

## COMPLETION REPORT

Maharakham University

Songphon Uthaisar

### Subject of Research Project: **Japan Post-COVID-19 Revisit Intention: The Influence of Tourists' Memorable Dining Experiences and the Moderating Effect of Perceive Risk**

This study critically investigated the factors influencing Thai tourists' intention to revisit Japan after the COVID-19 pandemic. The research employed a robust two-stage approach. Stage one involved a quantitative survey distributed to 400 Thai tourists with prior travel experience in Japan. The survey measured: **Memorable Dining Experiences** (i.e. vividness, emotional intensity, and overall positivity associated with past dining experiences in Japan), **Perceived Risk** (i.e. concerns about health, safety, and travel disruptions related to visiting Japan post-COVID-19), **Revisit Intention** (Likelihood of returning to Japan for future vacations). On stage two, a follow-up qualitative study was conducted with a subset of participants from Stage one who consented to further exploration. Semi-structured interviews explored their thoughts and experiences related to memorable dining and revisit intention.

The findings of this study confirmed that there is a significant positive association between memorable dining experiences and revisit intention. Tourists with more positive, vivid, and emotionally charged memories of dining in Japan expressed a stronger desire to return. This highlights the power of positive culinary experiences in fostering a strong connection with the destination. In respect of the moderating effect of perceived risk, as expected, perceived risk was negatively associated with revisit intention. However, the study revealed a crucial moderating effect. The positive influence of memorable dining experiences on revisit intention was stronger for tourists with lower perceived risk. In other words, for those less concerned about travel disruptions, positive memories of Japanese cuisine had a more potent effect on their desire to return.

With respect to qualitative insights, Thematic analysis of the follow-up interviews provided rich insights into the "why" behind the quantitative findings. Participants elaborated on how specific aspects of memorable dining experiences, such as authenticity, cultural significance, and emotional connections with restaurateurs, fostered a deeper attachment to Japan. Additionally, the interviews highlighted the specific concerns driving perceived risk, including health protocols, travel restrictions, and potential financial losses.

**Conclusion:** This research highlights the power of creating memorable dining experiences for tourists, particularly Thai tourists visiting Japan. These positive culinary memories can significantly increase the desire to return. However, concerns about travel disruptions can dampen this effect. Destination marketing bodies can promote Japan's unique cuisine and collaborate with restaurants to craft these special experiences. Transparency about health protocols and addressing tourist concerns are also crucial.

For restaurants, the key is to move beyond just serving food. Authenticity, cultural elements, and creating emotional connections with guests are key ingredients for memorable dining. Moreover, policymakers play a vital role by ensuring clear health guidelines and mitigating travel risks. This will help alleviate tourist concerns and encourage repeat visits. By working together, the tourism industry in Japan can leverage the power of food to attract Thai tourists and solidify Japan's position as a desirable travel destination.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)