



# Seafood, its appreciation and capacity to contribute towards the South African Tourism Industry: A case study of Chinese tourists in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal

Sheetal Bhoola\* and Anand Singh  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Durban, South Africa, 4041  
[bhoolas@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhoolas@ukzn.ac.za)

Corresponding author\*

## Abstract

This cosmopolitan city of Durban in South Africa, is home to a variety of cuisines along with fresh produce, fresh seafood, meats and poultry. This paper contributes towards the value and importance of creating a culinary destination in Durban through appropriate tourism marketing strategies for especially Chinese tourists. Chinese tourism to South Africa has been on an increasing trajectory and China's presence was evident at Africa's Travel Indaba 2018, a mega event which is hosted in Durban annually. Attention is paid to cuisine preferences and meal choices of tourists in 2018 in comparison to data collated in 2010 from Chinese soccer fans who were in Durban as spectators to the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup. Foods and cuisines that Durban has to offer are noted and the question is raised whether food in Durban is adequately marketed to international tourists that attend mega events in Durban.

**Keywords:** seafood, culinary tourism, Durban, Chinese, food

## Introduction

This paper is a continuation of ongoing studies that have been investigating the possibilities of culinary tourism as a marketing strategy for Durban's Tourism. Durban in South Africa's Kwa-Zulu Natal province is home to a wide variety of foods because of the diverse ethnic groupings within its population. Central to this study is determining which cuisine type proves to be popular and is appreciated by tourists of all nationalities that the city attracts through global annual events such as Africa's Travel Indaba and other events. The first paper on this theme, *Culinary choices: developing Durban as a culinary destination* was based on this research theme and focused on the concept of culinary tourism with the aim of strengthening tourism to Durban. Some additional objectives of this paper included marketing capacities of food in Kwa-Zulu Natal and the identification of the varying foods available in Durban. This study also revealed the cuisine preferences of tourists from China, India, Malawi, Germany, France, Spain, England and The United States of America that visited Durban during the 2010 FIFA<sup>1</sup> Soccer games (Singh & Bhoola, 2016:1). A second paper in this 'trilogy' focused on Durban's Indian cuisine which was described and reflected upon with the intention for it to become a vehicle for culinary tourism if marketed effectively and adequately (Singh & Bhoola, 2018: 107).

Comparatively, this paper highlights the potential of seafood as a focal cuisine to be used in developing a culinary tourism initiative for the city. Other coastal cities like Cape Town and Port Elizabeth are yet to market their seafood restaurants ardently, although their culinary tourism initiatives have been in place for a number of years now. Reference is made to their numerous wine tourism initiatives and Cape Malay cuisine. Seafood and its relevance is further entrenched by its popularity amongst the Chinese who are the current largest outbound tourism market which destinations around the world are presently competing for. Furthermore, research and literature which detail food preferences of Chinese tourists in different

---

<sup>1</sup> The Federation Internationale de Football Association.



destinations are rare, with the exception of one recent publication that explicitly indicates that the Chinese prefer their own variation of cuisine even when visiting the United States of America (Wu et al, 2016:4706). However, these scholars note that Chinese cuisine remains a preference for Chinese tourists in Western Countries. In comparison, South Africa has a heterogeneous diversity in its populous which has contributed extensively to the wide variety of cuisines that have migrated to the country. Other cuisines and food variations have manifested through the amalgamations peoples and their diversity which contributes to the number of non-Western and unique cuisines that are available in Durban. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to assume that the majority of Chinese tourists would prefer their own cuisine in Durban, which has given importance and validation to this research.

Therefore, this paper contributes towards better understanding the Chinese tourists and their cuisine preferences whilst they are in Durban, irrespective of their reasons of travel. Discussions within this paper include meal preferences and their perceptions of what types of foods or cuisines that they view as being authentic. Details of Africa's Travel Indaba are included with special reference to observations of the varying types of food that were available for delegates. Data collated in 2010 and then in 2018 of Chinese tourists in Durban, are compared and discussed in detail, giving this paper value in its capacity to indicate changes and or similarities in dietary preferences and eating habits of these tourists over an eight year period. Furthermore, this paper acknowledges Durban's capacity to play host to global events such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the annual Africa's Travel Indaba. The information presented showcases the city's capacity to appropriately accommodate the Chinese tourist and other international guests in relation to their food preferences and meal requirements during peak touristic times and when hosting global events.

Tourism focused studies such as these have become more significant as the South African economy continues to depend on the Tourism sector to contribute towards employment, and especially in recent years. According to statistics South Africa, the tourism industry contributes more than the mining sector to employment in this country. One in 22 employed persons in South Africa are employed within the Tourism sector. Such statistics only underline the need for continual studies within the Tourism sector so that this sector can continue to grow South Africa's revenue and contribute permanently to employing citizens (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

The Chinese in recent years have been visiting South Africa frequently and according to a tourism business report published in print media earlier this year, the Chinese in particular have become more interested in visiting Durban, and therefore it is a market which should be focused on by Durban tourism (Rajgopaul, *Business Report Online*, 5 May 2018). Scholars have indicated that South Africa is not the only destination that the Chinese have been travelling to. The United States of America has also in recent years experienced an increase in Chinese tourism because The American Embassy extended the length of both business and tourist visas in 2014. This has resulted in a tourism boom for the country directly from China (Wu et al, 2016: 4706). Media reports stipulate that Hong Kong, Macau and Thailand are also frequented by the Chinese regularly and a broad overview of media reports and blogs speak of the new Chinese outbound tourism boom. Scholars, Wu et al (2016) indicate that there will be many international destinations that will be competing against one another for the Chinese tourist revenue. Global trends such as these only strengthen the need to market South African tourism appropriately to attract the Chinese tourists. Central to their needs are their dining experiences and preferences for certain varieties of foods.

The Business Report also emphasized that an effort should be made to entice tourists from the Middle East and Asia to Durban (Rajgopaul, *Business Report Online*, 5 May 2018). In comparison, Cape Town have already embarked on their awareness strategies to be more accommodating towards the Muslim traveler's needs since South Africa was ranked as one of ten most Muslim-friendly travel destinations for 2018 among non-Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries in the annual Mastercard-Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel



Index (GMTI). These organizations have been prioritizing on creating a Muslim friendly tourism market, with the availability of halaal food<sup>2</sup> been central to accommodating Muslim tourists from the Middle East (Anon, *Cape Town takes steps to tap into \$22 bn Muslim travel Sector*, 22 May 2018). Durban too is home to a variety of halaal specialty restaurants across the city. These include both Durban Indian<sup>3</sup>, authentic Indian, Portuguese and Pakistani cuisines amongst others. Observations have affirmed that seafood too is widely consumed by Muslims in and around Durban. This gives prominence to the timeous need to market the city's seafood restaurants widely and appropriately within South Africa, so that the city can lure not only the Chinese, but also Muslim travelers. These food specialties and the variety of cuisines are reflective of Durban's capacity to be receptive to people of all ethnicities, religious faiths and nations. During the last mega event hosted in Durban, the city received people of all nationalities and faiths. The research collated after the 2010 FIFA World Cup games identified numerous visitors to the city from all around the world. Amongst them were included tourists from Malawi, India, England, France, Italy, Cameroon, Greece, Germany and China. The magnitude of this event and its success contributed towards developing a positive global perspective of the hospitality sector in Durban. Other events that the city has hosted have continually contributed towards this increasingly positive tourism image the city has, despite its numerous challenges with crime and security related issues.

Kwa-Zulu Natal enjoyed success when Durban was afforded the opportunity to host soccer games during the 2010 FIFA World Cup and in addition the Africa's Travel indaba has been taking place in Durban for a number of consecutive years now. Recent tourism statistics have indicated an upward trend towards tourists visiting Durban. According to statistics released in print media, tourism has been responsible for almost tripling the amount of revenue generated into South Africa between the years 2010 and 2014 (Rajgopaul, *Business Report Online*, 5 May 2018). However, these statistics are vague and do not indicate how favoured Durban was as a tourist destination, in comparison to other metropolitan cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg. But we are to still determine whether tourists have been visiting Durban as much as Cape Town and other touristic sites in South Africa. In addition, Travel Start which is an online flight booking company indicated that their survey revealed that Durban has been ranking third next to Cape Town and Johannesburg for the last four consecutive years in the category of most popular air routes.

The mere fact that travelers are travelling to their destinations via Durban presents us with a possibility of tourism growth. Tourists can easily break their journey in Durban and visit the city, alternatively they could bypass the city and opt to visit other areas of South Africa. However, these statistics do not indicate if tourists have been only utilizing King Shaka International Airport<sup>4</sup> or whether they have been visiting Durban. Nevertheless, Durban has also come second best to Cape Town especially within the Tourism Arena. Table Mountain as a tourist attraction has remained to be popular and a 'must see' site for many international tourists for more than a decade now (Anon, *Travel news*, 26 June 2018). Charles Peerce from FEDHASA<sup>5</sup> explained that International tourists prefer to visit Cape Town, but since there has been a shortage of water, tourists have been steering away from the city (Rajgopaul, *Business Report Online*, 5 May 2018). This then could have a positive impact on other cities in South Africa that are continuously in competition with Cape Town for international tourists. The annual event, Africa's Travel Indaba in Durban attracted a fair amount of both local and international tourists this year, which allowed Durban to be showcased not only as an

---

<sup>2</sup> Halaal is a term that describes meats that are permissible to consume for people of Islam faith. Meats are slaughtered in a unique way and are blessed before being shelved for commercial purposes and consumption.

<sup>3</sup> A distinctly different variation of Indian cuisine which is influenced by local cuisines within Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban, South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> The largest commercial airport in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal.

<sup>5</sup> The Federated Hospitality Association of Southern Africa.



destination suitable for congresses and events, but as a vacation destination simultaneously. The findings of this study confirmed that due to the water restrictions imposed on both residents and tourists in Cape Town, some international delegates chose to spend up to three additional nights in Durban rather than in Cape Town this year, whereas other tourists were content to spend some leisure time in Johannesburg.

### **The Chinese travel to South Africa**

There was a notably large presence of seemingly

Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean or Japanese people and from the onset, as an observer the researcher could not differentiate between these ethnic groupings. Engaging with them was the only way to determine their nationality. This was revealed after interviews were held with those that were willing to participate in this study. Of a possible 20 study participants, 15 were from China, and the remaining were Taiwanese and Japanese.

Since the 1994 general election in South Africa, the Chinese has been visiting the country more frequently, which assisted in ushering South Africa's grand re-entry into the international arena. Diplomatic relations between China and South Africa were established in 1998 and by 2001 China had granted South Africa Approved Destination Status<sup>6</sup> (Weaver, 2002: 61). The Chinese have become one of the most sought after markets for foreign tourists. According to journalist Savannah Freemantle, the Chinese are accountable for at least 70 million international trips during the year 2017 (Freemantle, *Chinese Arrivals in South Africa*, 2 February 2019). Mark Godfrey explains that international travel for the Chinese populous serves as a barometer for social mobility world (Godfrey, *Southeast Asia's seafood market being reshaped by Chinese tourists*, 29 May 2018). South African Tourism has embarked on initiatives to attract Chinese tourism since there has been a notable rise of Chinese visiting South Africa after 2010. Between January 2010 and December 2010 the South African Tourism Industry welcomed more than 68 309 Chinese tourists. The Chinese have visited South Africa for both leisure and business purposes (Lehohla, 2010). The cities visited by these tourists and the type of tourist activities they engaged in are not indicated in the Tourism 2010 report compiled by Statistics South Africa. However, the FIFA World Cup attracted serious interest. Between January and September 2011, approximately 60 000 Chinese tourists visited South Africa, an eighteen percent increase over the same period in 2010. The reasons for this increase include the establishment of South African Application Centres in Beijing and Shanghai to improve visa efficiency, and a series of successful South African Tourism promotions. In January 2012, South African Airways launched direct flights between Johannesburg and Beijing, impacting positively on local business and tourism (China Tourism Update, 2012).

During 2016, approximately 10 000 Chinese tourists visited South Africa. Their peak travel times are around their celebrations of Chinese New Year in January and February each year and then again in May and June when they take their annual holidays. Despite these time frames, the statistics in 2016 proved that Chinese tourists have a preference towards South Africa as a business or leisure destination. SAT<sup>7</sup> President for Asia-Pacific, Bradley Bower explained that Chinese tourists are now opting to visit places of interest in Africa rather than embark upon typical Paris shopping sprees that were popular not so long ago. It is interesting to note statistics that have also revealed new trends which indicate that independent travelling among these tourists has been on an upward trend in comparison to group tours and group travelling. These tourists are heading to destinations where visa policies are favourable. In addition, South Africa tour companies have now adopted Mandarin speaking tour guides and

---

<sup>6</sup> "Approved Destination Status (ADS) simply means that citizen of China are not allowed to go on holiday abroad unless it is to a country that has ADS. A country that does not have ADS is not allowed to market itself in China" (Weaver, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> South African Tourism



promotional tourism material which is translated into Mandarin to accommodate the Chinese tourist. In addition, direct flights from Johannesburg to China, Hong Kong and surrounding destinations have all contributed to the increase of Chinese tourists visiting South Africa. This is further aided by the favourable exchange rates between the yuan and the rand, which gives reason to believe that the Chinese tourism boom may continue on an upward scale (Freemantle, Chinese Arrivals in South Africa, 2 February 2019). It has been reported that Chinese tourists are wary and concerned about safety and security issues when touring South Africa. This has only given the South African Tourism Authorities further reason to create a greater awareness of security concerns in each city in the country and to continually attempt to attract crime free positive publicity so that tourists can feel safe in South Africa. Data collated which will be discussed later in the paper revealed the perceptions of Chinese tourists in relation to crime in South Africa.

It has been estimated recently that the Chinese tourists spends approximately \$6 200 a trip to South Africa and their average length of stay is 10 days. It is also interesting to note that Cape Town is still revered by these tourists, with most tourists spending at least three to four nights there on each trip. SAT President for Asia-Pacific, Bradley Bouwer explained that Chinese visitor spending is predicted to reach US\$100 million this year, making the country a major contributor to the growth of the tourism industry, which supports one in every ten jobs in South Africa. According to Manju (2012), Indian and Chinese tourists spend more than tourists from the United States and the United Kingdom when travelling in South Africa and Australia. The data also indicated that both the Indian and Chinese tourists choose to splurge on themselves especially when they travel to Australia, the United States and South Africa. While it is not clear precisely what they choose to buy in South Africa, Manju (2012) indicates this includes airfares, accommodation bills, food and shopping (Manju, *The Times of India*, 6 March 2012).

## **Methodology**

### **The research process and sample populous**

A qualitative methodological approach was employed in this study and it included two segments of data. The first set of data was collated during the year 2010 when Durban played host to the FIFA World Cup soccer games and the second set of data was collected and collated during May 2018 at the time of Africa's travel indaba in Durban. Interviews and surveys were conducted with these Chinese tourists at both time frames and this was complemented by a literature analysis of current information and statistics in relation to Chinese tourism trends in South Africa. Five in-depth interviews with Chinese tourists that visited Durban as spectators to the FIFA World Cup soccer games were conducted in 2010 and in addition in 2018, 5 in- depth interviews were held with delegates of Africa's travel Indaba in May 2018, and 10 questionnaires were completed by those delegates that opted not to engage in interviews with me. The questionnaires consisted of ten open-ended questions which were similar to the questions posed in the study in 2010. The central focus of these questions were about their food preferences and restaurant preferences whilst they were in Durban. Respondents were asked to identify their nationality, country of residence, their gender and purpose of travel to Durban. All study participants were assured of their anonymity when they agreed to participate in this study. Participants were informed initially that participation in this study was voluntary and that there were no financial rewards for their contribution towards this study. Respondents were not offered any food or drink after I had approached them as all of these interviews took place after midday within the dining areas of the fair, and in most cases, these individuals had already eaten their meal or snack. Some information presented in the questionnaire was rather brief and lacked further explanation for their food choices. However, the in-depth discussion presented in this paper is primarily based on the five lengthy interviews held with Chinese interviewees. Most interviewees who agreed to participate in this study were fluent in English, with the exception of two interviewees whose contributions were excluded from this study, simply because upon transcription of the interview



I realized that their lack of command of the English language contributed towards irregularities in their responses.

Participant observation was an advantageous contribution to this paper. It has further enhanced the quality of the data collated during interviews and surveys and provided additional details which are presented in this study especially in relation to observations of the annual Africa's Travel Indaba in 2018. Agar (1996) explains that participant observation is a broad description that encapsulates all of the observations of both formal and informal interviews in which anthropologists engage. The value of such observations especially at global events such as the Travel Indaba cannot be undermined. This method allowed us as anthropologists to partake in the daily happenings, rituals and interactions at restaurants during 2010 and at Africa's travel Indaba this year (Agar, 1996 cited in Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002: 8).

A Purposive sampling method was employed as it was the most appropriate sampling method for this study. It is a type of non-probability sampling that allows the researcher to make decisions on who to include in the sample. There are numerous sub-categories within purposive sampling, but for the purpose of this study criterion sampling was implemented. Criterion sampling involves searching for cases or individuals who meet certain criteria directly related to this study (Jupp, 2006: 245). For instance, all my interviewees had to be of Chinese origin to participate in this study, and they had to have travelled to Durban especially for Africa's Travel Indaba 2018. This data was then compared and collaborated with the data collated in 2010 which only established eating preferences of the Chinese tourist in Durban.

During 2010, the 5 interviews with Chinese tourists took place at restaurants located in three areas of Durban namely The Durban Beachfront, Florida Road (the mid-town area that is rapidly developing into a middle class 'hangout' for locals as well as Lagoon Drive and Chartwell Drive in Umhlanga Rocks – where residential areas, hotels and restaurants serve the leisure needs of mainly the wealthy from within and outside the area. Chinese tourists were randomly approached to participate in the study whilst they were seated at various restaurants and permission to interview restaurant patrons was granted by restaurant managers and or owners. These interviewees were assured of their anonymity and no incentive was offered to them for their participation. During the first week of May 2018 interviews and surveys were conducted at the Durban's International Convention Centre and Exhibition halls where the Travel Indaba was held. Delegates that I assumed were of Chinese nationality were approached to participate in the study based on the criterion of their nationality. Interviews and surveys were both challenging at times, as at least 3 of the Chinese delegates interviewed at the Africa's Travel Indaba had a limited command of the English language and Mandarin was their first and preferred language of communication. Some study respondents that took the time to complete the questionnaire also responded in Mandarin handwriting, forcing us to ignore some of the responses and explanations received. However, interviews rather than the questionnaires proved to be most resourceful as respondents had the time for further discussions of uncertainties in the questions posed, for their responses and perceptions to be reaffirmed by us and they shared other general information with us in relation to crime, foods available and restaurants in Durban.

### **Africa's Travel Indaba in Durban, 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2018.**

Africa's Travel Indaba has become one of the biggest and most revered Travel events in Africa which has an aim to launch and showcase various international and local businesses and entrepreneurs within the travel industry. The event has been recognised on the international platform and has been commemorated by awards from the Association of World Travel Awards within the category of Africa's Best Travel and Tourism. This event has become the ideal platform for entrepreneurs to launch and promote their tourism services, attractions and



or products. The event is owned by South African Tourism and has proven to be successful for a number of years now. Durban has hosted this event for 28 years consecutively with success despite ongoing challenges of crime, tourist safety and lack of public transport facilities<sup>8</sup>. Since its inception, the event has developed into an enormous global event which attracts people of nationalities to participate. The event has the capacity to generate up to millions and has been attracting more than 10 000 delegates annually. The event which took place in May 2018 hosted more than 1000 exhibitors and more than 1400 buyers from 68 countries around the globe. (Bryer, Tourism time in the Spotlight at Africa's Travel Indaba 2018, 10 May 2018). The event has always been financially lucrative for Durban. For instance, last year the event contributed more than R85 million to province's GDP and possibly as much as R6m in government taxes. This year however, the program was restructured with longer lunch time breaks during which delegates could discuss business and network effectively. This was a strategic approach to revolutionize food travel in Africa according to journalist Clinton Moodley. Moodley also made mention of culinary adventures that are available in Durban which contribute towards downtimes for tourists (Moodley, The stage is set for Africa's travel Indaba, 7 May 2018).

This year the event was hosted for a period of three days between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2018 across 2 venues which are adjacent to each other in the city centre. The Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre (Durban ICC) and the Durban Exhibition Centre (DEC). These venue are easily accessible to delegates as they can walk from one venue to the other with ease during the fair. This event also gave entrepreneurs a networking opportunity as the 6<sup>th</sup> of May was a day which was dedicated to networking for businesses within the tourism and hospitality sector of Africa. The remaining days were open to all and were classified as days on which one could enjoy and discover the fair and trade (Moodley, The stage is set for Africa's travel Indaba, 7 May 2018). The researcher's observations indicated that the international guests outnumbered South Africans at the event, and there were representatives from many African countries too. This year there were delegates from 80 countries present and overall registrations reached approximately 7000 people. There were approximately over 1700 buyers and over 1100 registered exhibitors with 23 African countries in attendance this year ([www.indaba-southafrica.co.za](http://www.indaba-southafrica.co.za)).

#### *Food at Africa's Travel Indaba*

Food vendors situated at the eating courts within the two halls bustled throughout the day and conference delegates could choose from a wide variety of cuisines available for sale. The take away options included foods that were easy to eat whilst walking and engaging in the event. These privately owned food trucks managed by local entrepreneurs primarily served Western fast foods which included beef and chicken burgers, hot potato chips, sandwiches, wraps and hotdogs amongst other foods. In addition the main dining hall at the The Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre (Durban ICC) served a buffet sit-down lunch daily, with dishes varying from continental and western cuisines, as well as African influenced dishes and Durban Indian curries. The menu consisted of both hot and cold dishes daily and the dishes served daily varied from day to day.

However marketing initiatives about the variety of foods that Durban has to offer were not evident. For instance, no information about local foods and cuisines was available for international guests. The event had the physical space for such marketing as both these function halls are huge in size and guests had to walk through exhibitor halls, food halls and main dining areas. There were no information boards or flyers that explained to the

---

<sup>8</sup> Across the city of Durban, public transport can be challenging for tourists in particular. The buses do not travel to all areas of the city and they are predominantly used by people to commute to the city centre and to residential suburbs on a daily basis. The availability of buses that commute after hours are limited making this mode of transport inappropriate for tourists.

international guest what the varying food options were at the event and, neither were there vendors that specialized in Durban Indian Cuisine and or Chinese cuisines, despite its availability in the city. Guests were not informed of which foods and cuisines were local and unique to Durban, and where one could sample local dishes.

The marketing of foods and cuisines in Durban has unfortunately not been prioritized, and this trend has been evident not just in 2018, but in previous years too, despite global attention and new focuses on food and cooking via television programs, the web and a wide range of print media. As mentioned in a previous publication (Singh & Bhoola, 2018:118), there is a lack of effort and interest to market Durban's specialized dishes such as the Bunny chow<sup>9</sup> and Durban Indian curries<sup>10</sup> or Zulu infused local dishes and or seafood amongst other available dishes and foods. *The Chinese and their perception of what foods are authentic to South Africa*

The concept of 'authenticity' is often contested and has sparked continual interest amongst food anthropologists and scholars alike. The value of understanding this concept and its relevancy becomes significant when food becomes central in attracting the culinary tourist and other types of tourists to destinations. Scholars and tourists often enquire which dishes or foods are unique and 'authentic' to a destination and often they are the ones that determine the popularity of the food. This becomes more important emphasised when tourist destinations compete against one another for tourists from similar regions of the world (Singh & Bhoola, 2018: 116). Continual migration of people of all nations to South Africa whether it is temporary or permanent has also had an influence of foods available in our country. For instance local dishes that were prepared in a particular style 5 years ago may now be influenced by migrant populous in Durban. Mintz and Du Bois (2002) affirmed this by stating that both foods and people move across the globe simultaneously but they fail to make mention of the influences and the variances that develop in foods after migration (Mintz & du Bois, 2002 cited in Singh & Bhoola, 2018: 110). Scholar, Symons (1999) states that "authentic meals have to be true to place" (Symons, 1999 cited in Singh & Bhoola, 2018: 110). In contemporary societies places constitute peoples of all ethnicities, nations and religious sects which contributes to the lack of accurate academic comprehension of authentic foods of a particular destination. Therefore varying theories collectively indicate that the term 'authentic' is loosely defined and its existence is continually questioned.

However, this tourist perspective brings value to the tourism economy. Their perception is able to guide local tourism authorities as to what local foods could be labelled authentic for marketing and tourism initiatives that can bring to the fore the element of uniqueness to South African cuisines. In this reflection, Erik Cohen (2002) reiterates that this concept is broad and that its value and or relevance is primarily related to specificity of an object, experience or consumable (Cohen, 2002: 269).

Interviews conducted in 2010 revealed that there were three foods which were seen as authentic to South Africans by the 5 Chinese interviewees. The foods are namely, seafood, biltong<sup>11</sup> and game meat. In 2018 data collected through both interviews and surveys revealed

---

<sup>9</sup> A bread bowl which is created from a loaf of bread and the centre is scooped out and filled with a curry of your choice. Most popular bunnies in Durban include, Mutton Bunny and the beans bunny.

<sup>10</sup> Curry is a spicy saucy dish which consists of either meats, poultry, seafoods, legumes or vegetables. In Durban, the curries available tend to be more pungent than other areas of the world and there is a dominant use of lots of ground fresh and dried chilies, ginger and garlic.

<sup>11</sup> Dried and salted meats available in South Africa. The meats are salted and dried over a number of days and they are sold once dried completely. They are available in game meat such as ostrich and kudu as well as mainstream meats such as chicken and beef. Popular amongst locals is a meat variety called boerewors which constitutes of all meats processed together into sausages and other products alike. Dried boerewors has also become a favourite for many.





that seafood, Durban Indian Cuisine, samp<sup>12</sup>, barbequed meat, and African dishes were authentic dishes. These foods were elected as authentic for varying reasons. Some interviewees explained that the quality of seafood in Durban was of an exceptional standard making it valuable to South African foods and others commented that game meats would be authentic as they are primarily available only in South Africa and not easily available elsewhere. There also seemed to an overlapping understanding of what authentic food and unique foods were.

However, central to the information retrieved was the fact that in 2010 and 2018 seafood was repeatedly mentioned. In 2010, 3 out of 5 interviewees classified seafood as authentic and in 2018, 4 of 5 interviewees indicated the same. Six out of 10 questionnaires responding similarly which places a great emphasis on the impact that seafood available in Durban has on Chinese tourists. The continual repetition of responses from tourists who visited Durban in 2010 and 2018 heightens the importance of this study and the way seafood restaurants can contribute to Durban Tourism.

### *Seafood popularity and availability in Durban*

#### *The Chinese and their preference of Seafood*

Chinese food culture has become renowned for its capacity to integrate almost all foods and plants in its cuisine. Chang et al (2010) explain that Chinese cuisine can include diversity, flexibility and adaptability which can be a major determinant of food preference. This is influenced by cultural food ways and habits that are formed through this socialisation process (Chang et al, 2010:991). Recent reports stipulate that Chinese trawlers fish the most and travel the furthest across international seas for their catch. Global Fishing Watch, a non-profit organisation which specialises in researching fishing capacities globally speculated that China was responsible for 17 million hours of fishing during 2016 (Doyle, *Chinese Trawlers travel farthest and fish the most: Study*, 22 February 2018). There is an obvious link between these trawlers, the numerous fish markets in China and the level of consumption of seafood by the Chinese.

Recent mass media journalists have coined the term 'seafood tourists' to describe the high outbound Chinese tourism to Thailand over the last year. Godfrey (2018) explains that the high prices of seafood varieties in China are encouraging its people to consume this food outside in other countries. Chinese travellers are on the constant search for inexpensive seafood focussed vocational sites, and Thailand has become popular in this regard. Chinese tourists have become the driver of seafood consumption in Southeast Asia, reaffirming their food preferences in other regions of the world (Godfrey, *Southeast Asia's seafood market being reshaped by Chinese tourists*, 29 May 2018). This trend only reaffirms that seafood features prominently on the dining tables of the majority of Chinese in contemporary times. Torres (2002) cited in (Chang et al, 2010:993) that many studies affirm that tourists have a tendency to prefer foods which they are familiar with when travelling and can resist sampling local specialities or varieties of foods. Chang et al (2010) further explains that food consumption within tourism can be about the 'ontological comfort of home' for many tourists and food habits can derive from learnt behaviour and can be resistant to change once they are established (Chang et al, 2010:993).

Chinese Interviewees in 2010 and in 2018 were asked about their preferred type of restaurant when visiting Durban. Some 60% of all 20 respondents indicated that they prefer dining at a seafood restaurant in Durban, with 20% indicating their preference for Indian restaurants and the remaining 20% indicating their preference to dine at a Chinese restaurant. In addition, many other interviewees of other nationalities interviewed in the 2010 also indicated their preference for seafood dishes in Durban and more than a decade ago seafood was deemed

---

<sup>12</sup> Samp is a local food consisting of dried corn kernels that have been chopped and packaged for sale. These corn kernels are cooked in boiling water so that a soft chewable corn is attained.



to be one of the most expensive meals available in Durban according to a *Daily News*<sup>13</sup> survey conducted in the year 2005. The survey also indicated that restaurant patrons were willing to pay high prices for seafood meals (Kuppan, *The Daily News*, 17 May 2005). Interviewees interviewed in 2018, stated that the price of seafood dishes in Durban are reasonable and affordable in comparison to some metropolises like London and New York City. Mark Godfrey explained in his publication that most seafood varieties within China are unaffordable for their people at present (Godfrey, *Southeast Asia's seafood market being reshaped by Chinese tourists*, 29 May 2018). Special reference was made to langoustines, crayfish and prawns and freshly caught fish available in Durban. These Chinese tourists expressed approval and satisfaction of the way seafood was prepared and served at restaurants in Durban. Special reference was made to dishes such as fish curry as well as grilled and butter pan fried fish slices and prawns. Interviewees from the study in 2010 also expressed the opinion that fish dishes prepared at Chinese restaurants in Durban were not to their preference and respondents from the 2018 study were unable to comment much in relation to Chinese restaurants and their dishes with reference to seafood dishes. Chinese tourists that were interviewed in 2018 consumed seafood meals almost daily whilst they were in Durban and were comfortable to do so because of the variety of ways fish is prepared in Durban. Special reference was made to a popular restaurant in Durban which Chinese tourists enjoyed a meal at during the week of Africa's Travel Indaba. Interviews revealed that the hotel staff in Umhlanga advised them to have dinner at that restaurant and they noted that they had not seen any marketing information available on seafood restaurants in particular since their arrival in the city.

#### *Marketing and availability of seafood in Durban.*

This research has highlighted the fact that Chinese tourists have been consistent in their preference for seafood meals when they visit Durban. This then brings to the fore the possibility that seafood can be largely popular amongst tourists of other nationalities as well. Seafood restaurants, among other cuisines then can too serve as a culinary attraction for tourists in Durban.

An analysis of all internet marketing initiatives by Tourism and the hospitality sector has supported the viewpoint that seafood restaurants and their specialities lack both sufficient and appropriate marketing in the city. Furthermore, print media initiatives are also scarce in relation to informing the tourist of the numerous seafood restaurants that we have in Durban and their specialities.

Restaurateurs have indicated that most prawns purchased and prepared by them are either imported from surrounding countries, despite Durban being a coastal city. The irregularities in relation to the privatisation of seafood products in South Africa is evident in the lack of seafood markets available to local citizens. Shops specialising in seafood products display huge disparities between the prices of goods and often these prices fluctuate according to the demands of locals. Our personal observations have indicated that local shellfish sells for higher prices than shellfish imported from Mozambique for instance. During the periods of religious festivals such as Christmas, Deepavali<sup>14</sup> and Eid al Fitr<sup>15</sup>, the price of shellfish at the stores has a tendency to escalate tremendously in comparison to other times of the year. These irregularities are derived from personal viewpoints which can contribute significantly to creating a new trend for locals to preferably enjoy seafood at restaurants rather than in their homes.

An annual event such as the Africa's Travel Indaba 2018 was an opportunity for the tourism and hospitality sector in Kwa-Zulu Natal to market the city's seafood's and cuisines to both

---

<sup>13</sup> Daily newspaper (owned by Media South Africa and Independent News) which is a morning edition available for sale Monday to Friday.

<sup>14</sup> The Hindu festival of lights which is celebrated by people of Hindu faith globally.

<sup>15</sup> An important celebration in the Islamic calendar which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.



international and local tourists. At the Indaba this year, fish did not feature on the menus of the numerous food trucks for delegates to purchase. In conjunction, the websites which marketed the event made no reference to the multiple cuisines available, masking the city's cuisines' strengths and contributing towards Durban's lag of culinary tourism in comparison to other regions of the world.

At present, the website, [www.dining-out.co.za](http://www.dining-out.co.za), lists approximately 10 restaurants which specialise in seafood, yet there are numerous others which are excluded from the list. Comparatively, the other restaurant guide, [www.eatout.co.za](http://www.eatout.co.za) has 35 seafood restaurants listed in Durban. The variances on these sites, their different formats, and the task to compare three or four restaurant guides to each other also contributes towards the uncertainties that tourists may have when they are deciding where to dine in Durban.

These websites including the Durban tourism mainstream site makes no mention of seafood restaurants available in Durban. Kwa-Zulu Natal has not yet focused on the culinary tourism initiative as a focus, as a result there has been minimal initiatives to strongly market seafood, despite its popularity and affordability in comparison to other metropolis in the world. The fluctuating and weakening South African Rand also permit international tourists to indulge in luxurious foods and drink whilst they are touring the country. Data retrieved that seafood was very appealing to almost 70% of all 20 respondents and that for 50% of these tourists a seafood meal was their favourite meal to enjoy in Durban. This information only validates the popularity of seafood amongst the Chinese simply because the data collated in 2010 and in 2018 have similar outcomes in relation to the Chinese and their preference towards seafood and in particular shellfish. A major hindrance to these tourists getting to their favourite seafood restaurants was the lack of public transport and safety concerns. This can be seen as a major detractor to the growth of tourism in Durban. Not only do international tourists struggle to travel within the city, but so do local tourists. Most tourists are not willing to spend lavishly on transport costs such as and private taxis, private care hire and tour guides often for others it may be unaffordable. The tourism sector should consider widening their bus routes and extending their operational hours on a daily basis. This service can also positively contribute towards the hospitality sector of Durban. Chinese delegates also expressed their concern and the inconvenience to travel within Durban city at night to dine at specific restaurants. Chinese tourists that visited Durban before and not only for business, spoke fondly of exceptional seafood meals enjoyed in the Umhlanga area of Durban. This time around, they were accommodated in central Durban as their main purpose of visit was to participate at Africa's Travel Indaba, as a result they were unaware of which seafood restaurants to dine at even after consulting the online restaurant guide. They contemplated taking a private taxi to Umhlanga to dine at a seafood restaurant that they had dined at before.

Respondents indicated that they had a perception that seafood was not abundant in Durban, despite its exceptional freshness and popularity amongst them. Their perception was based on two observations. The fact that many seafood restaurants do not offer patrons the choice to pick their live crustacean from the fish tank or from a keeping pool prior to it being prepared after the order is place. Those facilities they believe entice one to enjoy more seafood more often in a coastal city. At present no restaurants in Durban and its surrounds have this facility which give tourists the impression that seafood is not in abundance here, even though it should be because of the city's locality.

The second observation is that there are no fishermen located at Durban's harbour or waterfront selling freshly caught crustaceans and fish. In addition Durban has no fresh seafood market which specializes only in seafood's, like other coastal cities around the world. The markets available in Durban primarily specialize in fresh vegetables and fruits and are located in the outskirts of the city centre with the exception of one market known as the Early Morning market which specializes in fresh produce, poultry and fish. However, there too the fish is not in abundance in comparison to the poultry options available for sale. The website, [www.marketsofwarwick.co.za](http://www.marketsofwarwick.co.za) does not even make mention of the fact that sporadically freshly



caught fish is for sale at the market. Other coastal cities in the world have open air seafood markets where one is permitted to enter and make purchases accordingly. Countries like Morocco, Japan, The United States of America amongst others all have fresh seafood markets located in their coastal cities. These markets are huge attractions not only to local residents, but to tourists as well. These markets have become central to tourism and a blog has been created specifically which asks people globally to identify their favourite fresh fish market on the site. Thus far, [www.traveloutlandish.com](http://www.traveloutlandish.com) has attracted a number of comments from travelers and cities such as Coasta Brava in Spain, Seattle and Washington in the USA has been cited to having the best seafood market. Such markets can only aid tourism growth, especially if they are attempting to attract desired volumes of Chinese tourists. The above two observations are central indicating pointers that the availability and the pricing of seafood in Durban need attention and reassessment.

The lack of advertising and media attention on foods available in Durban reiterates that the city has not yet embarked on a culinary tourism marketing strategy which could prove to be lucrative especially one which can highlight particular foods like seafood. *Conclusion*

During the 2010 study, literature analysis and data collation it was established that there were minimal marketing initiatives undertaken by local tourism authorities to promote the variety of foods and cuisines available in Durban. South Africans too have caught onto the trend of national food shows which encourage competition amongst people who aspire to have expertise in the kitchen. For instance, *The Come Dine With Me* show debuted in 2011 in South Africa and since then it's popularity has grown amongst South Africans. However, there is much emphasis on the preparation of foods and the cooking processes, but we do not have access into fresh seafood markets, and we are mostly forced to purchase both fresh and packaged foods from supermarkets.

For instance, foods and restaurants in Durban have become topics of interest for South Africans. This is evident as on online newspapers have a subcategories of food and drink under the lifestyle or travel segment of the newsfeed. Yet there still lacks a structured and defined media and or marketing space for the growth of culinary tourism in each province specifically. The online restaurants guides play a role in marketing Durban's food as a whole, but they tend to be inaccurate in terms of the number for restaurants listed on the site. Not all restaurants are included in the directories and when restaurants relocate, are renamed, and are replaced with national franchises or become independent of the franchises, the information is rarely updated on these sites. Interviewees have indicated that they were advised by other tourists, hotel staff and friends in Durban to taste certain foods and seafood dishes. For instance, The Lord Prawn restaurant has been renowned in Durban for the quality of seafood that they serve for a number of years, yet they fail to appear on the much publicized website [www.dining-out.co.za](http://www.dining-out.co.za). Similarly there are other restaurants that have not been listed on [www.wininganddining.co.za](http://www.wininganddining.co.za).

Presently, the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal still lacks a website which includes a category which focuses on food tourism in Durban. The [visitdurban.travel](http://visitdurban.travel) website includes categories such as destinations, see and do, where to stay, beach and adventures, sports, nightlife and so forth but excludes a dining or restaurant guide and fails to educate tourists about the foods available in the city, let alone its seafood and its popularity. In comparison the Durban tourism website ([www.durbantourism.com](http://www.durbantourism.com)) has listed many entertainment venues such as entertainment centres and malls, and within these categories are restaurant choices listed. This site too gives no prominence to Durban's culinary riches that can be used to lure tourists. Eight years later there has been minimal advancements made towards marketing Durban as a culinary tourist destination, despite the globalised focus on food and cuisines, and the localised focus on food on both online and print media. A recent informal discussion with The Durban Tourism manager<sup>16</sup> of business intelligence and product quality confirmed my

---

<sup>16</sup> Ms. Roshini Mehta



viewpoint that Durban as a city is yet to embark on a culinary tourism initiative. A Culinary tourism study is still in its infancy stages of planning, despite the evident need for Durban to promote itself as a culinary tourism destination and the lucratively of this strategy.

It is imperative that this initiative cannot be delayed further, as it can serve as a core attraction for Chinese tourists to Durban, South Africa. The Chinese have always placed a large amount of significance on food and eating. Guan & Jones (2015) affirm this by explaining that in even contemporary times Chinese people acclaim that eating is one of the few joys of humanity. Food, therefore has the capacity to influence and enhance the travel experience of tourists. The connection of foods available at a destination to rarely analysed tourist preferences can become pivotal towards the increase and sustainability of tourism (Guan & Jones, 2015: 417).

### References

- Anon. The Most popular air routes and destinations in South Africa for 2018. Travel news. [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za). 26 June 2018.
- Anon, Cape Town takes steps to tap into \$22 bn Muslim travel Sector. Travel news. [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za). 22 May 2018.
- Bryer, D. (2018). Tourism time in the Spotlight at Africa's Travel Indaba 2018. Opinion. [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za). 10 May 2018.
- Chang, R.C.Y., Kivela, J. & Mak, A.H.N (2010). Food Preferences of Chinese Tourists, **Annals of Tourism Research**, 37(4), 989-1011.
- China Tourism Update. **China: One of the most important sources for Tourism in South Africa**. [www.tldchina.com](http://www.tldchina.com). 16 January 2012.
- Cohen, E. & Avieli, N. (2004) Food in tourism: attraction and impediment, **Annals of Tourism Research**, Vol: 31, No: 4. p. 755-778.
- Dewalt, K & Dewalt B. R (2002). **Participant Observation**. Oxford. AltaMira Press.
- Doyle, G.(2018). Chinese Trawlers travel the farthest and fish the most: Study. World News. [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com). 22 February 2018.
- Eatout. (2006- 2017) Durban. [www.eatout.co.za](http://www.eatout.co.za) Accessed on 14 April 2018
- Freemantle, S.. (2018) Forecast: Chinese Arrivals in South Africa. 2 February 2018. [www.tourismupdate.co.za](http://www.tourismupdate.co.za). Accessed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2018.
- Guan, Jingjing & Jones, D.L. (2015). The Contribution of Local Cuisine to Destination Attractiveness: An analysis Involving Chinese Tourists' Heterogeneous Preferences in **Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research**. Vol. 20. Pp. 416-434.
- Godfrey, M. (2018). Southeast Asia's seafood market being reshaped by Chinese tourists. [www.seafoodsource.com](http://www.seafoodsource.com). 29 May 2018.
- Lehohla, P. (2011). **Tourism 2010 for Statistics South Africa**. ([www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)). Report No: 03-51-02.
- Kuppan, I. (2005). Expensive taste on the menu in Durban. *The Daily News*. 17 may 2005.
- Jupp, V. (2006). **The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods**. London. Sage Publications



Manju, V. (2012). Indians, Chinese big spending tourists. *The Times of India*. ([www.articles.timesofindia.com](http://www.articles.timesofindia.com)). 6 March 2012.

Moodley, C. (2018).. The stage is set for Africa;s travel Indaba, *Travel News*. [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za). 7 May 2018.

Rajgopaul, Dhivania. Durban to host Africa’s Travel Indaba. [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)- business report 5 May 2018.

Saunders, M (2010). Welcome to the markets of Warwick. [www.marketsofwarwick.co.za](http://www.marketsofwarwick.co.za). Accessed on 14 May 2018

Singh, A. & Bhoola, S. (2016). Culinary choices: developing Durban as a culinary destination in **African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure**. Vol 5 (4).

Singh, A. & Bhoola, S. (2018). Durban’s Indian Cuisine: Origins, Popularity and Prospects for Developing Culinary Tourism in **The Anthropologist** 32 (1-3). P. 107-120.

South African Restaurants Dining-out (2018). Durban and the surrounds. [www.dining-out.co.za](http://www.dining-out.co.za)). Accessed on 14 April 2018.

South African Tourism. (2017) About the Indaba [www.indaba-southafrica.co.za](http://www.indaba-southafrica.co.za). Accessed on 16 May 2018.

Statistics South Africa (2016). Tourism: jobs, economy and spending. [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za). Accessed on the 10 July 2018.

Taylor (2018). Africa. [www.traveloutlandish.com](http://www.traveloutlandish.com). Accessed on 14 May 2018. The Wining and Dining Team (2017) Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban [www.wininganddining.co.za](http://www.wininganddining.co.za) Accessed on 13 April 2018

Weaver, T. (2002). Pricing themselves out of the market? **The Journal of Southern African Tourism**, Vol: 2, No: 2, p. 36-40.

Wu, K., Raab, C., Chang, W. & Krishen, A. (2016). Understanding Chinese tourist’s food consumption in the United States. **Journal of Business Research** 69. Pp. 4706-4713.

Zokwana, S. (2018).. Acquaculture crucial as food source, job creation. Opinion. [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za). 19 June 2018.

Webpages: