

ROLE OF GASTRONOMIQUES IN TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF DOMESTIC TRAVELLERS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The basic components of tourists' demand have always remained in and around three major aspects related to travel i.e. food, accommodation and the modes of travel. The culinary aspects of a region not only attract the tourist but also project the local culture as well as the food habits of the local inhabitants. Gastronomy: the art of good eating as described by French dictionary was initially used by a J. Berchoux in 1804 in his poem as the "enjoyment of food and drink at the very best". Gastronomy tourism or culinary tourism traces its origin to the white paper format presented by Eric Wolf *President-WFTA (ICTA then)* in 2001 when he realised the growing interest in food and wine and the potential of culinary tourism in driving local business. Culinary tourism refers to the travelling of people from their own geographical region to other with the aim of trying local cuisines for both enjoyment and learning purpose. India's long history and religious diversity has a tremendous impact on its Cuisine, which is a result of invasions by Mughals, Turks, Britishers and Dutch communities. The major objectives of the research were to find out the impact of a destinations cuisine on the travel decision of tourist, the factors affecting their food habits, role of cuisine in overall tourist satisfaction and their perception about India's potential as a food tourism destination. The research revealed that the destination's cuisine has a positive influence on the travel decision of the tourists and plays a major role in tourists' overall satisfaction. Though major factors affecting the tourists' food habits were found to be regional, cultural, and economical constraints, India largely possesses a domestic food tourism market which is need to be captured at the earliest.

KEY WORDS: Culinary Tourism, Gastronomy, WFTA, Food tourism market etc.

Introduction

Born to a Poet's imaginary thoughts, the French term "Gastronomy" can be traced back to the nineteenth century where it was described as the "enjoyment of food and drink at the

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very best" (Berchoux, 1804). Food has always been a basic necessity from the time immemorial. As stated by Scarpato (2002) in ancient days, people did not have any particular skills or professions that were directly related to food and drinks, it was more about their involvement and enjoyment of food and drinks. But today food has a multifaceted role in every aspect of life be it social or cultural or religious or simply the lifestyle. (Mennell, Murcott, and Van Otterloo, 1992). World Food Travel Association (WFTA) has defined Gastronomy Tourism / Food Tourism as "The pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both far and near." It was further suggested by Sabah (2008) as the movement of people from their own geographical location to other, with the aim of trying local cuisine for both enjoyment and learning purpose. Eric wolf, *President-WFTA (ICTA then)* in 2001 realised the growing interest in food and wine and the potential of culinary tourism in driving local business. It is also argued that culinary tour also creates an opportunity for the tourists to learn new cooking techniques and local food culture (Amster, 2013; Sharr, 2013). Stepping in the same concept India is no way at the back stage as far as regional culinary aspects are concerned. In India Food defines the identity of a person's family, class, religion, ethnicity etc. Country's long history and religious diversity has a tremendous impact on its Cuisine, which is a result of invasions by Mughals, Turks, Britishers and Dutch communities.

There are basically six major food regions in India, namely Northern Food region, South Indian food region, Western, Eastern, Central food region and the North-West Frontier cuisine. Each of the regions has a unique food culture and large diversity in terms of their preparation and other culinary aspects. Be it the customary wazwan of Kashmir or the ethnic family food of Chettinan Community, be it the pungency of mustard oil in east to the subtle of coconut in west, the country has a large diversity not only in terms of food preparations but also the unique ingredients used thereof. The consistent increase in domestic tourists in India (10% in last fiscal year, 2012-13), shows the desire to travel as far as tourism destination, religious places, entertainment and leisure aspects are concerned. Hence a study related to influence of destination's cuisine on the travel decision of tourists and role in over all tourist satisfaction would certainly help in understanding the country's potential as a food tourism destination.

Literature Review

The majority of literatures related to food tourism signify that the three major aspects around which the tourist's interest revolves are the destination to which people travel, the nearby places of interest and the local delicacies. (Au & Law, 2002) argued that each destination has different level of attraction that can draw tourist from different countries; hence the relationship between food and tourism cannot be overlooked. Food reflects the culture and lifestyle of a region hence plays a key role in attracting tourists, which is the major reason behind the growth of food and wine tourism in France (Corigliano, 2002). Boyne, Williams, & Hall (2002) argued that tourist (in USA) almost spend 40% of their budget while travelling

which shows the existence of a very close relationship between food and tourism. The research shows the major reason for which the travellers revisited the destinations like France and Italy is largely due to its image as a culinary destination (Frochot, 2003; Boyne, Williams, & Hall, 2002). Further while analyzing various factors that affect the food habits (Gastronomique decision) of the tourists, major literatures found to argue upon the influence of cultural background on the food habits of the individual (Lowenburg, Todhunter, Wilson, Savage & Lubawski, 1979). It was also argued by Fields (2002) that the basic motivators that affect the food habit of individuals are physical motivators, cultural motivators, interpersonal motivators and status and prestige motivators. According to Kittler & Sucher (1989) tourist's food habit is of more complex nature affected by culture, religion, ethnicity and geographical area. As stated by (Roozbeh, Ng, & Boo, 2013) traditional food preparation is an important factor to tourists' overall satisfaction for both first and repeat visitors to a destination. This is further stated that the quality of food, service, and physical environment are the significant determinants of tourist satisfaction. (Kisang & Heesup, 2010; Canny, 2013). Other literatures in the related field reveal that Gastronomic experiences render an important role in shaping perceptions and contentment with the overall travel savoir-faire (Neild et al., 2000; Remington and Yuksel, 1998). Since there has not been any research to analyse the influence of a destination's cuisine on the travel decision of the tourist visiting within the country, the present paper tries to address the issue along with the various factors affecting the tourist's food habits & the role of local cuisine in over all tourist satisfaction.

Objectives

1. To study & analyse the impact of the cuisine of a destination, on the tourist's travel decision to those areas.
2. To analyze the various factors that affect the Gastronomique decision of the tourists.
3. To find out the role of local cuisine (food & beverage) in over all tourist satisfaction.
4. To find out India's potential as a food tourism destination as perceived by the domestic tourists of India.

Research Methods

The research is carried out in two phases. In the first phase data were collected through initial exploratory interviews with few of the respondents in various cities and in addition to that a literature review was conducted to conceptualize and operationalise the constructs (questionnaire) to be used in the field survey. In the phase two, the data were collected from 390 domestic tourists through multi stage and simple random sampling. The questionnaire was comprised of four sections each relating to the objective's demand. The responses were recorded with the help of multiple scaling techniques and analyzed through Percentage analysis method in order to get a closer view to the research dimension.

Findings and Discussions

While carrying out the research the tourist were asked with few open ended questions like what would be your first thought the moment you hear about delicious food preparations and the responses were never the less bit surprising. Around 140 respondents (36%) replied that “Wow-Let’s try it out”, which shows the keen desire of the tourists for trying out new delicious food items though the name of any particular food preparation was not mentioned by the researcher.

The detailed survey about various dimensions of the specified objectives brought about the following facts in to lime light,

Travel Behaviour of the tourists related to food (Chart-1.1, Chart-1.2);

The initial questionnaire designed for studying the travel pattern of the tourists when there is a desire to taste new delicacies outside the conventional diet, shown a very predictable response and 61% of the respondents were in favour of travelling to a nearby restaurant or food joint rather than travelling to a far new destination. But the frequency of travelling to those outlets shows the greater aspect related to it, i.e. the love for food. Almost 53% of the respondents love to patronize every month to these outlets. The research also revealed that around 7% of the respondents travelled to various destinations across the country specifically for food when there was a desire to taste something new and about 49 tourists (12%) revealed that distance of travel will never be a constraint when the it comes to the matter of tasting good food. Finally upon being asked about the impact of the destination’s cuisine on their travel decision, a highly positive response was obtained. Around 72% of the tourists agreed that the cuisine of any destination certainly has some impact on their travelling decision where as only 26% denied of any such influence on their decision. While analyzing further it was revealed that 17% of the tourist felt that the cuisine has largely influenced their travel decision and 44% felt that it has partially influenced, where as 11% of the tourists feel that it has very minimal impact on their travel decisions.

Factors affecting the Gastronomique decision of the tourists;

A thorough analysis of various responses as received from the tourists shows that there are basically five factors that largely affect the food habits or Gastronomique decision of the individuals. They are namely Culture, Religion, Societal impact, Economical condition and the geographical location to which the individual belongs. While analyzing further, it was found that tourists believe Religion to be the most affecting factor (1° factor), followed by the culture of the individual (2° factor). The Economical condition of the visitor also greatly affects the food habits hence considered as the tertiary (3°) factor followed by the societal factors and the geographical location of the individual is considered to have the least impact on the food habits.

Role of food and beverage in overall tourist satisfaction (Garph-1)

While enquiring about the percentage of total spending incur towards consumption of food and beverages during their travel to various destinations, majority of the tourist (195 respondents) revealed that their average spending towards food and beverages lies between 20% — 30% of the total spending. But at the same time the research shows that in case of 25% of the tourists (98 tourists) the spending towards food and beverages reaches up to 40% of their total spending and in case of 4% of the tourists the expenses goes above 40%. Further while researching about the food preferences of the tourists during their visit to a new destination, it was found that almost 72% of the tourists expressed their desire to taste the local regional delicacies of the destination with great curiosity whereas only 19% shown their keenness to stick to their own household preparations. Hence upon being asked about the share of food and beverages in overall satisfaction from a visit to a destination, the tourists came up with mixed response. While 164 tourists gave up to 30% credit to the food and beverage in their overall satisfaction, at the same time 116 tourists gave about 40% credit to the culinary offerings at the destination and almost about 67 tourists gave 50% and more credit to their food experiences at the destination and feel it as one of the most satisfying aspect of their tour.

Tourists' perception of India's potential as a food tourism destination (Garph-2)

While enquiring about the tourists' awareness regarding the concept of food tourism it was found that 64% of the tourists (250 tourists) are partially or fully aware of the term Food tourism or culinary tourism. The research revealed that majority of the tourists (around 67%) strongly feels that India has a great potential as a food tourism destination. Further it was also clearly evident from the responses of the tourist that the cuisine of a destination certainly has a strong potential to be used as a marketing tool for destination image building. Around 63% of the respondents were in support of it. Finally the most important aspect of the research revealed that, according to the tourists' perception the top most five destinations of India having maximum potential to be developed as food tourism destination are Rajasthan (1st), Punjab (2nd), Lucknow (3rd), Kerala (4th) and Hyderabad (5th). The other destinations following them are West Bengal, Kashmir, Maharashtra and Old-Delhi.

Discussions

Though the ratio of food travellers in India are quite low but the desire to taste new delicacies and the love for food certainly influences them to travel even long distances. It was also clearly evident from the fact that more than sixty percentages of the tourists feel that cuisine of a destination largely or partially influences their travel decision up to certain extent. In addition to it, the keen desire to taste the local regional delicacies at the destination also plays a major role in the overall tourist satisfaction from the tour. Around 87% of the tourists

shown their interest to pay a visit to a food tourism destination in their next tour, if offered with competitive prices which shows the available demand in this segment.

Recommendations

1. As the cuisine of a destination affects the travel decision of the tourists positively, there is a need for aggressive promotion and creating awareness among the people regarding this much newer segment.
2. Development of proper Infrastructure, promotion in print and social media, web based publicity and merchandisings are few other suggestive measures to popularize the regional local cuisines.
3. Organising “*Regional Food festivals*” as a part of Tourism Promotional Activity like “The Dance and Music festivals” organised in many parts of the country.
4. Keeping the requirement of food travellers specific Food-Circuits need to be identified by the State Government and publicised in domestic and international market.
5. Establishment of “*Culinary/Food Museums*” to show case the regional cuisine and food customs to a greater mass of tourist at ease.
6. *Developing a database* of the regional cuisines of India to showcase its rich cultural ethnicity is another great idea of promoting local cuisines.
7. Theme restaurants/*Ethnic Food Pavilions* could be established along the National highways in PPP-model focusing on a family environment.
8. A *strategic Climate food model* needs to be developed as India is divinely bestowed with food ingredients for every climatic condition.
9. As the food and beverages plays a major role in tourist’s overall satisfaction, a high degree of sanitation and hygiene need to be maintained at regional food joints through the formulation of strict regulation and food safety policies.
10. Government in co-ordination with the Academicians should facilitate to conduct research works related to food culture of India.

Conclusion

India, a land of rich cultural heritage is no way behind as far as culinary aspects are concerned. With the presence of numerous classical delicacies each confined to a particular region influenced by the geography, culture and climatic condition, India truly posses a great potential to be marketed as a food tourism destination throughout the world. As the travel behaviours of the tourist are certainly affected by the food aspect of a touring destination, the potential lying with this segment of tourism cannot be ignored. Further as it is clearly revealed that the tourist would love to take up a food tour in their next visit if offered with competitive

prices unlike other conventional tourism destinations, it shows the great market potential of domestic food tourists. Hence need to be captured through a proper supply chain mechanism supported by ample promotional and awareness campaigns.

Annexes: Charts and Graphs

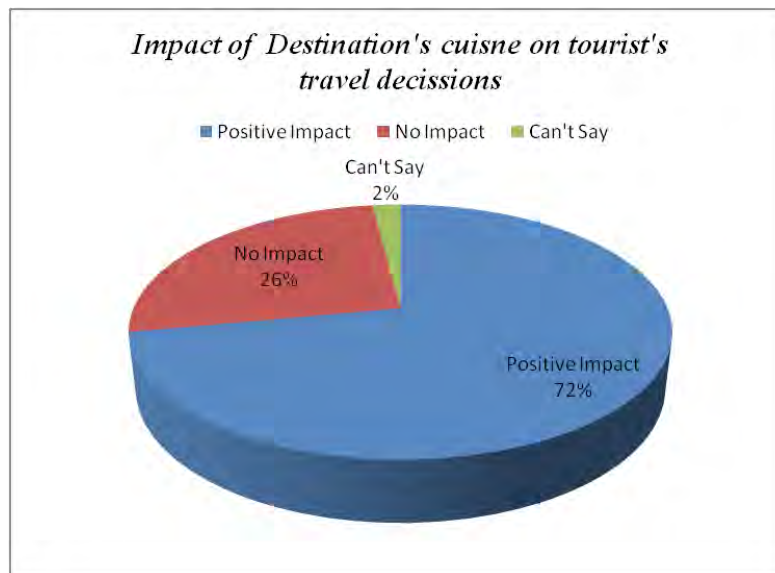


Chart 1.1

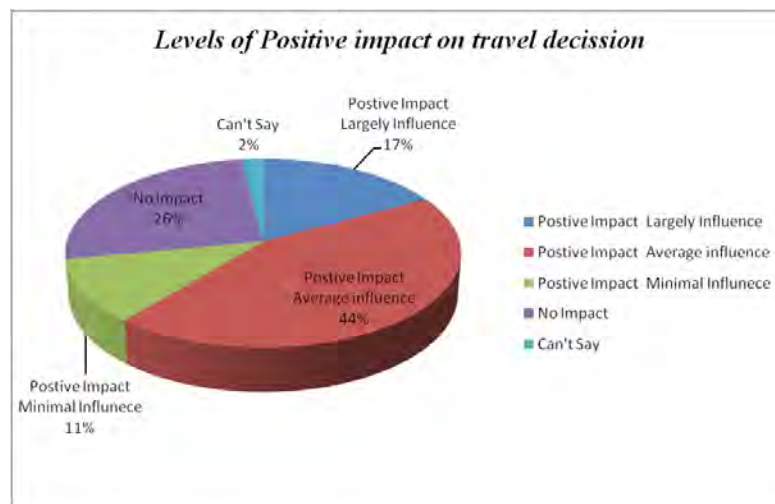
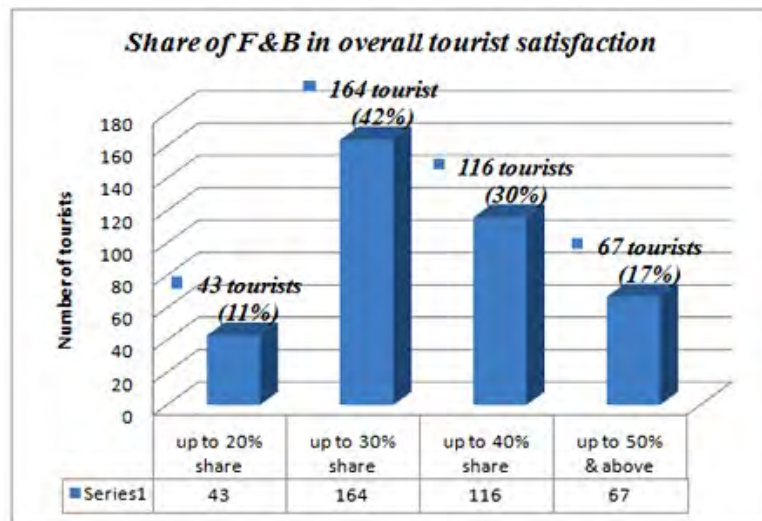
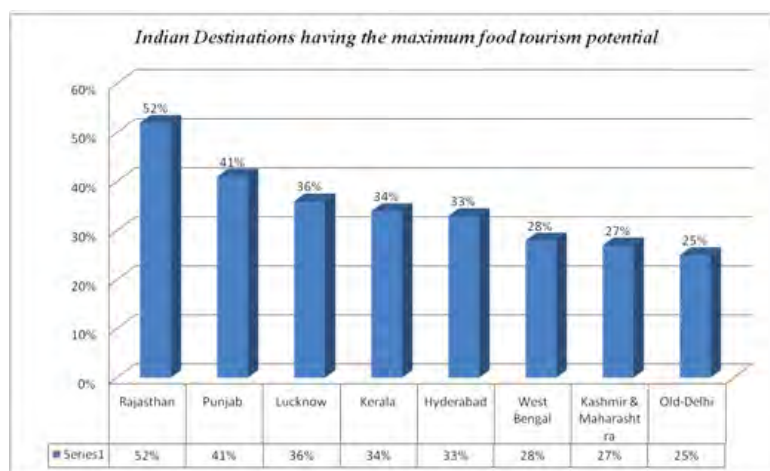


Chart 1.2



Garph-1

**Garph-2:** Tourists' perception of Indian destinations having maximum food tourism potential:

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