option of an exploratory case study.

Delimitations

Because of the prevailing limitations, although there are 38 small island destination states (SIDS) globally, the Caribbean and the case study country subject of Trinidad & Tobago is the primary geographic dissertation delimitation. However, tourism is broadly categorized as either land or cruise-based. However, cruise packages are typically all-inclusive regarding accommodation, meals, and beverages, and many cruise packages include island attraction tours. Accordingly, the various international cruise lines have virtually no opportunity or interest to promote any local food or gastronomy. Consequently, cruise passengers spend the least of all tourists at a destination, primarily attributed to the limited time they spend ashore and the cruise ship itself being the primary all-inclusive destination. Hence, the other major dissertation delimitation focus is on land-based tourism.

Significance of the Study

The highly competitive global tourism industry mandates that the Caribbean SIDS travel and tourism product must strive not to be perceived to be in any way to be substandard or backward when compared to the other global regions. Food can significantly impact the tourist experience and destination loyalty, and consequently, tourism revenues. Accordingly, Trinidad & Tobago destination marketers and stakeholders must understand better the challenges and opportunities of tourists' food travel behaviors and desires. Therefore, it is imperative to explore how and why food tourism can be a distinctive destination marketing pull factor and how food consumption can be so much more than a mere ubiquitous activity that all tourists engage in at all destinations. Accordingly, Trinidad & Tobago DMOs and stakeholders can better leverage local food potential to design uniquely memorable food-related activities and experiences to cultivate destination loyalty rather than homaging ubiquitous sun, sea, and sand brand loyalty.

Reduction of Gaps in the Literature

The scholarly concept of food-related tourism is a relatively new mode of tourism that has received much scholarly attention during the recent two decades, which has surmised its significant potential contributions to destination differentiation and competitiveness (Fusté-Forné, 2019). Okumus et al. (2013) surmised scholarship regarding the promotion of local food in the small island destinations of Aruba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Martinique, which are traditionally the among the most competitive tourism destinations of the Caribbean. However, an extensive scholarly review of food and destination marketing-related literature did not indicate further Caribbean Island studies beyond this 2013 solitary cursory food tourism study. Accordingly, this Trinidad & Tobago case study was the first known dissertation scholarship on any Caribbean Island destination's local food and destination marketing.

Suhartanto et al. (2018) surmised that most tourists opine that their travel satisfaction is incomplete without some extent of souvenir shopping. Food is considered an ideal souvenir because of its practicality and its intertwined identity with a travel destination. However, notwithstanding a distinct scholarly literature gap regarding food and tourism in the Caribbean and the case study subject of Trinidad & Tobago, the linkage between food souvenirs and tourism is itself only a most recent academic research subject. So, while there is a growing understanding of souvenirs as a significant element of destination marketing, recent research suggests that food souvenirs are more than a prop of tourism and destination satisfaction.

Food souvenirs have much post-purchase behavioral capital. However, despite its potential significance, the perspective of food as a souvenir in tourism has been largely underexplored (Yuan et al., 2021). Trinidad & Tobago is the established global cradle of the most prestigious and flavorful cocoa, the key ingredient of much of the most globally sought-after gourmet chocolates. Accordingly, there is much scholarly literature regarding Trinidad & Tobago's Trinitario cocoa. Correspondingly, there is a lack of scholarly literature regarding chocolate or food souvenirs. In summary, this dissertation sought to reduce the primary research gap regarding local food and SIDS destination marketing and food souvenirs, specifically in Trinidad & Tobago.

Implications for Biblical Integration

The main ingredient for a successful tourism and travel sector is hospitality, and food is a key pillar of hospitality. One of God's appointed duties of us as Christians is 'hospitality,' which means welcoming strangers and visitors to our island homes. Romans 12:13 encourages us to 'practice' hospitality. Practice is a verb that requires constant action. Offering and communicating the uniqueness of local food is an example of 'practicing hospitality. To ensure the success of the Caribbean travel and tourism product, it must be a 'hospitality practice,' meaning it must pay continuous attention and should not be practiced intermittently. Because this industry is the economic lifeblood of most Caribbean islands, it requires constant attention and nurturing. Hospitality to visitors must be an extension of God's hospitality to us. When the tourists are offered superior hospitality, they reward hospitality with increased revenues and repeat business via positive and inherently powerful 'word of mouth.'

> For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*. (Romans 12:4-6, New King James Version)

On the level of the individual and collectively, we are one in the body of Christ. All members do not have the same functions because God has not obligated everything to be performed by every person, so he has bestowed different but equally significant gifts. To do otherwise would have ignored the service of others to the detriment of exhausting all. Accordingly, the DMOs and tourism industry stakeholders such as hotels, restaurants, and eating establishments are key cogs of the tourism and hospitality network, each with different gift contributions.

Thus, the range of talents at the DMOs and tourism sector stakeholders' level is complimentary and supports the network via symbiotic relationships within the tourism hospitality network elements. The hospitality network includes dependency and interdependency relations, making different but critical collaborative contributions to its smooth functioning. Thus the hospitality network actors are like how the human body consists of many organs, each having its respective function and striving towards the harmony and synergy of the whole body. Each organ is vitally and necessarily located in the strategic space it occupies. Accordingly, it makes each synergistically useful even though performing a different function according to their individual gift competencies.

Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate

Marketing is a pivotal way to promote tourism destinations to potential visitors. Accordingly, a good marketing strategy is a critical factor in developing and enhancing the destination image from the perspective of the product, price, region, and promotion (Liu et al., 2021). However, Şahin et al. (2020) surmised that contemporary tourists have moved beyond being satisfied with mere quality products and services. Accordingly, contemporary tourism is primarily focused on experience hospitality where the aim is to delight the tourist senses with memorable and positive experiences. Therefore, destination experience is the new frontier of destination differentiation (Piramanayagam et al., 2020).

However, travelers may not be inclined to select a destination based on one specific experience but prefer to opt for a bundle of experiences. Accordingly, destination marketing and destination marketing organizations must proffer a bundle of experiences (Erkmen, 2019). However, authenticity is a highly desirable and motivating trait for tourists and enhancing competitive advantage (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017). Accordingly, promoting local food and food tourism is a major non-seasonal pillar, contributing significantly to destination authenticity, image, differentiation, specialization, and competitiveness (Fusté-Forné, 2019).

Stone et al. (2019) surmised that about 90% of travelers engage in food tourism during their travels at various locales such as hotels, restaurants, bars, street food establishments, culinary festivals, markets, and brew wineries. Accordingly, about 80% of travelers feel that food and drink experiences are significant aspects of their trip satisfaction. Positive food and drink experiences encourage them to recommend a destination and provide a memorable association with destination travel.

Also, about two-thirds of travelers purchase food and drink-related souvenirs, and about 60% of food items purchased at home were initially experienced on a trip. However, even if the tourist does not regard food as a primary motivator for travel, it is undeniable that food accounts for a major portion of a traveler's expenditure. It typically represents about one-third of the total economic tourist contribution to a destination (Fusté-Forné, 2019).

Despite the systemic influence of food on tourism policymakers and tourism organizations of the Caribbean and moreso in Trinidad & Tobago have at best underutilized and even sometimes ignored the potential of local food because they poorly understand its capacity and capability. The highly competitive global tourism industry mandates that the Caribbean SIDS travel and tourism product must strive not to be perceived to be in any way to be substandard or backward when compared to the other global regions. Benchmark country destinations like France, Italy, Spain, Thailand, and Taiwan have actively and successfully promoted local food. It has become a distinct market segment and a tourist attraction in its own right and is a focal point of differentiation from other countries and regions.

This study benefits tourism-related businesses by exploring why and how local food and food souvenir promotion can be leveraged by Trinidad & Tobago destination marketing. Additionally, destination marketing itself is related to a marketing cognate in its strategic approach to enhancing tourism experiences, influencing decision-making, and spurring destination competitiveness and attractiveness.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

The highly competitive global tourism industry mandates that the Caribbean SIDS and Trinidad & Tobago travel and tourism product must strive not to be perceived to be in any way to be substandard or backward when compared to the other global regions. Accordingly, a good marketing strategy is pivotal regarding developing and enhancing destination image from the perspective of the product, price, region, and promotion. Even if the tourist does not regard food as a primary motivator for travel, it is undeniable that food accounts for a major portion of a traveler's expenditure. However, despite the systemic influence of food on tourism policymakers and tourism organizations in the Caribbean and moreso in Trinidad & Tobago have underutilized and perhaps even sometimes ignored the potential of local food because they poorly understand its capacity and capability. Accordingly, destination marketers and stakeholders must understand better the challenges and opportunities of tourists' food travel behaviors and desires. Therefore, this study is significant because it is the first scholarly investigation of why and how local food and its subset food souvenir promotion can be leveraged by Trinidad & Tobago destination marketing.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Business Practices

Business practices inherently regard the tactics and activities an organization employs to achieve its objectives, especially selling and marketing its products and services. Around the middle of the twentieth century, numerous islands became strategically important tourist destinations with the onset of mass tourism (Parra-López & Martínez-González, 2018). Since then, the contemporary global tourism and travel market has undergone significant changes. Accordingly, tourism activities have evolved and transformed, tourist expenditures have increased tremendously, and traditional destinations have sought to make great efforts to innovate and be competitive.

Therefore, many countries have sought to enhance the accessibility of their tourism products and leisure activities to satisfy the ever-changing desires of modern-day tourists. However, what remains largely unchanged is that 14 countries, predominantly from the European and North American regions plus China, account for approximately 70% of total global tourism activities (Ilban et al., 2017). Similarly, about 70% of the inbound tourists are from the USA, Canada, and Europe in the Caribbean (WTTC, 2021).

Notwithstanding the tourism industry dominance of Europe and North America, Peterson and DiPietro (2021) surmised that the Caribbean is one of the most tourism-dependent and penetrated regions globally. Caribbean tourism's economic dependence is evidenced by its approximate 20% of exports, 15% of gross domestic product (GDP), 14% of labor employment, and 13T of capital investments. The Caribbean tourism industry 2018 performance indicated 60 million visitor arrivals with an almost 50-50 split between tourist arrivals and cruise passengers (Nair & McLeod, 2020). Although the Caribbean has flirted with tourism products such as ecotourism, yachting, sport, and cultural and festival tourism, its tourism cornerstone still regards its inherent natural climate and thus (3S) sun, sea, and sand tourism.

The Caribbean SIDS twin-island country of Trinidad & Tobago, despite being located within one of the world's most tourism-intensive regions, only attracts less than two percent of the tourists who have been visiting the Caribbean region annually. Still, the Caribbean only accounts for about 1.9% of global tourist arrivals. The Trinidad & Tobago tourism focus is on its rich heritage and its carnival festival, much beloved by the Trinidad & Tobago diaspora. Trinidad & Tobago is a long-standing true melting pot of diverse ethnicities ranging from indigenous peoples, African, East Indian, British, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Chinese, and Syrian Lebanese backgrounds. Accordingly, these cosmopolitan ethnicities have systemically impacted the country's socio-economic development, arts, culture, cuisine, and religious traditions.

Systemically coupled to Trinidad & Tobago Carnival is its world-famous steel pan music. Carnival features the steel pan, the only musical instrument invented in the 20^{th} century, and different genres of music such as calypso, soca, and chutney, which is a blend of East Indian and soca beats. Trinidad & Tobago's annual carnival is traditionally held after the religious festival of Lent during the winter season is billed as 'The Greatest Show on Earth.' Trinidad-style carnival has expanded its popularity and is celebrated during the summer season in several foreign cities as Miami Carnival, Labour Day celebrations in New York, Caribana festival in Toronto, and Nottinghill carnival England (National Tourism Policy (2020-2030) Trinidad & Tobago, 2020).

However, carnival aside, diasporic tourism is non-seasonal and even more beneficial as the diaspora visits secondary locations apart from primary tourist locations. Accordingly, they consume relatively more local products and services and patronize local businesses more than international tourists. Thus, the diaspora-based communities are active cultural ambassadors and can contribute significantly to the albeit default marketing of their heritage destination and its world-famous festival (Seraphin et al., 2020).

The Problem

Trinidad & Tobago Tourism Background Problems

As recent as 2010, Trinidad & Tobago globally ranked 7th and 8th per capita regarding its natural gas and oil reserves. Although this endowment has resulted in many benefits, it has also spawned many problems fundamentally attributed to Dutch Disease and the phenomenon of the deindustrialization of various Trinidad & Tobago economy sectors, such as agriculture and tourism. The Dutch Disease concept simplistically disaggregates an economy into two sectors, the booming and the non-booming sectors. The booming sector is pedestalled regarding the resource allocation priority and spending effects of the booming tradeable commodity. In the case of Trinidad & Tobago, the tradeable commodity was hydrocarbons – oil and gas.

The negative effect of Dutch Disease is pedestaling one segment of the economy while it pedestrians the competitiveness of non-tradeable exports. The Dutch Disease manifestly results in the deindustrialization of primarily the manufacturing sector. However, deindustrialization is also considered shorthand for the shrinkage of any non-booming tradeable economic activity such as agriculture or tourism (Mahadeo et al., 2015). Therefore, unlike its neighboring Caribbean countries, Trinidad & Tobago's economic lifeblood and focus are not on the tourism industry but its energy sector. Accordingly, the energy sector accounts for over 40% of GDP, approximately 85% of the country's exports, and 54% of government tax revenues (Trinidad & Tobago Gas Master Plan 2014-2024, 2015).

A failed economic diversification strategy away from reliance on its hydrocarbon resources and downstream petrochemical industrialization paradoxically fuels a systemically uninspired Trinidad & Tobago tourism sector. Accordingly, Trinidad & Tobago's tourism sector has not traditionally depended on or actively leveraged its inherent sun, sea, and sand appeal or actively sought to develop itself as a mass-leisure destination market for cruise or visitor tourism. Thus, the tourism sector, typically much intertwined with a country's agricultural sector, has long been relegated to economic insignificance in Trinidad & Tobago.

Paradoxically, despite the significant impacts of the tourism sector on the local economies of the Caribbean, its potentialities are underutilized and sometimes ignored because local policymakers poorly understand its sustainable capability and capacity (Zappino, 2005). The 2019 global contribution of travel and tourism was $9.2 trillion or 10.3% of global GDP with a growth rate of +3.5%. Although the Caribbean only accounts for about two percent of the total global arrivals, the Caribbean enjoyed a $58.9 billion or 13.9% of GDP contribution with a +3.4% growth rate. However, Trinidad & Tobago's tourism contribution to GDP was only 7.8%, but with a negative growth rate of -2.9% (WTTC, 2021).

Local Food Tourism Problems

Food-related tourist and travel priorities may range from none to supporting to peak, but food and tourism are and have always been very closely intertwined. Accordingly, tourism scholarship consensus is that food-related activities can easily account for up to one-third of tourist spending. Accordingly, many countries increasingly look to food tourism to increase their revenue generation. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) notes that over two-thirds of its members actively seek to promote their destination's cuisine (Levitt et al., 2019). Food tourism is thus a well-established aspect of destination attraction and tourist experience. However, although many countries increasingly look to food tourism to increase their revenue generation, not all destinations can to fully utilize and competently incorporate culinary resources into their destination marketing efforts (Okumus et al., 2018).

Food tourism destination marketing inherently depends on the successful navigation of competing interests between private and public interests. Private actors are typically focused on the immediate results for their businesses. They consider other entities within the same line of business as competitors, thus making broad cooperation systemically fraught with problems, whereas public actors pedestal a cooperation agenda. Therefore, cooperation must be inherently mutually beneficial to the many producers and actors needed to satisfy the complexity of the tourist and tourism market demands regarding food and other industry issues. Accordingly, the DMO is typically the collaborative and coordinating force to manage an inherently cumbersome process of bringing the interests of the multitude of actors from the food and tourism sector together.

However, the local food service actors are inherently small-scale businesses regarding workforce and revenue turnover. Many actors do not possess the business savvy to acquire the appropriate knowledge to meet their potential destination's customer desires and demands. Additionally, food service producers grapple with challenges such as sustaining retail relations regarding price, scale, and delivery frequency (Andersson et al., 2017). So, despite the high resource potential of culinary heritage, there is still a lingering question regarding the level of competence and knowledge of local hospitality industry specialists to create a well-differentiated tourist value proposition to cater to the spectrum of tourist food interests (Bukharov & Berezka, 2018).

Okumus and Cetin (2018) surmised that many coastal tourism promotional strategies myopically highlight the ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea tourism rather than unique destination characteristics such as local food. Tourists' food choices vary during the visit to a destination, and tourists can spend much time and effort searching, planning, and consuming foods. Accordingly, a destination's variety of cuisine products, services, and food culture can be leveraged as unique and strategic resources regarding destination marketing, differentiation, and branding. Therefore, destinations should not project food and beverage experiences as part of a destination experience or for mere physical sustenance or convenience, but rather pedestal desirability. Accordingly, local cuisines should be pedestalled as a key aspect of destination image and advertising and promotions themes and not mere supplementary products. The highlighting of ubiquitous 3S sun, sand, and sea tourism via expensive large-budget promotional strategies rather than unique heritage, traditions, and cultural foods and festivals is criticized as myopic, improper, and not least naïve business savvy.

Therefore, specific marketing and promotional materials should be developed and periodically updated with engaging content photos or videos rather than text to position the destination as a culinary destination. Accordingly, brochures, websites, and even menus should be professionally designed by experts knowledgeable about tourism marketing and food. Food photography is an explicit area of expertise that ensures that depicted images are of international quality and reflect authenticity. Therefore, DMOs must be adequately cautious and discerning regarding the design and approval of food promotional materials and media. Further, DMOs should explore and compare the culinary promotions materials and media from the more established and successful culinary and food tourism destinations. Also, DMOs should explore and benchmark their culinary promotional materials and media output against more established and successful culinary and food tourism destinations such as France, Spain, and Italy.

Destination hotels are a significant actor of gastronomic branding because they may have one or several restaurants. Tourists typically start their culinary journey and experience local food and culture as the hotel establishment is their primary contact place after a journey (Gordin et al., 2016). Hussain and Khanna (2019) surmised that hotels are pedestalled as the backbone of the tourism system. Accordingly, hotels' food and beverage services are critical operations for enhancing profit, earning prestige, and nurturing competitive advantage. However, local cuisine in hotels is often neglected, although it has much latent destination marketing potential as a strategic attraction on its own and is a pivotal element of tourist satisfaction. But there are inherent destination marketing agenda challenges regarding the organizational change inertia among hotels.

Accordingly, a decisive element is the necessity to change the mindset of key decision-makers and the organizational readiness to embrace local food dishes. Organizational readiness consists of three dimensions: organizational climate, culture, and capacity. Thus, if an organization displays inherent positive affirmation of all three organizational readiness dimensions, it is considered ready to implement an idea of interest. Accordingly, the commitment and competencies of the management and staff coupled with the capacity of the organization's facilities need to be configured or reconfigured to incorporate radically new menu items apart from the conventional offers (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2019).

Still, local cuisine is typically not prevalent at hospitality establishments in many developing countries due to the inherent westernization of their menus. So, although indigenous foods are a beloved aspect of local culture and heritage, local people may sometimes not hold their local foods sufficiently high regard and consider them sophisticated enough to serve their foreign guests. Hotel restaurants are typically the first introduction and gateway to destination food experiences. Therefore, if local food is to ever ascend in popularity and become an attraction in its own right regarding foreign tourists, indigenous dishes must be vetted through tourist-oriented hotel restaurants. This way, the local dishes can become appropriately transformed and presented to suit the tastes and standards of tourists. Only when will local foods become introduced to tourists can their preferences and consumption patterns start to change.

Therefore, tourists will only gravitate towards local dishes if they are appropriately exposed and can recognize and differentiate local destination foods before appreciating local gastronomy. After that, tourists graduate and venture beyond the hotel to experience more local food authenticity at local eateries and street food vendors. However, institutionalized tourists are sometimes quite apprehensive about local food consumption and consider it too exotic for their palate. Also, they inherently do not trust food safety and hygiene at non-hotel establishments (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017).

Concepts

Based upon deconstruction of the specific problem statement, the broad concepts to be explored in this dissertation regards small island destination states (SIDS) as the first dissertation delimitation. Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are the main actors in strategic planning and the management and organization of destination resources. They require close working relationships with government agencies and tourism industry business stakeholders. The concept of local food tourism is a key construct of destination marketing policies and strategies. Accordingly, local food tourism and the destination food image concepts are systemically intertwined with other concepts of destination competitiveness and attractiveness, enhancing the overall destination image, positively influencing travelers' destination experiences, and champion destination decision-making.

Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The United Nations (UN) currently notes there are 38 special and distinct countries labeled as Small Island Destination States (SIDS) from three regions - the Caribbean, the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Sea (AIMS), and the Pacific region. Accordingly, the Caribbean region is home to 16 of the 38 SIDS countries. Despite their widespread geographical dispersion, SIDS typically all grapple with common challenges regarding their inherently small populations, deprived diversification options attributed to limited resources, seclusion or limited accessibility, systemic susceptibility to natural disasters, vulnerability to external shocks, and unbalanced dependency on international trade.

Despite these several economic development challenges, tourism often grapples as the only viable means of economic survival and growth and to overcome the systemic limitations of SIDS. The most prevalent destination image of SIDS regards their salubrious 3S endowment resources of sun, sea, and sand. Although SIDS is a staple of the pleasure periphery, tourists have become progressively detached from the destination itself and exacerbated by the huge popularity all-inclusive cruise tourism concept, especially regarding the Caribbean (Walker, 2020). The Caribbean archipelago SIDS are highly fractured and intra-competitive destinations, competing in a world of increasingly aggressive competitiveness and expanding tourism alternatives and substitutes (Miller & Henthorne, 2006). SIDS paradoxically focuses on their ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea as they grapple with differentiating themselves from other competitors. They typically lack the resources and expertise to market their destinations by specifically pedestalling their unique tourism products and services (Okumus et al., 2013).

Many Caribbean tourist destinations continue to compete head-on using highly generic individual marketing promotions campaigns appealing to a similar target market. As a result, there is little regional and individual country competitive positioning and an ongoing failure to appropriately research, develop and market competitive advantage regarding uniquely authentic attractions and experiences consistent with a highly dynamic global tourism landscape. However, in 2018, the Caribbean tourism sector arrivals were almost 60 million, split almost equally between tourist arrivals and cruise passengers, perpetuating the Caribbean region as the most tourism-dependent region globally (Nair & McLeod, 2020). Despite the progressive Caribbean-wide penetration and diffusion of tourism regionally, there are worrying signs regarding systemic economic stagnation and market share growth (Peterson et al., 2017).

Destination Image

The most important mission of DMOs is their destination positioning activities which seek to nurture a unique destination image (DI) in the consciousness of prospective tourists. Accordingly, the DI is pivotal in travel decision-making. Kuhzady and Ghasemi (2019) surmised that 10 countries are the preferred destination for about 70% of all tourists globally, with the other countries grappling for the other 30%. However, it is an inherently complex orchestration for DMOs to identify and action the strategies, destination marketing, branding, and image, which must synergize to attract destination tourists. The significance of marketing cannot be overstated as it seeks to make the unpalpable seemingly palpable by proffering the destinations' attractions, activities, and support services to meet the desires of its visitors. Therefore, destination marketers' branding activities regard creating and nurturing a distinctive and desirable destination identity. Accordingly, cultivating DI is a critical success aspect of destination branding as it directly reflects the strength of the destination brand (Lai et al., 2019).

Kamble and Sawant (2019) surmised that DI can be considered as either projected or perceived. Accordingly, the projected DI is considered a factor of attraction transmitted to the target market via different channels in close association with the destination, such as tourist offices, travel agencies, and tour operators. Therefore, the projected image is a crucial element of destination promotion. However, the perceived DI relates to the set of beliefs and impressions regarding a particular destination. Thus, destination stakeholders need to be systemically involved in the establishment and development of the DI. This involvement of stakeholders and residents is essential in portraying a consistent image. However, a lack of education, influence, and financial status can constrain a high level of congruency amongst stakeholders regarding image development.

Alternatively, Kuhzady and Ghasemi (2019) surmised that DI can be summarized according to component or formation approaches. Accordingly, DI component elements include cognitive, affective, and conative, which collectively assess a destination’s image as relatively positive or negative. The cognitive image regards the perspective of the traveler about the destination's attributes. The affective image regards the emotional mood towards a place, while the cognitive image represents the destination behavior of the traveler. However, DI formation approaches inherently regard the process of creation and image delivery.

Accordingly, this incarnation of DI is classified as induced (supply-oriented), autonomous (independently oriented), or organic (demand-oriented). Induced DI regards the DMOs attempts to attract the attention of potential visitors via marketing materials (e.g., brochures, videos, and more contemporarily, the internet and social media). Autonomous DI is regarded as an independent source of information that provides broad destination insight via documentaries or movies. Organic DI is traditionally limited to non-commercial information derived from actual experiences and communicated via word-of-mouth. However, the advent of information communication technology and the various incarnations of social media has resulted in a shift of communication power from suppliers to consumers via user-generated content and thus cocreators of DI. In summary, however, modern technologies such as the Internet and, more recently, social media have disrupted the way travelers search for information and destination promotion strategies. Accordingly, DMO's official social media pages seek to project unique destination images to reach target markets, spur desirability, and leverage positive images to motivate viewers to visit a specific destination.

Destination Food Image

Lai et al. (2018) surmised that the concept of the destination image is widely expounded in tourism scholarship. However, the phenomenon of destination food image is relatively new. Destination images entice tourists to reinforce their destination preference and choice. Accordingly, if destinations promote an enticing image, more tourists will travel to that destination, and food is a significant aspect of that image. However, destination foods have affective associations similar to the destination itself, meaning positive, negative, or neutral. Accordingly, a more favorable destination food image encourages consumption intentions. Therefore, DMOs should strategically emphasize their destination food image attributes of quality, safety, taste, ingredients, and cooking methods to influence preferences and promote tourism and competitive identity (Seo et al., 2017). However, food image for tourists inherently regards a functional value to satisfy hunger or a symbolic means of experiencing local food culture, cuisine, and food-related activities. Therefore, local food culture is a conduit for the host destination to express the destination's culinary identity, cultural heritage, shared gastronomy value, and lifestyle.

Traditional destination marketing treated food merely as a complementary attraction and one of several brand image elements and objectified as functional and an element of culture. But the physiological nuances of food are too intrinsic to travellers, not to pedestal how and why it can be leveraged in destination marketing. Accordingly, the concept of image has been progressively applied to gastronomy and cuisine as a benchmark of destination branding success (Lai et al., 2019).

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)

Sheehan et al. (2016) surmised that the traditional focus of DMOs has been on destination marketing. However, the contemporary tourism industry is shifting from marketing functions to a greater focus on management functions. DMOs are the main actors in strategic planning and the management and organization of destination resources and require close working relationships with government agencies and tourism industry business stakeholders. Consequently, while the DMOs fundamental aim is to facilitate tourism enhancement and destination development, they do not produce or own the destination's tourism product.

However, DMO success is systemically elusive because of the various stakeholders' inherently conflicting and disparate interests. Accordingly, DMOs feature a spectrum of non-profit incarnations and governance structures ranging from public authorities to public-private entities. However, this spectrum of entities inherently has similar political and resource challenges typical of public sector organizations. Therefore, the destination management organization concept regards a network perspective that incorporates various stakeholders and interdependencies and seeks a balance between competition and cooperation. Accordingly, a destination management focus encompasses switching away from a marketer towards a market-oriented focus and transitioning from an increasingly irrelevant intermediary function in the tourism value chain to a facilitator of opportunities. The destination management organization also inherently morphs from a commercial promoter into an intelligence promoter by strategically harnessing the ideas and creativity of all tourism community members (Vargas, 2020).

Local Food Tourism

Local food regards food preparation, including beverages via traditional methods or key ingredients of a particular locale. Thus, local food can have substantial economic multiplier effects on the local economy network of farmers, retail and street restaurant establishments, hotels, and food processing businesses. Accordingly, scholarship posits that up to 30-40% of a tourist's budget is spent consuming food and beverages or purchasing it as a gift or souvenir at a tourism destination (Choe & Kim, 2019).

Ellis et al. (2018) surmised a close relationship between food and tourism. Tourism literature regarding food scholarship frequently articulates the concept of food tourism, gastronomy tourism, and culinary tourism interchangeably. However, some scholars posit there are slightly different contexts and meanings regarding each term within the host-guest tourism framework. Accordingly, culinary tourism regards food consumption by the tourist within a cultural experience, while food tourism regards food's physical and sensual experience. However, both culinary and food tourism help to explain tourists' desires and food activities. On the other hand, gastronomy tourism is considered more a host-driven focus and inherently regards the place of food in the culture of the host. Therefore, this dissertation opted to interchangeably use food, gastronomy, and culinary terms regarding its local food scholarship.

Levitt et al. (2019) surmised that food tourists are not a homogenous group. Kyriakaki et al. (2016) surmised that tourist food preferences articulate four categories of gastronomy tourists: existential, experimental, recreational, and diversionary. The existential gastronomy tourist seeks out experiences beyond mere biological needs to satisfy a desire that pedestals authentic local cuisine prepared using traditional recipes. Accordingly, existential tourists preferentially patronize places that boost their knowledge of local food instead of mundane and sterile tourist restaurants.

In stark contrast, the experimental gastronomy tourist mirrors their trendy lifestyle. Accordingly, they pedestal glitzy and fashionable restaurants, reflected in their innovative design architecture, menus, and service consistent with their social image and prestige. Experimental gastronomy tourists are therefore not inherently loyal regarding their food and eating habits. The recreational gastronomy tourist does not pedestal food during their travels and tends not to deviate away from familiar food and drinks for familiarity reasons. Accordingly, they are not inclined to experience foreign foods which are not previously part of their everyday eating habits. Finally, the diversionary gastronomy tourist perceives food as mere sustenance and accordingly does not seek out any special food and is found in popular chain restaurants or functional settings.

Food tourism inherently incorporates the concept of gastronomy in destination restaurants, street food establishments, attending cooking classes, visiting local food markets food, and food exhibitions and festivals. Accordingly, The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) posits that gastronomy tourism is a niche aspect of the tourism industry and is a dynamic force contributing systemically to a destination's competitiveness and attractiveness (Leong et al., 2017). Furthermore, because food is a key attraction for travelers and an indispensable aspect of tourism, the special culinary experiences systemic to local food can be used by destinations to enhance their image, positively influence travelers' destination experiences, and champion destination satisfaction. Accordingly, the concept of local food is a key construct of destination marketing policies and strategies (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020).

Tourism Experiences

Experiences are considered the new value of contemporary tourism and the cornerstone of tourist satisfaction. Therefore, destinations compete with each other to attract tourists based upon proffering unique visitor experiences. Consuming food is a necessary and integral aspect of the daily activities of tourists and local food because its uniqueness is itself an essential source of potential place attraction. Accordingly, local food fosters a different status and unique cultural identity, making a destination distinctive and differentiated from others. Therefore, promoting local food experiences can enhance tourist satisfaction, nurture a positive image, and influence travel destination decisions. Therefore, there is a need for destination hospitality establishments to develop new culinary products and services that proffer unique and memorable experiences. Mere quality products and services no longer sway customers (Piramanayagam et al., 2020).

Accordingly, Sthapit et al. (2017) surmised that a destination's attributes are typically the first attraction to potential tourists tempted by the tourism-related activities and travel within the destination. The destination attributes are thus the source experiential components that spawn the visitor's experiences. Thus, tourism experiences are an inherently complex web of subjective factors regarding emotions and attitudes associated with the vacation. Accordingly, the destination experiences increase pleasure feelings and create positive emotions via emotional arousal. However, when tourists consume various tourist services, they systemically experience the destination's attributes as a total touristic product. Therefore, destination experiences can significantly contribute to spawning a positive or negative destination image, which subsequently impacts future destination selection or loyalty and post-experience behaviors. Satisfied tourists accordingly leverage superior competitive destination advantages manifested as increased tourism revenues, repeat tourism visits, and recommend the destination to others.

The ultimate goal of satisfied tourism consumers pedestals interesting stories and experiences over mere products. Thus, a holistic tourist experience is a combination of products and experiences. Tourists can shape their own uniquely memorable experience via their consumption of component elements of a destination, such as captivating geography, fascinating local culture, tantalizing gastronomy, interesting recreational activities, and enticing shopping. Memorable tourist experiences become forged from memorable tourism destinations and result in satisfied tourists (Şahin & Güzel, 2020).

Food is an essential pillar of tourism, along with transportation, accommodation, and destination attractions. Accordingly, the several facets of local food experiences are a gateway to destination culture, meeting and engaging with locals at food festivals, street food vendors, and restaurants. The local gastronomic experience is the core of a destination's culinary tourism. Thus, locally produced food and beverages are used to tell a story or portray some cultural aspect of the destination (Wijaya et al., 2017). Accordingly, tourists are inherently motivated by the desire to experience the destination locals' authentic lifestyle and culture, a significant aspect of which is partaking in local food. Hence, gastronomy is a key motivator and pull factor of tourism, and tourist destinations are where food and beverage rendezvous with travel and hospitality (Antón et al., 2019).

Accordingly, Sthapit (2017) surmised that memorable food experiences are a contemporary benchmark of destination managers and tourism stakeholder businesses. On-site tourism experiences are fleeting and only provide fleeting feelings. However, because tourists generally reflect on their trip experiences, the memorability and intensity of experiences etched in memory are lasting and of special significance. Accordingly, if food consumption is a peak touristic experience, this results in a memorable experience or merely a supporting experience if it is not. The range of international visitor food experiences is therefore not a unidimensional construct. Accordingly, Mohamed et al. (2020) surmised scholarship regarding the multidimensionality of food tourism experiences and posits key food experience elements, including sensory, intellectual, affective, and behavioral food experiences.

- **Sensory food experience** – food is perhaps the only product that arouses all human senses: sight, smell, taste, and tactile senses. So, apart from the food itself, the sensory food experience is also attributed to the food consumption environment. Accordingly, the psychological and physiological appreciation of food leverages tourist motivation to experience local food and helps to brand the total customer experience and are compelling determinants of tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions.
- **Intellectual food experience** – local food is a powerful medium to facilitate awareness and knowledge regarding the destination and its culture and foster a connection between tourists and destinations.
- **Affective food experience** – regards the emotions, sentiments, and feelings aroused from consumption of the destination products during the visit. So, while tourists may not recall the places and time regarding their experiences, they can typically recall positive or negative feelings. Accordingly, food experiences are a powerful destination marketing tool that should not be underestimated and overlooked. It significantly impacts tourist evaluation, memories, and attitude towards the destination's food image and local food offerings.
- **Behavioral food experience** – regards the tourists' experiences of consuming the food itself and how and where food is served to the tourist at a destination.

Accordingly, food-related behaviors and activities are a powerful pleasure and entertainment medium.

Destination Decision-Making

Piramanayagam et al. (2020) surmised destination scholarship from a geographical and perceptual perspective. The geographical destination is synonymous with well-defined boundaries such as a country, region, or city. However, from the perceptual perspective, tourist destinations encompass an amalgam of goods, services, and products consisting of the elements of attractions, accessibility, amenities, travel packages, and ancillary convenience services necessary to meet travelers' necessary needs. Many destinations, other than the Caribbean with its sun, sea, and sand attributes, have similar products; therefore, making a decision and choosing a destination can be a big challenge for potential tourists. Accordingly, the destination image, which regards an amalgam of beliefs, ideas, and impressions, is a critical aspect of destination decision-making.

However, a positive destination image and expectations is a pivotal precursor to the destination-making process as it arouses awareness and stokes interest as a distinguishing feature amongst competing destinations. Typically, destination selection is heavily influenced by previous travel experience and opinions, especially word of mouth (WOM), which can leverage various forms of electronic media and thus better find and retain customers. However, WOM can either positively or negatively impact destination image and thus destination selection (Jalilvand, 2017). Therefore, it is the purview of destination managing/marketing organizations (DMOs) to enhance the attractiveness of a destination-by-destination positioning, which inherently regards the process of developing and nurturing a unique image in the minds of prospective visitors. However, destination positioning is inherently intangible. Accordingly, destination marketers also utilize mass media destination visualization via contemporary visual social media such as Instagram, Flicker, and Pinterest to share videos and photos to augment further the destination image (Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019).

Özdemir and Çelebi (2018) surmised scholarship that motivation is inherently based on a pull-push construct related to the tourist and the tourism destination itself. Accordingly, the push construct governs whether the tourist goes on vacation travel or not. In contrast, the pull construct dictates the destination selection and where the tourist prefers to go. There is only minimal management potential to influence push factors. However, there is much leverage that managers can exert over destination pull factors. Therefore, motivation is a key element regarding destination decision-making that destination managers factor when deciding what products to offer and how to promote them.

Accordingly, destination managers seek to promote destination attributes that best match potential visitor motivations or focus their efforts on the market segment, which best matches the destination resources with tourist motivations because destination attributes sway tourists to visit particular destinations. However, tourists need to become informed that a given destination product meets their needs and desires. Consequently, if destinations successfully promote a desirable image, more tourists will actively seek out those destinations. In this regard, food is a powerful, multifaceted destination icon image that can leverage tourist satisfaction and destination decision-making (Seo et al., 2017).

Destination Competitiveness

The contemporary tourist destination is inherently highly competitive because potential visitors do not merely look for a single experience but rather a bundle of experiences. Therefore, destinations actively seek to find distinctive and unique approaches to promote themselves holistically by leveraging their core destination attributes such as accommodation, external eating options, and visiting cultural sites. In the context of the tourist dining experience, destinations can offer local cuisine as a peak experience rather than a supporting experience, thus contributing to tourists' destination satisfaction by adding value to the travelers' experience. Accordingly, there is a shift from considering food as merely satisfying basic needs towards a distinct element of destination food culture regarding its cooking, presentation, and appearance. Therefore, DMOs can develop and promote popular local cuisines for their taste and quality as a marketing and branding tool to enhance competitive differentiation and destination brand image (Erkmen, 2019).

However, Dalakis et al. (2018) posited that many tourism destinations have similar destination attributes, promotions, and target market segments. While a destination inherently thrives on natural and cultural resources, these are only mere comparative advantages and insufficient by themselves to become competitive if left unleveraged. However, a competitive destination is inherently more successful than its competitors if its destination brand is clearly articulated, more innovative, distinctive, and continuously enhances tourist experiences and satisfaction. Accordingly, Bukharov and Berezka (2018) posited that as competition amongst destinations becomes more intense, a better appreciation of tourists' preferences and contemporary trends becomes even more critical to nurturing value propositions that can enhance tourism and destination attractiveness (e.g., if a destination's local gastronomy has inherently distinct features, it can be a means of potential destination differentiation and thus competitive advantage).

Abreu Novais et al. (2018) surmised that destination competitiveness conceptualization is as multifaceted as the perspective focus of the different destination stakeholders. Therefore, the qualitative research concept of phenomenography can explore different aspects of individual and consensus regarding various complex aspects of the world and provide a holistic understanding, such as tourism destination competitiveness. Accordingly, phenomenography analysis reveals three different hierarchical stakeholder perceptions regarding the characteristics and dimensions of destination competitiveness: perception as a destination, performance focus, and long-term process.

Firstly, perception as a destination regards the individual relationship between the destination and the tourist or prospective tourist and is related to the notion of destination potential and attractiveness and accordingly determines the desirability of the destination based upon the availability of the products, experiences, or attributes that is wanted or needed. The orientation is one of demand. Secondly, destination competitiveness as performance focus is on the actual destination and the desirable outcomes that arise from competitiveness or the viability of the destination to attract and distinguish between visitors and tourists. Accordingly, the destination focus is not on experiences but on destination marketing and consumption, shifting from a demand orientation to a supply orientation. Therefore, this destination competitiveness context regards achieving certain goals based upon the destination target market by transforming destination characteristics into measurable parameters such as tourist and visitor arrivals, market share, tourist expenditure, and number of stayover nights. Thirdly, destination competitiveness as a long-term process implies that the destination in its entirety is concerned with everything social, economic, political, and even the steps combined as a process to allow for the destination to achieve particular goals and the effects of these goals. There is an inherent time dimension to the long-term process of destination competitiveness and ongoingly sustain competitiveness.

Accordingly, the long-term priority well-being of the destination as a whole requires a holistic approach by the full spectrum of destination stakeholders.

Destination Attractiveness

A destination's attractiveness and competitiveness are directly related to its tourist activities and attractions mix, which are key motivations regarding destination choice (Nguyen, 2019). Accordingly, augmenting a destination's attractiveness is a critical objective of governments and destination marketing organizations as it reflects its competitiveness. Destination attractiveness spurs tourists to visit and spend time at the destination and significantly influences vacation destination decision-making and satisfaction. Consequently, it enhances destination loyalty and positive word of mouth (WOM). However, price competitiveness has a key influence on destination attractiveness because, generally, travelers are inherently price sensitive. Price sensitivity encompasses the costs regarding transportation services to and from the destination and accommodation, food and beverage, and tour services and entertainment (Bianchi, 2018).

Ma et al. (2018) surmised that destination attractiveness is an inherently multidimensional construct regarding historical, social, and natural factors and shopping, recreational, food, accommodation, and destination infrastructure. Although all the above dimensions need to be present, each dimension's relative significance and extent vary from destination to destination. Destination attractiveness is an important destination marketing 'pull' factor. It is a perception regarding the combined relative importance of benefits to the traveler and the destination's inherent ability to deliver these pedestalled benefits. Thus, the more a destination can satisfy the individual's desires, the more attractive its perception of potential visitors and tourists will be. Contemporary travelers are inherently more experienced in traveling. Their destination attractiveness perception significantly impacts their place attachment, purchase decisions, and post-purchase decisions, thus having long-term implications regarding the destinations' long-term development.

Destination attractiveness and gastronomy have a simultaneous impact on tourist behavior. Travel satisfaction antecedents incorporate destination attractiveness alongside gastronomy attractiveness because the mass tourist market is jaded by many destinations' ubiquitous sun, sea, and sand holiday packages. Accordingly, travelers increasingly seek cultural doorway experiences to purchase feelings from local restaurants, street food sampling, local food markets, exhibitions, and festivals in unfamiliar places. However, the gastronomy spectrum encompasses tourists with a primary motivation for gastronomy sampling and food sampling as a secondary motivation of their travels and vacation and a doorway (Leong et al., 2017).

Theories

Importance-Performance Analysis

Because local food is inherently inimitable due to its myriad nuances, it can be used as a marketing and branding tool that fosters competitiveness and differentiation. The dining experience is one of the single experiences that can impact the tourists' overall experiential outcome because food significantly affects the tourists' perception of a destination. Accordingly, it is imperative to understand fundamental dining experience attributes of food quality, cultural influence on food, physical evidence, and social factors and their impact on travelers' satisfaction. This understanding can provide highly desirable insights regarding the management and positioning of the different local food attributes.

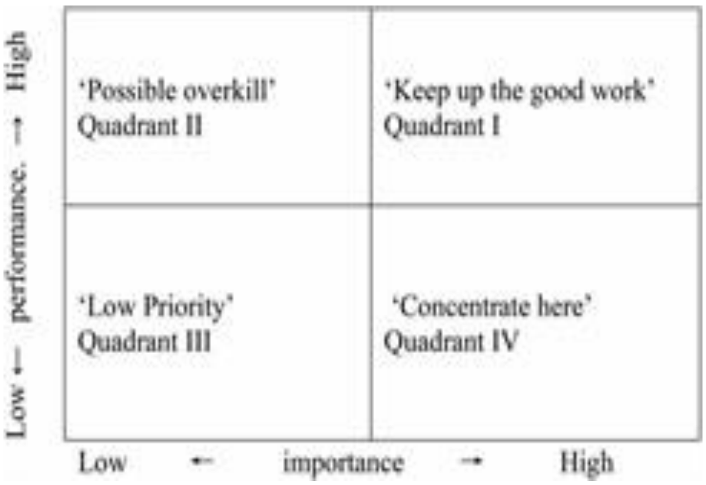
The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) technique is one of the few modern tools that assess satisfaction by comparing actual performance attributes against expectations

(Erkmen, 2019). IPA is an inherently well-established analytical tool frequently used to guide the improvement of specific attributes of products and services. Accordingly, conducting IPA requires a customer survey and data collection regarding the perception of the relative performance of focal products or services and the importance of the shortlisted pertinent attributes (Mikulic, 2019).

The IPA method noted in Figure 3 below is a two-dimensional importance-performance matrix. Accordingly, the values of importance and performance regarding diversified attributes are plotted against each other, resulting in a 2x2 matrix divided into four quadrants. The horizontal axis regards the measurement of the importance of attributes, including service attributes. The vertical axis regards the measurement of the performance of attributes. Accordingly, Quadrant I pertain to attributes with high performance and high importance. Attributes that become located in Quadrant I are competitive attributes and should be maintained, leveraged, and intensively promoted encouraged. Quadrant II locates the attributes with low importance but with high performance. These attributes' performance is unnecessarily superior to the competition, meaning that resource allocation is more than is required. Quadrant III regards the attributes which are low importance and low performance, thus implying low priority. Accordingly, an organization should consider redeploying or reallocating resources away from these attributes. Quadrant IV regards high performance coupled with low performance and accordingly plump for top priority focus and earmarked for immediate improvement efforts and resource allocation.

Figure 4

Traditional Importance-Performance Grid



Source: Feng et al., 2014, p. 1025.

Service organizations' service attributes located within these quadrants identify which attributes require appropriate remedial improvement. IPA is therefore popular because it is an inherently effective technique to evaluate existing strategies, pinpoint service attribute candidates for improvement priorities, and help develop new effective marketing strategies. IPA also allows firms to spot areas of high resource consumption and helps to identify which aspects should preferentially receive more attention to enhance customer satisfaction more efficiently. The popularity of the IPA analytical tool is thus based upon its intuitive simplicity and that it does not require significant knowledge and expertise regarding statistical techniques (Feng et al., 2014).

Content Analysis

Content analysis (CA) is perhaps the most frequently used method to explore the ways marketing materials represent aspects of culture or place research via photographic and textual material and coding schemes derived from sources such as brochures, travel guides, and websites. The researcher can thus explore conceptual and theoretical issues regarding the understanding of data (Mohd et al., 2014). Accordingly, CA can analyze the presentation of food and food culture promoted, the range and diversity of the gastronomic images presented, the role of food tourism regarding promotion and destination marketing and assess the constraints regarding the leveraging of food tourism destination marketing. Therefore, CA can assess the frequency and intensity of website visits and the percentage of content devoted to local food culture and cuisine, which is subsequently coded accordingly. Assessment dimensions include, for example, cuisine and gastronomy culture, featured foods and recipes, local cuisine, table etiquette, food tourism-related information, food tourism marketing strategies, restaurant guides, and restaurant or establishment certification (Horng & Chen-Tsang, 2010).

CA methodology is used to analyze large amounts of content from various visual and verbal communication data. Accordingly, CA regards the shrinking of phenomena or events into specified categories to facilitate better analysis and interpretation. However, as a methodology, it can be qualitative, especially in the formative stages of research, and quantitative, where it is applied to the statistical frequency of the phenomena. Therefore, CA inherently lends itself to the use of specialized computer software programs to analyze data by researchers (Harwood & Garry, 2003). CA is perhaps the most frequently used method to explore the ways marketing materials represent aspects of culture or place research via photographic and textual material and coding schemes derived from sources such as brochures, travel guides, and websites. The researcher is thus able to explore conceptual and theoretical issues regarding the understanding of data (Mohd et al., 2014).

Stalmirska (2017) surmised that CA can appropriately examine virtually any aspect of creative content, such as magazines articles, movies, books, meeting minutes, phone directories, and web pages. Accordingly, this means content can include words, meanings, pictures, symbols, or other forms of communicated messaging articulated and contained in books, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, official documents, films or video content, musical lyrics, photographs, websites, and other ways. However, the content of the data forms noted above uses CA's coding and interpretive features to identify patterns, themes, and meanings via a meticulously organized and detailed explanation and interpretation of material. The CA approach as a research method can audit communications methodically by expounding answers regarding questions such as what the communicated message indicates about, how, to whom, why, and what is communicated. Accordingly, the CA methodology facilitates the researcher's evaluation of textual and visual information regarding the representation of food on DMO websites or brochures.

Related Studies

Cruise Tourism. DiPietro and Peterson (2017) surmised that cruise tourism is the contemporary mass tourism and hospitality product. In the last decade, the cruise industry experienced a sensational growth rate of over seven percent, occupancy rates that exceeded 100%, and thus demand outstripped supply. The stunning success of the cruise industry is starred by the Caribbean, which is the premier global cruise destination and accordingly accounts for about 40% of global itineraries. Cruise tourism receipts are critical to many small island destination states as it often accounts for more than 50% of export earnings. Accordingly, cruise tourism is the fastest-growing leisure segment of the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries. Despite still being considered to have not yet reached maturity, the growth rate of the cruise industry almost twice outstrips the traditional land-based leisure growth rate.

Cruise tourism's inherent attributes make it uniquely different from land-based destinations. Accordingly, the ship itself is the destination. Typically, cruises are all-inclusive, meaning accommodation, meals, and ship attractions, and they offer to visit multiple destination tour packages where passengers have the option or not to go ashore. Also, cruising provides destinations with the added benefit of thousands of potential returning visitors who may desire to experience a destination further as land tourists. Accordingly, this notion is the main argument of policymakers to provide cruise lines with various destination incentives to become a port of call on their tour itineraries.

However, Caribbean cruise tourists suggest that their inherent reasons for not returning for a land-based vacation in the Caribbean are attributed to the higher costs of accommodation and local issues such as security, sanitation, hygiene, and food options perceived as inferior to the ship (Baker & Unni, 2018). Otherwise, Römhild-Raviart et al. (2019) surmised that cruise passengers typically spend the least of all tourists at a destination, mainly attributed to the relatively short time they spend at a port, about five to eight hours, and the business model of cruise lines. Accordingly, the cruise line business model is inherently based upon their passengers spending most of their money on-board rather than at a port of call. Cruise passengers return to the ship for their food and beverage consumption because their cruise vacation is an all-inclusive affair. Therefore, there is minimal need to spend money on an onshore destination excursion in local bars, hotels, restaurants, and eating establishments. So, while many cruise destinations pedestal increasing the numbers of visitors attributed to cruise lines, the economic and cultural experience opportunities are muted. Accordingly, the discretionary spending on the cruise ship is approximately 82%, with the remaining 18%, at the cruise destination itinerary.

Notwithstanding the discretionary passenger spending habits, the cruise industry's mantra is that cruise passengers typically spend approximately $100 per port of call and that this estimate has remained virtually unchanged for the past 20 years. However, other local destination organizations posit that their studies consistently determine that the actual cruise passenger spending is only about half of the cruise line $100 baseline. However, in the Caribbean, a $100 destination excursion will typically net between $25–50 to the local tour operator. Other typical average expenses regard jewelry and watches – $39; Clothing – $13; and souvenirs – $12.

When extrapolated across the millions of Caribbean cruise passengers annually, the cumulative spending is still very significant for most Caribbean destinations. However, from an economic perspective, cruise passenger spending has tempered meaning because much of the products sold are not produced locally. Also, the revenue impact on the local economy is derived primarily from the sales margins. Accordingly, there is much inherent economic leakage by destinations attributed to cruise passengers spending their money directly with the cruise line itself or their ship tenant partner businesses (Kayahan et al., 2018). Also, economic multipliers are typically low as cruise passengers sleep, eat, drink and shop with the cruise, and most cruise ships are registered to tax-haven ports (MacNeill & Wozniak, 2018).

Food Linkages and Leakages. One of the major criticisms of tourism as an economic mirage is that it does not contribute systemically to the destination economy due to financial leakages. Leakages are attributed to imported products and inputs such as foods, beverages, hospitality consumables, hospitality furniture and equipment, and construction equipment and supplies. Leakages also regard foreign or multinational firms supplying most of the investment and thus profit repatriation in destination marketing and sales, and hotel facilities infrastructure that employs non-residents in key positions of power and influence. Although the Caribbean is entrenched as the most tourism-dependent region globally, economic leakage attributed to the importation of food and beverage tourism inputs remains relatively high. For example, the foreign exchange leakage attributed to hotel food purchases in Jamaican hotels was estimated at approximately 54% (Terzioglu & Gokovali, 2016).

The high economic leakage status quo prevails despite the latent potential and linkages of local foods and beverages for promoting destination authenticity while stimulating economic growth and minimizing hotel and hospitality tourism leakages (Thomas-Francois et al., 2017). Russell (2020) surmised the scholarship regarding the intertwined terms of leakages and linkages. Linkages are synonymous with the proportion of imported food to the destination origin food utilized by its tourism industry. Leakages accordingly regard the relative percentage of the holiday cost paid by the tourist that never reaches the tourist destination in the first place coupled with the portion that leaves the destination in terms of imports or expatriate profits. However, leakages are notably high in SIDS, where tourism is the mainstay of the economy, compared to countries with a more diversified and larger economy, such as Trinidad & Tobago, where there is no known scholarship regarding its leakage rate. But in St. Lucia, the leakage rate is about 45%, and in the Bahamas, it is as high as 85%, with a Caribbean region average of about 70%.

Anderson (2013) surmised that leakages are either internal or external and persist in many destinations and are attributed to a lack of capacity to cope with the sector's demand because of limited resources or artificial deficiencies. Many islands are characteristically small-sized and externally dependent due to their inherently limited natural resources. Accordingly, internal leakages regard where tourists pay locally, but that payment or a portion of it is diverted to import the input goods and services consumed in the tourism industry. Therefore, financial leakage is typically high in destinations where there is small manufacturing and service capacity. However, external leakages regard the total value added attributed to the involvement of intermediaries in tourist-generating countries. Accordingly, external leakages are inherently high regarding all-inclusive tours. Tour marketers at the tourist origin countries purchase several destination services and assemble them to resell to visitors as a comprehensive travel destination package.

Collectively, higher leakages result in lower economic benefits, while the reduction of leakages corresponds with the strengthening of intersectoral linkages such as agriculture. However, linkages are further distinguished as either forward or backward linkages. Accordingly, forward linkages arise when one sector supplies goods and services to other sectors, while backward linkages regard where demand for supplies from one sector drives supply from another. For example, there are inherent backward supply chain linkages between hotels and restaurants and the agricultural sector. Therefore, economies with weak intersectoral linkages are typically compelled to import relatively large proportions of their food and beverages and other resource inputs for their tourists, such as hospitality management staff, outside sourcing of souvenirs, and transportation.

Typically, foreign-owned or foreign-managed hotels rely more on imported food products than smaller and locally owned hospitality and hotel establishments. However, expatriate chefs need to be encouraged to proffer more local themed dishes instead of typically focusing on international cuisine despite their inherent preference for imported foods over local produce. Although some international tourists are willing and interested in local food, they are inherently reluctant to switch totally and like to revert to more familiar international foods and beverages.

Accordingly, hospitality establishments, especially four and five-star hotels, feel compelled to retain a menu of international foods to preserve their reputations regarding high quality and guest satisfaction. Also, the inherent problem of systemic seasonal tourism fluctuations results in a disconnect between the demand of tourism establishments and what the destination agricultural sector can supply. Accordingly, seasonal fluctuations can lead to local produce quality, supply, and price-related fluctuations that the three-star and less prestigious hotels can bear, and that more prestigious establishments are willing to tolerate. In summary, the main issues of local produce leakage and linkages regarding seasonality, high prices, and quality inconsistencies severely challenge local food promotion and popularity at SIDS destinations hospitality establishments (Pratt et al., 2018).

Caribbean Fine Flavored Cocoa and Chocolate Tourism. Notwithstanding the long-standing tourist destination popularity of the Caribbean islands, a virtually unknown facet of Caribbean destination exoticism is our cocoa, the primary ingredient of the most beloved of all dessert food – chocolate (Visioli et al., 2009). Cocoa's main ingredient of chocolate is native to New World countries located in Latin America and the Caribbean. Trinidad & Tobago is the birthplace and cradle of Trinitario Cacao, globally acclaimed as a most prestigious source of the five percent 'fine flavor' grade of global cocoa production. The other 95% global production referred to industry wide as 'bulk cocoa' is typically utilized for most global chocolate brands and product segments. Currently, only 23 countries are internationally recognized sources of fine cocoa. However, only 10 of these 23 countries exclusively produce fine or flavor cocoa, of which five are islands of the Caribbean.

However, despite the globally prestigious status of Trinidad & Tobago as the birthplace of fine flavor cocoa, the local production has decreased from a peak of 35,000 tons to a paltry 500 tons over the past several decades (Bekele, 2019). This cocoa industry status manifestly indicates a quantifiable failure of Trinidad & Tobago to promote this local food potential *inter* *alia* to the detriment context of its destination marketing. Typically, tourists seek authentic and fresh ingredient culinary experiences, including desserts and food souvenirs, and pedestal exotic tastes and flavors. Coincidentally, the inherent attention to detail preparation and presentation of fine chocolates significantly appeals to tourists who pedestal authentic experiences.

Eight of the top 10 highest chocolate per capita consumption country rankings include European countries in descending order: Switzerland, Austria, Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium, Russia, USA, and France (McCarthy, & Richter, 2019). Coincidentally, the USA and Europe are the two major regions regarding tourist arrivals to the Caribbean and Trinidad & Tobago. Stayover arrivals to the Caribbean totaled 31.5 million in 2019, with approximately 15.5 million Americans, 3.4 million Canadians, and 5.8 million Europeans, notwithstanding a 30.2 million cruise passenger visits in 2019 (Carib Journal, 2020). Regarding Trinidad & Tobago, the estimated tourist arrivals for 2019 are 388,576 visitors, and cruise ship arrival tourists numbered 91,424 (Tourism Analytics, 2020).

The Fine Chocolate Industry (2019) surmised that there is no equal to fine chocolates, an umbrella term regarding the full spectrum of high-quality chocolate products produced by small to medium-scale non-mass market chocolatiers. Thus, the fine chocolate marketplace interchangeably uses other market terms such as craft, specialty, gourmet, and artisan. Accordingly, fine or artisan chocolatiers source the best quality cocoa and make small batches of chocolates from high-quality ingredients to derive unique taste combinations of flavors and texture. Fine chocolate makers traditionally placed more emphasis on the origins and percentage of chocolate. Therefore, the expanded focus of contemporary fine chocolate artisans inherently regards more exotic combinations of spices, fruits, and nuts and more unusual pairings to satisfy customer desires for more premium and healthy ingredients and different flavor profiles.

However, the chocolate brands and products from Europe and North America still dominate. Accordingly, there is some blurring by the unenlightened consumer regarding lesser stature premium chocolate brands (e.g., Lindt, Ghiradelli, Godiva, and Ferrero Roche). There is little development and market penetration of local or regional fine chocolate brands and products regarding Caribbean tourism or even within the highly popular Caribbean cruise sector.

Various forms of premium liquor, including wines, craft beer, and single malt whiskey, pair with select chocolates (Candy Industry Magazine, 2015). Fine chocolates are inherently hand-crafted artisanal chocolates for the traditionalist consumer and avant-garde because of their new and innovative chocolate creations for connoisseurs. Therefore, the palate for fine chocolates is as demanding as it is for fine wines, as consumers of luxury products typically pedestal attention to detail. Fine chocolate prices start at a minimum of $24 per pound and inherently are supreme quality with all-natural ingredients and an exceptional, unique presentation (Vivino, 2018). Accordingly, fine chocolates are a relatively affordable true luxury product. Comparatively, premium chocolate brands are boxed presentations obtainable from specialty branded stores such as Lindt, Godiva, Ferrero, and Ghiradelli and typically fetch a price of $12-24 per pound (Thompson, 2018).

The healthier ingredients and reduced sugar input, coupled with the artistic designs of fine chocolates, prompt consumers towards a more favorable attitude to fine chocolates compared to cheaper types of chocolate. Because of the fine gourmet chocolate status as a luxury food, it offers a symbolic value in addition to functional value. Accordingly, the highly personalized and luxury image pedestal boxed fine chocolates as highly considered special occasion gifts (Kim & Jeon, 2020). The relatively small size of fine chocolates coupled with aesthetically pleasing packaging further leverages consumer association with luxury image, exclusivity, and higher quality (Thaichon et al., 2018).

Scholarship regarding the country-of-origin concept applied to Developing Countries suggests a cultural tendency to pedestal foreign products, especially from European metropolitan countries and glitzy American brands, more highly than domestic products. Because of the rapid onset of globalization, consumers consider product origin and brand name as indicators of quality and acceptability. Accordingly, ensuring no material distinguishing between local and foreign chocolate products packaging and presentation fosters customer loyalty (Ozretic-Dosen et al., 2007). However, the extent to which chocolate consumers know of Trinidad & Tobago Trinitario cocoa's superior flavor quality, the prospects of chocolate products manufactured locally is relatively unknown and underappreciated. Foreign tourists to the island and the wider Caribbean region are predominantly from North American and European countries with long-established chocolate manufacturing and a fine chocolate palate. Total tourist spending was an estimated $38.3 billion, with estimated spending of $1,171 per trip and revenues per room estimated at $135.46 (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2019).

The Caribbean tourists who stay over at Caribbean hotels and cruise ship arrival terminals are grossly untargeted fine chocolate sales and marketing channels. Accordingly, there are largely untapped marketing opportunities for fine chocolates regards ' welcome gift or turndown service' in Caribbean hotel establishments, duty-free shops at Caribbean airports and cruise ship terminals for gift-giving and souvenir purchasing, and personal consumption. A Caribbean vacation ambiance is a perfect opportunity for tourists to savor and help make a memorable first experience with local fine chocolates made from authentic fine flavored Trinitario cocoa.

Accordingly, the value-added revenues of selling finished products at a significantly higher multiplier compared to lower-priced and lesser value-added raw materials in the form of cocoa beans are significant sources of valuable foreign exchange earnings. Additionally, the online sales platform further enhances the prospects of export sales and thus nurtures a budding industry. The promotional efforts via the hospitality hotel sector tourism and cruise ship terminal promotions can target product sales to the almost 60 million visitors who visit the Caribbean region annually and almost 500,000 visitors to Trinidad & Tobago.

However, the fine chocolate industry in Trinidad & Tobago and the wider Caribbean remains largely underdeveloped, meaning there are few places and opportunities regarding purchase channels and non-existent marketing promotions. The tourist and seasonal shopper gift-giving demographic inherently overlap significantly. The peak tourist and cruise ship season of mid-December to mid-April coincides high with the peak gift-giving season of Christmas, Valentine's, and Easter.

Products are purchased largely to satisfy emotional and rational appeals. Accordingly, products are either hedonic or utilitarian, and these attributes significantly impact consumer choice. Inherently, utilitarian products regard the functional value of the product while hedonic products stimulate and satisfy consumer's psychological happiness and pleasure. Chocolates thus classify as emotional, hedonic products because they provide emotional happiness and pleasure (Kim & Jeon, 2020). The rational needs of the fine chocolate regard its inherent superb quality, exceptionally unique presentation and packaging, and convenient accessibility via online distribution and exotic product selection. However, the emotional needs regard the sophisticated palate of the fine chocolate consumer willing to spend more to enjoy a luxury product with ingredient authenticity and a production process with integrity and passion (Carr, 2013). As the most craved food, chocolate is also widely consumed during comfort eating because it provides instant enjoyment and pleasure.

However, Visioli et al. (2009) further posited that different mood states give rise to specific types of foods in preference to others. Accordingly, chocolate consumption regards either the satisfaction of a chocolate craving or emotional eating, meaning reaching out for food even though one is not hungry or in need of nutrition to relieve an aversive mood state. Chocolate and is also widely consumed during comfort eating because it provides instant enjoyment and pleasure. Fine chocolatiers stimulate consumer behavior psychology by incorporating uniquely artistic designs with different high-quality and exotic ingredient combinations. Especially regarding women, the brain cognizes the sensual facets of the aroma of cacao, its natural texture, and its creamy softness as sensory fulfillment. Accordingly, the sensual qualities of chocolate cause cravings when comfort, cheering up, and relief from stress is needed

Hudders and Pandelaere (2012) posited the relationship of mood to food is reciprocal and that different mood states give rise to specific types of foods in preference to others. Fine chocolates inherently classify as luxury products and thus not subject to binary classification regarding emotional or rational appeals. Typically, luxury chocolate products offer both functional and psychological benefits to consumers. Functional benefits regard the excellent product quality, coupled with the pleasure and sensory gratification of the luxury consumer. Consumers typically associate higher-priced luxury products with inherently higher quality and thus higher consumption enjoyment. Psychological benefits, albeit fleeting, inherently regard luxury consumption with subjective well-being, namely satisfaction with life (cognitive well-being) and an increased frequency of positive effect coupled with a reduced impact on the negative effect. The higher hedonic value attributed to luxury chocolates is due to the inherently more potent aroma and unique flavors (Visioli et al., 2009).

Anticipated and Discovered Themes

Souvenirs (Food). Ho et al. (2021) surmised that the purchase of souvenirs is traditionally one of the most important tourist pastimes because they are a tangible symbol of the destination visited and reflect its unique culture. Accordingly, food souvenirs extend and reinforce the memory of the travel experience, which can also be shared as gifts. Food souvenirs are considered superior to traditional souvenirs as they evoke the sensual attributes of flavor, taste, appearance, texture, and smell and are typically hand-made using natural local ingredients. They, therefore, reflect the destination's food culture, and the uniqueness and authenticity of the product preserve the destination's culinary heritage and geographic location. However, souvenir products must therefore be attractively displayed in an appealing setting to leverage their attribute dimensions.

Accordingly, the five most important dimensions of food souvenirs regard its branding and packaging presentation, uniqueness, food quality, authenticity, taste, and value. Therefore, food souvenirs present an opportunity for destination actors such as retail businesses and DMOs to develop strategies to enhance tourist satisfaction, post-purchase behaviors, and destination competitive advantage (Suhartanto et al., 2018). Food souvenirs have several forms, such as food and beverage products. They may be sold in gifts shops and restaurants as meals, confectionery, snacks, semi-finished foods such as meats, vegetables, and tubers, processed fruits, and food dish ingredients such as spices and seasonings.

Accordingly, food souvenir products require appropriate packaging for easy luggage transportation and preferably if the name of the destination where the product originates is somehow visibly incorporated into the external design branding. Also, the availability of online purchasing and international shipping services are key elements of food souvenir revenues. For example, in Indonesia's very popular tourist destinations, souvenir shopping expenditure is estimated at over six percent of foreign tourist expenditure. Small and medium-sized businesses produce food souvenirs with significant employment contributions (Levyda et al., 2021).

Street Food Hygiene & Safety. Street food is consumed every day by about 2.5 billion persons globally because it is low-cost, easily available, and convenient. Accordingly, street food has inherently high socio-economic value because it nurtures the preservation of local food heritage and thus spawns increased benefits to tourism as a means of attracting tourists. However, street food faces many inherent challenges regarding health and hygiene standards attributed to its method and place of preparation (Alfiero et al., 2019). The World Food Travel Association estimates that 9 out of 10 travelers are considered food travelers. Travelers and tourists are inherently susceptible to contracting foodborne illnesses attributed to eating at various locales while experiencing destination gastronomy (Schroeder et al., 2018).

Accordingly, Kim and Bachman (2019) surmised that food patrons desire other aspects of their food experience beyond taste, atmosphere, quality of service, price, and menu variety, like the cleanliness of the food establishment surroundings and its restrooms. The cleanliness of the restrooms is the mainstay of the overall perception of cleanliness and creating a positive first impression for the estimated 75% of restaurant patrons who typically use the establishment restrooms. Therefore, unsanitary restrooms may infer a lack of cleanliness and questionable sanitation of the food service.

Restroom cleanliness is critical in fostering high customer satisfaction and expectations within the hospitality and tourism industry and avoiding negative word-of-mouth. Food consumers eat with their eyes first and use them to determine their patronage or avoidance of businesses that do not adequately adhere to professional sanitation and cleanliness standards. Accordingly, about one out of four customers do not return to an eating establishment when its restroom was determined to be dirty. About 80% of potential customers would choose to avoid an establishment with a dirty restroom.

Summary of the Literature Review

This literature review outline commenced with a business overview of the global tourism industry, a regional Caribbean perspective, and then the country perspective of Trinidad & Tobago. The literature review next expounded on Trinidad & Tobago's tourism background problem of pedestalling its energy sector while overlooking its tourism industry potential. After that, the specific problem statement deconstructs guided the expounding of literature regarding the broad concepts of small island destination states (SIDS), destination image, destination food image, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), and local food tourism. Additional intertwined concepts regarding destination competitiveness, attractiveness, which can enhance the destination image and positively influence travelers' destination experiences and champion destination decision-making, were also expounded.

The IPA technique was expounded as an appropriate tool that could assess local food by comparing actual performance attributes against expectations that can impact travelers' satisfaction regarding the destination. Also, the CA was expounded as a popular methodology to facilitates the researcher's evaluation of textual and visual marketing information regarding the representation of food on DMO websites or brochures and assess the constraints regarding the leveraging of food tourism destination marketing. Next, the literature review expounded on related studies and the benefits of cruise tourism posited by cruise industry proponents against the downside of mass and all-inclusive cruise tourism business models, which pedestrians discretionary destination spending such as food and beverages. The related study of food linkages and leakages expounded on the inherent systemic inhibition of successful development and promotion of local food.

The last related study topic discussed the notion of Caribbean fine flavored cocoa and its inherent potential as a food souvenir and hospitality establishment linkage product. Finally, the literature review expounded on the anticipated theme of souvenirs and the notion of food souvenirs. The unanticipated theme sought to expound on the impact of street food and general destination hygiene and safety on promoting local food and the destination itself.

Summary of Section 1 and Transition

Section 1 expounded on the problem, nature of the study, conceptual framework, outline review of the professional and academic literature, and supporting material dissertation components regarding local food in destination marketing, focusing on the Trinidad & Tobago case study. Accordingly, the problem component expounded on the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose statement, and relevant research questions. The nature of the study component discussed the postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic primary research paradigms, the mixed, fixed, and flexible design methods, and the rationale for selecting the flexible case study approach for this dissertation. Also, the nature of the study discussed the four types of triangulation and the rationale for this dissertation’s preference for its methodological triangulation focus.

The conceptual framework presents a diagrammatic presentation of five key research objectives which guide this dissertation's research framework and expounds on several pertinent concepts, theories, and actors. Accordingly, the expounded concepts included Caribbean Small

Island Developing States (SIDS), destination marketing organizations (DMOs), Local Food Tourism, Tourism Experiences, Destination Decision-Making, Destination Competitiveness, and Destination Attractiveness. The two major theories regard importance-performance analysis and content analysis, while the major actors regard several tourism demand (push) & supply (pull) actors – DMOs and hotels. Closely aligned with Section 1 are the supporting material, regarding key terms, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, and aspects of the significance of the study. Accordingly, key terms subject jargon repeatedly used throughout the dissertation composition were identified and briefly defined. Underlying assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are fundamental aspects of any scholarly research study. Therefore, this case study dissertation's uniquely contextualized assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were expounded accordingly. The significance of the study focused on three broad issues regarding the reduction of gaps in the food and destination marketing tourism literature, implications for biblical integration, and benefit to tourism business practice and relationship to my marketing cognate. Lastly, Section 1 also included a limited outline of the professional and academic literature regarding this dissertation topic. Accordingly, the outline review forayed into the notions of current tourism business practices, tourism industry background, and local food problems; related studies associated with the dissertation subject, and the anticipated theme of food souvenirs, and discovered theme of street food hygiene and safety arising from conducting the preliminary literature review. Also, the concepts expounded earlier in the conceptual framework were incorporated into the outline of the professional and academic literature.

Section 2 sought updated learnings from moving beyond the limited outline to a comprehensive review of the professional and academic literature dissertation topic. Additionally, several aspects which contributed to the articulation of the overall dissertation are expounded in Section 2. Secondly, aspects such as the researcher’s role and research methodology are further developed beyond the initial contribution of Section 1. Thirdly, a description of the study participants and a discussion of the preferred population and sampling approaches are also detailed. Fourthly, the data collection plan and appropriate Instruments are expounded before the articulation of the organization of the collected data to facilitate comprehensive analysis, which is subjected to reliability and validity scrutiny. Lastly, all aspects mentioned above are coherently incorporated in Section 2 of the comprehensive dissertation document.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 of this flexible design case study moved beyond the outline and comprehensive review of the professional and academic literature expounded in Section 1. Section 2 started with an expounding of the role of the researcher and the further development of the research methodology based upon the trajectory set by the Purpose Statement. After that, the project narrative described the type of interview participants determined via a combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling methods but closely aligned with appropriate sample fame and size. Finally, Section 2 concluded with a narrative regarding the data collection and organization plans and relevant data analysis processes. However, Section 2 also significantly incorporated the concepts of reliability and validity and its components which collectively engendered necessary scholarly rigor.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this flexible design case study was to explore the pedestalling of local food in Caribbean SIDS with a case study focus on the country of Trinidad & Tobago. This research explored traditional brand loyalty marketing regarding the ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea context against an inherent failure regarding a more contemporary destination loyalty marketing approach by leveraging local food to reinvigorate a stagnated destination appeal and destination visitation strategically. Therefore, the researcher explored how and why the impact of local food on tourist experiences and destination decision-making potentially enhances the destination competitiveness and attractiveness of the Trinidad & Tobago destination.

Role of the Researcher

Yin (2018) posited the role of the researcher as a series of desirable attributes which enable the researcher to conduct an empirical investigation of a phenomenon within its inherently natural context utilizing several sources of information. These desirable attributes regard asking good questions and interpreting the feedback fairly. Being a good listener and not succumbing to existing ideologies or preconceptions, staying flexible to accommodate newly encountered situations as opportunities and not threats, and having a comprehensive grasp of the issues pertinent to the study, even regarding an exploratory mode. Conducting the research ethically from a professional perspective and also being sensitive to conflicting evidence.

Alternatively, Hancock and Algozzine (2017) surmised that the case study researcher must be the principal source for collecting data and its analysis. The researcher thus adopts the leading role of decision-maker and makes recommendations to address the case described and then analyze, assess, and subsequently appraise. The first role of the researcher is to articulate a topic or question of interest. Secondly, the researcher conducts a literature review to determine what is already known and not known about the topic to help establish the research as helping to fill a significant knowledge gap. Also, the literature review helps the researcher to decide upon appropriate research designs and approaches. Having established the suitable study designs and techniques, the researcher seeks to gather relevant information which addresses the fundamental research question bounded by time and or space location and the research design and methodology parameters. Thus, the researcher collects data from several sources such as existing documents and richly descriptive sources such as original interviews and other literary techniques to bring to life the different perspectives of the phenomenon being studied.

Next, the data from the various sources are analyzed, which inherently regards its review and subsequent coding, categorizing, synthesizing, and interpretation. However, the researcher must follow several guidelines for a successful interview process. The researcher must identify key contextual participants whose knowledge and opinions provide pertinent insight regarding the study and its research questions. Therefore, the researcher must develop interview protocols and appropriately worded questions, consider the interview settings regarding conducting interviews, determine a reliable means to record the interview data, and adhere to ethical and legal requirements for conducting research generally. However, the researcher must resist any leading or suggestive comments which may influence the interview participants' perspectives.

Bracketing

The case study researcher must seek to mitigate their biases and prejudices to secure the impartiality of their subsequent conclusions. Therefore, bracketing helps researchers to grapple with their inherent research bias. Bracketing facilitates the reader to become familiar with the researcher's experiences and determine if the researcher fixated on the participant's experiences without the researcher's influence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Weatherford and Maitra (2019) surmised that bracketing is a means to mitigate researcher judgment or avoid the commonplace and typical way of seeing things. Therefore, bracketing enables the researcher to extract their own biased experiences from impacting the research study topic. However, differing bracketing scholarship contends that it is neither realistically possible nor desirable for the researcher to abstain totally from any judgment regarding the research process.

The controversial nature of bracketing also attributes to several aspects of diverse bracketing practice, including personal reflection, journal writing, and researchers' commonly conducted literature review. Therefore, some scholarship contends that formal bracketing does not facilitate the process of learning and research because it is inherently too constrictive. However, if the researcher's practice becomes too rigidly systematic and methodology constrained, bracketing will not occur as the researcher's viewpoint provides valuable context and authenticity and impacts the ultimate research conclusions accordingly. Bracketing, therefore, aims to connect directly and instantly with the world as we experience it rather than thinking about it. Judgments and theories are therefore suspended briefly to facilitate considering the world afresh (Finlay, 2009).

Research Methodology

The researcher's research decisions do not merely select from qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Decisions also critically include choosing from designs amongst the three research methods as 'strategies of inquiry, one of which regards the qualitative flexible research methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The crux of flexible research design inherently regards constructing a qualitative-based one-off design apt to answer real-world research questions. Notably, flexible designs are inherently a work in progress. They can adapt to the evolution of the research during data collection as the research question changes or is further clarified. The five main flexible research approaches include narrative, phenomenological, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). A case study provides a tremendous opportunity to gain a comprehensive awareness of a case. The researcher can gather data from several sources and synthesize this data to articulate the case coherently. Thus, the case study method can advance theory, investigate programs, and facilitate interventions because of its adaptability and thoroughness (Baxter & Jack, 2008). However, a researcher's cultural and experiential background contains systemic biases, values, and ideologies that impact their study results. Triangulation is an effective mitigator regarding data analysis in an empirical study (Fusch et al., 2018).

Appropriateness of Flexible Study Research Methodology

This dissertation proposed to use a flexible study research methodology. The flexible design origins are derived from the qualitative research tradition. Flexible design inherently requires that the researcher develop the design via interaction with the focus of the study, but the data collection and analysis are instead intertwined. However, flexible designs can include a small amount of quantitative data. The systemic weakness of fixed designs regards its inherent inability to grapple with the complexities and nuances of individual human behaviors. However, flexible designs are more apt for that. Although with a flexible design, the purpose of the study is usually well-articulated, flexible designs are inherently customizable due to their work-in-progress attribute and thus adaptable to the research. Research questions may thus be underdeveloped and unsettled at the onset, so may methods options despite any early research start-up decisions regarding data collection.

Therefore, during early data collection, the researcher's approach and the research questions may change. A case study approach is preferred when one wishes to understand a real-world case. Therefore, it is assumed that its inherent understanding likely includes significant contextual factors pertinent to the case (Yin, 2018). Thus, the crux of a case study research is to select a case or several cases, multiple case studies, and articulate how the case(s) illustrate(s) a problem or issue and leads to a detailed and extensive analysis of the case. Therefore, the researcher would clearly describe the case identified in the study. The case should thus be regarded as a clear entity such as a group, individual, organization, community, relationship, decision process, or specific project and typically be used to study or evaluate programs.

A case study can also regard many or a few people or a long or short period and is inherently bounded by time and place. However, the case borders demarcate the case under investigation from a larger context of which it is a subset. The researcher should select the case to provide insight into an issue or a problem, which may be broad in scope or limited to a small geographic area. Significantly also, the researcher accumulates and analyzes multiple data sources to provide a comprehensive perspective regarding the issue within the case boundaries.

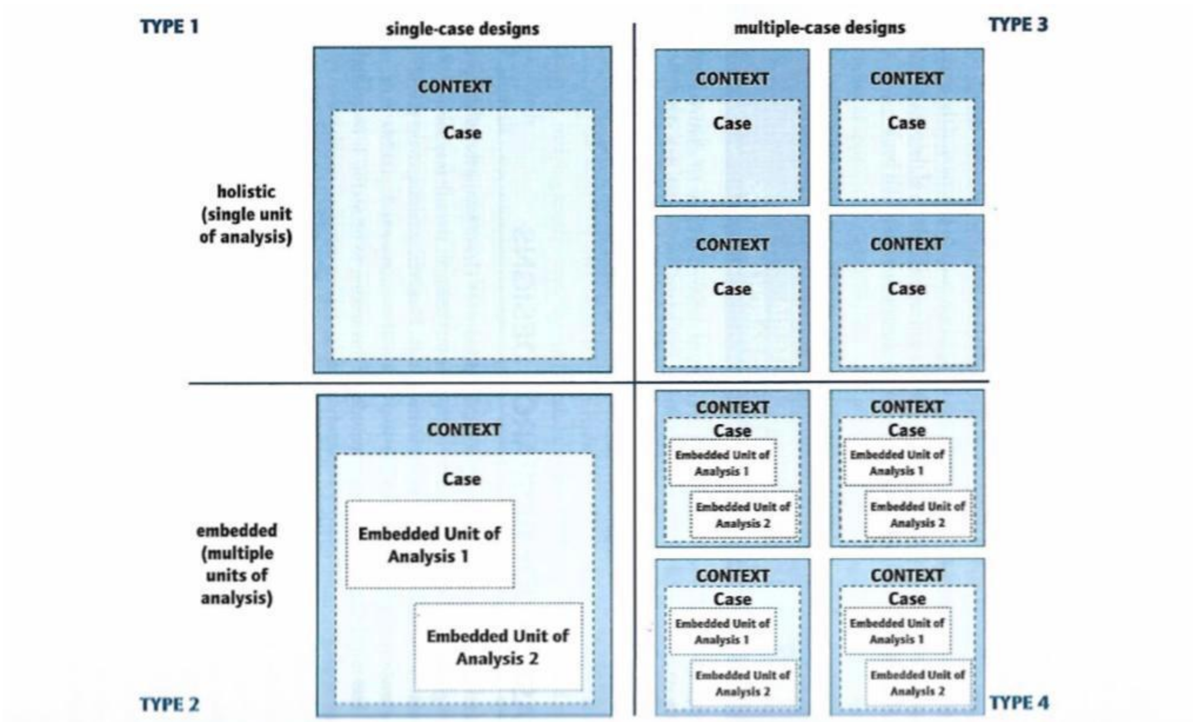
Case study academic rigor inherently regards multiple qualitative data sources (e.g., interviews, observations, documents, and visual materials). The consequence of a case study is thus a case. Therefore, the inherent analysis of the myriad sources of information results in a comprehensive description of the case with the emergence of data themes, generalizations, or assertions regarding the case. Moreover, generalizations inherently regard how the issue is explored and better understood by learning about the case. Therefore, the reader can emerge with an in-depth appreciation of the issue explored by the case study (Creswell, 2016).

This dissertation explored and investigated the Caribbean SIDS local food and destination marketing phenomenon, characterized by a detailed preliminary research paucity. The essence of this study was exploration rather than explanation. A pragmatic approach to case study sampling in this dissertation was adopted because of the systemic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the selection factors of travel access and time and financial constraints of the researcher. Therefore, the research would have to be done in one SIDS country - the twin-island state of Trinidad & Tobago in the Caribbean, hence, a single-case design. Notwithstanding the single case approach noted above, multiple units of analysis regarding relevant destination marketing stakeholders would be included, which would allow for more in-depth exploration to be undertaken.

Noted in Figure 5, Yin (2018) posited four case study designs as a two-by-two matrix. The first dimension regards the use of either single or multiple cases. The second regards using either a single-holistic unit of analysis or multiple embedded units of analysis, potentially providing significant opportunities for extensive analysis, thus enhancing insights into the single case. Yin (2018) surmised that the preferred choice of case design inherently depends on the type of question the research is investigating, the degree of control exercised over the case, and the focus on current or previous phenomena. This dissertation study, therefore, elects for a single case with multiple units of analysis.

Figure 5

Case Study – Four Basic Design Types



Source: Yin, 2018, p. 48.

Appropriateness of Case Study Research Method

The fundamental idea of a case study is to pick a case or several cases – a multi-case study and articulate how the case portrays a real current problem or issue; this results in an extensive case review within a defined contextual setting (Creswell, 2016). Therefore, case study research can contend with a single case through complex and multiple scenarios as a collective case study. Thus, it facilitates the researcher to address 'how' and 'why' questions regarding complex phenomena within their contextual situation. In this regard, it is invaluable for the novice to the experienced researcher, as a case study provides a tremendous opportunity to gain a comprehensive awareness of a case. The researcher can gather data from several sources and synthesize this data to articulate the case coherently. Thus, the researcher can survey individuals, groups, or organizations, basic through multifaceted interventions; relationships; societies or programs, and the disaggregation and restoration of various phenomena. The case study also has the inherent potential to advance theory, investigate programs and facilitate interventions because of its adaptability and thoroughness (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Case study research has five logically sequenced components regarding its design. First, the case study research form asks questions such as "how" or "why" to articulate the nature of the study. Second, the case study proposition focuses on the direction of research towards something worthy of examination. Third, the case definition and 'bounding' choose what is to be studied and is bounded by individuals depending on whether it is a single or multi-case study, a group, community, program, organization, and time and place. Bounding delimits the scope of the data compilation, the relationship between the data and the subject, and the associated contextual situation; the case study also needs to define a current real-life abstraction. Fourth, linking data to propositions relates and connects the data choices and their inherent suitability to the case study. Fifth, the criteria for interpreting the case study's findings regards statistically relevant benchmarks and determining and articulating other possible contradictory explanations of the conclusions noted by the researcher.

Baxter and Jack (2008) surmised the type of case study is decided after determining that the research topic may be best studied from the perspective of a qualitative case study, and the case boundaries are delimited. The type of case study chosen is determined primarily by the general study purpose, such as depicting a case, investigating a case, or contrasting cases.

- **Explanatory** – used when attempting to address a question that seeks to explain the likely contributory links in real-world interventions, which are too complicated for survey or experimental approaches.
- **Exploratory** – used to survey those settings where the involvement with a difficult situation being considered does not have a specific solitary outcome.
- **Descriptive** – used to describe a difficult situation or phenomenon and the real-world context in which it happened.
- **Multiple or collective case** – enables differences to be surveyed by the researcher between and amongst cases while reproducing similar findings across cases.
- **Intrinsic** - used when the desire is to comprehend better a case where there is interest despite its specificity and simplicity. It is not used to comprehend abstract or general phenomenon.
- **Instrumental** – used to advise awareness of an issue or enhance a theory and not a specific situation.

Challenges of Case Study Methodology

A case study is not the simplest of the five qualitative research methodologies to undertake due to the fundamentally complex nature of its varied theoretical objectives and the underlying fact there is currently no single agreed way to report a case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this regard, Creswell and Poth (2018) posited some challenges regarding case study research. At the onset, the researcher must pinpoint the case that could range from comprehensive to restricted. Next, determine what the case study will not examine and hence not have too many objectives, and then determine and define the case/unit of analysis. The researcher must determine which of the several bounded systems they will elect to report:

studying a single individual, several persons, a set of persons, a total program, or doings. The researcher must also choose from amongst the alternatives of the intent of the case analysis such as single instrumental, collective/multiple, and intrinsic or instrumental. The researcher must decide whether to elect for a single or a multiple/collective case study.

As the number of multiple case studies expands, the extent of resource availability likely decreases regarding time and finances. The larger the number of multiple cases then the lesser the extent of research. The researcher must determine the sampling approach's logic as acquiring sufficient information to depict the case study may restrict its value. However, delimiting the boundaries regarding time, happenings, and practices may be complicated due to an ambiguous time interval definition. The rigor of the research is also challenging due to the practice of triangulating or combining various data sources such as interviews, papers, and observations during the data accumulation process (Ridder, 2017).

Appropriateness of Triangulation

The overarching purpose of any study is to address the research question inherently. However, a researcher's cultural and experiential background contains systemic biases, values, and ideologies that impact their study results. Triangulation is an effective mitigator regarding data analysis in an empirical study. Triangulation, therefore, enhances the validity of the process regarding using multiple external analysis methods about the same events. Thus, triangulation is critical to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, that the inferences have a reasonable probability of occurring, and can be aligned with the study's conceptual framework. The notion of triangulating several data sources spawned four types of triangulation and is commonly used by qualitative studies to enhance the research's objectivity, truth, and validity.

- **Data triangulation** – frequently confused with methodological triangulation. The data points of people, time, and space are interrelated and ongoingly represent different data regarding the same event and reveal and recognize commonalities regarding different settings. Data points are thus taken over time to observe ongoing interactions.
- **Investigator triangulation** – correlating the discoveries of several researchers in a study, meaning more than one researcher is studying the phenomenon. Thus, mitigation is inherently attributed to the different researchers – not including coders, assistants, or data analysts - observing the same data. Therefore, the different researchers may or may not concur with each other's interpretations.
- **Theory triangulation** – regards using and correlating different theoretical strategies. Thus, researchers apply different and alternate theories to the same data set, for example, a theoretical lens and a contradictory theory. An alternate strategy is to let the raw data guide the researcher to articulate a new theory and expand the researcher's knowledge accordingly.
- **Methodological data** – the correlation of data obtained from several data collection methods, either within or between methods. Within-method triangulates data from different collection methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observations in a case study or ethnography. However, the systemic flaws in one method still persist and can impact the data. Between-methods regards triangulating data obtained from a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a mixed-methods study, and one approach can offset the other approach (Fusch et al., 2018).

This dissertation on local food and destination marketing in Caribbean SIDS and the case study of Trinidad & Tobago used methodological (in-method) triangulation, which is the most widely used type of triangulation, regarding its flexible case study approach. Triangulation is the aptest way to explore the various levels and perspectives regarding the same phenomenon. Thus, the methodological triangulation focus in this dissertation regards interviews and document analysis from the internet, websites, and other media and field notes. The corroboration of data from several sources within the multiple units of the single case study will enhance the depth of understanding regarding the theme of local food and destination marketing within the single case study with multiple units of analysis paradigm.

Summary

This research segment noted and discussed why this dissertation scholarship opted for the flexible design research and exploratory case study method using an exploratory approach. The crux of flexible research design inherently regards constructing a qualitative-based one-off design apt to answer real-world research questions. Therefore, the corroboration of data from several sources within the multiple units of the single case study enhanced the depth of understanding regarding the theme of local food and destination marketing. However, to ensure that this dissertation makes a worthy contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding local food and destination marketing, the concept of triangulation is expounded, and the methodological type of triangulation was noted as the aptest triangulation type.

Participants

The researchers' probe to contribute to academic debate and knowledge inherently requires collecting data from participant individuals. These participants are systemically associated with the research population, which regards the group of individuals who have one or more study-related characteristics of interest. Therefore, research findings are attributed to the population due to the link to specific or all participants. Thus, the researcher must focus on participants who can articulate and contribute the best experiences and thoughts regarding the overarching research goal (Asiamah et al., 2017). This dissertation regarded participants from local DMO actors who are typically government-associated institutions responsible for harnessing a diverse mix of private hospitality and tourism companies, public agencies, non-profit bodies, and hotels.

Yin (2018) posited that participants have an invaluable perspective and help produce an accurate portrayal of a case study phenomenon because they are inherently 'internal' rather than external to it. However, the challenge is identifying key participant individuals systemic to the phenomenon of local food and destination marketing whose inherent grasp and assessment can be gleaned to provide valuable insights via interview questions. The selection of participants directly impacts the quality of information obtained; however, although the availability of the participants is important, it does not trump the participants who may have the best information regarding the research study questions. Therefore, the researcher must ideally have the resources and ability to access these preferred interviewees (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

Population and Sampling

When undertaking descriptive survey research, the researcher may often find it desirable to articulate one or several characteristics of a potentially large population. However, it is typically not feasible to study the entire population of interest. Therefore, it is more practical to focus the study on a subset or sample of the population. The results derived from studying the population sample can be used to make inherent generalizations regarding the entire population, assuming the sample is truly representative (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Discussion of Population

The concept of population funnels three hierarchical levels: general, target, and accessible population. The general population is characteristically crude. It is the biggest group of potential participants regarding a study and is based upon the researcher's universally known and specified. The general population must have at least one attribute of interest to be eligible as population members, such as 'tourism and hospitality industry workers.' However, the general population makes little sense without the contextual specification of the target and accessible population. Therefore, further removal of participants from the general population is necessary to improve it. Factoring selection criteria determine the target population to shortlist individuals from the general population. Therefore, the shortlisted target population reflects the best potential participants who can share experiences and thoughts regarding the study under the most convenient conditions. However, not all target participants may be willing or available to participate in the study. The accessible population is inherently smaller than the target population because many individuals may opt-out of the study (Asiamah et al., 2017).

Ma et al. (2018) surmised that destination attractiveness is an inherently multidimensional construct and a pivotal destination marketing 'pull' factor. Tourism supply (pull) actors inherently regard those responsible for delivering products and services (Özdemir & Çelebi, 2018). The destination pull actors were sourced from the general population of tourism and hospitality firms in Trinidad & Tobago regarding the delivery of products and services and institutional support regarding the coordination and mobilization of DMOs and resources. Therefore, the 'pull' actor population sample supplies the target participants regarding this dissertation study who have knowledge and experience of local food in destination marketing. Target participants were drawn from several major population sources, including The

Government of Trinidad & Tobago, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts and its Tobago counterpart, The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) - Division of Tourism, Culture, and Transportation. Various domestic tourism industry stakeholders' websites such as The Trinidad & Tobago Incoming Tour Operators Association (TTITOA), The Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association (THRTA), and The Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI). Finally, regional tourism support institutions such as the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). However, accessible population participants were subsequently gleaned from the target population based on their willingness and availability to participate at the time of the study.

Discussion of Sampling

Gentles et al. (2015) surmised that the broad definition of sampling inherently regards selecting specific data sources from which study data are collected to address the study objectives. However, there are marked nuances regarding how sampling is understood across research traditions such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and case study. Case study sampling regards selecting cases and selecting data sources that best help the understanding of the case. Therefore, the case sampling focus is at two levels, the case itself and the unspecified data sources within the case. Otherwise, Moser and Korstjens (2018) surmised that sampling regards the process of selecting or seeking out situations, context, and or participants who can provide rich data about the phenomenon of interest. Therefore, in qualitative research, sampling is deliberate and not random, and several sampling methods or strategies include purposive, criterion, theoretical, convenience, and snowball sampling. However, lesser-used sampling methods include maximum variation, an extreme case, a typical case, and confirming and disconfirming sampling.

This study used purposive, convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. Purposive sampling is regarded as the most effective means of qualitative sampling methods based upon the inherent shortlisting by the researcher of participants or sources of data with an anticipated richness and relevance of information regarding the study's research questions (Gentles et al., 2015). Convenience sampling simplistically regards the selection of participants who are readily available and accessible. However, snowball sampling regards the selection of participants via referrals from previously selected participants or other persons who have access to potential participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

A sampling frame articulates an extracted sample of the target population and is defined as the list of all units in the population from which the research sample is selected (Rahi, 2017). Therefore, developing a sample frame inherently requires the researcher to understand and consider the unique characteristics of the specific research subjects and the settings where they may be located. The researcher must develop criteria for selecting sites and or subjects capable of addressing the research questions, identifying specific sites and or subjects, and securing their participation in the study (Devers & Frankel, 2000). However, the sample is determined by the conceptual requirements of the study and not primarily by representativeness. Therefore, the researcher must provide a description of and rationale regarding the choices of the sampling plan. The sampling plan is appropriate when the shortlisted participants and settings can appropriately advance the information needed to understand the study phenomenon comprehensively (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Sampling inherently requires the refinement of the accessible population based upon the criteria of willingness and availability to find the most qualified participants regarding the study. Therefore, it is wise to continue the refinement process after the specification of the accessible population if perhaps the remaining number of population members is impractical and needs to be further reduced to reach a more appropriate sample size (Asiamah et al., 2017). However, Gentles et al. (2015) surmised scholarship that sample size regards the number of interviews rather than the number of participants. Qualitative studies typically use smaller-sized samples because the broad aim of sampling is to find useful information regarding the complexity, depth, variation, or context of a phenomenon. However, regardless of how the sample size is defined, qualitative methods scholarship surmises that it is impossible to specify the sample size before a study. Some scholarship suggests ballpark estimates of adequate sample sizes according to research tradition. For example, the number of data sources regarding a single case study ranges between 20 and 50 units of data sources within a single case study.

However, the most common criterion for determining an adequate sample size is when the research has attained saturation. Moser and Korstjens (2018) surmised that data saturation occurs when no new analytical information becomes evident, and thus the study provides comprehensive information regarding the phenomenon. However, in qualitative research, it is advisable to undertake two or three more observations, interviews, or focus group discussions beyond when no new analytical becomes evident to confirm that data saturation has been attained. In the case of content analysis, which in this dissertation's primary data collection method, the estimated recommended number of interviews is about 20-30.

Summary of Population and Sampling

The scholarly contribution to academic debate and knowledge inherently requires the culling of information from participant individuals. However, the challenge is identifying key participant individuals systemic to the phenomenon whose inherent grasp and assessment can be gleaned to provide valuable insights via interview questions. The researcher must shortlist participants from a larger population who can articulate and contribute the best experiences and thoughts regarding the overarching research goal. The concept of population funnels three hierarchical levels: general, target, and accessible population. However, the general population makes little sense without the contextual specification of the target and accessible population. Ultimately, accessible population participants will be subsequently gleaned from the target population based upon their willingness and availability to participate at the time of the study. This is best achieved via a sampling frame that articulates a frame where a sample of the target population can be extracted.

Developing a sample frame requires the researcher to understand and consider the unique characteristics of the specific research subjects and the settings where they may be located. Therefore, sampling inherently requires the refinement of the accessible population based upon the criteria of willingness and availability to find the most qualified participants regarding the study. Qualitative studies typically use smaller-sized samples because the broad aim of sampling is to find useful information regarding the complexity, depth, variation, or context of a phenomenon. However, the most common criterion for determining an adequate sample size is when the research has attained saturation, where no new analytical information becomes evident. Thus, the study provides full information regarding the phenomenon.

Data Collection and Organization

Based upon Yin's typology, this dissertation is based upon a single embedded case study. It thus elects for a single case approach with multiple units of analysis regarding relevant destination marketing stakeholders, which would allow for more in-depth exploration to be undertaken (Yin, 2018). Interview questions are aligned with the content analysis of several websites and literature review results. An interview guide incorporating several general and open-ended probing interview questions aligned with this dissertation's research questions and problem statement is noted in Appendix A. The researcher used NVivo qualitative research software to organize, analyze, and visualize information in both data sets.

Data Collection Plan

The proposed data collection plan is linked to the third and fourth research objectives noted as RO3 and RO4 in Figure 2. RO3 explores how local food is promoted by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and industry stakeholders in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago. Additionally, RO4 regards the investigation and expounding on stakeholders' viewpoints via semi-structured interviews regarding the use of local food in destination marketing in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago.

The data collection regarding this study firstly involved the qualitative content analysis of government-associated stakeholder DMO and private stakeholder websites to investigate the overall picture regarding local food and destination marketing. This approach allowed the researcher to evaluate textual and visual information regarding the contextual representation of food on the various organizational websites. However, open coding was proposed to articulate the relevant discovered themes and thus resist making the data comply with pre-conceived categories. Therefore, via purposive sampling, the researcher proposed the following private and government stakeholder DMO websites to shortlist participants or sources of data with an anticipated richness and relevance of information regarding local food in the context of the destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago. The private stakeholder websites included The Trinidad & Tobago Incoming Tour Operators Association (TTITOA), The Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants, and Tourism Association (THRTA), and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO). However, the government stakeholder DMO websites included The Government of Trinidad & Tobago, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts - Tourism Trinidad Limited (TTL), its Tobago counterpart, The Tobago House of Assembly (THA) Division of Tourism, Culture, and Transportation – Tobago Tourism Agency Limited (TTAL), The Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI), and finally the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

Regarding the second phase of the data collection plan, the researcher utilized semi-structured interviews of DMO executives, senior staff, and industry experts. Industry experts include, for example, food tourism event planner or coordinator, popular chef, media specialist tourism and hospitality personality, culinary heritage personality, leading company person responsible for food and beverage development and marketing. Stalmirska (2017) surmised that the goal of semi-structured interviewing inherently regards gathering systematic information about a set of central topics and some exploration if new issues or topics become relevant.

Therefore, semi-structured interviews are undertaken to prospect for deeper insights regarding the use of food in destination marketing strategies. Interview participants are shortlisted by the researcher utilizing purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. The researcher can utilize semi-structured interviews to comprehend the 'what,' 'how,' and 'why' because the researcher can probe participants' responses and ask for further explanations to build on interviewees' responses. The two main types of interview techniques are typically either face-to-face or via telephone with e-mails. However, contemporary social media technology such as Skype or Microsoft Teams extends face-to-face interviewing, which can preserve interview authenticity (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017).

Instruments

Hancock and Algozzine (2017) surmised that the case study researcher must be the primary instrument source regarding the collection of data and its analysis. However, the researcher must develop an interview protocol and guide to facilitate a successful interview process. Interview questions are inherently sub-questions of the research study but phrased such that the interviewee can easily grasp them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moser and Korstjens (2018) further posited that interviews have a planned flow based upon a written, pre-determined, and sequenced series of questions which helps guide the interview. However, the actual question sequence should follow the participant responses and evolution of the conversation. Therefore, the researcher's objective is to engage in a dialog to allow the participant to speak freely.

Hancock and Algozzine (2017) also posited that the number of interview questions should be ideally 5-10, but the precise number should not be pre-meditated. The researcher should additionally consider the interview settings regarding conducting interviews, determine a reliable means to record the interview data and adhere to ethical and legal requirements for conducting research generally. However, the researcher must resist any leading or suggestive comments which may influence the interview participants' perspectives. The interview guide (Appendix A) consists of several essential components, including basic information regarding the interview, an introduction, interview content questions coupled with probes, follow-up questions, and closing instructions (Creswell, 2016).

- **Basic Interview Information** – The interviewer notes basic information regarding the interview to ensure a well-organized database. The information recorded includes the date, location of the interview, the names of the interviewer and interviewee, and the estimated length of the interview.
- **Introduction** – This segment of the interview guide notes instructions to help the interviewer avoid overlooking important items during the potentially anxious initial period of the interview. The interviewer introduction and discussion of the purpose of the study can be written in advance and merely read to the interviewee. However, it should note a prompt to remind the interviewer to secure a signed-off copy of the informed consent form provided to the interviewee at the onset. In the case of an audiovisual platform such as Skype or Teams, the consent form can be forwarded in advance. Additionally, the interviewee may also mention the general structure of the interview, for example, how it will begin, the number of questions, and importantly inquire if the interviewee has any questions.
- **Opening Question** – It is very important to establish a good rapport with the interviewee at the onset of the interview by asking an open-ended ice-breaker-type question directly regarding the interviewee's professional status and responsibilities and their number of years associated with the tourism and hospitality industry.
- **Content Questions** – These questions regard the study's research sub-questions or, put another way, different facets of the central phrased phenomenon, phrased in a simple open-ended way to the interviewee. Therefore, these questions typically begin with the word how or what.

- **Probes** – Content questions can be coupled with probes which are reminders to the researcher to be alerted to ask the interviewee for more information or to ask for further explanation of their expounding on their response to the content question. For example, probe phrases such as 'tell me more' (asking for more information) or 'could you explain your response more' (asking for an explanation.
- **Follow-up Question** – This type of question helps to initiate closure to the interview and demonstrates the interviewee's curiosity regarding learning more about the interview topic from the interviewee.
- **Closing Instructions** – The interviewer needs to convey gratitude and thank the interviewee for their time and willingness to participate in the interview. Also, reassure the interviewee about the confidentiality of the interview and ask for an opportunity to conduct a follow-up interview if it becomes necessary to clarify any points arising from the first interview.

However, although the interview guide format is inherently similar, there are two versions of the interview guide regarding this study, with one version intended for the DMO organizations and the other version for the industry experts.

Data Organization Plan

Aspers and Corte (2019) surmised that qualitative research is inherently interpretive because the researcher seeks to make sense of phenomena that study participants ascribe to them. This study proposes an iterative approach to data organization based on a purposeful data collection approach (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) surmised that qualitative data collection typically includes written notes, audio files and their transcriptions, and copies of marketing materials. The researcher proposes safeguarding the data collected in a password-protected computer and backed up in an external hard drive. However, pseudonyms are to be used to replace the identifying or source information to protect the confidentiality of participants, and any physical materials are stored in a lockable filing cabinet that is accessible to the researcher alone.

At the onset of the study, the researcher establishes a naming blueprint for digital files to facilitate easy location and access to large databases of text, images, or recordings. Also, it is helpful to maintain a searchable spreadsheet consisting of attributes such as file name, participant pseudonym, data, and data type for easy reference and file location efficiency. The cornerstone of data organization in qualitative research is the process of coding which facilitates collected data to be assembled, categorized, and thematically sorted, thus providing an organized platform for the synthesis of meaning.

A code inherently regards a word or short phrase which symbolically assigns a summative, salient, and essence-capturing attribute associated with a portion of language-based or visual data (Williams & Moser, 2019). Qualitative analysis typically begins with the organization of collected data that needs to be stored in smaller and more manageable units (codes) to be retrieved and reviewed easily. Software programs can, therefore, efficiently and effectively help to manage research data. For example, the intended use of NVivo software can securely store, annotate, and retrieve texts and locate words, phrases, and segments of data units to generate diagrams and extract quotes (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Summary of Data Collection and Organization

Creswell and Poth (2018) surmised that data management and organization best coincide with the analysis process and not in distinct steps as they are very much interrelated. This dissertation was based upon a single embedded case study, meaning a single case approach with multiple units of analysis regarding relevant destination marketing stakeholders, which allowed for more in-depth exploration to be undertaken (Yin, 2018). However, the case study researcher is the primary instrument source regarding data collection and its analysis.

An interview protocol is proposed to facilitate a successful interview process and includes a series of communication noted as Appendices. First, Appendix D - a DBA- ADRP Permission Request Template developed to initiate contact with researcher shortlisted organizations with potentially rich data prospects. Second is Appendix B - a Participant Information Factsheet developed to articulate useful information to prospective interviewee participants. The third is Appendix C – a participant consent form developed based upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. However, the fourth is Appendix A - the interview guide. This guide has two versions, one targeted to the DMO participants and the other for industry experts. Collected data are typically quite voluminous and therefore needs to be stored in more manageable units to be retrieved and reviewed easily. The intended use of software programs such as NVivo can help the researcher manage and organize research data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). However, regardless of the chosen research design option, if the data collection and organization methods lack scholarly rigor, analysis can be compromised, thus minimizing the value of outcomes (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth (2018) surmised that data analysis is more than a mere approach to analyzing text and data. It involves organizing the data, conducting a first-round reading-through of the database, deducing coding and organizing themes, representing data, and fashioning an interpretation. However, data analysis is posited by Creswell and Poth as analogous to a spiral-like around and around circle process rather than a linear approach. The researcher starts with entering text or audiovisual data and exits with an account or narrative. Fruitful researcher data analysis is an ongoing process that requires constant deep and insightful interactions with the data and codes (Maher et al., 2018).

Although software programs (e.g., NVivo) can help manage research data, the researcher is still required to do the analytical work by considering what is in the data, making codes, and identifying categories, concepts, and patterns (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). However, the coupling of data organization and coding allows the researcher to develop themes and articulate meaningful learnings. Therefore, data analysis is inherently complex and is considered the most important and challenging step in the qualitative research process from multiple analytical perspectives (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019).

Emergent Ideas

Moser and Korstjens (2018) surmised that although software programs can help manage research data, the researcher is still required to do the analytical work by considering what is in the data, making decisions regarding codes, and identifying categories, concepts, and patterns. Creswell and Poth (2018) surmised that after the organization of the study data, researchers continue with the analysis process, seeking to get a sense of the overall database. Therefore, the researcher reads the interview transcripts several times until they fully grasp the interview responses details to get an overall sense of the interview's emergent ideas before dissecting it into several convenient parts via coding.

It is very useful to write memos or notes regarding short phrases, ideas, or key concepts on the margins of field notes or transcripts as an initial foray into new data as they are ongoingly read over and over. Therefore, memoing has a complementary role as a key role within the systematic analysis of data and helps track the development of ideas. Memoing lends credibility to the process of qualitative analysis and outcomes as the researcher uncovers emergent themes, which leads to more powerful and richer explanations.

Coding Themes

Continuing with the Creswell and Poth (2018) spiral analogy, after the several readings and reviews, next comes the describing, classifying, and interpreting the data. A pillar of qualitative research is the coding process, which inherently regards making sense of the text and transcriptions collected from interviews, documents such as brochures and other literature, and observations derived from (e.g., websites). Therefore, the coding process starts with aggregating the text and visual data into small manageable themes or categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different study databases, and then assigning a descriptor label to the code.

However, there is typically a significant amount of winnowing or reduction of data as not all information is relevant, and thus some discarding is necessary (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Elliott (2018) surmised that the eventual number of coding themes should be conserved to a minimum. Still, there is no inherent, standardized number to achieve, and typically there is a need for both emergent themed and preconfigured codes. However, the name of the code should capture the essence of their content and clearly convey their meaning to the reader. Coding is, therefore, an inherently iterative process, especially regarding doctoral projects. The doctoral researcher develops an understanding of their data and their initially articulated codes but returns to the data and codes to refine and or combine them as a revalidation of their earlier coding efforts.

Coding aside, however, Creswell and Poth (2018) further surmised that classifying regards the dissecting of the qualitative information and seeking categories, themes, or dimensions. Classifying begins with identifying five to seven themes as broad units of information. However, these broad units may have several subthemes, which may themselves have their own tributaries. Therefore, a key challenge for novice qualitative researchers is leaping from codes to themes; thus, several strategies may be used to explore and develop themes (e.g., memoing is used to phrase emerging thematic ideas and highlight pithy quotes while the researcher codes). Also, creating diagrammatic representations of the relationship amongst codes and emerging concepts as visual relationships are very helpful with spotting overlaps among codes, drafting summary statements regarding recurring or noteworthy aspects of data which may help to perceive patterns between conditions and consequences. However, the development of themes inherently depends on the prior coding of the research data. Nonetheless, articulating a code and the coding process attributed to emergent ideas and data themes can be more art than science (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Each shortlisted code is coupled to a longer description in a master list which is updated as new codes emerge in a dedicated codebook. The codebook articulates the specific boundaries regarding each code. Later on, the codebook provides invaluable help regarding interpreting activities.

Interpretations

The codebook, which contains data and its assigned codes, is used by the researcher to review the codes and identify themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, Hancock and Algozzine (2017) posited that a fundamental aspect of doing case study research is collecting and interpreting only data potentially meaningful to the research effort. Therefore, the researcher simultaneously summarizes and interprets information gathered with ongoing examination and interpretation, helping make sense of the data and understand the topic being investigated. This process involves examining and reexamining research questions and answers.

However, summarizing and interpreting information also sometimes means putting aside less pertinent information and developing a management system to track all information used or not used. Simply putting aside a portion or aspects of information sources may compromise a case study researcher's ability to fully explain the study issues. Creswell and Poth (2018) surmised scholarship that the interpretive process requires researcher creative and critical wherewithal to make carefully considered reasoning regarding what is inherently meaningful amongst the patterns, themes, and categories spawned by analysis. The interpretative process regards the articulation of codes, the establishment of themes from codes, and after that, the organization of themes into encompassing units of abstraction to make sense of the data.

Data Representation

The process for representing and visualizing data is the last phase of the Creswell and Poth data analysis spiral analogy before accounting for the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Parmentier-Cajaiba and Cajaiba-Santana (2020) surmised that visual maps are a way of visually representing qualitative data, thereby enhancing scholarly rigor and analysis. Visual representation of data inherently regards recognizing patterns, summarizing data, and comparing and reviewing relationships over time that are not likely visible independently of their representation. This also helps the researcher make sense of data, improve its analysis, and theorize, thus cultivating reflexive thinking and fostering communication. Therefore, qualitative researchers must think creatively about how they display their data and not merely describe it. This allows the reader to discern a clear connection between the raw and analyzed data.

Visual representation helps researchers better grapple with large amounts of raw and complex data derived from rich contextual and even eclectic settings that need to be selected, shrunk, interpreted, analyzed, and communicated. Also, the visual engagement with data may assist with the coding process and theorizing from the qualitative data. The reader can be transported into the context of the phenomenon and as a personal experience and therefore support any emergent theory. Parmentier-Cajaiba and Cajaiba-Santana (2020) further surmised that the analysis process to represent data visually includes contextualizing the data, selecting and representing events, situating data in time, and relating events meaningfully. The NVivo software also has much visualization usefulness regarding, for example, its word cloud generation as a visualization feature.

Summary of Data Analysis

Data analysis is more than a mere approach to analyzing text and data. Data analysis is inherently complex and is considered a significant and challenging step in qualitative research. Creswell and Poth (2018) summarized the data analysis process via the analogy of a spiral as the researcher analyses data using analytic circles rather than a fixed linear approach. The researcher enters with text or audiovisually collected data and exits with a trimmed account of the data analysis findings. The data analysis spiral inherently regards the management and organization of data, the reading and memoing of emergent ideas, which helps describe and classify codes into themes that facilitate the development and assessment of interpretations.

Coding is an inherently iterative process that aggregates the text and visual data into small manageable themes or categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different study databases and then assigning a descriptor label to the code. Next comes describing, classifying, and interpreting the data followed by the visual representation of data which inherently regards recognizing patterns, summarizing data, and comparing and reviewing relationships over time that are not likely visible independently of their representation. This also helps the researcher make sense of data, improve its analysis, and theorize, thus cultivating reflexive thinking and fostering communication. However, fruitful researcher data analysis is an ongoing process that requires constant deep and insightful interactions with the data and codes (Maher et al., 2018). Although software programs (e.g., NVivo) can help manage research data, the researcher is still required to do the analytical work by considering what is in the data, making decisions regarding codes, and identifying categories, concepts, and patterns (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Reliability and Validity

Cypress (2017) surmised that reliability and validity are two indispensable aspects of all research, and scholarship asserts that the rigor of qualitative research equates with the concepts of reliability and validity. However, Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that reliability and validity have multiple perspectives and can be addressed differently. Further, Creswell and Creswell (2018) surmised that reliability and validity have different qualitative versus quantitative research connotations. Qualitative validity inherently regards the researcher scrutinizing or verifying the accuracy of the research findings by employing specific procedures. Therefore, qualitative validity is an intrinsic strength of qualitative research, inherently based on accurate researcher and participant findings or readers’ account. On the other hand, qualitative reliability inherently demonstrates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and among different projects.

Cypress (2017) further surmised the seminal scholarship of Lincoln and Guba (1986), who reconceptualized reliability and validity with the concept of 'trustworthiness' which has become a popular central concept framework to appraise the rigor of a qualitative study. Qualitative reliability mandates the documentation of the procedures in, for example, case studies to include as many steps as possible and establish a detailed study protocol and database so that others can follow the procedures. A study's goal is to ensure trustworthiness is simultaneously assessed during the study and after the research is conducted. The most popular definitions and criteria regarding trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). However, although these trustworthiness criteria are typically used procedures, not all the procedural criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are used in every study (Connelly, 2016).

The confidence of truthfulness of the study findings pedestals credibility as the study’s most important benchmark (Connelly, 2016). Korstjens and Moser (2018) surmised that credibility inherently establishes whether the research findings represent valid information derived from the participants' original data and is thus a true interpretation of the participants' originally communicated views. Therefore, credibility inherently regards the aspect of truth-value and uses strategies including (e.g., prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member-check to ensure credibility). The strategy of prolonged engagement implies an extended presence during observation of lengthy interviews or engagement in the field with participants. Therefore, sufficient time is invested in facilitating becoming familiar with the setting and context to check for misinformation, foster trust, and become familiar with the data to get rich data.

Persistent observation identifies the characteristics and elements most pertinent to the problem or issue under study, which the researcher focuses on in detail. Triangulation inherently regards the use of various data sources, investigators, and data collection methods. Triangulation is the aptest way to explore the various levels and perspectives regarding the same phenomenon (Fusch et al., 2018). Member checking involves reversing data flow, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions from where the data were originally sourced. Also, it strengthens the data as the researcher and the respondents can review the data from different perspectives (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Connelly (2016) surmised that the essence of transferability regards how findings are useful to persons in other contexts. However, transferability is inherently different from other aspects of research as the reader determines how pertinent the findings are to their context. Therefore, researchers need to provide an expressive portrayal that will inform and resonate with readers. Researchers reinforce the study's transferability with a rich, detailed description of the context, setting, or location and the people studied and by being transparent with analysis and demonstrating trustworthiness.

Dependability regards the stability of the data over time and the circumstances of the study. However, the stability of the circumstances depends on the nature of the study (Connelly, 2016). Dependability inherently requires participants' assessment of the findings and evaluation and recommendations about the study, which are all supported by the data derived from study participants. On the other hand, confirmability regards the extent to which other researchers could confirm the study findings. Confirmability ensures that data and its interpretation are not inquirer illusions but rather genuinely derived from data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Alternatively, Connelly (2016) posited that confirmability regards the neutrality or extent to which study findings are consistent and repeatable. Korstjens and Moser (2018) posited that the criterion of dependability and confirmability can employ an audit trail strategy and transparency. These criteria describe the research steps from the beginning of the research study onto the development and articulation of the research findings. Therefore, records of the research path need to be kept throughout the study.

Bracketing

The case study researcher must seek to mitigate their biases and prejudices to secure the impartiality and thus the validity of their subsequent conclusions. Therefore, bracketing or epoche helps researchers to grapple with their inherent research bias. Bracketing facilitates the reader to become familiar with the researcher's experiences and determine if the researcher fixated on the participant's experiences without the researcher's influence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Weatherford and Maitra (2019) surmised that bracketing is a means to mitigate researcher judgment or avoid the commonplace and typical way of seeing things. Therefore, bracketing enables the researcher to extract their own biased experiences from impacting the research study topic.

Bracketing is not a question of whether there is researcher influence, but rather how the influence occurs, hence its mitigating impact. However, if the researcher's learning and research become too rigidly systematic and methodology constrained, bracketing will not occur as the researcher's viewpoint provides valuable context and authenticity and impacts the ultimate research conclusions accordingly. Nonetheless, researcher bracketing or epoche inherently enhances trustworthy analyses and the scholarly rigor of research. Shufutinsky (2020) asserted that a combination of use-of-self techniques such as ecliptic self-bracketing, self-transparency, self-exclusion, and partnering and mirroring can be employed to attain and demonstrate bracketing.

Triangulation is an effective mitigator regarding data analysis in an empirical study, and it enhances the validity of the process regarding using multiple external analysis methods about the same events. Thus, triangulation is critical to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, that the inferences have a reasonable probability of occurring, and can be aligned with the study's conceptual framework (Fusch et al., 2018). The methodological triangulation focus in this dissertation regarded interviews and document content analysis from the internet, websites, and other media and field notes. The corroboration of data from several sources within the multiple units of the single case study enhanced the depth of understanding regarding the theme of local food and destination marketing within the single case study with multiple units of analysis paradigm. Therefore, the methodological form of triangulation corroborated individual viewpoints and experiences against others and contributed to the richness of the data (Shenton, 2004).

Saturation

Saturation is the most popularly touted assurance of qualitative rigor by authors. Conceptually, saturation is a yardstick criterion of qualitative research for suspending data collection and or analysis. However, saturation is inherently an ongoing and cumulative judgment that the researcher makes and perhaps never finalizes rather than an objective that can be pinpointed at a specific moment (Saunders et al., 2018). Therefore, failure to attain saturation dilutes the quality of the research conducted. Hennink et al. (2017) asserted that saturation has an inherently simple appeal but is complex to operationalize and declare. Although there are several scholarly incarnations of saturation, this study opts to proffer the different approaches of code saturation and meaning saturation to guide the sample size estimates.

Code saturation is used during data collection to gauge saturation by asserting that the range of issues regarding the study has been identified and no more new issues can be discerned. However, code saturation alone is not sufficient as it only identifies issues that, although contributing to a more robust codebook, need additional data to be more fully understood. Thus, it is not only the presence or frequency of an issue that bestows saturation but, more significantly, the richness of data garnered from an issue that leverages its understanding. Code saturation can be attained with a few interviews as it may outline the leading domains of inquiry. However, further data are required to enhance the depth, richness, and complexities in data that have important meaning regarding understanding the research study phenomena.

Therefore, meaning saturation occurs when the researcher has achieved a comprehensive understanding of issues and when there are no further dimensions, nuances, or insights that can be discerned. Saturation is only declared when identified codes become fully understood, which typically requires more data. So, while a code may be gleaned from one interview and repeated in another, additional interviews are required to capture the full spectrum of the issue to understand it fully. Therefore, saturation underscores the need to collect more data to confirm that the researcher has heard it all and understood it all (Hennink et al., 2017).

Bracketing Techniques

Shufutinsky (2020) surmised that bracketing can be displayed and attained via a combination of use-of-self methods, including ecliptic self-bracketing, prevention, self-transparency, self-exclusion, and partnering and mirroring to enhance rigor, validity, credibility, and trustworthiness.

- **Ecliptic Self-Bracketing** - more a methodological timeline than a methodology, which is performed throughout the full spectrum of the research process, starting with topic selection, literature review, method design, data collection, analysis, and concluding with reporting. Therefore, understanding personal views and positions regarding the study and reflecting on the various aspects of the research cycle ensure that biases are identified and minimized or at least made transparent.

- **Prevention** - coping with biases by seeking to pre-empt their development as much as possible, such as suspending the comprehensive literature review until after data collection. Accordingly, this checks the extent of researcher knowledge regarding existing outcomes, thus curbing theoretical knowledge and pre-suppositions and reducing bias regarding the method and question development, the conduct of interviews, and other data collection.
- **Self-Transparency** - benefits the reader by understanding what the researcher and writer did and any associated limitations and strengths during the interview to garner the results which yielded the results presented. Additionally, self-transparency can also be demonstrated by the self to the audience via different approaches such as auto-ethnographic narrative reporting and journaling and memoing to consider ideas and thoughts and ideas, record them, and save them for subsequent analysis.
- **Self-Exclusion** - based on use-of-self to know when to withdraw or exclude oneself from a conversation or participation strategically to focus on accurately capturing the essence of the experiences of research participants and contributes to transparency and trustworthiness.
- **Partnering and Mirroring** - also use self to address confirmation bias via partnering with, for example, faculty members, co-researchers, and other scholarly colleagues to collaborate as code-checkers, sources of objectivity to secondarily analyze and code raw data. Therefore, independent objectivity can better explore differences in perception and interpretation via the possibility of triangulation.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are two indispensable assertions of qualitative research rigor that equate with the concepts of reliability and validity (Cypress, 2017). Qualitative validity regards whether the findings are accurate from the viewpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account. In contrast, qualitative reliability inherently demonstrates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and projects (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1986) reconceptualized reliability and validity with the concept of 'trustworthiness' to appraise the rigor of a qualitative study. Trustworthiness is simultaneously assessed during the study and after the research is conducted via credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

The concepts of bracketing, triangulation, and saturation leverage validity. Bracketing or epoche helps the researcher to grapple with their inherent research bias and facilitates the reader to become familiar with the researcher's experiences and determine if the researcher fixated on the participant's experiences without the researcher's influence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use-of-self methods such as ecliptic self-bracketing, self-transparency, self-exclusion, and partnering and mirroring are invaluable techniques to mitigate biased data collection and analysis (Shufutinsky, 2020).

Triangulation enhances validity by conducting multiple external analysis methods about the same events (Fusch et al., 2018). Saturation is inherently an ongoing and cumulative judgment that the researcher makes and perhaps never finalizes rather than an objective that can be pinpointed at a specific moment (Saunders et al., 2018). Saturation, therefore, has an inherently simple appeal but is complex to operationalize and declare as sufficient data collection is required to confirm that the researcher has heard it all and understood it all (Hennink et al., 2017).

Summary of Section 2 and Transition to Section 3

The project highlights noted in Section 2 expounded the rudiments of the information presented in the Foundation of the Study in Section 1. Section 2 expounded the purpose of the study, participant description, and discussion and rationale of the research method and research design regarding this qualitative study. Also included were descriptions regarding participant selection and sampling considerations, followed by discussions regarding data collection and data analysis. Lastly, the concepts of reliability and validity and their components were also expounded to help engender necessary scholarly rigor.

In Section 3, NVivo software is utilized to help with the data collection and organization. Then, the presentation of the findings based upon the data collection and data analysis will be derived from the information garnered via the interview process questions to the shortlisted participants. The upcoming Section 3 therefore highlights the application to professional practice and the resulting implications for change. Section 3 also discusses further study recommendations and expounds researcher reflections attributed to conducting this research study. Finally, Section 3 also includes a summary of this case study research results and its conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice

Overview of the Study

The problem addressed in this research study is the continued loyalty to the ubiquitous sun, sand, and sea tourism brand marketing versus nurturing destination loyalty. In this regard, Trinidad & Tobago is failing to promote local food as an integral part of their destination loyalty marketing to enhance tourism experiences and destination decision-making resulting in the potential loss of destination competitiveness and attractiveness. This exploratory qualitative case field study approach uncovered learnings derived from Trinidad & Tobago destination marketing websites and stakeholder interviews because this dissertation topic lacks empirical evidence.

The content analysis method was used to explore DMO photographic and textual website marketing materials and develop coding schemes to explore conceptual and theoretical issues regarding data understanding. Content Analysis was therefore used to analyze the presentation of food and food culture promoted, the range and diversity of the gastronomic images presented, the role of food tourism regarding promotion and destination marketing, and assess the constraints regarding the leveraging of food tourism destination marketing. The research probe also required collecting data from participant individuals to contribute to academic debate and knowledge of this dissertation topic.

Participants were drawn from local DMO government-associated institutions and a diverse mix of individuals familiar with the phenomenon of local food and destination marketing from Trinidad & Tobago and regionally. Therefore, various destination marketing stakeholders were interviewed to garner multiple perspectives on the issues systemic to the primary research questions proposed in this dissertation. Semi-structured interview questions were used to glean valuable insights from participants derived via purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling methods.

This dissertation's methodological triangulation focus regarded the use of interviews and document content analysis from DMO websites. NVivo qualitative research software was used to organize, analyze, and visualize information from website content analysis and data interview sets. Accordingly, NVivo was used to generate 'Word Cloud' figures and a 'Hierarchical Chart' table derived from coding themes as data visualization features. This corroboration of data from nineteen different interview sources and the two DMO websites, one for each island, enhanced the depth of understanding regarding the theme of local food and destination marketing within this single case study. Therefore, the methodological form of triangulation corroborated individual viewpoints and experiences against others and contributed to the richness of the data collected.

Presentation of the Findings

This presentation of the research findings focused mainly on this case study's third (RO3) and fourth (RO4) research objectives within the Concept Framework noted in Figure 2. Although Trinidad & Tobago is a twin-island country, each island's destination management and marketing activities are managed separately. Therefore, key findings are derived from the website content analysis using the NVivo software regarding the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited and Tourism Trinidad Limited websites. These content analyses are presented in a descriptive format. This exploratory case study aims to expound insights into a topic lacking empirical evidence.

The Institutional Review Board application and approval are based upon a maximum of 20 interviews to achieve research saturation. However, only 16 out of 19 attempted interviews were successfully conducted and analyzed with the NVivo content analysis software. Two local prospective participant interviewees proved elusive and did not eventually participate in the study despite several weeks of follow-up after sending the interview invitation request. Also, one significant regional tourism organization participant eventually replied via e-mail that they "have no information to add to your research."

DMO Websites Content Analysis (RO3)

DMOs represent a diversity of tourism stakeholders such as hotels, restaurants, and souvenir-related businesses. DMOs devote a significant portion of their efforts and resources to appeal and be persuasive by providing destination information via destination websites to prospective travelers. Fernández-Cavia et al. (2020) surmised scholarship that destination websites stand out as the most consulted sources on destination choice and trip preparation, especially regarding accommodation. However, destination websites are also used to a lesser extent as a source of information for the tourist while at the destination and throughout their trip. The DMO-branded website is critical as the tourist's gateway to the destination. Therefore, highlighting or downplaying any destination elements is indispensable to what becomes known or unknown about the destination's brand identity and competitiveness (Morosan, 2015). Camprubí and Coromina (2016) surmised scholarship that there has been an exponential use of content analysis as a research method regarding tourism studies. Additionally, Eto and Kyngäs (2008) posited that content analysis is profoundly applicable when there is a lack of previous knowledge about a phenomenon under study.

Themes Discovered - Websites

Seasonality

Rogale-Homika and Gunare (2021) asserted that seasonality is a distinctive feature of the global tourism industry. The systemic impact of seasonality on the tourism business and the whole tourism structure is attributed to the concentration of tourism inflows during relatively short periods. Therefore, most destinations grapple with creating alternative tourism products to extend the season and address how tourists can be attracted to overcome seasonality.

The Visit Trinidad website features its world-famous carnival, various festivals and international sporting events, and year-round attractions regarding its beaches, nature, and cuisine to minimize the systemic impact of ubiquitous tourism seasonality. Mohanty and Sadual (2019) surmised scholarship that contemporary visitors' and tourists' focus has shifted from mere physical sightseeing. The focus is now towards pedestalling authentic and experience type tourism activities where they can discover, participate, and learn about a destination. Destination attractions bundle tourism products and services that provide the various facilities and amenities to the tourist from which they derive their experience and desired satisfaction.

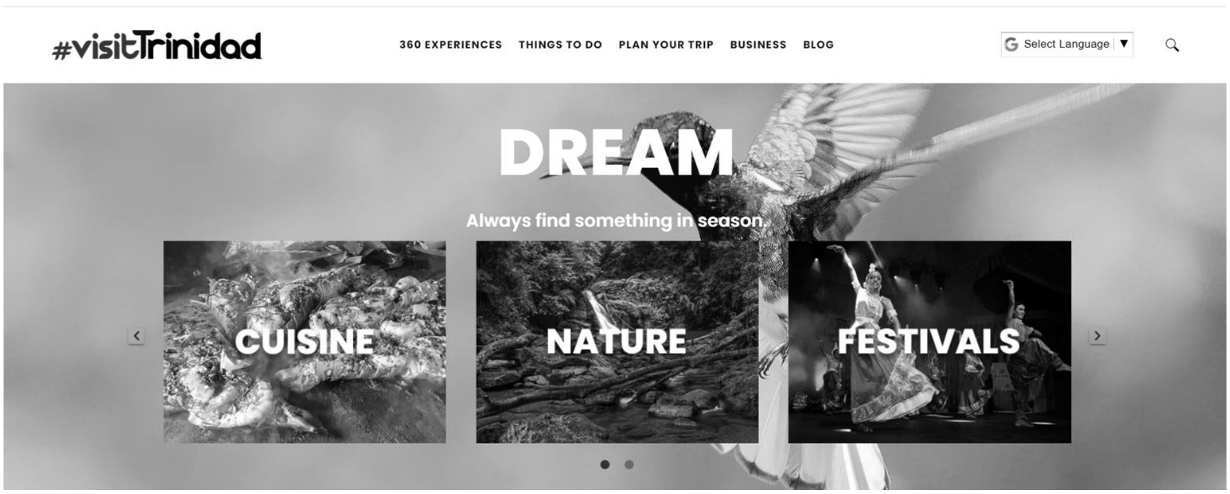
However, cuisine helps build the brand image that leverages and enhances the attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination. Most visitors typically experience the destination cuisine intentionally or not, and food-related experiences can directly influence destination choices (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Food is non-seasonal and is the most elementary commodity at all destinations, enhancing the destination image and brand status. Therefore, 3 S endowment aside, food tourism is a cornerstone of destination marketing. It has facilitated a paradigm shift from mere destination pleasure-seeking to unique and unforgettable experiences (Mohanty & Sadual, 2019).

Experiences

The landing pages of the Visit Trinidad and Visit Tobago DMO websites portray the primary theme of 'experiences' and 'things to do.' In the case of both DMO websites, experiences are highlighted as a common theme in Figures 6-13. The content analysis of the visit Trinidad website revealed that, in general, the destination marketing emphasis is placed on year-round experiences to address the ubiquitous tourism challenge of seasonality: "DREAM, always find something in season." The website informs the prospective visitor of various destination activities throughout the year, such as sports featuring the world-famous sport of cricket, carnival, beaches, cuisine, nature, and festivals.

Figure 6

Visit Trinidad Website Landing Page: Seasonality Marketing Themes

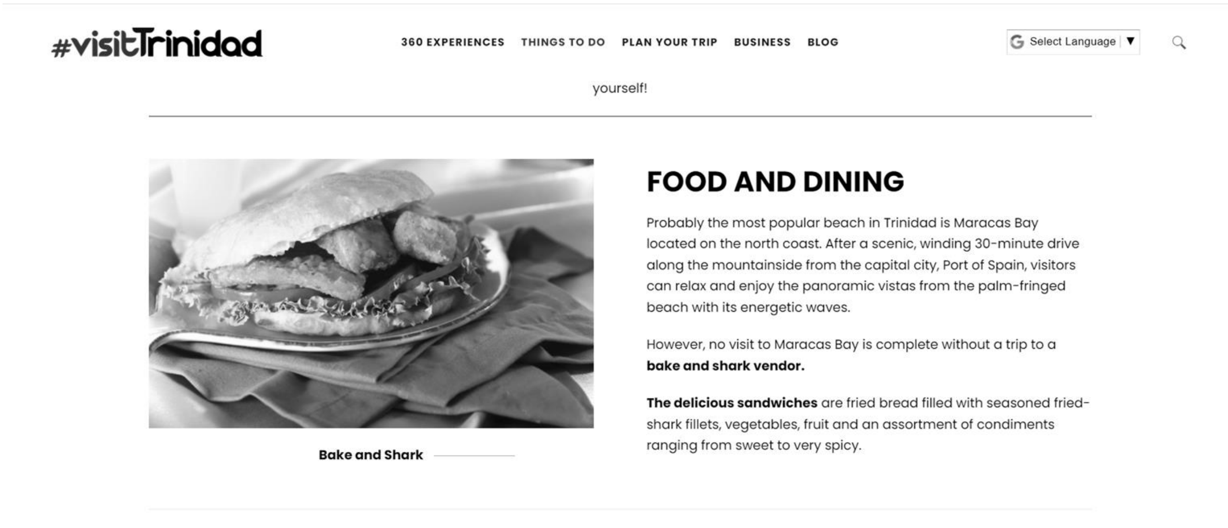


From Visit Trinidad, 2020, https://visittrinidad.tt/

As presented in Figure 4, "Cuisine" is one of six key marketing themes that position food as a distinct non-seasonal element in the Trinidad destination and its beaches and nature. The cuisine page highlights a picture reflecting the grilling of lobster, which appears to be generously seasoned with fresh local green seasonings, the signature Trinidad & Tobago way of cooking. Further analysis of the "taste our culture" Visit Trinidad webpage features pictures and descriptions regarding food and dining, local street foods, sweet treats, international dishes, and a section featuring recipe videos on local cuisine, which are expounded below.

Figure 7

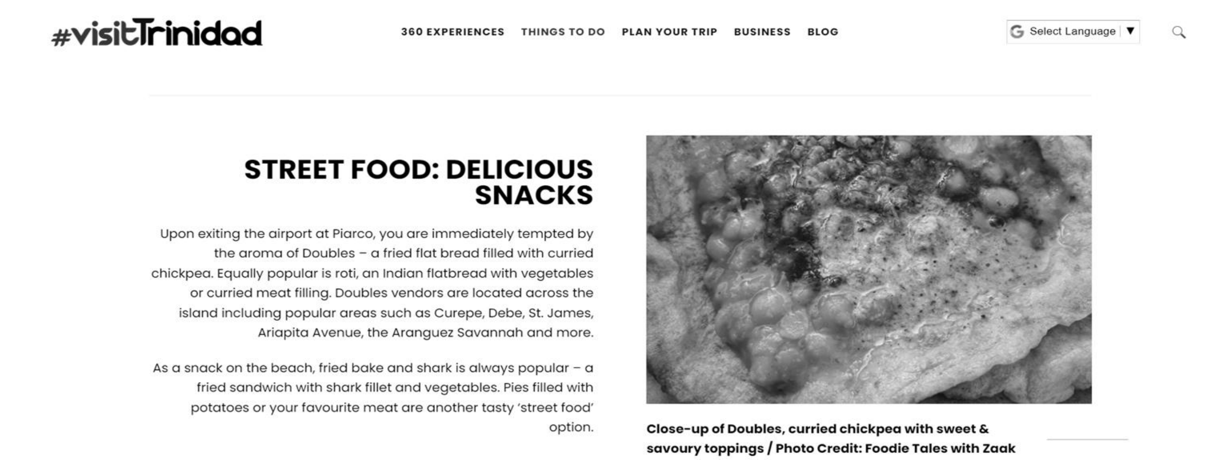
Visit Trinidad Website, Cuisine Webpage Featuring Food and Dining



From Visit Trinidad, 2020, https://visittrinidad.tt/

Figure 8

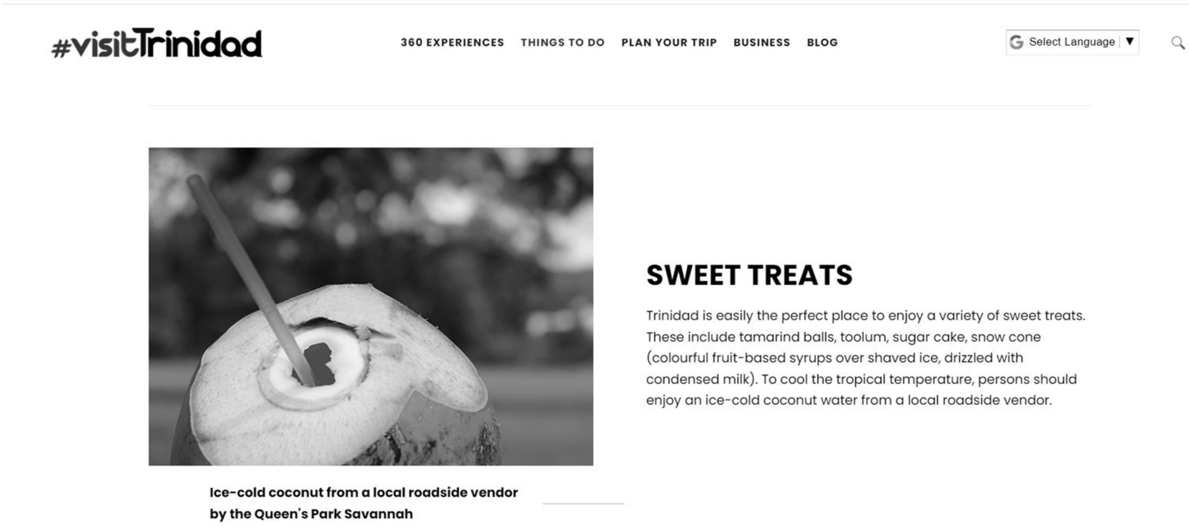
Visit Trinidad Website, Cuisine Webpage Page Featuring Street Food



From Visit Trinidad, 2020, https://visittrinidad.tt/

Figure 9

Visit Trinidad Website, Cuisine Webpage Featuring Sweet Treats



From Visit Trinidad, 2020, https://visittrinidad.tt/

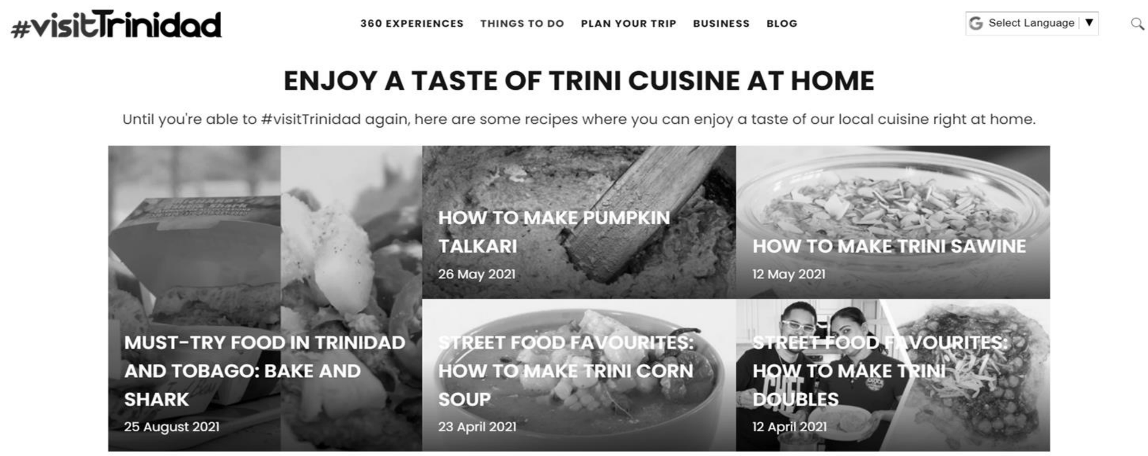
Figure 10

Visit Trinidad Website, Cuisine Webpage Featuring International Dishes

From Visit Trinidad, 2020, https://visittrinidad.tt/

Figure 11

Visit Trinidad Website, Cuisine Page Featuring Local Recipes' How to Make' Videos Webpage



From Visit Trinidad, 2020, https://visittrinidad.tt/

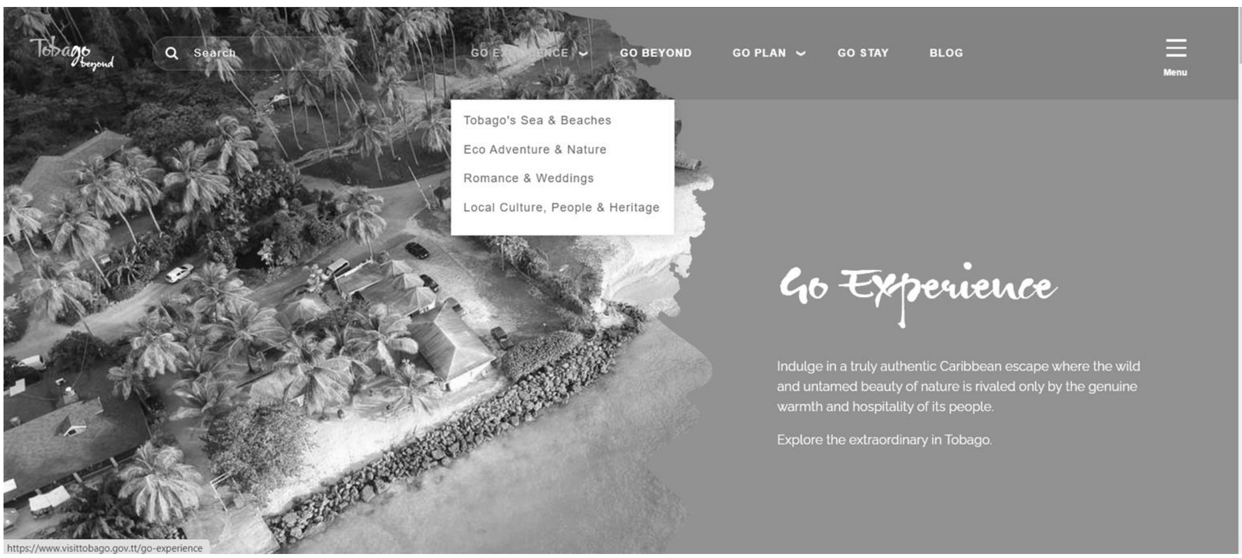
According to the information provided on the cuisine web page and noted in Figure 6, the most popular Trinidad beach is Maracas Bay. The signature local food called 'bake and shark' is a gastronomic highlight that completes the beach experience. This gastronomic delight features a fried bread sandwich filled with fresh, well-seasoned fried-shark fillets, with optional toppings of vegetables, fruit, and fresh local condiments ranging from sweet to very spicy. Several Trinidad street foods, including a picture and description of doubles, along with local foods roti, bake and shark, and pies, are featured in Figure 9. Doubles are fried flatbread with well-seasoned curried chickpeas topped with various optional spicy hot sauces and other savory toppings, including coconut chutney and cucumber. Figure 10 provides information regarding local sweet treats such as tamarind balls, sugar cake, toolum, and snowcone. Figure 10 also presents a popular tropical and Caribbean pastime of drinking the water from a freshly picked coconut from a street vendor. International cuisine is featured via a picture of Japanese cuisine in Figure 11 and notes the island's very diverse cultural heritage reflected at restaurants throughout the island featuring

Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese, Lebanese, Indian and Caribbean fusion cuisine. Lastly, the cuisine webpage presents in Figure 12 a few 'how to make' videos of popular local cuisine foods.

The Visit Tobago Website focuses on different experiences. Its landing page noted in Figure 12 below features "Go Experience," lists four non-seasonal activities. This activity list regards its sea and beaches, eco-adventure and nature, romance and weddings, and local culture, people, and heritage.

Figure 12

Visit Tobago Website Landing Page, Go Experience

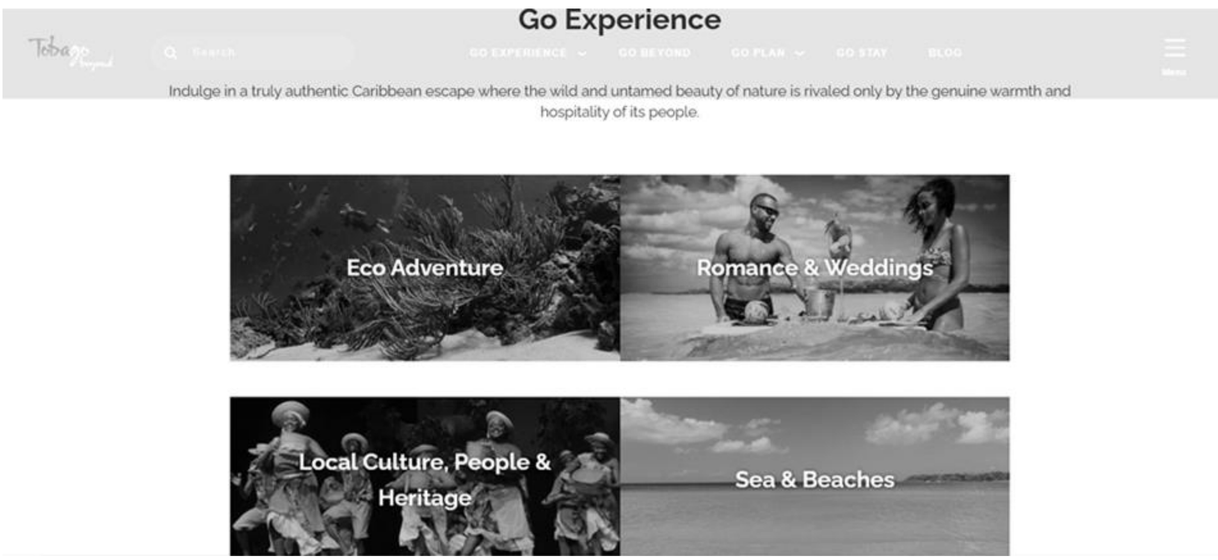


From Visit Trinidad, 2020, https://visittrinidad.tt/

The Visit Tobago landing page in Figure 12 features four main destination marketing experiences regarding its sea and beaches, eco-adventure and nature, romance and weddings, and local culture, people, and heritage, all inherently non-seasonal destination attractions. The Visit Trinidad landing page noted in Figure 6 also presents "Things To Do" pages regarding various physical sights and experiences.

Figure 13

Visit Tobago Website Landing Page, Four Key Marketing Themes

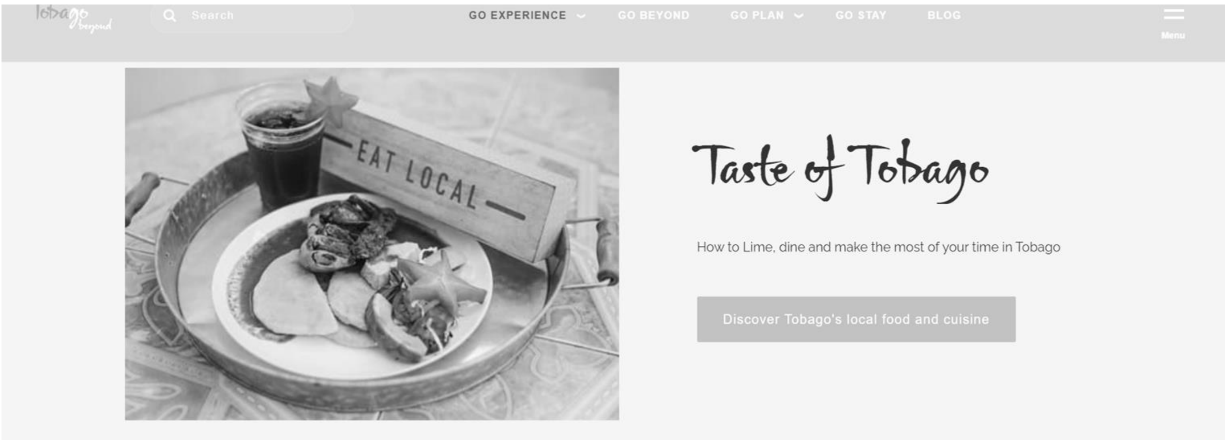


Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

The local culture, people, and heritage web page invites visitors to discover Tobago's authentic cultural experiences. The 'Taste of Tobago' Experience highlights the true essence of the destination's cultural allure with the infusion of its local food flavors, heritage, and connection with its people.

Figure 14

Visit Tobago Website 'Go Experience Local Culture, People & Heritage' Taste of Tobago Experience Theme Webpage



Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

The 'Taste of Tobago' webpage introduces several experiences regarding entertainment intertwined with food and beverage options, from fine dining to the casual beach and street eats noted below in Figures 15 and 16.

Figure 15

Visit Tobago Website, Taste of Tobago Experience Theme, How to Lime, Dine, and Make the Most of Your Time in Tobago Webpage

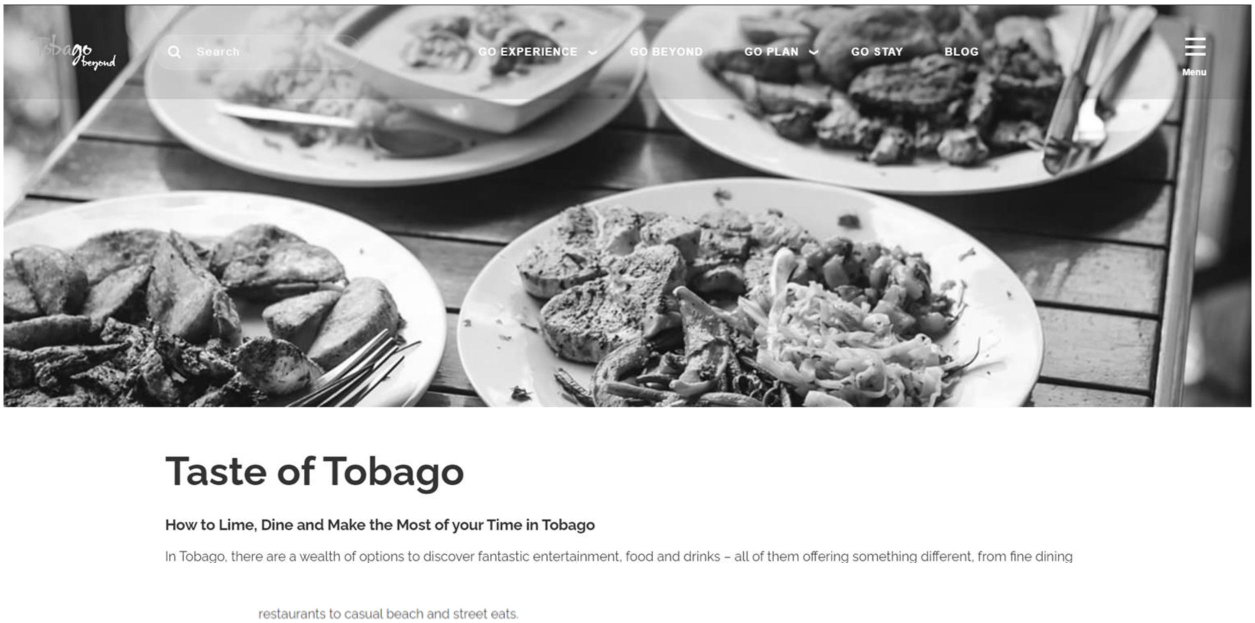
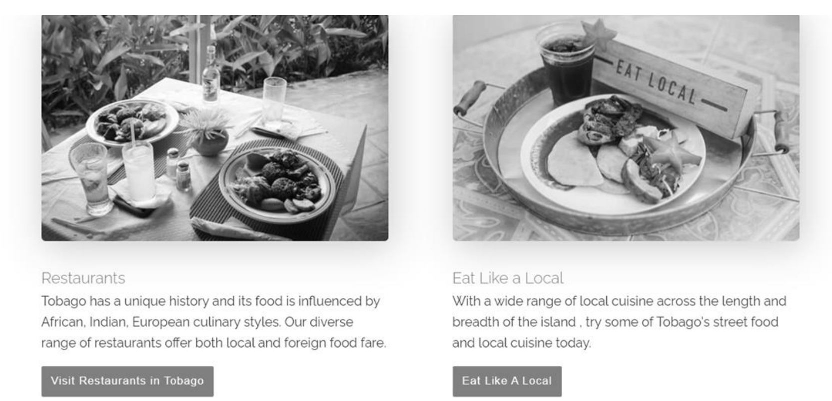


Figure 16

Visit Tobago Website, Taste of Tobago Experience Theme, Eat Like a Local or Restaurant Options Webpage

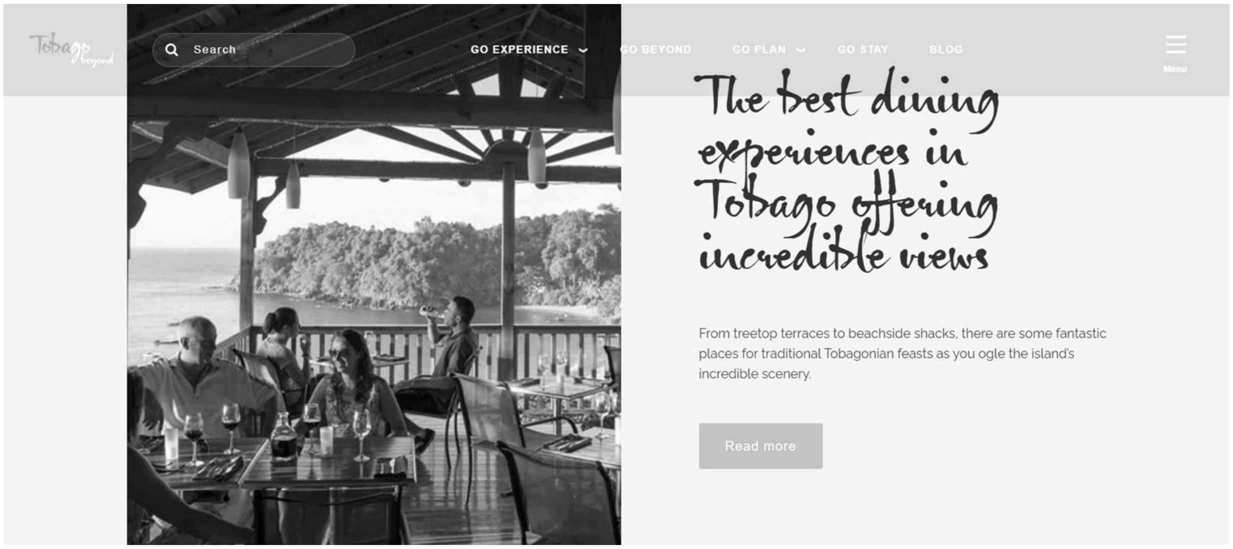


Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

Figure 16 highlights Tobago's restaurant establishments to 'eat like a local.' The restaurant experiences are influenced by the inland's African, Indian, and European culinary heritage and offer local and foreign food fare with various amazing views as noted in Figure 17.

Figure 17

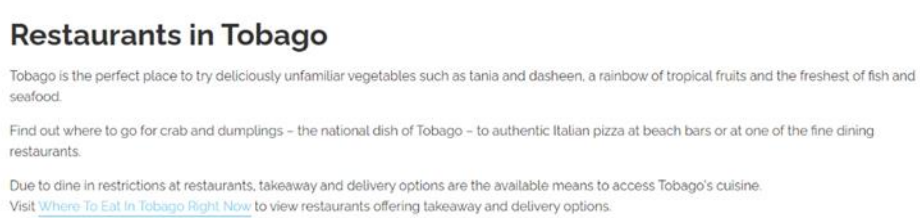
Visit Tobago Website, Experiences Themed Dining Views Webpage



Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

Figure 18

Visit Tobago Website, 'Where to Eat Restaurant Locations' Webpage

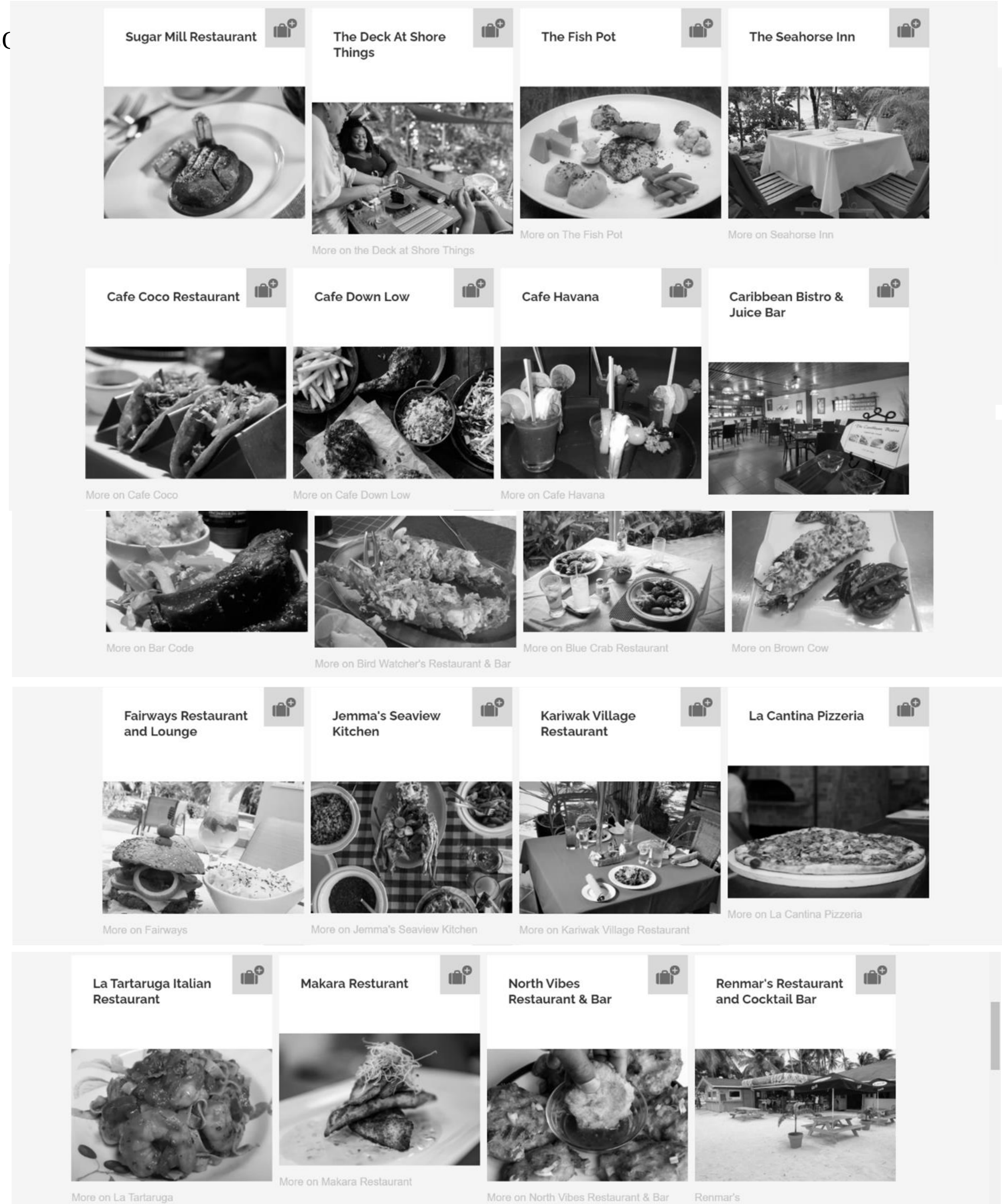


Restaurants in Tobago

Tobago is the perfect place to try deliciously unfamiliar vegetables such as tania and dasheen, a rainbow of tropical fruits and the freshest of fish and seafood.

Find out where to go for crab and dumplings – the national dish of Tobago – to authentic Italian pizza at beach bars or at one of the fine dining restaurants.

Due to dine in restrictions at restaurants, takeaway and delivery options are the available means to access Tobago's cuisine.
Visit Where To Eat In Tobago Right Now to view restaurants offering takeaway and delivery options.

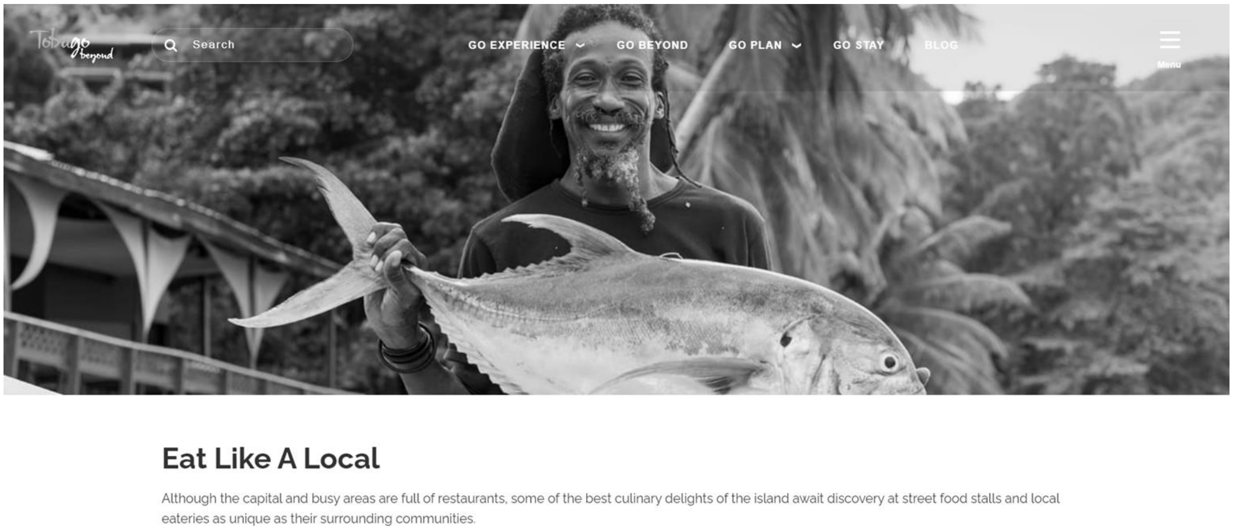


Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

Tobago's restaurant establishments options feature multiple establishments in various locations dispersed around the island, as noted in Figure 18.

Figure 19

Visit Tobago Website, 'Eat Like a Local' Webpage



Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

Tobago's 'eat like a local' features locations that provide several culinary street food delights at various eateries and food stalls noted in Figures 18 and 19. Tobago's heritage also features the traditional art of baking in hand-made clay ovens with bread and pastry recipes handed down over generations, pictured below in Figure 20.

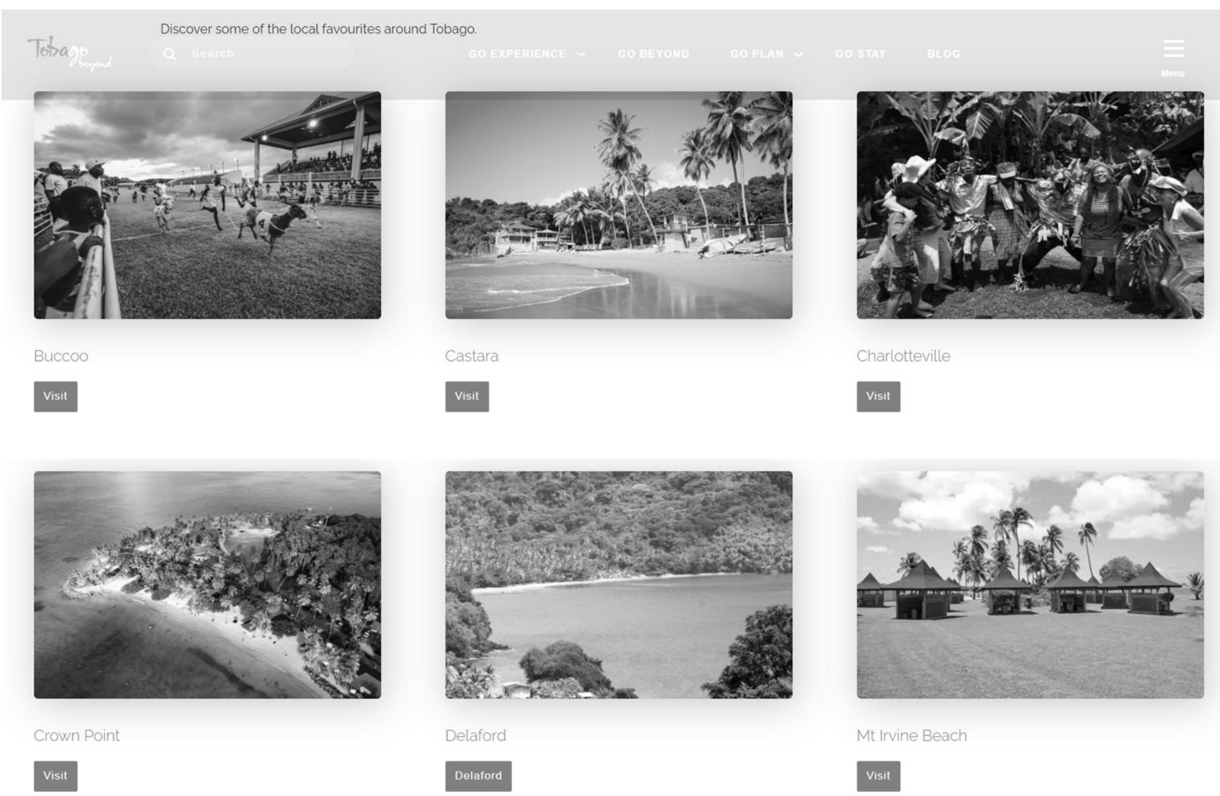
Figure 20

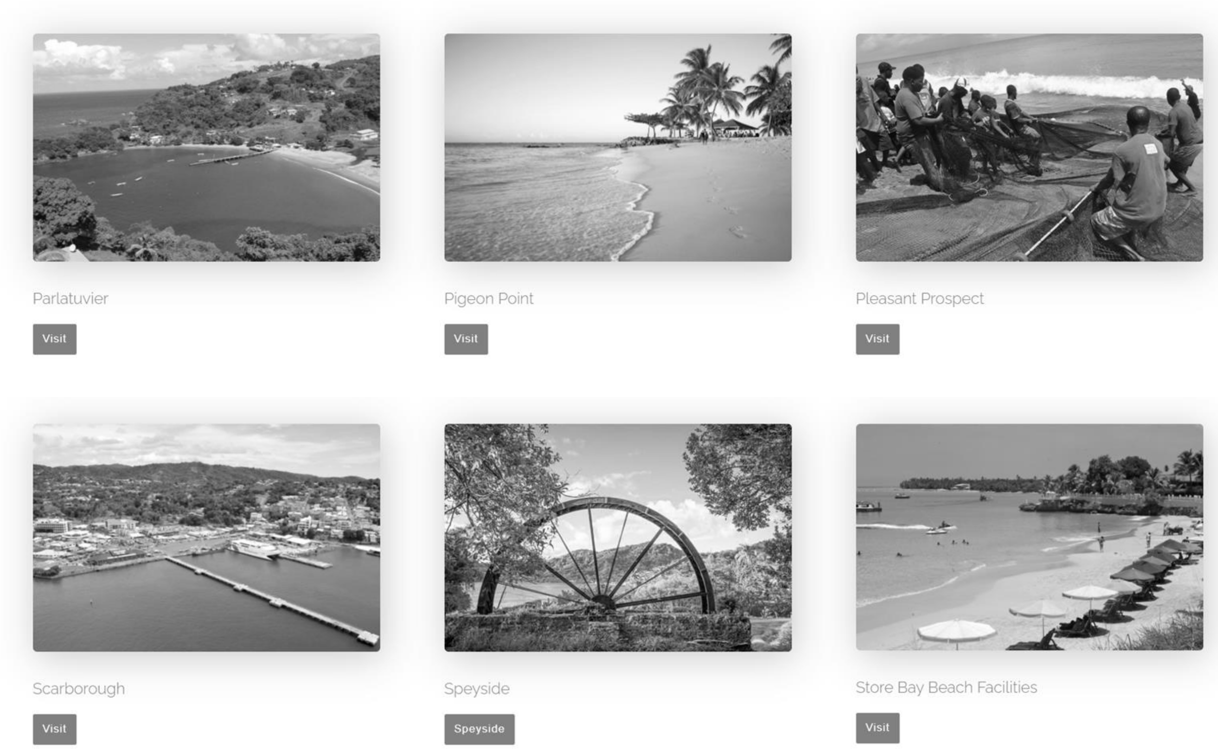
Visit Tobago Website, Experience 'Local Food' Webpage

Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

Figure 21

Visit Tobago Website, Local Food Locations Webpage





Retrieved April 24th, 2022, from https://www.visittobago.gov.tt/

Websites - Representation and Visualization of the Data

A comprehensive review of the "cuisine" themed Visit Trinidad web page highlights a paradise for food lovers. The culinary invitation to Trinidad savors various food ranging from local cuisine to world-class fine dining. The content analysis NVivo word cloud frequency based upon (Figure 22) determined that only about 40% of the 247-word families highlighted on the cuisine web page are food-related. An additional eight percent attributes to popular food establishment locations throughout Trinidad. However, only about six percent or 15 of the cuisine page 247-food word families are local-food related. These represent only a paltry three signature local dishes – bake and shark, doubles, and roti and three local desserts known as sugar cake, toolum, and snow cone. The rest are merely generic word families.

Figure 22

NVivo Word Cloud of Food Descriptors for the Visit Trinidad Cuisine Page

Figure 23

NVivo Word Cloud of Food Descriptors for the Visit Tobago Cuisine Landing Page

The Tobago website notes several different options for entertainment, food, and drinks, from fine dining to casual beach and street eats. The content analysis NVivo word cloud frequency based upon (Figure 23) determined that only about 33% of the 1632-word families highlighted on the cuisine web page are food-related. Similar to the Visit Trinidad website, only about three percent are local-food related. However, unlike the Visit Trinidad website, the Visit Tobago website does at least mention local non-alcoholic beverages, beer, and rum.

Themes Discovered - Participant Interviews

The NVivo content analysis coding exercise discovered three major themes in Table 1. Accordingly, all 16 participant interviewees posited that Trinidad & Tobago local food presents many marketing opportunities, notwithstanding its many intertwined challenges. Also, Trinidad & Tobago have many inherent and intertwined destination challenges and opportunities. However, the local food and destination marketing challenges and opportunities are attributed to systemic Trinidad & Tobago government influences and funding issues.

Participant Theme #1 – Local Food Challenges and Opportunities

Participant #15 asserted that "it is like love at first sight when it comes to our cuisine." Participant #7 posited that "tourists do want to try our local cuisine, but we still have to offer them what they are accustomed to." However, the hotel restaurants must have the entertainment and a local ambiance to go along with the food." But Participant #12 posited that Trinidad & Tobago's foray into food tourism lacked foresight as it has not embraced proper consultation with the relevant people and is also plagued by funding issues attributed to its tourism investment climate:

> Trinidad & Tobago's food is amazing because of its races, cultures, and eclectic backgrounds. We have something so unique compared to other Caribbean islands and even throughout the world. It has many possibilities and potential; our food is so flavorful and distinct that food and entertainment are the new oil in Trinidad & Tobago. The

> importance of food should be on top when marketing Trinidad & Tobago because, frankly, I do not see us having anything else to bring anyone here other than our food and our carnival.

Participant #4 echoed the sentiments of the American celebrity food Vlogger – American David Hoffman, who has almost one million YouTube followers and has visited 86 countries documenting his food adventures. Hoffman, during a 2022 visit to Trinidad & Tobago, declared, it is "the food capital of the Caribbean," and Participant #14 concurred that Trinidad & Tobago is the food capital of the Caribbean:

> We recognize that our diverse culinary offerings are a point of differentiation. We think that our food is very powerful. So, we are actually in the process of developing a specific marketing strategy. Specific to food, we want to certainly claim that we are the food capital of the Caribbean even though we have not been leveraging it and saying it. We want to create a lot of hype around our food.

Similarly, Participant #2 echoed:

> The whole notion of food is one of the untapped assets in most destinations. However, some destinations have done a much better job of taking advantage of their food and beverages, which are tied to their culture better than other islands. Trinidad has a wonderful opportunity. The times I have been to Trinidad, I've had some of the most amazing meals at the restaurants because of the diversity, which is one of its great assets. So, Trinidad has that opportunity of utilizing their food and beverage, and you have some amazing individuals that have great skills.

Participant #7 opined that "the food in Trinidad & Tobago is very good and is better than the rest of the region, but we don't make enough of its potential." Participant #1 expressed that "the uniqueness we have is a good steppingstone to creating a narrative around our various local food products." However, Participant #1 posited that we need the expertise of some foreign chefs to be able to help us extract the best flavor out of our products.

Participant #11 reckoned that "Trinidad & Tobago has the most eclectic cuisine because of the various influences of our historical past and traditions, making for unique food experiences that contemporary travelers appreciate because of their more refined palettes." Participant #10 further posited that the locally grown fresh green seasonings differentiate its local food from international cuisine and, therefore, should be used to elevate the culinary industry in Trinidad & Tobago. This posit by Participant #10 attributes to the concept of *terroir*, which regards the combination of physical factors such as soil, vegetation, height above sea level, slope, and microclimate with the human traditions and cultivation practice (Broadway, 2017). Notwithstanding this unique taste attributed to local seasonings, Participant #10 opined that:

> We don't really have that level of respect for our food and cuisine compared to other countries. We have looked down on our food and have never wanted to put it on the same level as, say, French or Italian cuisine.

Participant #12 posited that local foods are not popular because Trinidad & Tobago cannot deliver consistent quality food at stable prices because of the inherent unpredictability of local fruits, starches, and vegetable supply. Participant #16 also lamented our food quality and consistency at hotel restaurant establishments, notwithstanding the position that the food aspect at hotels is hugely significant. However, the appropriately trained and competent culinary staff and chefs are a major limitation. Participant #3 posited that whenever foreign tourists come, we think that we should give them foreign foods when we should emphasize local foods. However, we need to do the proper research on tourist taste preferences regarding the spiciness levels of our hot peppers and curries, starch portion sizes, and presentation of our local foods.

Destination Marketing Challenges and Opportunities Theme

Participant #9 posited that the Caribbean islands grapple with getting as much attention as possible amongst a clutter of global options people have for taking vacations. Other island destinations have similar sun, sea, and sand offerings but at greater value for money than Caribbean destinations, and especially Trinidad & Tobago. However, Participant #14 posited that respect and appreciation for the tourism sector have traditionally lacked. Participant #11 asserted that destination Trinidad & Tobago have more experience activities and things to do while on vacation than other Caribbean islands. However, the tendency in the past has been to focus on the marketing side while neglecting the product side.

Accordingly, the major destination Trinidad and especially Tobago challenges are the room stock quality, quantity, and variety directly related to the tourism sector's investment climate and fiscal incentives. Also, there is a significant challenge regarding direct airlift from the major international visitor source cities. Most of the flights coming into Tobago must pass through Trinidad or other islands because destination Tobago does not have the demand capability to fill an entire direct flight. Also, these shared flights do not offer the daily arrival and departure flexibility of the more popular Caribbean and other global 3S destinations. However, the consequence of a lower influx of tourists means that the destination beaches and attractions are not cluttered, and the tourist does not have to compete for sun, sea, and sand.

Participant #9 further lamented the current state of the digitalization of the destination, which does not exist in too many accommodation establishments. The booking and reservation system is typically not e-commerce ready as it uses outdated voice calls and payment steps. This subpar digitalization status stymies the efforts of DMOs to attract tourists via leveraging destination websites and social media platforms.

Participant #2 asserted that the visitors from outside the Caribbean see it as one. Therefore, if there is an issue at one destination, they consider it systemic and similarly affects the entire Caribbean archipelago islands. However, in the case of Trinidad & Tobago, it is desirable to collaboratively market the country as one but with two intertwined destinations. Creative visitor packages need to be developed to couple Tobago's typical (3S) sun, sea, and sand destination attribute with (e.g., Trinidad's carnival and culinary delights). However, there is a need for investment in infrastructure and marketing promotions by the DMOs and the private sector. Participant #3 asserted that we need to incorporate some stability and consistency in our experiential activities to ensure that returning tourists can engage during subsequent visits or if they make word-of-mouth recommendations to their social network.

Participant #4 posited that regional tourism stakeholders, including Trinidad & Tobago, "take things for granted, and one of the things we take for granted is the product that we offer." Participants #3 and #10 both considered sanitation, food safety, and hygiene as very important issues which could negate all destination marketing efforts if any tourists become sick or suffer food poisoning. Such incidents have the easy potential to go viral on social media with a devastating impact on foreign tourism. Therefore, our sanitation, food safety, and hygiene must rise to international standards and be in place before we generally foray into any food tourism and tourism expansion.

Participant #5 asserted a few significantly looming tourism opportunities for the Caribbean. Digital nomads can be tapped as a source because of the global technological advancements. Millennial tourists prefer culture, place, and people immersion experiences compared to the traditional Caribbean tourist consumer, typically focused primarily on leisure tourism. However, Participant #14 posited that the millennial tourist extends to include the Trinidad & Tobago diasporic tourists. Trinidad & Tobago has an estimated diaspora of 400,000, most of whom are concentrated in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, which are traditionally the source of the majority of international visitors to Trinidad & Tobago (Government of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago Draft Diaspora Policy, 2021). The millennial diaspora is an underleveraged source of high-spending tourists who are also destination influencers on their social networks from these major inbound tourism source markets. However, Participants #10 and #11 noted the many Trinidad & Tobago diasporic Hollywood actors and entertainment celebrities such as Nicky Minaj, Alfonso Ribero, Nia Long, Heather Headley, and Lorraine Toussaint. CNN anchor Abbi Phillip and globally acclaimed sporting and track personalities have not been engaged as destination ambassadors. Jamaica has made tremendous marketing use of its reggae music artists, such as the late Bob Marley, Shaggy, and athletics stars, such as Usain Bolt and Rihanna from Barbados by extending diplomatic passports to their diasporic celebrities and tourism ambassadors.

Participant #2 asserted that about 60% of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) accommodation providers are considered small-sized establishments of less than 75-rooms. However, Participant #7 asserted that most accommodation establishments, especially in Tobago, are very small, under a 10-room capacity. These small-sized establishments can't offer all-inclusive packages because they cannot justify the investment in resources to offer anything beyond breakfast and certainly not lunch or dinner. However, Participant #2 suggested that destination Trinidad & Tobago adopt the successful strategy employed in other Caribbean islands with small accommodation establishments and limited in-house guest service capability.

A collaborative solution is employed whereby these smaller accommodation establishments can generate additional revenues from the increased guest accommodation. For example, smaller establishments can offer meal options at different restaurants to foster different culinary and entertainment experiences for their guests.

Government Influences and Funding Theme

Participant #2 asserted that governments have not collaborated at the Caribbean regional level to successfully address the issue of interconnectivity and high airlift taxes and fees amongst Caribbean islands. This situation impedes the development of the Caribbean region's tourism product as it has stymied the availability of funds to facilitate regional marketing campaigns by the CHTA. Participant #5 echoed the limiting influences of Caribbean governments and funding issues:

> Funding is a challenge and will continue to be a challenge as Caribbean governments have to make hard decisions in terms of how they allocate limited resources to competing interests such as health, education, transport, so destination marketing, by virtue of its nature, ends up being a little lower on the totem pole.

However, specific to Trinidad & Tobago, Participant #2 asserted that because tourism and hospitality are not the country's economic lifeblood, there is the perception that the destination is significantly challenged regarding what it is offering to tourists because of inadequate investment in tourism infrastructure and destination promotion:

> There needs to be a desire and an interest from the destination in supporting the industry. That support comes by facilitating the right infrastructure and providing businesses with the necessary tools and financial resources to succeed. The government needs to provide taxation and fiscal incentive support; otherwise, it is more difficult for the destination to

succeed.

Similarly, Participant #11 lamented that the government has not put the right fiscal and tax breaks incentives. An overhaul of the foster foreign direct investments regime is required in the tourism and hospitality sector, but "we seem to have an inherent fear of doing something we are not familiar with." However, this should not be because we are the last of the Caribbean islands to embrace tourism and hospitality. We have the opportunity to look at and learn from all of the missteps and successes of countries. Participant #14 lamented that Trinidad & Tobago does not have a cohesive hospitality and tourism sector primarily because of its siloed focus on its lucrative energy and petrochemical sectors. "We've had enough time and ample opportunity to get it right and get it going. We don't have people who are serious enough and don't even have top strategic management people at the top." Other Caribbean islands comparatively have nothing else to market and have had to make their hospitality and tourism sector a success out of necessity. Participant #7 posited that as a country, we need to start understanding the economic benefits of different industries and make better budget allocations accordingly. We will not get more tourists if we do not have the number of quality rooms to fill flights routinely.

> Trinidad & Tobago can diversify its economy into other areas while maintaining its oil and gas sector. We don't have to wait until we run out of oil and gas to start thinking about diversifying, so let's diversify into sustainable tourism and food tourism in a big way. We are our own worst enemies, like the steel pan; we are not promoting what we are good at. It's never too late; we just have to muster the will to do it now. There's no tomorrow. It's better to start today.

Participant #9 also lamented that a greater awareness from the political administration and the general public is needed to appreciate the benefits of tourism. If you get that, everyone will understand what is required to be done. However, "what we fail to do now, we will have to do in a crisis if we don't adjust to now." Participant #1 posited that the promotion of the Trinidad & Tobago brand has not been properly thought through. The country and product brand are unsatisfactory because the government has not done its job due to its preoccupation with the energy sector.

Participant #5 further posited that the unsettling frequent changing of government appointed DMO board members and CEOs has led to inconsistent destination marketing strategies over the last few years. Participant #12 teased the idea of a Ministry of Food Production and Tourism, which can arguably enjoy much synergistic symbiosis regarding the notion of agriculture and tourism linkages and leakages and funding. Participant #13 questioned whether Trinidad & Tobago has ever gotten serious energy behind tourism and provided the requisite funding and, even more importantly, timely funding. Otherwise, you end up scrambling and ultimately with substandard results.

> The politics of the day determine a lot of what you do and say about tourism, and politics has stymied a lot of things that are possible. We have what may be called a Start/Stop syndrome. Projects start, but they stop or get derailed for several reasons. Things start with good intentions, but when another government administration comes into power, things change and go in another direction. We have good policies, but do we stick to them? Do we implement them? We suffer from (IDD) implementation deficit disorder.

Participant Interviews - Representation and Visualization of the Data

Table 1

NVivo Spreadsheet - Participant Interviews by Major Themes

	Local food challenges and opportunities	Destination marketing challenges and opportunities	Government influences and funding	Experience and immersive tourism	Food quality, hygiene, presentation and packaging	Agriculture and food linkages and leakages	Local food promotion by DMOs and industry stakeholders	Marketing impact of food	SIDS promotion of local foods destination marketing opportunities and challenges
Participant 1	7	1	2	0	1	4	2	1	0
Participant 2	4	8	9	3	0	0	3	2	3
Participant 3	8	2	4	0	6	0	2	3	1
Participant 4	2	4	1	0	0	0	4	0	0
Participant 5	4	8	6	0	1	1	1	4	2
Participant 6	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Participant 7	18	19	17	0	0	2	2	6	2
Participant 8	7	3	6	0	0	1	1	3	0
Participant 9	5	16	6	0	0	1	0	1	0
Participant 10	12	2	3	0	0	0	5	3	0
Participant 11	17	33	22	0	1	4	3	7	3
Participant 12	8	4	7	0	0	0	1	7	3
Participant 13	1	4	5	1	0	0	0	1	0
Participant 14	5	10	5	2	0	0	3	1	0
Participant 15	2	3	11	0	0	0	4	0	1
Participant 16	7	20	16	0	1	0	0	3	0

Figure 24

NVivo Hierarchy Chart – Participant Interviews By Major Themes

Relationship of the Findings

The Research Questions - Discussion of how research findings address the research questions:

RQ1. What are the inherent challenges and opportunities of marketing Caribbean small island destination state (SIDS) tourism?

Participant #9 asserted that the general challenge for Caribbean islands is getting as much attention as possible because there is a clutter of options people have for taking vacations worldwide. Accordingly, this will always be a regional challenge because we are a small part of the global community. Travelers have different options, and the Caribbean's niche asset falls into the general frame of a tropical climate with warm weather beaches. However, the Caribbean has tremendous competition because many global destinations have similar natural assets at lower costs and better value for money. So, for a three-star vacation price in a Caribbean destination, the traveler may instead be offered a five or six-star property with a similar 3S environment in a different region. Major carriers' availability of direct destination flights can become an issue as travelers may wish to redeem frequent flyer miles. Therefore, if these major airlines do not offer service to a particular Caribbean destination, the traveler may choose to vacation in another destination where their frequent flier miles can be redeemed.

Participant #5 similarly echoed the issue of increased marketplace competition. For example, enhanced sales promotions and spending to tease potential tourists to opt for one destination over another within the region or another region entirely. The Caribbean has traditionally only focused on its sun, sand, and sea tourism. However, new types of niche market tourists are emerging, so there is a challenge for Caribbean destinations to diversify their product offerings into, for example, food tourism.

Participant #2 asserted that Caribbean regional marketing is conducted by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association. The CHTA membership consists of various types and sizes of accommodation establishments and service providers. However, the CHTA remains significantly challenged because this organization has not enjoyed the cash flow of a sustained financial mechanism of contribution assistance from Caribbean governments to market the region. One practical suggestion is that perhaps $1 or $2 per passenger could be set aside from airline charges or current exorbitant island interconnectivity taxes. Such an initiative would result in millions of dollars in an annual revenue stream, which could be dedicated to sustained funding of regional destination marketing. Accordingly, Participant #4 lamented that Caribbean regional tourism stakeholders have everything to benefit by working together structured and strategically. As a region, we take things for granted, one of which is the product that we offer.

RQ2. What is the marketing impact of food on tourism experiences and destination selection decision-making?

Participant #7 asserted that leisure relaxation is the Caribbean's biggest draw. However, the destination accommodation must also offer other types of amenity experiences, for example, gyms, diving, snorkeling, and bird watching. Still, they end up being used by only a minority of guests. Participant #16 lamented that "without experiences, all you have is somebody that came, they saw, and they left. Experiences are what the soul is looking for." However, Participant #15 surmised that it is like love at first sight for our local cuisine. Participant #1 echoed that the uniqueness of what we have is a good steppingstone that can create a narrative around our food product. Participant #2 posited that food may not perhaps be a primary reason tourists travel to the Caribbean. However, it can certainly substantiate or reinforce sun, sea, sand offerings, and other destination attractions. Trinidad & Tobago is the most prolific winner at the annual CHTA' Taste of the Caribbean', a regional culinary competition amongst tourism destination markets.

Accordingly, the talent and competence are inherently available to craft food and beverages to differentiate Trinidad & Tobago from other destinations. However, because of the large number of smaller-sized accommodation and hospitality establishments, especially offsite restaurants, more collaborative efforts can facilitate rich gastronomic experiences and generate enhanced revenues for diverse stakeholders. In this regard, even smaller-sized accommodation establishments can compete with their larger-sized and branded counterparts in the highly popular 'all-inclusive' business model. So, Participant #2 further asserted that Trinidad & Tobago has a wonderful opportunity to promote and differentiate its destination offerings to the customer by leveraging its gastronomic diversity and culinary talent.

Participant #3 asserted that some remedial work must be done to improve the overall standard of the food presentation and portion sizes and tweak the taste of the spiciness and strong flavor of food curries to milder versions that make the taste more suitable to the foreign palate. Participant #5 also concurred that a destination cannot rely on food tourism as a stand-alone product to draw visitors to a destination but agrees that it can be a part of its cultural Experience. Accordingly, Trinidad & Tobago has the potential to develop a whole experience around food and a drawing card for the destination. This food experience can feature food and beverage festivals, creating food trails where can eat at different food establishments and street food. Also, because Trinidad & Tobago is not best suited to a mass-leisure type of destination, it may be more apt to the concept of 'slow food.' Participant #11 similarly opined that contemporary culinary trends regarding vegan and halal food options are other culinary options that are readily available in Trinidad & Tobago because of its inherent multicultural diversity. These extended culinary options make it possible for a wider catchment pool of international visitors and a source of regional competitive differentiation and destination selection.

However, Participant #13 questioned whether we are culturally confident enough about our food offerings to international tourists. Participant #6 opined that we need proper marketing and some more self-belief because we often do not believe that our cuisine is good enough and may not even be of interest to tourists. Our food and beverage can be a huge tourist attraction for Trinidad & Tobago, but we do not market our gastronomy offerings sufficiently. Trinidad & Tobago has some of the best food globally because of our inherent *terroir*.

RQ3. What are the Caribbean SIDS (Trinidad & Tobago) destination marketing opportunities and challenges regarding promoting local foods?

Participant #9 noted that food is very important in getting a greater return from the tourism and hospitality industry. But this will require fundamentally greater awareness and appreciation of the benefits of tourism and the political and administrative will to provide the necessary support for what is required to be done for success. However, for local food to become an attraction in and of itself, it has to be exceptionally outstanding. Accordingly, Participant #5 asserted that consistency is one of the main challenges in promoting local food. The destination must ensure that it can deliver the dining and street food experience whenever the potential stream of tourists comes to visit. Otherwise, the destination may have expended much effort and finances on a whole marketing campaign to offer immersive food experiences and find itself under or unprepared to offer an ongoing and consistent experience. Participant #7 posited that the food in Trinidad & Tobago is very good. Still, we do not make enough of it to offer to the tourists constantly but default the local food towards diasporic consumption. Also, the ambiance and entertainment must reflect local flair to complement the local food fair for a complete and authentic experience.

Participant #10 lamented that destination Trinidad & Tobago has generally looked down on local food and does not want to put it on the same level as trendsetting European cuisine to the international tourist. However, diasporic tourism does not need much marketing because it is an inherently captive market. Participant #10 also asserted that food preparation and storage and the requisite equipment and utensils are basic but fundamental to health and food safety practices to mitigate against food poisoning and negative destination social media publicity. However, Participant #10 further lamented that the DMOs operate their social media as an information platform, not an influencer platform, so they can organically engage potential visitors and tourists looking to learn about and sift their destination experience options. The leading food-specific social media influencer in Trinidad & Tobago without DMO or government support has over 700,00 Facebook and over 100,000 Instagram followers, 100,000 YouTube followers, and in 2022, forayed into TikTok.

Participant #12 posited that Trinidad & Tobago's foray into food tourism has not embraced proper consultation with the relevant people and is constrained by funding issues and a lack of foresight and investment. Consequently, local foods are not popular because Trinidad & Tobago cannot deliver consistent quality food at stable prices because of the inherent unpredictability of local fruits, starches, and vegetable supply. Participant #12 further posited that customer service and knowledge about our local foods must be addressed via hospitality staff's requisite training and education. The food menu presentation and design quality need to be upgraded to meet industry standards and become more user-friendly to tourists. Participant #16 also lamented our food quality and consistency at hotel restaurant establishments, notwithstanding the position that food and beverage offerings at hotels are hugely significant financially. Also, the appropriately trained and competent culinary staff and chefs are a major limitation, and destination Trinidad & Tobago lack the know-how to market food-wise properly.

The Conceptual Framework: Discussion of how the research findings relate to elements of the Research Framework:

As noted previously in Section 1 of this dissertation, this study proposed the following five key research objectives, noted in Figure 2, which guided this dissertation's research framework.

RO1: To explore the literature regarding local food and destination marketing. Accordingly, this is intended to establish the research context and pinpoint scholarly academic gaps. The first research objective regarded a literature review exploration of local food and destination marketing and a conceptual research framework of the interlinked concepts regarding the dissertation phenomenon. The literature review comprehensively explored the connection between local food and tourism. Accordingly, it included various cultural approaches to food-related tourism, how and why local food is a powerful destination marketing tool and a potential destination attraction by itself. Participant #12 surmised:

> Trinidad & Tobago's food is amazing because of its races and cultures and eclectic backgrounds. We have something that is so unique compared to other Caribbean islands and even throughout the world. It has so many possibilities and potential. Our food is so flavorful and distinct that food and entertainment are the new oil in Trinidad & Tobago. The importance of food should be on top when marketing Trinidad & Tobago because, frankly, I do not see us having anything else to bring anyone here other than our food and our carnival.

Participant #7 posited that if tourists are not properly fed from a food perspective, they are not happy. However, Participant #16 further asserted that without memorable experiences, "all you have is somebody that came, they saw, and they left," which does nothing for pedestalling the destination status or preference. Participant #5 surmised that food, including its various types of food and even its preparation, is a systemic aspect of the whole cultural experience of a destination. So, there are a few ways to experience food, including food festivals, which are an attraction in and of themselves, food trails at different eating establishments and restaurants, and street food. However, Participant #5 also noted the concept of slow food, which is inherently an aspect of slow tourism, which may perhaps be more apt for Trinidad & Tobago. Participant #9 asserted that mass tourism is not a preferred destination marketing strategy for

Trinidad & Tobago DMOs because of its typically extensive infrastructure and high resource consumption but relatively higher revenue leakage and profitability per tourist's head.

> RO2: To design and construct a conceptual research framework to navigate the research and justify the preferred case study methodology approach based upon the literature review and the inherent research gaps.

The second research objective designed and constructed a conceptual framework to navigate the research and justify the preferred case study methodology approach based on the literature review and the inherent research gaps.

> RO3: To explore how local food is promoted by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and industry stakeholders in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago.

The RO3 objective explored how local food is promoted by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and industry stakeholders in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago. RO3 explored how food is promoted on the respective Trinidad & Tobago DMO websites. Although Trinidad & Tobago is a twin-island country, each island's destination management and marketing activities are managed separately. Therefore, key findings are derived from the website content analysis using the NVivo software regarding the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited and Tourism Trinidad Limited websites. These content analyses are presented in a descriptive format because this exploratory case study aimed to expound insights into a topic lacking empirical evidence.

> RO4: To investigate and expound on stakeholders' viewpoints regarding the use of local food in destination marketing in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago.

The fourth research objective used semi-structured interviews to investigate and expound on stakeholders' viewpoints regarding the use of local food in destination marketing in the SIDS case of Trinidad & Tobago. Because it takes a multi-faceted infrastructure to host a visitor, RQ4 sought to provide relevant insight from Trinidad & Tobago and regional destination organizations and industry experts. Interviewees were derived from sixteen tourism-related private sectors, service and supplier establishments, and individuals. Three other interviewee participants were unsuccessfully sought to attain research saturation. However, they eventually declined to participate after several attempts at follow-up communication via e-mails and telephone calls.

RO5: To articulate creative and practical suggestions and recommendations to guide coherent planning to pedestal local food as an inimitable cultural resource regarding destination marketing.

The research framework's fifth research objective articulated creative and practical suggestions and recommendations to guide coherent strategic planning to pedestal local food as an inimitable cultural resource regarding destination marketing. Participant #7 asserted that "the biggest market in the Caribbean is for leisure relaxation." Everything else, such as bird watching, eco-tourism, and diving, remains relatively small because most tourists come to the Caribbean to get away from the cold, relax, and do nothing. However, regardless of whether a tourist is an avid food lover or not, they all have to consume food. During a vacation period, people are more relaxed and open to considering new or different experiences, and food is something that they can experience. Participant #16 further asserted that without memorable experiences, "all you have is somebody that came, they saw, and they left," which does nothing for pedestalling the destination status or preference.

Participant #6 posited that customer service can provide a competitive edge as "Trinidad & Tobago, especially Trinidad, cannot compete on things like beaches and sand." Participant #9 echoed that mass tourism is not a preferred destination marketing strategy for Trinidad &

Tobago, and Participant #12 endorsed the status of Trinidad & Tobago as the food capital of the Caribbean:

> Trinidad & Tobago's food is amazing because of its races and cultures and eclectic backgrounds. We have something that is so unique compared to other Caribbean islands and even throughout the world. It has so many possibilities and potential. Our food is so flavorful and distinct that food and entertainment are the new oil in Trinidad & Tobago. The importance of food should be on top when marketing Trinidad & Tobago because, frankly, I do not see us having anything else to bring anyone here other than our food and our carnival.

Anticipated Themes: Discussion of how the findings relate to the anticipated themes with a focus on any differences, unanticipated themes, or missing themes:

The analysis findings based upon data collected from the Trinidad & Tobago destination websites and the tourism stakeholder participant interviewees included the anticipated themes of seasonality, experiences, local food challenges and opportunities, destination marketing opportunities and challenges, and government influences and funding.

Seasonality

Grappling with seasonality is ubiquitous in the tourism and hospitality industry and thus an anticipated challenge for many destinations, including Trinidad & Tobago. Seasonality has many economic impacts due to underutilization or overuse of resources. The inefficient use of resources and facilities affects employment and capital investment and causes fluctuating profit margins (Shimamoto, 2019). The content analysis of the visit Trinidad website revealed that, in general, the destination marketing emphasis is placed on year-round experiences to address the ubiquitous tourism challenge of seasonality (see Figure 6): "DREAM, always find something in season." The website informs the prospective visitor of various destination activities throughout the year, such as sports featuring the world-famous sport of cricket, carnival, beaches, cuisine, nature, and festivals. Likewise, the Visit Tobago landing page in Figure 10 features four main destination marketing experiences regarding its sea and beaches, eco-adventure and nature, romance and weddings, and local culture, people, and heritage, all inherently non-seasonal destination attractions.

Experiences

Experience themes are intertwined with the seasonality themes in Trinidad & Tobago destination marketing websites. However, there are also several supporting experiences-themed perspectives as indicated by the participant interviewees. Participant #16 lamented that "without experiences, all you have is somebody that came, they saw, and they left. Experiences are what the soul is looking for." Participant #3 opined that:

> The majority of the tourists that come to visit Trinidad & Tobago are from the USA and the UK and looking for an immersive experience. But they are not familiar with our food, so we should do more to let them taste and enjoy our cuisine.

Participant #5 similarly echoed that the destination can develop a comprehensive and immersive experience around food as part of a larger cultural experience in the form of food festivals, creating food trail restaurants, and street food establishments. Participant #11 posited that "we have the most eclectic cuisine, and because of our historical past, we have many influences that make for a really unique dining experience." Participant #7 posited that the food in Trinidad & Tobago is very good. Still, we do not make enough of it to offer to the tourists constantly but default the local food towards diasporic consumption. Also, the ambiance and entertainment must reflect local flair to complement the local food fair for a complete and authentic Caribbean and Trinidad & Tobago Experience.

Participant #7 further surmised that leisure relaxation is the Caribbean's biggest draw. However, the destination accommodation must also offer minimum types of amenity experiences, for example, gyms, diving, snorkeling, and bird watching. Paradoxically, many of these various experiences are often not well patronized by many tourists because most tourists come to the Caribbean to get away from the cold, relax, and do nothing. However, regardless of whether a tourist is a foodie or not, they all have to consume food. During a vacation period, people are more relaxed and open to considering new or different experiences, and food is something that they can experience.

Government Influences and Funding

The government influence and funding scenario issues cannot be overstated. These issues systemically impact the destination marketing challenges and opportunities. They are intertwined with the marketing impact of food on tourism experiences and destination selection decision-making.

Notwithstanding the above-noted anticipated themes, one interesting unanticipated theme, albeit only mentioned as a brief comment, was the notion of the slow food noted by Participant #5, which bears further expounding. Walker et al. (2021) surmised that food is widely acknowledged as an essential aspect of the overall tourism experience. There are three components of food tourism. One component is agriculture which supplies the product. The second component is culture, which is the source of the history and authenticity of the product. Finally, tourism supplies the infrastructure and services. These three components combine as the food tourism experience.

However, slow food incorporates the three components focusing on a quality food experience intertwined with comprehensive sustainability issues. Slow food has been very effective because of the significance of local food, fair trade purchasing practices for tourism stakeholders, and the transformation of local farmers' markets and direct food buying from growers into a leisure experience. Accordingly, this sustainability championing has spurred an overall change in culinary attitudes and lifestyles and growing in popularity with tourists globally and in many SIDS destinations globally, including in the Caribbean.

However, Timms and Conway (2012) surmised that slow food has also evolved and spawned slow tourism as the anthesis of the global phenomenon of mass tourism. Slow tourism is focused on economic growth expressed by enhanced Gross Domestic Product via increased market share. In the case of Caribbean SIDS, many destinations' natural resources have already reached their limit. However, many SIDS have also simultaneously deepened their reliance on imported external inputs exacerbated by the foreign ownership of mass tourism establishments.

This scenario, unfortunately, facilitates high capital leakage and disrupts tourism and hospitality stakeholder linkages. Conway and Timms (2010) posited that slow tourism can be considered a viable destination promotion re-branding genre alternative. Caribbean destination marketing need not always default to sun, sea, sand, fast-paced vacation escapism, or mass tourism. The best-suited destination candidates for slow tourism and slow food development are at geographical margins and where diversity and authenticity persist. Accordingly, the case study subject of Trinidad & Tobago is perhaps ideally poised for slow tourism and slow food destination marketing.

The Literature: Discussion of how the findings relate to the literature with a focus on similarities and differences:

Şahin and Güzel (2020) surmised that contemporary tourists have moved beyond being satisfied with mere quality products and services. Accordingly, contemporary tourism is primarily focused on experiences hospitality where the aim is to delight the tourist senses with memorable and positive experiences. Therefore, destination experience is the new frontier of destination differentiation (Piramanayagam et al., 2020). Participant #16 echoed that "without experiences, all you have is somebody that came, they saw, and they left. Experiences are what the soul is looking for." However, travelers may not be inclined to select a destination based on one specific Experience but prefer to opt for a bundle of experiences. Accordingly, destinations and destination marketing organizations must proffer a bundle of experiences (Erkmen, 2019). Although Participant #7 asserted that leisure relaxation is the Caribbean's biggest draw, the destination accommodation must also offer other types of amenity experiences, for example, gyms, diving, snorkeling, and bird watching. Still, they end up being used by only a minority of guests. However, Participant #7 cautioned that the ambiance and entertainment must pedestal local flair to complement the local food fair for a complete and authentic Caribbean and Trinidad & Tobago destination experience.

Participant #5 similarly echoed that the destination can develop a comprehensive and immersive experience around food as part of a larger cultural experience in the form of food festivals, creating food trail restaurants, and street food establishments. Authenticity is a highly desirable and motivating trait for tourists and enhances competitive advantage (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2017). Promoting local food and food tourism addresses the ubiquitous issue of tourism seasonality by contributing significantly to destination authenticity, image, differentiation, specialization, and competitiveness (Fusté-Forné, 2019).

The Visit Trinidad website content reveals that, in general, the destination marketing emphasis is placed on year-round experiences to address the ubiquitous tourism challenge of seasonality (see Figure 6): "DREAM, always find something in season." The website informs the prospective visitor of various destination experience activities throughout the year, such as sports featuring the world-famous sport of cricket, carnival, beaches, cuisine, nature, and festivals. Likewise, the Visit Tobago landing page in Figure 12 features four main destination marketing experiences regarding its sea and beaches, eco-adventure and nature, romance and weddings, and local culture, people, and heritage, all inherently non-seasonal destination attractions.

Stone et al. (2019) surmised that about 90% of travelers engage in food tourism at various locales such as hotels, restaurants, bars, street food establishments, culinary festivals, markets, and brew wineries. Accordingly, about 80% of travelers feel that food and drink experiences are significant aspects of their trip satisfaction. Positive food and drink experiences encourage them to recommend a destination and provide a memorable association with destination travel. Also, about two-thirds of travelers' purchase food and drink-related souvenirs, and about 60% of food items purchased at home were initially experienced on a trip. However, Participant #16 lamented our food quality and consistency at hotel restaurant establishments, notwithstanding the position that food and beverage offerings at hotels are hugely significant financially. Also, Participant #7 echoed that if tourists are not properly fed from a food perspective, they are not happy. The field study's significant and missing theme was souvenirs, including food souvenirs. It was not on the radar of any hospitality stakeholder participant apart from the one participant who engaged in the business of locally produced chocolates.

Despite the systemic influence of food on tourism, policymakers, and tourism organizations of the Caribbean, including Trinidad & Tobago, have underutilized and sometimes ignored the potential of local food because they poorly understand its capacity and capability. Participant #14 surmised that:

> When GDP from tourism hovers between 4-6 percent, you know that it is really not a priority. One of the big challenges is to get buy-in from all of the stakeholders that we have a really distinct product that we can really leverage and which can be a significant catalyst for the economic diversification of Trinidad & Tobago.

Related Studies

Cruise Tourism

There was only one reference to cruise tourism amongst all interview participants despite the posit by DiPietro and Peterson (2017) that the stunning success of the cruise industry is starred by the Caribbean, which is the premier global cruise destination. Accordingly, cruise tourism accounts for about 40% of global itineraries, and cruise tourism receipts are critical to many small island destination states accounting for more than 50% of export earnings. However, Participant #7 asserted that "Trinidad & Tobago's location as the southernmost island in the Caribbean archipelago has never been an attractive cruise ship destination because of its inherently too distant geographic location."

Cruise tourism's inherent attributes make it uniquely different from land-based destinations. Accordingly, the ship itself is the destination. Typically, cruises are all-inclusive, meaning accommodation, meals, and ship attractions, and they offer to visit multiple destination tour packages where passengers have the option not to go ashore. Also, cruising provides destinations with the added benefit of thousands of potential returning visitors who may desire to experience a destination further as land tourists. Accordingly, this notion is the main argument of policymakers to provide cruise lines with various destination incentives to become a port of call on their tour itineraries.

Food Linkages and Leakages

One of the major criticisms of tourism as an economic mirage is that it does not contribute systemically to the destination economy due to financial leakages. Leakages are attributed to imported products and inputs such as foods, beverages, hospitality consumables, furniture and equipment, and construction equipment and supplies. Leakages also regard foreign or multinational firms supplying most of the investment and thus profit repatriation from destination marketing and sales and hotel facilities infrastructure that employs non-residents in key positions of power and influence. Although the Caribbean is entrenched as the most tourism-dependent region globally, economic leakage attributed to the importation of food and beverage tourism inputs remains relatively high (Terzioglu & Gokovali, 2016).

Participant #2 asserted that tourism is not the country's economic lifeblood, and there is inadequate investment in tourism infrastructure and destination promotion and absent taxation and fiscal support. Similarly, Participant #11 echoed that the government has neither put the right fiscal and tax breaks incentives nor overhauled the foreign direct investments regime required for a thriving tourism and hospitality sector. Participant #9 lamented that a greater awareness from the political administration and the general public is needed to appreciate the benefits of tourism. Similarly, Participant #7 posited that Trinidad & Tobago needs to appreciate the economic benefits of different industries. So, while Trinidad & Tobago does not suffer from economic leakages attributed to its tourism and hospitality sector, it nonetheless grapples with the negative impacts of Dutch Disease and the economic leakages attributed to the energy and petrochemical sector's foreign direct investment and tax incentives. Accordingly, Participant #7 lamented:

> Trinidad & Tobago can diversify its economy into other areas, while maintaining its oil and gas sector. We don't have to wait until we run out of oil and gas to start thinking about diversifying, so let's diversify into sustainable tourism and food tourism in a big way. We are our own worst enemies, like the steel pan; we are not promoting what we are good at. It's never too late; we just have to muster the will to do it now. There's no tomorrow. It's better to start today.

Participant #9 echoed that "what we fail to do now, we will have to do in a crisis if we don't adjust now."

Souvenirs (Food)

Ho et al. (2021) surmised that the purchase of souvenirs is traditionally one of the most important tourist pastimes. Souvenirs are a tangible symbol of the destination visited and reflect its unique culture. Food souvenirs extend and reinforce the memory of the travel experience, which can also be shared as gifts. They are considered superior to traditional souvenirs as they evoke the sensual attributes of flavor, taste, appearance, texture, and smell. They are typically hand-made using natural local ingredients and reflect the destination's food culture. The uniqueness and authenticity of the product preserve the destination's culinary heritage and geographic location. Accordingly, food souvenirs' five most important dimensions are their branding and packaging presentation, uniqueness, food quality, authenticity, taste, and value. However, souvenir products must be attractively displayed in an appealing setting to leverage their attribute dimensions. Therefore, food souvenirs allow destination actors such as retail businesses and DMOs to develop strategies to enhance tourist satisfaction, post-purchase behaviors, and destination competitive advantage (Suhartanto et al., 2018).

However, there was virtually no perspective whatsoever related to souvenirs or food souvenirs by any of the interview participants except for Participant #1, who is directly involved with chocolate from a tourism perspective. Participant #1 surmised that their objective is promoting agritourism, of which souvenirs are an inherent subset, and thus sustainable agriculture. So, much like how tourists visit France for wine and Scotland for whiskey, the plan is to attract visitors to Trinidad & Tobago for fine chocolate experiences, much like geographic indicator status for Mexican Tequila or French Champagne. So, by creating a narrative around the destination's uniquely fine flavored Trinitatio cacao, tourists and food tourists could come to discover and enjoy the unique flavor of Trinitario cacao as a culinary experience. However, Participant #1 cautioned that before this uniquely fine flavored cacao experience can be offered to the tourist market, several issues need to be addressed properly. Such issues include intellectual property and food accreditation, product quality, standards, consistency, packaging, presentation, logistics, distribution, and training to build up the staff with the right attitudes and skill sets.

Street Food Hygiene & Safety

Street food is consumed every day by about 2.5 billion people globally because it is low-cost, easily available, and convenient. In Trinidad & Tobago, where there are streets, there is food. Street food has inherently high socio-economic value because it nurtures the preservation of local food heritage and thus spawns increased benefits to tourism to attract tourists. However, street food faces many inherent challenges regarding health and hygiene standards attributed to its method and place of preparation (Alfiero et al., 2019). The World Food Travel Association estimates that 9 out of 10 travelers are considered food travelers. However, travelers and tourists are inherently susceptible to contracting foodborne illnesses attributed to eating at substandard locales while experiencing destination gastronomy (Schroeder et al., 2018).

Kim and Bachman (2019) surmised that food patrons desire other aspects of their food experience beyond taste, atmosphere, quality of service, price, and menu variety, like the cleanliness of the food establishment surroundings and its restrooms. The cleanliness of the restrooms is the mainstay of the overall perception of cleanliness. It creates a positive first impression for the estimated 75% of restaurant patrons who typically use the establishment's restrooms. Therefore, unsanitary restrooms may infer a lack of cleanliness and questionable food service sanitation. Restroom cleanliness is critical in fostering high customer satisfaction and expectations within the hospitality and tourism industry and avoiding negative word-of-mouth. Food consumers eat with their eyes first and use them to determine their patronage or avoidance of businesses that do not adequately adhere to professional sanitation and cleanliness standards. Accordingly, about one out of four customers do not return to an eating establishment when its restroom is determined to be dirty. About 80% of potential customers would choose to avoid an establishment with a dirty restroom.

Street food stalls in Trinidad & Tobago often do not even have proximity to public washroom facilities, and local food eatery establishments and restaurants have typically not pedestalled the significance of washroom facility design and layout. Participant #10 lamented typically substandard enforcement of health and safety practices regarding street food storage temperature, equipment and utensils, and food service staff. However, these practices set the ambiance tone for food service establishments and street food stalls because consumers and especially tourists, want to enjoy the destination and local food fare without worrying about food sanitation and food poisoning issues. Participant #10 further lamented that washrooms at local food establishments are poorly designed (e.g., they lack the necessary lighting to facilitate the taking of quality patron selfies and videos and attractive picture-taking backdrops for posting on social media platforms). Notwithstanding the food safety and hygiene at eating establishments, Participant #11 even more fundamentally lamented that the safety and hygiene of the local accommodation room stock bathrooms are frequently below international standards resulting in reduced inclination to sell the destination by international retail tour operators.

The Problems: Discussion how the findings relate to the problem being studied:

The problem addressed by this dissertation is the failure to promote local food as an integral aspect of Trinidad & Tobago destination marketing initiatives to enhance tourism experiences and destination decision-making resulting in the potential loss of destination competitiveness and attractiveness. Accordingly, the research findings suggest an inherent failure by tourism and hospitality stakeholders to pedestal the promotion of local food due to multiple intertwined issues. However, the research findings also suggest that the failure to promote local food is attributed to a more systemic failure of the destination to attend to its tourism competitiveness and attractiveness. Further, this is much intertwined with the very low-level economic priority of the tourism and hospitality industry by the government of Trinidad & Tobago resulting in low and untimely budgetary allocations and tardy addressing of multiple tourism industry financial imperatives described previously.

Participant #10 lamented:

> We don't really have that level of respect for our food and cuisine compared to other countries. We have looked down on our food and have never wanted to put it on the same level as, say, French or Italian cuisine.

However, Participant #1 asserted that we need the expertise of some foreign chefs to be able to help us extract the best flavor out of our products. But Participant #12 posited that Trinidad & Tobago's foray into food tourism has not embraced proper consultation with the relevant people and is hamstrung by funding issues and a lack of foresight and investment:

> Trinidad & Tobago's food is amazing because of its races, cultures, and eclectic backgrounds. We have something so unique compared to other Caribbean islands and even throughout the world. It has so many possibilities and potential. Our food is so flavorful and distinct that food and entertainment are the new oil in Trinidad & Tobago. The importance of food should be on top when marketing Trinidad & Tobago because, frankly, I do not see us having anything else to bring anyone here other than our food and our carnival.

Participant #14 supported that Trinidad & Tobago is the food capital of the Caribbean:

> We recognize that our diverse culinary offerings are a point of differentiation. We think that our food is very powerful, and so we are actually in the process of developing a specific marketing strategy. Specific to food, we want to certainly claim that we are the food capital of the Caribbean even though we have not been leveraging it and saying it. We want to create a lot of hype around our food.

Participant #7 posited that "tourists do want to try our local cuisine, but we still have to offer them what they are accustomed to as well." However, participant #12 posited that local foods are not popular because Trinidad & Tobago cannot deliver consistent quality food at stable prices because of the inherent unpredictability of local fruits, starches, and vegetable supply. Participant #16 lamented that our food quality and consistency at hotel restaurant establishments are of concern, but food service income is typically significant for hotels. However, the appropriately trained and competent culinary staff and chefs are a major limitation. Hotel restaurants must have the entertainment and a local ambiance to complement their local food offering. Participant #10 lamented typically substandard enforcement of health and safety practices regarding street food storage temperature, equipment and utensils, and food service staff. However, these practices set the ambiance tone for food service establishments and street food stalls because consumers and especially tourists, want to enjoy the destination and local food fare without worrying about food sanitation and food poisoning issues.

However, Participant #7 opined that "the food in Trinidad & Tobago is very good and is better than the rest of the region, but we don't make enough of it its potential." Participant #1 expressed that "the uniqueness we have is a good steppingstone to creating a narrative around our various local food products." Participant #3 posited that whenever foreign tourists come, we think that we should give them foreign foods when we should be placing more emphasis on local foods. However, we need to do the proper research to make our foods more palatable to better accommodate the foreign palate, especially regarding the spiciness of our hot pepper and curry, portion sizes regarding starches, and our presentation.

Participant #9 posited that the Caribbean islands and their inherent sun, sea, and sand grapple with getting as much attention as possible amongst a clutter of global options that people have for taking vacations. Other global island destinations have similar sun, sea, and sand offerings but at greater value for money than Caribbean destinations, especially Trinidad & Tobago. However, Participant #14 posited that respect and appreciation for the Trinidad & Tobago tourism sector have been traditionally lacking, despite the assertion of Participant #11 that destination Trinidad & Tobago have more experience activities and things to do while on vacation than other Caribbean islands. However, Participant #11 lamented past focus on marketing while neglecting the product side.

Consequently, the major destination Trinidad and especially Tobago challenges are the room stock quality, quantity, and variety directly attributable to the tourism sector's investment climate and fiscal incentives. Also, there is a significant challenge regarding direct airlift from the major international visitor source cities. Accordingly, most of the flights coming into Tobago must pass through Trinidad or from international markets, which are shared by other islands because destination Tobago does not have the demand capability to fill an entire direct flight. Also, these shared flights do not offer the daily arrival and departure flexibility of the more popular Caribbean and other global 3S destinations. However, the consequence of a lower influx of tourists means that the destination beaches and attractions are not cluttered, and the tourist does not have to cramp for sun, sea, sand, and other experiences.

Participant #9 further lamented the current state of the digitalization of the destination, which is lacking in many accommodation establishments. A disconnect exists whereby even if the DMO, destination websites, and social media platforms have done a sufficiently good enough job of attracting the prospective tourist, the booking and reservation system is not e-commerce ready, resulting in outdated and annoying voice calls and payment steps.

Unlike its neighboring Caribbean countries, Trinidad & Tobago's economic lifeblood and focus are not on the tourism industry but on its energy sector. Accordingly, the energy sector accounts for over 40% of GDP, approximately 85% of the country's exports, and 54% of government tax revenues (Trinidad & Tobago Gas Master Plan 2014-2024, 2015). Although energy sector endowment has resulted in many benefits, it has also spawned many problems, including a systemically uninspired Trinidad & Tobago tourism sector. Typically, much intertwined with a country's agricultural sector, the tourism sector has long been relegated to economic insignificance in Trinidad & Tobago. Accordingly, Trinidad & Tobago's tourism sector has not traditionally leveraged its inherent sun, sea, and sand appeal or actively sought to develop itself as a mass-leisure destination market for cruise or visitor tourism.

Paradoxically, despite the significant impacts of the tourism sector on the local economies of the Caribbean, its potentialities are underutilized and sometimes ignored because local policymakers poorly understand its sustainable capability and capacity (Zappino, 2005). Participant #2 asserted that at the Caribbean regional level, governments have not collaborated to successfully address the issue of interconnectivity and ridiculously high airlift taxes and fees amongst Caribbean islands, which impedes the development of the Caribbean destination market. Limited collaboration has also stymied the availability of funds to facilitate regional marketing campaigns by the CHTA. Participant #5 echoed the limiting influences of Caribbean governments and funding issues:

> Funding is a challenge and will continue to be a challenge as Caribbean governments have to make hard decisions in terms of how they allocate limited resources to competing interests such as health, education, transport, so destination marketing, by virtue of its nature, ends up being a little lower own the totem pole.

However, specific to Trinidad & Tobago, Participant #2 asserted that because tourism and hospitality are not the country's economic lifeblood, there is the perception that the destination is significantly challenged regarding what it is offering to tourists because of inadequate investment in tourism infrastructure and destination promotion:

> There needs to be a desire and an interest from the destination in supporting the industry. That support comes by facilitating the right infrastructure and providing businesses with the necessary tools and financial resources to succeed. The government needs to provide taxation and fiscal incentive support; otherwise, it is more difficult for the destination to

succeed.

Similarly, Participant #11 lamented that the government has not put the right fiscal and tax breaks incentives. An overhaul of the foster foreign direct investments regime is required in the tourism and hospitality sector, but "we seem to have an inherent fear of doing something we are not familiar with." However, this should not be because we are the last of the Caribbean islands to embrace tourism and hospitality. We have the opportunity to look at and learn from all of the missteps and successes of countries. Participant #14 posited that Trinidad & Tobago does not have a cohesive hospitality and tourism sector primarily because of its siloed focus on its lucrative energy and petrochemical sectors. "We've had enough time and ample opportunity to get it right and get it going. We don't have people who are serious enough and don't even have top strategic management people at the top."

Other Caribbean islands comparatively have nothing else to market and have had to make their hospitality and tourism sector a success out of necessity. Participant #7 posited that we need to start understanding the economic benefits of different industries as a country, and the budget allocations to different sectors must not be a rollercoaster. We will not get more tourists if we do not have the number of quality rooms to fill flights routinely.

> Trinidad & Tobago can diversify its economy into other areas while maintaining its oil and gas sector. We don't have to wait until we run out of oil and gas to start thinking about diversifying, so let's diversify into sustainable tourism and food tourism in a big way. We are our own worst enemies, like the steel pan; we are not promoting what we are good at. It's never too late; we just have to muster the will to do it now. There's no tomorrow. It's better to start today.

Participant # 9 also lamented that a greater awareness from the political administration and the general public is needed to appreciate the benefits of tourism. If you get that, everyone will understand what is required to be done. However, "what we fail to do now, we will have to do in a crisis if we don't adjust now." Participant #1 posited that the promotion of the Trinidad & Tobago brand has not been properly thought through. The country and product brand has been damaged because the government has not done its job due to its preoccupation with the energy sector.

Participant #5 further posited that the unsettling frequent changing of government-appointed DMO board members and CEOs has led to inconsistent destination marketing strategies over the last few years. Participant #12 teased the idea of a Ministry of Food Production and Tourism, which can arguably enjoy much synergistic symbiosis regarding the notion of agriculture and tourism linkages and leakages and funding. Participant #13 questioned whether Trinidad & Tobago has ever gotten serious energy behind tourism and provided the requisite funding and, even more importantly, timely funding.

The politics of the day determine a lot of what you do and say about tourism, and politics has stymied a lot of things that are possible. We have what may be called a Start/Stop syndrome. Projects start, but they stop or get derailed for several reasons. Things start with good intentions, but when another government administration comes into power, things change and go in another direction. We have good policies, but do we stick to them? Do we implement them? We suffer from (IDD) implementation deficit disorder!

Summary

The NVivo software content analysis of the DMO websites and tourism industry stakeholder interviews revealed multiple nuanced research findings. Several such findings applied to multiple dissertation perspectives. The research findings suggested an inherent failure by Trinidad & Tobago tourism and hospitality stakeholders to pedestal the promotion of local food due to multiple intertwined issues. However, the research findings also suggested that the failure to promote local food is attributed to a more systemic failure of the destination to attend to its tourism competitiveness and attractiveness. Further, this is much intertwined with the very low-level economic priority of the tourism and hospitality industry by the government of Trinidad & Tobago resulting in low and untimely budgetary allocations and tardy addressing of multiple tourism industry financial and fiscal imperatives. Local food has many possible opportunities and potential. Still, it will remain latent without tourism industry-government support, proper destination marketing, and the belief that local cuisine is good enough and of interest to tourists.

Application to Professional Practice

The most lucrative global tourism destinations in the USA, Europe, and Asia have effectively leveraged food as an integral aspect of their destination marketing and management strategies. Accordingly, there is growing scholarly attention on food-related destination marketing in these more successful and attractive tourist destinations. However, the Caribbean is systemically impacted by the general failure of its tourism destinations to promote local food as an integral aspect of their destination marketing initiatives to enhance tourism experiences and destination decision-making resulting in the potential loss of destination competitiveness and attractiveness. There is a general lack of scholarly research on the potential of local food in the Caribbean region despite its inherent status as a high tourism penetration and popular destination. Trinidad & Tobago is a Caribbean and Small Island Destination State (SIDS) tourism anomaly. It is neither a mass leisure nor a traditional sun, sea, and sand tourist destination.

Accordingly, achieving a deeper understanding of the contemporary use of local food as a destination marketing tool is pivotal in contriving future destination marketing strategies that would foster enhanced competitive advantage and increase the profile of Trinidad & Tobago as a unique tourist destination. The case findings are perhaps best applied to improving the general business practice and articulating potential application strategies regarding the gastronomic destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago and other SIDS to a lesser degree.

Improving General Business Practice

Destination Trinidad & Tobago should not project food and beverage experiences as part of a destination experience or mere physical sustenance or convenience, but rather pedestal desirability. Accordingly, local cuisines should be pedestalled as a key aspect of destination image and advertising and promotion themes and not mere supplementary products. The highlighting of ubiquitous 3S sun, sand, and sea tourism via expensive large-budget promotional strategies rather than unique heritage, traditions, and cultural foods and festivals is criticized as myopic, improper, and, not least, naïve business savvy. Therefore, specific marketing and promotional materials should be developed and periodically updated with engaging content, photos, and videos rather than mundane text to position the destination as a culinary destination. Experts knowledgeable about tourism marketing and food should professionally design social media content and websites. Even menus should feature professionally done food photography, an area of expertise that ensures that depicted images are of international quality and reflect authenticity.

DMOs must be adequately cautious and discerning regarding the design and approval of food promotional materials and media. Further, DMOs should explore and compare the culinary promotion materials and media from the more established and successful culinary and food tourism destinations. Therefore, DMOs should explore and benchmark their culinary promotional materials and media output against more established and successful culinary and food tourism destinations such as France, Spain, and Italy.

Hotel restaurants are typically the first introduction and gateway to destination food experiences. However, local cuisine is typically not prevalent at hospitality establishments in many developing countries due to the inherent westernization of their menus. Therefore, if local food is to ever ascend in popularity and become an attraction in its own right regarding foreign tourists, indigenous dishes must be vetted through tourist-oriented hotel restaurants. This way, the local dishes can become appropriately transformed and presented to suit the tastes and standards of tourists. Only then will local foods become introduced to tourists can their preferences and consumption patterns start to change. Tourists will only gravitate towards local dishes if they are appropriately exposed and can recognize and differentiate local destination foods before appreciating local gastronomy. After that, tourists graduate and venture beyond the hotel to experience more local food authenticity at local eateries and street food vendors.

Institutionalized tourists are sometimes apprehensive about local food consumption and consider it too exotic for their palate. They do not trust food safety and hygiene at non-hotel establishments. Street food has inherently high socio-economic value because it nurtures the preservation of local food heritage, facilitates multiplier tourism benefits, and enhances tourist attraction. However, street food patrons desire other aspects of their food experience beyond taste, atmosphere, quality of service, price, and menu variety, like the cleanliness of the food establishment surroundings and its restrooms. Sanitation, food safety, and hygiene are pivotal issues that could negate all destination marketing efforts if tourists become sick or suffer food poisoning. Such incidents have the easy potential to go viral on social media with a devastating impact on foreign tourism. Therefore, this study highlighted the need for the destination sanitation, food safety, and hygiene to meet international standards and be in place before any foray into concerted food tourism and tourism expansion.

Tourism is more than a destination, and gastronomy is more than a dish. Gastronomy tourism is inherently a value chain built around elements of interest and management regarding food production, processing, and consumption. However, food processing involves several value-added facets, including gastronomic landscapes intertwined with destination culture, culinary identity, and heritage. Other significant value-chain facets include public policy, administrative guidelines, destination infrastructure, and training and research. However, it bears reminding that Trinidad & Tobago is very much a SIDS tourism anomaly. This study found a consensus from its data collection and analysis that stakeholders considered food and local food of only limited importance to destination marketing. Food and local food were not considered beyond a mere support attraction. Stakeholders continue to undervalue and underprioritize the destination's widely posited status as the culinary capital of the Caribbean.

There was also consensus that the promotion of food and local food and the tourism sector generally was systemically inhibited by government-related influences, funding, and inherent issues with the destination's tourism infrastructure. Accordingly, the destination and its infrastructure, especially its room stock and its digitalization and e-commerce readiness status, are widely considered substandard to international benchmarks. The strengthening of the tourism value chain would also facilitate easier and safer transactions regarding accommodation bookings, restaurant reservations, souvenir shopping, and sightseeing and attractions.

However, the fundamental issue of implementation deficit disorder (IDD) looms. Many tourism sector improvements and enhancements proffered by knowledgeable and well-traveled tourism industry stakeholders remain stymied and either implemented piecemeal or not all. The degree of knowledge of tourism and gastronomy varies considerably within and among destination stakeholders. Still, there was an overall lack of appreciation and understanding of food tourism's inherent benefits across the tourism gastronomy value chain by the tourism industry stakeholders and government-related DMOs.

Many food establishments do not possess the business savvy to acquire the appropriate knowledge to create a well-differentiated tourist value proposition to cater to the spectrum of tourist food interests. The local food service actors are inherently small-scale businesses regarding workforce and revenue turnover. Foodservice producers grapple with challenges such as sustaining retail relations regarding price, scale, and delivery frequency. Also, despite the high resource potential of culinary heritage and a locally based culinary training establishment, there is still a lingering question regarding local hospitality industry specialists' level of competence and knowledge. Accordingly, there must be a fundamental review of the culinary curriculum to ensure that the institutional graduates of the Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute can suitably complement the accommodation room stock quality and the destination hygiene and food safety target improvements.

The modern tourism industry is inherently highly competitive because potential visitors do not merely look for a single experience but rather a bundle of experiences. Therefore, destinations actively seek to find distinctive and unique approaches to promote themselves holistically by leveraging their core destination attributes such as accommodation, external eating options, and visiting cultural sites. In the context of the tourist dining experience, destinations can offer local cuisine as a peak experience rather than a supporting experience, thus contributing to tourists' destination satisfaction by adding value to the travelers' experience. The research findings informed the popularity and status of Trinidad & Tobago's cuisine as the culinary capital of the Caribbean.

Accordingly, it is entirely plausible to shift from considering food as merely satisfying the basic sustenance needs of tourists towards promoting a distinct element of destination food culture regarding its cooking, presentation, and appearance. Therefore, DMOs can develop and promote popular local cuisines and street foods for their taste and quality as a marketing and branding tool to enhance competitive differentiation and destination brand image. Accordingly, local cuisines should be pedestalled as a key aspect of destination image and advertising and promotion themes and not mere supplementary products.

Destination hotels are a significant actor in gastronomic branding because they may have one or several restaurants. Tourists typically start their culinary journey and experience local food and culture as the hotel establishment is their primary contact place after a journey (Gordin et al., 2016). Hussain and Khanna (2019) surmised that hotels are pedestalled as the backbone of the tourism system. Accordingly, hotel food and beverage services are critical operations for enhancing profit, earning prestige, and nurturing competitive advantage. However, local cuisine in hotels is often neglected, although it has much latent destination marketing potential as a strategic attraction on its own and is a pivotal element of tourist satisfaction. But there are inherent destination marketing agenda challenges regarding the organizational change inertia among hotels. Accordingly, a decisive element is the necessity to change the mindset of key decision-makers and the organizational readiness to embrace local food dishes.

Organizational readiness consists of organizational climate, culture, and capacity. Thus, if an organization displays inherent positive affirmation of all three organizational readiness dimensions, it is considered ready to implement an idea of interest. Accordingly, the commitment and competencies of the management and staff, coupled with the capacity of the organization's facilities, need to be configured or reconfigured to incorporate radically new menu items apart from the conventional offers (Bondzi-Simpson & Ayeh, 2019).

The purchase of souvenirs is traditionally one of the most important tourist pastimes because they are a tangible symbol of the destination visited and reflect its unique culture. However, food souvenirs extend and reinforce the memory of the travel experience but are considered superior to traditional souvenirs as they evoke the sensual attributes of flavor, taste, appearance, texture, and smell and are typically hand-made using natural local ingredients. They, therefore, reflect the destination's food culture, and the uniqueness and authenticity of the product preserve the destination's culinary heritage and geographic location.

Therefore, food souvenirs allow destination actors such as retail businesses and DMOs to develop strategies to enhance tourist satisfaction, post-purchase behaviors, and destination competitive advantage (Suhartanto et al., 2018). Food souvenirs have several forms, such as food and beverage products. They may be sold in gift shops and restaurants as meals, confectionery, snacks, semi-finished foods such as meats, vegetables, and tubers, processed fruits, and food dish ingredients such as spices and seasonings.

Despite the globally prestigious status of Trinidad & Tobago as the birthplace of fine flavor cocoa, there is a systemic failure of Trinidad & Tobago to promote this local food. Foreign tourists to the island and the wider Caribbean region are predominantly from North American and European countries with long-established chocolate manufacturing and a fine chocolate palate. Typically, tourists seek authentic and fresh ingredient culinary experiences, including desserts and food souvenirs, and pedestal exotic tastes and flavors. The extent of tourist awareness of Trinidad & Tobago's Trinitario cocoa's superior flavor quality and the prospects of chocolate products manufactured locally remains virtually unknown and untapped.

A Caribbean vacation ambiance is a perfect opportunity for tourists to savor and help make a memorable first experience with local fine chocolates made from authentic fine flavored cocoa. However, the tourists who stay over at Caribbean hotels and cruise ship arrival terminals are grossly untargeted fine chocolate sales and marketing channels. Accordingly, they are largely untapped marketing opportunities for fine chocolates, for example, ' welcome gift or turndown service' in Caribbean hotel establishments, duty-free shops at Caribbean airports, cruise ship terminals for gift-giving, and souvenir purchasing, and personal consumption. Accordingly, the value-added revenues of selling finished products at a significantly higher multiplier than lower-priced and lesser value-added raw cocoa beans are significant sources of valuable foreign exchange earnings.

Additionally, the online sales platform further enhances the prospects of export sales and thus nurtures a budding industry. The promotional efforts via the hospitality hotel sector tourism and cruise ship terminal promotions can target product sales to the almost 60 million visitors who visit the Caribbean region annually and almost 500,000 visitors to Trinidad & Tobago. However, the fine chocolate industry in Trinidad & Tobago and the wider Caribbean remains largely underdeveloped. There are few places and opportunities regarding purchase channels and non-existent marketing promotions. The tourist and seasonal shopper gift-giving demographic inherently overlap significantly. The peak tourist and cruise ship season of mid-December to mid-April coincides high with the peak gift-giving season of Christmas, Valentine's, and Easter.

Potential Application Strategies

This study presented the inherent comparative and competitive advantage of Trinidad & Tobago's albeit informal status as the culinary capital of the Caribbean. There is undoubted potential to create high-quality, differentiated products that can generate desirable experiences and value-added for tourists. However, the logical starting and critical starting point is the articulation of a Local Food Strategic Marketing Plan. This plan must completely sync with the destination's tourism and economic priorities, which the government drives. However, this strategic plan to develop destination gastronomy tourism must be based upon a medium and long-term sustainable tourism vision. Therefore, this strategic plan must critically incorporate the consensus viewpoints of the destination stakeholders. The Trinidad & Tobago diaspora viewpoints from the USA, Canada, and the U.K. must also factor as a stakeholder in developing a global vision for the destination.

This strategic plan must couple local food and beverage fare and its Caribbean culinary capital status with other globally popular aspects of our culture, including our steelpan and soca music and our annual carnival festivals held in the North American metro cities of Miami Carnival, Labor Day in New York, Chicago, Caribana festival in Toronto, and the European city of Nottinghill, London. However, the DMO institutions must be provided the necessary financial support and industry fiscal incentives by the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago government to lead this initiative effectively.

Also, the government policy must be changed to address the traditional and long-standing economic singular focus on the energy and petrochemicals sectors. There must also be a reversal of the neglect of the agricultural sector, especially regarding cocoa. Simultaneously, there must be strategic investment and incentives to develop a local fine chocolate industry of international standard, focusing on the export potential to the more popular cruise ship destinations throughout the Caribbean.

This study can serve as a preliminary analysis and diagnosis of Trinidad & Tobago's current food tourism situation, the first phase of any food tourism strategic plan. Accordingly, this study has expounded on the domestic context of the destination's food tourism product, which required identifying key participants and their perspectives, which is critical for articulating the path to achieve the most appropriate goals. Once the priority programs are defined and established, an operational development and marketing plan must be articulated. These plans will leverage Trinidad & Tobago's tourism and gastronomic potential, which can be implemented to benefit the existing heterogeneous and fragmented tourism and hospitality value chain.

However, the plan must be communicated to the sector and among the communication channels linked to potential tourists. This communication will facilitate implementing the programs identified by a strategic plan, and its associated operational development and marketing plan without the dreaded IDD (implementation deficit disorder) noted previously. Addressing the destination's value-added food chain segments is a logical and first step in elevating the current standards to meet international tourism standards ultimately. However, it cannot be overstated that the political will must be the inertia and catalyst to provide institutional leadership and an appropriate quantum of economic and human resources.

DMOs must lead the recognition of the informal status as the culinary capital of the Caribbean so that everyone, especially the Trinidad & Tobago diaspora, is inspired to feel proud of and identify with all facets of local gastronomy. Accordingly, this will require championing local gastronomy cultural heritage by synergistically strengthening the cultural identity of the destination's indigenous music and carnival festivals locally and abroad. DMOs must also champion the competitiveness of all destination stakeholders of the tourism value chain and spur excellence, knowledge, talent engagement, innovation, and cooperation of all parties.

Also, DMOs must seek out the assistance and cooperation of the banking, telephony, and social media expertise. The DMOs must also champion the agriculture linkage disconnect with the tourism industry. Logically, the most glaring intervention should foster the creation and development of a fine gourmet chocolate industry spurred by a simultaneous resurgence of sustainable fine cocoa farming and production.

Summary

At the onset, the government and its DMOs must demonstrate the necessary political willpower and provide overdue fiscal incentives. This political willpower will provide the much-needed catalyst for financial investment by the domestic and international private sector tourism businesses. The holistic strategy expounded above is the best way to pursue the sustainable success of the tourism industry and competitively differentiate Trinidad & Tobago's destination marketing to the international tourism market.

Recommendations for Further Study

The diasporic population of Trinidad & Tobago predominantly lives in the USA, Canada, and the U.K., which are also the largest source of tourist visitors to destination Trinidad & Tobago. The participant interviewees shortlisted in this study were limited by time and cost considerations and compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the virtual closure of the tourism industry globally and Trinidad & Tobago. These circumstances left a void regarding considering and incorporating the perspectives of international tourists and the diasporic community.

The other recommended area of further study regards researching the potential of authentic Caribbean gourmet chocolates as food souvenirs, especially in the cruise tourism sector and chocolate tourism as a land tourism niche market. A Caribbean vacation ambiance is a perfect opportunity for tourists to savor and help make a memorable first experience with locally made fine chocolates produced from authentic fine flavored cocoa from Trinidad & Tobago and other Caribbean SIDS. The purchase of souvenirs is traditionally one of the most important tourist pastimes because they are a tangible symbol of the destination visited and reflect its unique culture. Accordingly, food souvenirs extend and reinforce the memory of the travel experience, which can also be shared as gifts. Food souvenirs are considered superior to traditional souvenirs as they evoke the sensual attributes of flavor, taste, appearance, texture, and smell and are typically hand-made using natural local ingredients. They, therefore, reflect the destination's food culture, and the uniqueness and authenticity of the product preserve the destination's culinary heritage and geographic location.

Notwithstanding the long-standing tourist destination popularity of the Caribbean islands, a virtually unknown facet of Caribbean destination exoticism is Trinidad & Tobago, the birthplace and cradle of Trinitario Cacao and globally acclaimed as a most prestigious source of global cocoa production's five percent 'fine flavor' grade.

The Caribbean tourists who stay over at Caribbean hotels and cruise ship arrival terminals are grossly untargeted fine chocolate sales and marketing channels. However, there has been virtually no research on the market potential of locally produced fine chocolates from authentic fine cocoa and promotions such as chocolate making and cocoa plantation tours. Also, 'welcome gifts or turndown service' regarding Caribbean hotel establishments, boxed chocolate gift-giving and souvenir purchasing, and personal consumption from duty-free shops at Caribbean airports and cruise ship terminals.

Reflections

A DBA degree is fundamentally more applied than a more theoretical Ph.D. Hence, choosing a practical case study research topic on local food and destination marketing. Any study on Caribbean tourism is beneficial as tourism is systemic to the economic lifeblood of the Caribbean. Also, the researcher expounded his perspective on Biblical principles, which are systemically intertwined with this study.

Personal and Professional Growth

Not many individuals are fortunate enough to be blessed with the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree and reach the stage of authoring a dissertation study. Therefore, from the onset of this DBA journey, this dissertation author always sought every possible opportunity to view course assignments and tasks from the lens of practical benefit to the Caribbean region, and especially Trinidad & Tobago. However, in the case of Trinidad & Tobago – this dissertation author's home country, the destination is very much a tourism anomaly. This dissertation author's undergraduate agriculture degree and extensive work and business relationship with the local petrochemical and energy sectors allowed for a firsthand experience of the negative impact of the Dutch Disease phenomenon. Therefore, this dissertation facilitated a scholarly critical thinking opportunity to present mainstream and sustainable economic options based upon the inherent symbiosis between tourism and agriculture.

Notwithstanding the above, undertaking the overall doctoral journey required tremendous persistence. Accordingly, the research forewarned about the high attrition rate of doctoral students and frequent periods of lonely and frustrating experiences. In this regard, the researcher recalls a couple of the earliest assignments in the very first course, which required researching and writing about the concepts of critical thinking and doctoral persistence. The learnings from these research assignments were very helpful in navigating the many challenges over the past almost 5 years.

However, this did nothing to alleviate the number of sacrifices made regarding spending time with family and friends and juggling finances, work, and business responsibilities during this doctoral journey. Nonetheless, as this doctoral journey is fast approaching its conclusion, this researcher must acknowledge that it did provide a much-needed positive focus which was invaluable in dealing with the emotions of depression and sadness at the onset. Each successive course milestone helped this researcher appreciate life and its many gifts, blessings, and impending further responsibilities bestowed by God.

> 'Do not dwell on your successes or your failures. Embrace them both. Live and enjoy gratefully the rest of this remarkable life that God has blessed you with to the fullest.' – Winston Mohammed

Biblical Perspective

Our primary calling is to glorify God, and we can serve God via the work we do when we serve others. We reflect God through caring for our relationships with God and one another, creatively engaging in the work we are called to undertake, reflecting our diversity, sustaining our community, and accomplishing God's purposes on earth through our work (Cawley & Snyder, 2015). Genesis 1:38 notes that humans are to "fill the earth and subdue it." Although all that God made was good, it was deliberately left undeveloped. Thus, it was left to creation with its untapped systemic potential to cultivate creation to attain its fullest potential via work.

God provides us with the purpose of our work by calling us to serve the world individually and communally. Accordingly, we thrive emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The Bible teaches us that work is a vocation or calling reconceived as God's assignment to serve others and not merely individual advancement. The Genesis decree highlights the concept of imago Dei – in God's image, and our distinctly human privilege and calling are to enjoy forever glorifying God. Sirach 38:34 asserts the Christian worldview concept of work as our fulfillment tribute to God as we pray for his guidance to conscientiously employ our divine gifts and diligent labor to fulfill our Godly purpose.

The main ingredient for a successful tourism and travel sector is hospitality, and food is a key pillar of hospitality. One of God's appointed duties of us as Christians is 'hospitality,' which means welcoming strangers and visitors to our island homes. Romans 12:13 encourages us to 'practice' hospitality. Practice is a verb that requires constant action. Offering and communicating the uniqueness of local food is an example of 'practicing hospitality. To ensure the success of the Caribbean travel and tourism product, it must be a 'hospitality practice,' meaning it must pay continuous attention and should not be practiced intermittently. Because this industry is the economic lifeblood of most Caribbean islands, it requires constant attention and nurturing. Hospitality to visitors must be an extension of God's hospitality to us. When the tourists are offered superior hospitality, they reward hospitality with increased revenues and repeat business via positive and inherently powerful 'word of mouth.'

> For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them.* (Romans 12:4-6, New King James Version)

On the individual and collective level, we are one in the body of Christ. All members do not have the same functions because God has not obligated everything to be performed by every person, so he has bestowed different but equally significant gifts. To do otherwise would have ignored the service of others to the detriment of exhausting all. Accordingly, the DMOs and tourism industry stakeholders such as hotels, restaurants, and eating establishments are key cogs of the tourism and hospitality network, each with different gift contributions.

Thus, the range of talents at the DMOs and tourism sector stakeholders' level is complimentary and supports the network via symbiotic relationships within the tourism hospitality network elements. The hospitality network includes dependency and interdependency relations, making different but critical collaborative contributions to its smooth functioning. Thus the hospitality network actors are like how the human body consists of many organs, each having its respective function and striving towards the harmony and synergy of the whole body. Each organ is vitally and necessarily located in the strategic space it occupies. Accordingly, it makes each synergistically useful even though performing a different function according to their individual gift competencies.

Summary

The reflections segment of this dissertation articulated the researcher's inspiration and critical thinking after completing the case study research. The researcher expounded on the personal and professional motivation for embarking on this study topic. The researcher's perspective on the Biblical principles of God's gift and our hospitality vocation is that hospitality to others must be an extension of God's hospitality to us. We can serve God via the work we do when we serve others.

Summary of Section 3

Section 3 regarded the culmination phase of this qualitative case study. Data were derived from the analysis of websites and semi-structured interview questions. NVivo content analysis software was used to help with data collection, analysis, and representation and visualization of the data by generating Word Cloud food descriptor figures, an Excel spreadsheet figure, and a hierarchy chart tabular depiction of interviewee themes. The themes of seasonality and experiences were the main themes derived from website analysis. However, the semi-structured questions posed to interview participants resulted in the three major themes: local food challenges and opportunities, government influences and funding, and destination marketing challenges and opportunities. After that, several discussions were expounded on how the findings related to key areas of this research proposal.

The first discussion regarded how the findings addressed the three research questions: RQ1. What are the inherent challenges and opportunities of marketing Caribbean small island destination state (SIDS) tourism; RQ2. What is the marketing impact of food on tourism experiences and destination selection decision-making; RQ3. What are the Caribbean SIDS (Trinidad & Tobago) destination marketing opportunities and challenges regarding promoting local foods? The second discussion regarded the anticipated themes of the findings and how they differed or were related to any unanticipated and missing themes. The third discussion regarded the similarities and differences of key dissertation literature topics of cruise tourism, food linkages and leakages, food souvenirs, and street food hygiene and safety. The last discussion regarded how the study findings related to the study problem.

The final segment of Section 3 included the expounding on application to professional practice, recommendations for further study, and the reflections of this dissertation's author. The application to professional practice discussed and elaborated on multiple issues which impact the leveraging of local food in the destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago. Accordingly, the next discussion topic posited a strategic plan to develop destination gastronomy tourism as the basis of a cornerstone potential application strategy. The recommendations for further study centered on investigating the perspective of the Trinidad & Tobago diaspora as key interview participants.

Otherwise, another study recommendation was the researching the potential of authentic Caribbean gourmet chocolates as food souvenirs, especially in the cruise tourism sector and chocolate tourism as a land tourism niche market. The reflections aspect of Section 3 expounded on the intertwined personal and professional perspectives and experiences of the dissertation author and the dissertation topic. Otherwise, the dissertation author's biblical reflection posits food as a manifestation of hospitality to visitors, which is an extension of God's hospitality to us which should not be mere work but a vocation.

Study Conclusions

The purpose of this flexible design case study dissertation sought to explore how and why local food impacted tourist experiences and decision-making and the destination marketing competitiveness and attractiveness of Trinidad & Tobago. There is growing scholarly attention on food-related destination marketing in more successful and attractive tourist destinations. However, there is a lack of scholarly research on the potential of local food in the Caribbean region despite its inherent status as a high tourism penetration and popular destination.

The highly competitive global tourism industry mandates that the Caribbean SIDS travel and tourism product must strive not to be perceived as substandard or backward compared to the other global regions. Despite the influence of food on a destination's competitiveness and attractiveness, policymakers and tourism organizations of the Caribbean and Trinidad & Tobago have at best underutilized and even ignored the potential of local food because they poorly understand its capacity and capability. Therefore, this study fills a gap on how and why Trinidad & Tobago can and should leverage food as an integral aspect of its destination marketing and management strategies, much like the most lucrative global tourism destinations in the USA, Europe, and Asia have very effectively done.

The research study sought a deeper understanding of the contemporary use of local food by employing content analysis of the Trinidad & Tobago destination marketing websites and industry expert interviews, which revealed three major consensus themes. Two of these themes inherently regarded the challenges and opportunities of local food and the destination infrastructure. However, Trinidad & Tobago is a Caribbean and Small Island Destination State (SIDS) tourism anomaly because it is neither a mass leisure nor a traditional (3S) sun, sea, and sand tourist destination. Accordingly, the third consensus theme of government influences and funding is posited as the overriding systemic factor impacting the success of the Trinidad & Tobago tourism sector.

A food tourism strategic marketing plan incorporating the facets of Trinitario fine chocolate food souvenirs targeted to the Caribbean cruise tourism industry and destination food safety and hygiene is a crucial cornerstone of contriving future Trinidad & Tobago destination loyalty strategies. A 3C destination experience bundle featuring Trinidad & Tobago Carnival, chocolate, and cuisine is more authentically and uniquely competitive than merely homaging ubiquitous 3S brand loyalty. Achieving a deeper understanding of the contemporary leveraging of Trinidad & Tobago's local food and its albeit unofficial status as the culinary capital of the Caribbean as a destination marketing pull is pivotal. However, leveraging the influence of an expansive diaspora as destination ambassadors and the growing popularity of Trinidad & Tobago-styled carnival festivals held predominantly in major North American and U.K. cities are the key destination loyalty success pivots. It is hoped that the learnings of this study can best be applied to the case study subject of Trinidad & Tobago but may also be of some potential value to other Caribbean SIDS and contribution to the success and sustainability of the tourism sector generally.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide (DMOs)

1. Checklist of items before conducting the interview

   - Ensure that the interview is conducted in a conducive environment and that the interviewee is relaxed.
   - Ensure that the interviewee has reviewed the participant information factsheet and signed off on the Consent Form.
   - Verify that the participant is ready to proceed with the interview.
   - Turn on the recorder after reminding the interviewee that the responses and recording will remain strictly confidential.

2. Opening Question: Can you tell me about your background and experience in the tourism industry?

3. Content Questions:

   i. What do you consider as the role or purpose of a DMO? Probe: Can you clarify if you consider your organization a destination management or marketing organization or both?

   ii. What are the main challenges in destination marketing in Trinidad & Tobago (or the Caribbean if interviewing the Caribbean Development Bank)? Probe: How has destination marketing in Trinidad & Tobago changed over the last 5-10 years?

   iii. What are your views regarding food as a tourist attraction?

   iv. What kind of experience can local food provide to visitors?

   v. How important is the role of local food in the destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago?

   vi. Does your organization have any specific local food marketing strategy or campaigns?

vii. How is your organization working with any local food stakeholders such as festival organizers or restaurant owners?

viii. What do you consider the main opportunities and challenges of using local food in destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago?

4. Follow-up Question: What are your suggestions regarding the development, organization, and marketing of local food in the destination of Trinidad & Tobago? Probe: Do you have any additional comments or viewpoints that you wish to share?

5. Closing Instructions Checklist

- Ensure to convey gratitude and thank the interviewee for their time and willingness to participate in the interview.
- Reassure the interviewee about the confidentiality of the interview
- Ask for the opportunity to conduct a follow-up interview if necessary to clarify further any points arising from the first interview.

Interview Guide (Industry Experts)

1. Checklist of items before conducting the interview

- Ensure that the interview is conducted in a conducive environment and that the interviewee is relaxed.
- Ensure that the interviewee has reviewed the participant information factsheet and signed off on the Consent Form.
- Verify that the participant is ready to proceed with the interview.
- Turn on the recorder after reminding the interviewee that the responses and recording will remain strictly confidential.

2. Opening Question: Can you tell me about your background and experience in the tourism industry?

3. Content Questions:

i. What are your views regarding food as a tourist attraction?

ii. What kind of experience can local food provide to visitors?

iii. How important is the role of local food in the destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago?

iv. Does your organization have any specific local food marketing strategy or campaigns?

v. How is your organization working with any other local food stakeholders such as festival organizers or restaurant owners?

vi. What do you consider the main opportunities and challenges of using local food in destination marketing of Trinidad & Tobago?

4. Follow-up Question: What are your suggestions regarding the development, organization, and marketing of local food in the destination of Trinidad & Tobago? Probe: Do you have any additional comments or related viewpoints that you wish to share?

5. Closing Instructions Checklist

- Ensure to convey gratitude and thank the interviewee for their time and willingness to participate in the interview.
- Reassure the interviewee about the confidentiality of the interview.
- Ask for the opportunity to conduct a follow-up interview if necessary to clarify further any points arising from the first interview.

Appendix B: Participant Information Factsheet

This document regards an invitation to participate in an Applied Doctoral Research Project Case Study interview which means that neither the research project nor the results will be published. Based on industry status attributed to experience and expertise, participants are invited and drawn from hospitality and tourism industry representatives, contacts, and officials. Taking part in the study is entirely optional, and if you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. However, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Hopefully, interviewees may find their participation a fulfilling experience.

Purpose of the Research

This interview research is undertaken as part of the interviewer's Doctor of Business Administration dissertation requirements of Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, USA. This research explores the role of local food in Trinidad & Tobago destination marketing.

Researcher: Winston Mohammed, Liberty University Student ID # L29524477; E-mail: xxxxxxxx@liberty.edu; mobile: (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Ashlie Roeder; e-mail: xxxxxxxx@liberty.edu

About the Interview

Study participants are asked approximately eight questions in an interview process which may last approximately 30-40 minutes depending on how much information they wish to share. The interview process may be conducted either via Microsoft Teams or face-to-face and will be recorded. However, please be assured that all the information provided will be kept strictly confidential and presented anonymously as per scholarly protocols without publication.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Title of Dissertation Research: Local Food in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Destination Marketing – the Case of Trinidad & Tobago.

Researcher: Winston Mohammed, Liberty university Student ID # L29524477; E-mail: xxxxxxxx@liberty.edu; mobile: (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Ashlie Roeder – Liberty University; e-mail: xxxxxxxx@liberty.edu

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information noted on the Participant Information Factsheet.
2. I confirm that I have been provided with adequate information regarding the study purpose and the interview framework, and the study is explained to my satisfaction.
3. I have been provided information regarding the researcher's name and contact details, including the researcher's dissertation supervisor.
4. I agree to allow the interview to be recorded.
5. I agree to the use of my anonymized quotes in the study.
6. I confirm that my participation is voluntary, and I am aware that I may freely withdraw at any time without advising a reason.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Appendix D: DBA -ADRP Permission Request Template

Date

Recipient

Title

Company

Address

Dear (Recipient),

As a doctoral student in the Business Department at Liberty University pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration, I am conducting case study research to examine the promotion of local food as an integral aspect of destination marketing initiatives to enhance tourism experiences and destination decision-making. This study is an Applied Doctoral Research Project; therefore, neither the research project nor the results will be published. Accordingly, my research questions propose to expound on Trinidad & Tobago's inherent destination marketing challenges and opportunities for promoting its local food.

I am writing to request your kind permission to conduct a portion of my research on your organization and accordingly contact a few of your employees to seek their participation in this study. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are free to discontinue their participation at any time without advising a reason. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my request further and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request. If you choose to grant permission, I will kindly need a signed statement indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Winston Mohammed
Doctoral Student
Liberty University School of Business
Mobile: xxx-xxx-xxxx
E-mail: xxxxxxxxx@liberty.edu