

PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION OF TOURISTS TOWARDS CULINARY TOURISM IN KERALA

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Abstract

This research paper uncovers the knowledge of culinary tourism or gastronomy tourism which is the exploration of food as a purpose of tourism. It tries to portray the perception and satisfaction level of tourists towards culinary tourism or food tourism in the state of Kerala. Spearman rank correlation, T-test, and ANOVA were used as tools for data analysis. The study found that there is a difference in the perception of male and female respondents about culinary tourism in Kerala. There is also a difference in the satisfaction level of both males and females. It was also found that there is no difference in the perception based on age. However, the satisfaction level of tourists visiting culinary tourism destinations is different based on their age. The data were collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. A bibliometric review was done with the keyword 'gastronomy tourism', to find out the most cited research author in this field. The study contributes to the existing literature about the perception and satisfaction of tourists towards food tourism in Kerala.

Keywords:- Culinary tourism, rural tourism, Gastronomy tourism, Food tourism, Kerala tourism, Tourism Development, Tourism.

Culinary tourism is one of the emerging research areas in the field of tourism. It is otherwise called Gastronomy tourism or food tourism. Tourists move to different destinations in the world in search of food or to experience the food of a particular

destination is termed as Gastronomy tourism. Kerala being a state with much potential for food tourism is attracting a large number of international as well as national tourists.

Destination management organizations are concentrating on

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providing a better food experience to tourists in Kerala. Tourists' travel choice decision is highly influenced by the food in the particular destinations. In Kerala destinations such as Alappuzha and Kumarakom are attracting a large number of tourists. Visitors from different parts of the world are motivated to travel particularly for experiencing the taste of special food in destinations. Alappuzha is famous for dishes with fish and snacks. People travel to Kumarakom to experience the special spicy non-vegetarian food in the state. Therefore, Kerala is the best destination for gastronomical tourism in the Country (A, 2018).

Kerala Cuisine

Kerala cuisine has been influenced by many regions in the state. The state is special for its spicy food and uses fewer sweet food items as compared with other northern states in the country. Red and green pepper, cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, and cloves are the most commonly used spices. It is famous for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. Sadhya, a traditional Kerala meal includes rice as the main course with different vegetarian curries served in banana leaves. Payasam, a sweet dessert served after Sadhya helps in easy digestion. The breakfast items including puttu, idiyappam, palappam, and dosa are also famous among international tourists. Kerala is the land of coconut trees and therefore the state uses more coconut products in the preparation of food items such as grated coconut, coconut milk, coconut oil, etc...

Gastronomy Tourism and Satisfaction

The level of competition in the tourism sector is increasing day by day and the destinations face more challenges in attracting tourists. Uniqueness in the destination invites a greater number of visitors. Food is a main part of any destination, there is a wider scope of making the tourists satisfied with different food experiences. When tourists are satisfied with the food in the destination, they are more likely to visit again and recommend the destination to others. The variables identified for the study are; I am satisfied with the taste of authentic food, I am satisfied with the reasonable price of food items, I am satisfied with the hygienic and healthy food, I am satisfied with the appealing and traditional menu and, I am satisfied with the friendly behaviour of service providers (G. Migliore 2023).

Literature Review

(Reynolds, 1965), Studies the role of customers in image building process. The customers have an important role in building the image of a particular destination. A destination must be unique in any ways to attract tourists. It can be of attractive food items or natural beauty of activities etc.

(Quan S.; Wang N, 2004)The study attempts to understand the role of culinary tourism in economic development. The objective of the study was to find out how food tourism in supported the local people. Structural equation model was used to test the relationship of culinary tourism and lifestyle of local people. It was found that culinary tourism has created career opportunities for many

Bibliometric Review on Gastronomy Tourism
Citations and Authors

SL.No	Authors	Citations
1	Quan S.; Wang N. (Title: Towards a structural model of the tourist experience: An illustration from food experiences in tourism)	1014
2	Kivela J.; Crotts J.C. (Title: Tourism and Gastronomy: Gastronomy's Influence on How Tourists Experience a Destination)	790
3	Chang R.C.Y.; Kivela J.; Mak A.H.N. (Title: Food preferences of Chinese tourists)	551
4	Okumus B.; Okumus F.; McKercher B. (Title: Incorporating local and international cuisines in the marketing of tourism destinations: The cases of Hong Kong and Turkey)	325
5	Okumus B.; Koseoglu M.A.; Ma F (Title: Food and gastronomy research in tourism and hospitality: A bibliometric analysis)	149

local people. It is also contributing to the revenue of the tourism department.

(Altaf. A, 2022) The research paper focused on studying the effect of culinary tourism in the promotion of hotel industry. The findings of the study say that there is a gradual increase in the sales of hotel industries can be seen, after the introduction of culinary tourism. People are travelling from faraway places to experience the food of local people.

Statement of the Problem

Stiff competition is facing by Indian Tourism sector in the present world tourism market. Tourism marketing organizations are finding innovative strategies to retain existing tourists and attract potential tourists (Reynolds, 1965). A destination must have unique characteristics to attract tourists. One among them is food. People are always

conscious of the quality and availability of food in every destination they travel. Here comes the relevance of Gastronomy tourism.

India is a country with different cultures and traditions. People can experience a different variety of food from different parts of the county. Kerala is at the top list with special food items that attract a large number of tourists every year. In this context, it is necessary to have researches relating to culinary tourism. It was found that there are a smaller number of studies concentrating on culinary tourism in Kerala.

Significance of the Study

Gastronomy is a normal attraction for any tourist in the world. Nowadays the trend of tourism has changed from just travelling from one place to another for sightseeing, to travelling to experience

the culture of different destinations. Here comes the relevance of culinary tourism. To experience the food of a particular destination always gives pleasure to the tourists. It gives them an understanding of the food culture of local people and their lifestyle.

Kerala is famous for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. People travel from faraway places to Kerala just to taste its authentic food items. To cope up with the existing competition in the field of tourism, Kerala has to give more importance to food tourism and attract more tourists.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the perception of tourists towards Kerala's culinary tourism.
2. To examine the level of satisfaction of tourists towards gastronomy tourism in Kerala.

Scope of the Study

The study collects data from popular culinary destinations such as Alappuzha and Kumarakom in the state of Kerala.

Methodology

Primary data:

The primary data were collected from 100 respondents (both domestic and foreign tourists) who visited the destinations, Kumarakom and Alappuzha in the state of Kerala

Secondary data:

The secondary data have been collected from published and unpublished sources such as tourism statistics of Kerala, journals, theses, magazines, Government reports, etc.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of tourists towards culinary tourism in Kerala based on Gender.

H02: There is no significant correlation between the perceptions of tourists towards culinary tourism based on the age of the respondents.

H03: There is no significant difference between the levels of satisfaction of tourists based on gender.

H04: There is no significant difference between the level of satisfaction and Age group.

Demographic Profile

Perception of Tourist and Gender

H01: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of tourists towards culinary tourism in Kerala based on Gender.

An Independent t-test was conducted to compare the factors of perception of tourists towards Kerala cuisine with gender. The table shows the statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between male and female tourists visiting culinary tourist destinations. Two factors show there is a significant difference between the perception level of males and females. 'All food items are healthy' and 'Local culinary is more eco-friendly' are the two factors in which male and female respondents have differences in opinion. Female respondents consider the food items in Kerala tourism destinations to be healthy and more eco-friendly. Male respondents have the opposite opinion. Hence, *the null hypothesis is rejected in this case and accepted in all other cases.*

Table 1
Personal Variables

Gender of Respondents	Gender	No. of Respondents		Percentage
	Male		54	
Female		46		46
Age of Respondents	Age Group	No. of Respondents		
		National tourist	International	
	18-25	16	13	
	26-45	21	24	
	45-65	8	5	
65 and above	5	8		
Educational Qualification		No. of Respondents		
		National tourist	International	
	Primary	2	-	
	Secondary	3	5	
	Higher Secondary	8	10	
	Degree	24	23	
	Master Degree	13	12	
	Others	-	-	
Employment Status		No. of Respondents		
		National tourist	International	
	Private sector		30	
	Public sector		2	
	Own business		10	
	Unemployed		-	
Students		8		
Nationality		No. of Respondents		
	Indian	50		
	Foreign	50		

Table 2
T-test for comparison of Perception of tourists based on Gender

Perception of Tourist	Male (54)		Female (46)		F-Value	P- Value
	Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev		
In culinary tourist destinations, foods are safe to consume	1.98	.812	1.97	.906	.843	.985
All food items are healthy	3.96	.512	1.93	.326	1.350	<0.01
Tasting authentic food from its original place gives more pleasure	1.94	.810	2.00	.918	.804	.749
Experiencing local food helps me see the lifestyle of people around the destination	1.71	.691	1.70	.779	.247	.926
Local culinary is more eco-friendly	4.01	.689	1.73	.443	0.60	<0.01
People serving local food are friendly	1.31	.468	1.34	.481	.471	.730
Enjoying local food with scenery gives a positive experience	1.29	.460	1.34	.481	1.155	.586
I like to share pictures of local food and share	1.70	.690	1.71	.779	.247	.926
Experiencing food of destination builds a positive image of the destination	1.75	.845	1.86	.859	.135	.520

Source: Primary data

Perception of Tourists and Age

H02: There is no significant correlation between the perceptions of tourists towards culinary tourism based on the age of the respondents.

The table depicts that there is no significant correlation (p value <0.05) between the factors of perception of tourists towards culinary tourism about the age of the respondents. Hence, *the null hypothesis is accepted*, that is there is no significant correlation between the perception of tourists regarding culinary tourism in Kerala based on age.

Comparison between Satisfaction and Gender of Respondents

H03: There is no significant difference between the level of satisfaction of tourists based on gender.

The scale used to measure the variables of satisfaction is Likert’s Five-

point scale. The table shows, there is no significant relationship between the level of satisfaction and gender of tourism except one variable. The majority of the male respondents disagree with the statement “I am satisfied with the reasonable price of food items”, with a p -value less than 0.05. Hence, *the null hypothesis is rejected, that is, there is no significant relationship between “I am satisfied with the reasonable price of food items” and the gender of respondents.*

Comparison between the Level of Satisfaction and Age Group

H04: There is no significant difference between the level of satisfaction and age group.

A post hoc test was conducted to identify exactly which age group has a difference in opinion regarding satisfaction level. The above table revealed that ‘satisfaction on taste of food items’ in the

Table 3
Spearman rank correlations between perception and age

Perception of Tourist	AGE	
	Correlation coefficient	Sig (2 tailed)
In culinary tourist destinations, foods are safe to consume	.118	.234
All food items are healthy	-.029	.778
Tasting authentic food from its original place gives more pleasure	-0.41	.690
Experiencing local food helps me see the lifestyle of people around the destination	-.042	.681
Local culinary is more eco-friendly	-.011	.911
People serving local food are friendly	.108	.287
Enjoying local food with scenery gives a positive experience	.119	.237
I like to share pictures of local food and share	-0.42	.681
Experiencing food of destination builds a positive image of the destination	.109	.298

Source: Primary data

Table 4
T-test for comparison of perception of tourists based on Gender

Satisfaction of Tourist	Male (54)		Female (46)		F-Value	P- Value
	Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev		
I am satisfied with the taste of authentic food	1.98	.812	1.97	.906	.843	.985
I am satisfied with the reasonable price of food items	3.89	.621	1.98	.345	1.378	<0.01
I am satisfied with the hygienic and healthy food	1.32	.458	1.44	.482	.461	.739
I am satisfied with the appealing and traditional menu	1.30	.435	1.24	.489	1.225	.686
I am satisfied with the friendly behaviour of service providers	1.88	.922	1.89	.802	.788	.911

Source: Primary data

Table 5
ANOVA test for comparison of satisfaction of tourists based on Age.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Satisfied with the taste of authentic food	Between Groups	4.809	3	1.603	3.876	.012
	Within Groups	39.701	96	.414		
	Total	44.510	99			
Satisfied with the reasonable price of food items	Between Groups	35.964	3	11.988	25.129	.000
	Within Groups	45.796	96	.477		
	Total	81.760	99			
Satisfied with the hygienic and healthy food	Between Groups	12.675	3	4.225	6.209	.001
	Within Groups	65.325	96	.680		
	Total	78.000	99			
Satisfied with the appealing and traditional menu	Between Groups	1.167	3	.389	1.569	.202
	Within Groups	23.793	96	.248		
	Total	24.960	99			
Satisfied with the friendly behavior of service providers	Between Groups	2.146	3	.715	3.025	.033
	Within Groups	22.694	96	.236		
	Total	24.840	99			

Source: Primary data

POST HOC TEST
Multiple Comparisons

Dependent variable	(i) Age	(j) Age	Mean difference (i-j)	Std. Error	Sig.	Inference
Satisfied with Taste	18-25	25-45	-.50170	.20713	.080	Not Significant
		45-65	-.58333	.23271	.065	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-.80556*	.23966	.006	Significant
	25-45	18-25	.50170	.20713	.080	Not Significant
		45-65	-.08163	.16773	.962	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-.30385	.17724	.322	Not Significant
	45-65	18-25	.58333	.23271	.065	Not Significant
		25-45	.08163	.16773	.962	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-.22222	.20656	.705	Not Significant
	65 and Above	18-25	.80556*	.23966	.006	Significant
		25-45	.30385	.17724	.322	Not Significant
		45-65	.22222	.20656	.705	Not Significant
Satisfied with Reasonable Price	18-25	25-45	1.54592*	.22246	.001	Significant
		45-65	1.32143*	.24994	.001	Significant
		65 and Above	2.19444*	.25740	.001	Significant
	25-45	18-25	-1.54592*	.22246	.001	Significant
		45-65	-.22449	.18014	.599	Not Significant
		65 and Above	.64853*	.19036	.005	Significant
	45-65	18-25	-1.32143*	.24994	.001	Significant
		25-45	.22449	.18014	.599	Not Significant
		65 and Above	.87302*	.22185	.001	Significant
	65 and Above	18-25	-2.19444*	.25740	.001	Significant
		25-45	-.64853*	.19036	.005	Significant
		45-65	-.87302*	.22185	.001	Significant
Satisfied with Healthy Food Items and Hygiene	18-25	25-45	.55612	.26569	.163	Not Significant
		45-65	.91667*	.29851	.015	Significant
		65 and Above	-.08333	.30742	.993	Not Significant
	25-45	18-25	-.55612	.26569	.163	Not Significant
		45-65	.36054	.21515	.342	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-.63946*	.22736	.030	Significant
	45-65	18-25	-.91667*	.29851	.015	Significant
		25-45	-.36054	.21515	.342	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-1.00000*	.26497	.002	Significant
	65 and Above	18-25	.08333	.30742	.993	Not Significant
		25-45	.63946*	.22736	.030	Significant
		45-65	1.00000*	.26497	.002	Significant
Satisfied With the Traditional Menu Provided	18-25	25-45	.03231	.16035	.997	Not Significant
		45-65	.15476	.18016	.826	Not Significant
		65 and Above	.30556	.18553	.358	Not Significant
	25-45	18-25	-.03231	.16035	.997	Not Significant
		45-65	.12245	.12985	.782	Not Significant
		65 and Above	.27324	.13721	.198	Not Significant
	45-65	18-25	-.15476	.18016	.826	Not Significant
		25-45	-.12245	.12985	.782	Not Significant
		65 and Above	.15079	.15991	.782	Not Significant
	65 and Above	18-25	-.30556	.18553	.358	Not Significant
		25-45	-.27324	.13721	.198	Not Significant
		45-65	-.15079	.15991	.782	Not Significant
Friendly Behaviour	18-25	25-45	-.01190	.15660	1.000	Not Significant
		45-65	-.25000	.17595	.490	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-.36111	.18120	.008	Significant
	25-45	18-25	.01190	.15660	1.000	Not Significant
		45-65	-.23810	.12681	.245	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-.34921	.13401	.051	Not Significant
	45-65	18-25	.25000	.17595	.490	Not Significant
		25-45	.23810	.12681	.245	Not Significant
		65 and Above	-.11111	.15617	.892	Not Significant
	65 and Above	18-25	.36111	.18120	.008	Significant
		25-45	.34921	.13401	.051	Not Significant
		45-65	.11111	.15617	.892	Not Significant

Source: Primary data

age group of 65 and above and 18-25 has a significant difference with p -value <0.05 . Tourist in the age group of 65 and above more satisfied with traditional food items. For the variable, 'satisfaction on reasonable price', there is a significant difference between the age group of 18-25 with all other age groups. For the variable 'satisfaction with healthy food items and hygiene', there is a significant difference between the age group of 18-25 (more satisfied) and 45-65. And the age group 65 and above (dissatisfied) has a significant difference with the age group between 25-65. For the variable 'satisfaction on the traditional menu provided' there is no significant difference between age groups, *hence the null hypothesis is accepted*. For the variable 'Friendly behavior of service providers', there is a significant difference between the age group 18-25 (more satisfied) and 65 & above.

Findings

- The study tries to find out the factors affecting the perception of tourists towards culinary tourism in Kerala. It was found that the perception levels of both males and females are different about the variables, "All food items are healthy" and "Local culinary is more eco-friendly".
- The majority of the female respondents perceive that all the food items in culinary tourism destinations are healthy and eco-friendly.
- Majority of the male respondents disagree with the statement "I am satisfied with the reasonable price of food items".
- Majority of the tourists who visit the destination are satisfied with the services provided at the destinations.
- Female tourists are more satisfied as compared with male tourists.
- Female tourists have a more positive perception of culinary tourism in Kerala.
- The satisfaction level of tourists towards culinary tourism between different age groups (18-25 and 65 & above) shows a significant difference.

Conclusion

The food tourism in Kerala is getting more acceptances from tourists all around the world. Kerala is famous for its spicy and other local food items. The tourists may have different perceptions regarding the food tourism destinations in Kerala. It may differ from person to person. The more the information they get the more is the level of perception. So, information sharing regarding food tourism is the most important thing for making people aware of the food tourism. It is necessary to promote the awareness regarding the food tourism in Kerala. The satisfaction level of tourists may differ on the basis of the tourist expectation regarding the food items. It was found from the study

that tourists above the age of 60 have a different expectation on culinary tourism in Kerala. They are more satisfied with traditional food items served in the destinations.

Suggestions

- There is a need for conducting more research work on culinary tourism since it has become an important theme in today's tourism market.
- There is a need for government support for the local people serving food for the maintenance of cleanliness and hygiene.
- The government should take steps through campaigns and programs to introduce the taste of Kerala to tourists.
- There is a lack of advertisement on the part of the Kerala government through their official websites regarding food items and menus. More tourists who are searching for authentic information on government websites are not aware of Kerala Cuisine.

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