

FOOD TOURISTS' LOCAL FOOD CONSUMPTION VALUE AND ITS EFFECT ON THEIR BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS TOWARDS THE DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

Indian street food had emerged as an essential component of food tourism in the country. Its affordability and variety, and make it a must-try for any food lover visiting India. Indian street food is not just about the taste, but it's also about the experience and the culture, which makes it a unique and memorable part of the overall travel experience. Popularity of Indian street food is also due to its, accessibility, and convenience. The atmosphere at street food stalls is often lively and bustling, with vendors cooking and serving food in front of customers. Present study tried to understand the street food experience of food tourists visiting India. This study tried to investigate the effect of Consumption value of local street food on food tourists' attitude towards local street food, food destination image and food tourist's behavioural intentions towards the destination. Survey was conducted in the street food markets of Delhi and Hyderabad. Responses of 700 food tourists having street food in the market were taken into consideration for the study. Proposed model of the study was tested with PLS-SEM approach using Smart-PLS. All the proposed hypothesis were supported through the results arrived from the data. Results portrayed consumption value of local street food to affect the behavioural intentions of the tourists significantly. Further attitude towards local street food and food destination image displayed mediating effect between consumption value of local street food and behavioural intentions of food tourists.

Keywords: Consumption Value, Food Tourism, Street Food, Behavioural intentions, Attitude towards Food.

INTRODUCTION

Food consumption is a fundamental activity for survival. Food and beverages prepared in a country represent the country's culture and lifestyles (Steel, 2013). Food pertaining to the specific countries are based on the vegetation and weather of those countries. Extensive research concerning food and consumption was conducted from the perspective of many disciplines like sociology and anthropology, and culinary within the last few decades. Marketing researchers studied the aspects of food by considering it as a service, thereby bringing it under the umbrella of services marketing. However, most of the marketing studies investigated the constructs like customer experience, perceived value, service quality, satisfaction, etc. in the context of restaurants. Marketing research identified food and culinary services only as a functional aspect in the context of restaurants. A limited number of studies addressed food and gastronomy themes (Okumus et al. 2018). The culinary and experiential aspects of food were mostly under-investigated, thus limiting the significance of these services to one of the aspects of the entire customer journey. Nevertheless, food and culinary services are equally experiential in nature.

Tourism literature played a pivotal role in identifying the unique experiential aspects of food and culinary services. Tourism researchers have begun to study food and culinary services as central elements of tourism research. According to Goldschmidt (2019), food tourism is no longer a tourism segment; instead, it has taken center stage of the tourist experience. Food tourism has grown significantly over the past decade (Bu et al. 2020). Recent studies identified food and culinary services as significant determinants for attracting tourists (Tsai & Wang, 2017), which resulted in the emergence of food tourism as an independent branch of tourism research. The market value of food tourism was 1116.7 billion dollars in 2019 and is expected to grow to 1796.5 billion dollars by 2027, exhibiting a compound annual growth rate of 16.8% (Businesswire, 2020). While the market size of the Indian food services industry was four trillion rupees for the fiscal years of 2019. Interestingly, the unorganized sector comprising street food stalls, ready-to-eat food carts, and dhabas contributes significantly to the market size. Especially, the Asian Pacific region is portraying lucrative scope for the growth of food tourism, compared to other regions.

Terms like culinary tourism, gastronomic tourism, and gourmet tourism are used interchangeably for referring to food tourism. Prior researchers had defined tourism in many ways. Hall & Sharples (2004) Defined food tourism as “*tourist and visitation activities to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and experiencing the attributes of specific food production region are the primary interests and motivating factors for travel.*” Further, Presenza and Simone (2012) described food tourism as a travel behavior motivated by a desire to experience certain foods. Similarly, Bertella (2011) referred to food tourism as a form of tourism where food is one motivating factor for travel. Food tourism offers customers new tastes, flavors, textures, cultures, local culinary heritage, customs, cultures, and authentic food and beverage experiences (Association, 2020). Erik Wolf, executive director of the World food travel association, defines food tourism as an “*act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place.*”

Food tourism literature identifies the segment of local street food as a niche area for research in food tourism and indicated significant gaps in local food consumption and marketing of destinations (Okumus, 2021). “Street foods” are defined as slightly to extremely processed food items that are vended on streets or other civic spaces, which are consumed on the spot or delivered to the workplace or homes for consumption (Keeble et al. 2015). Most food tourism research studied food tourist behavioural aspects before and during the experience stage, whereas studies concerning the post-experience stage are very few (Stone et al. 2019). However, the multisensory nature of food plays a significant role in shaping tourists’ decision-making behaviors. Additionally, it is crucial for the food services industry to effectively cater to tourists’ needs; therefore, understanding their attitudes and behaviors related to destination-specific local foods becomes very important (Chen & Huang, 2016). It is interesting to note that according to a recent study conducted by, The better India 2018, 2,203 Indian travelers reported that 67 percent of Indian travelers choose their destinations based on cuisine and food experiences the place offers. As mentioned earlier, the Indian local street food market accounts for a significant share in the food services industry, warranting attention from both researchers and practitioners. Hence our study aims to bridge these gaps by investigating the role of local street food consumption experience in shaping the post-consumption behavioural intentions of tourists towards the destinations.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Local Food Consumption Value

Consumption value refers to the utility derived from consuming a product or service. It is based on 'Consumption value theory proposed by Sheth (1991) which states consumption value as a multi-dimensional construct comprising of functional value, conditional value, social value, emotional value and epistemic value, where the contribution of these values change according to the specific services consumed. Consumption value had been used widely by the researchers for evaluating goods and services after the post-consumption stage in the context of industrial goods, consumer durable goods and services, management educational services, public health services, organic food, apparels, etc. When it comes to tourism, very few studies had used the construct of consumption value to evaluate the tourists' experiences related to general tourism, tourism package program and adventure tourism. While, studies which employed consumption value in food tourism are very nascent (Choe & Kim, 2018). To fill this gap and gain deeper insights, we try to incorporate consumption value to evaluate tourists' local food consumption value (TLFCV). As mentioned about the prominence of various values according to the services, functional value has been regarded as a primary role-playing factor in food consumption experiences. Functional value refers to the utility derived from the functional, physical and utilitarian aspects of goods or services. The nature of functional value is extensive, and it should be measured on dimensions specific to the services (Kim, et al. 2018). Three dimensions of functional values, price/value for money, taste/quality, and health, were identified by (Finch et al. 1998) as dimensions for evaluating food consumption functional value. We adopt the same dimensions for our study as prior works found that tourists give substantial consideration to the aspects related to taste, price, and health when experiencing food at tourist destinations. Tourist consumption of local food is bound to have an emotional value attached to it, as the activity is associated with having excitement and fun (Kim & Eves, 2012). Emotional value refers to the perceived utility derived from consuming goods or services capable of arousing feelings or affective states. Experiences of the tour intensify when the tourists have authentic food (Mitchell & Hall, 2003). Emotional value can determine if the tourists' have derived satisfaction post-experience and can help understand their behavioral intentions (Sánchez, et al. 2006). Hence, we incorporate emotional value to evaluate tourists' local food consumption value (TLFCV). Tourist activity is rarely alone activity; tourists peruse their experiences through social interactions between the travelers have a social value (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Social value refers to the utility derived from the consumption of goods or services. Many tourists travel with their friends and families, consume food, and derive social value from these experiences. Understanding this social value is necessary as they contribute to the behavioral intentions of the tourists'. Many prior studies had emphasized the creation of social value in the events that are taken part together, which are bound to have an impact on the satisfaction of the tourists' which shape the behavioral intentions of tourists (Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017). Along these lines, a sense of prestige is created when tourists share their experiences about their food at their destinations (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Extant studies indicate that prestige plays a crucial role in travel and tourism studies (Perrea et al. 2015). Thus studying social value with the dimensions of interaction and prestige can aid in obtaining better insights into the social value of food tourists. Food tourists tend to be curious about the food preparation process, what ingredients create the flavor, and in some cases, more about its historical and cultural roots for acquiring knowledge about the food (Prayag, et al. 2020).

This creates a potential for the presence of epistemic value in the consumption experiences of food tourists. Epistemic value refers to the ability of the goods or services to arise a sense of curiosity provide novelty and satisfy a desire for knowledge. Therefore, we consider the dimension of epistemic value for capturing food tourists' local food consumption value. The consumption value theory can help us to understand the multidimensional aspects of tourist's local food value, which can further help shed more light to understand food tourism.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE CONSTRUCTS AND HYPOTHESIS

Tourists' Local Food Consumption Value and Attitude towards Local Food

Purchasing and using good quality products and services is the primary goal of any customer; receiving quality services leads to arousal of positive feelings in tourists capable of stimulating positive behaviors in the future (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2018). In local food services, quality food with vivid service setting shapes tourists' attitudes towards food (Ozcelik & Akova, 2021). Food attributes like quality, taste, and emotional response towards food combine to shape tourists' attitudes and behaviors (Kim & Eves, 2012). Along with the goal of gaining novel experiences through local food, considering the health value of local food is paramount as it plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' attitudes. Local street food is often associated with health and hygiene issues. Many tourists resist consuming local street food because of neophobia (Caber, et al. 2018), which has to be taken care of by local food vendors. Tourists apprise local foods comprising health value. Price values always a significant determinant for the purchase of goods or services. Tourists show a positive attitude towards local foods available at reasonable prices. Food tourists engage in the consumption of local food for seeking pleasure, fun and excitement of watching the culinary, thereby evaluating local food services with emotional value (Lee, et al. 2011), which will stimulate a positive attitude in food tourists (Ha & Jang, 2010). The tourist experience is rarely taken alone. Tourists have local food with their social groups at specific locations to boast about. Social interactions enhance the tourists' satisfaction, creating a positive attitude towards local food (Perrea et al., 2015). Further food tourists always look forward to having novel experiences showcasing a sense of curiosity to try out and gain knowledge about the cuisine of local foods gain epistemic value that aids in forming a positive attitude towards local food (Fields, 2003). Epistemic value is considered as a crucial precedent for formation of attitude in the tourism literature (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Attitude formation of tourists play crucial role in tourism research as it impacts the behavioral intentions of the tourists directly or indirectly (Wang, et al. 2022). This discussion arouse curiosity and indicates pressing need to understand the relationship between tourist's local food consumption value of Indian street food, Attitude of tourists towards local street food and, further their attitude towards local street food to impact their behavioral intentions. Therefore we propose the below set of hypothesis.

H₁: *Local food consumption value of tourists will have an effect on their Attitude towards local street food.*

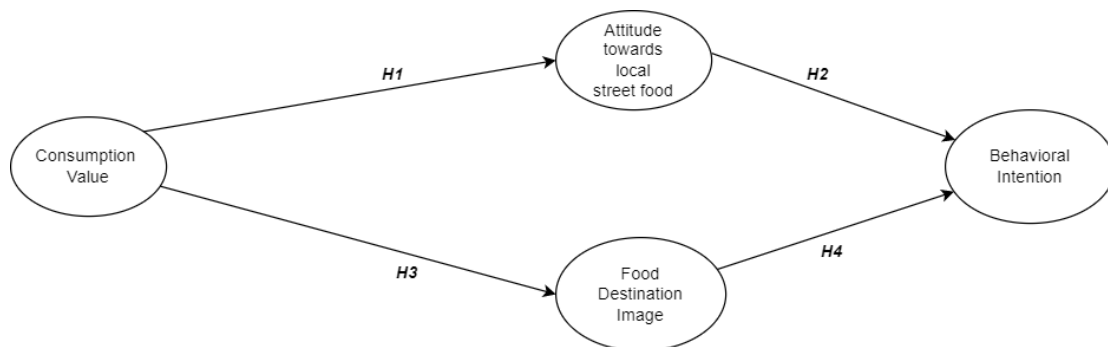
H₂: *Tourists attitude towards local street food will have an effect on their Behavioral intentions towards the destination.*

Tourist' Local Food Consumption Value and Food Destination Image

Tourist consumption value identifies the main motivating factors for destination selection, while food destination image is affective and cognitive (Lee & Kim, 2002). Tourists tend to choose the food destination on the basis of their own choices. Tourists choose their destinations by considering the destination image formed from the tourists' consumption value. A prior study by Ramkissoon, et al. (2009) inferred, consumption value influences destination image and travel behavior. Along these lines, it is vital to understand how consumption value impacts food destination image (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Further behavioral intentions of the tourists i.e. to revisit or recommend depends on the destination image substantially. Prior works indicate strong relationship between food destination image and tourists behavioral intentions (Davras & Özperçin, 2021; Gorji, et al. 2023; Kuhzady, et al. 2020). It becomes very important to find and analyze if similar conclusions can be drawn in the context of Indian street food. Therefore, we propose tourists' local food consumption value (TLFCV) to shape food destination image and further food destination image to have an impact on tourists' behavioral intentions. In these similar lines we propose the below set of hypothesis Figure 1.

H₃: *Local food consumption value of tourists will have an effect on Food destination image.*

H₄: *Food destination image will have an effect on Behavioral intentions of tourists towards the DESTINATION.*



**FIGURE 1
PROPOSED MODEL**

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

Indian street food is an integral part of the country's culinary heritage and is widely known for its diversity, flavours, and aromas. Street food in India is not just about the food; it's about the experience, the ambiance, and the culture. It's a combination of tradition, history, and innovation, which makes it a must-try for any food lover visiting the country. Food tourism has become an increasingly popular trend in recent years, and India has emerged as a favourite destination for food lovers. With its rich culinary history and diverse regional cuisines, Indian street food has become a major attraction for tourists visiting the country. Street food stalls are found in every nook and corner of the country, and tourists can easily find them while exploring the cities. Indian street food is also very affordable, which makes it a great option for budget

travelers. Additionally, the variety of options available in Indian street food makes it appealing to tourists with different tastes and preferences. Each region of India has its own unique cuisine and street food. For example, the spicy chat from Delhi, the vada pav from Mumbai, the dosa from South India, and the samosa from North India, are all iconic street foods that are deeply rooted in their respective regions' culture and history. Tourists can explore and experience these different regional cuisines through Indian street food. Above mentioned facets had motivated us to test the effect of consumption value on attitude towards local street food, food destination image and their effect on Behavioral Intentions of tourists towards the destination.

Data

Data was collected from the street food markets of Chandini Chowk, Delhi Heart located in Delhi and DLF Food Street, Charminar food market located in Hyderabad. The tourists were asked about their primary motive to travel. Tourists who conveyed that their primary motive is to taste local street food. Data was collected with an honest approach diligently. Items in the survey instrument were shuffled to avoid common method variance. In addition to this attention retention questions were added to the survey instrument to retain the focus of the tourists answering the survey. Mall intercept approach was employed to collect the data. We had used Hair et al. (2018) rule of thumb for deciding the sample size. Hair et al. (2018) suggests deciding the sample size on the basis of number of items in the survey instrument i.e. sample size is equals to ten times to the total number of items in the survey instrument. Our survey instrument has 35 items so we require at least 350 responses as a sample size. We had collected 700 responses for gaining deeper inferences. In 700 responses 350 were collected from the food tourists of Hyderabad and 350 were collected from the tourists who were in Delhi.

Measurement Scales

Survey instrument was made by using valid and standard scales which were well established in literature. Tourists were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to the statements, on 5 point to 1 point Likert scale. Local food consumption value of tourists (TLFCV) was measured using Choe and Kim (2019) multidimensional tourist's local food consumption value scale. Food destination image (FDI) was measured using the items adopted from Horng, et al. (2012). Further, Attitude towards local street food was measured using the items adopted from the research work of Hsu and Chen (2014). Lastly, Behaviour intentions of food tourists i.e. intentions to recommend and intentions to revisit were measured by adopting the scale items from (Tian-Cole, et al. 2002).

Analysis

All the constructs of the study are reflective second order constructs, Secondly, our study have many indicators, we have overall 21 indicators therefore we go with using PLS-SEM as suggested by Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2021). We had performed Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the fitness of the dimensions and the items. The reliability and validity of the constructs was examined. Further, the proposed model designed on the basis of hypothesis had been tested empirically.

RESULTS

Reliability and validity of Measurement Model

Fitness of the measurement model in PLS-SEM is evaluated through validity and reliability of the constructs. Construct reliability was indicated by Composite reliability (CR), Cronnback alpha (α) and Dijstra-Henseler’s rho (ρ_A) in this study. While, validity was established through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was measured through Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Results portrayed acceptable values for the fitness of the model where, all the Cronach alpha values are >0.7 , AVE >0.5 , and Outer loadings were > 0.7 , thus confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement model. Discriminant validity is at acceptable level and is established, i.e. the square root of AVE is greater than the correlations of the other constructs. Additionally, HTMT ratio is less than 0.85 confirming the discriminant validity. Further the model was tested to verify about multicollinearity where the VIF of the dimensions were observed and all were less than 3.3, indicating no multicollinearity issues. All the values confirming the reliability and validity of measurement model are discussed.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Strength of the model was evaluated through the measures of SRMR, Q^2 and R^2 obtained through PLS-SEM. Goodness of Fit was assessed as an additional supportive measure. The predictive measure, R^2 values of all variables is high where Attitude towards local food is 0.29, Food Destination image is 0.25 and a Behavioural intention towards the food destination is 0.40. Further Q^2 values of Attitude towards local food, Food Destination image and Behavioural intentions towards the food destination are 0.39, 0.31 and 0.34 respectively. According to Henseler, et al. (2018) SRMR should be below 0.08 for a model to be considered fit. SRMR of our model is 0.070 indicating our model to be strong. Lastly Goodness of Fit of our model is 0.45 thereby exhibiting overall fit. Below Figure 2 and portray the results of our study where, Local food consumption value of tourists have a strong effect ($\beta=0.53$, $t=4.15$) on Attitude towards local street food. Secondly, Attitude towards local street food have an effect ($\beta=0.15$, $t=2.44$) on Behavioural intentions towards the destination, additionally Local food consumption value of tourists indicated direct effect ($\beta=0.25$, $t=4.13$) on Behavioural intentions towards the destination. Further, results of our study show Local food consumption value of tourists to have a strong effect ($\beta=0.50$, $t=3.46$) on Food destination image and lastly, Food destination image to have an effect ($\beta=0.35$, $t=7.24$) on Behavioural intentions towards the destination.

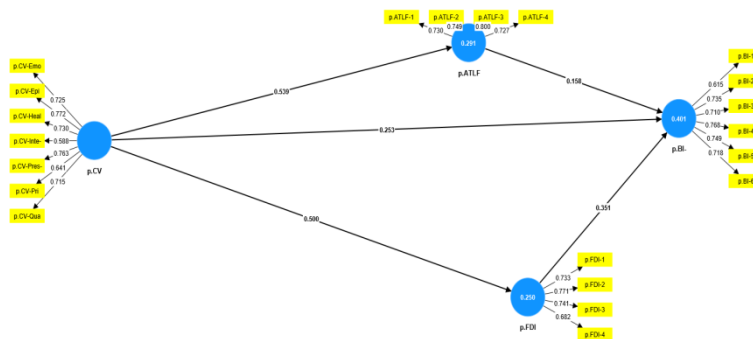


FIGURE 2 STRUCTURAL MODEL

Note: p.CV=Local food consumption value of tourists, p.ATLF=Attitude towards local street, p.FDI= Food destination image, p.BI=Behavioural intentions towards the destination.

Discussion and Implications

Our study was successful in describing local food consumption value of tourists shape their attitude towards local street food and effects the food destination image, and further the extent to which behavior intentions of tourists towards the food destination is effected by its image and tourist's attitude towards local street food. Empirically it is indicated that Food destination image and Attitude of tourists towards local food collectively impacts the behavioral intentions of food tourists towards the destination i.e. (to revisit) or (to recommend). Further it can be inferred that the formation of, tourists attitude towards local street food and food destination image depends mostly on consumption value. All our hypothesis (H1, H2, H3, H4) are supported successfully through the data. Digging further, through our results indicate that the food tourists perceive Indian local street food to be having substantial, Emotional Value, Epistemic Value, Health value, Interaction Value, Price Value, Quality Value and Price Value. Further our study came up with a novel finding. Results of our study reported a partial mediating effect. Where, consumption value of local street food exhibited a strong effect on behavioral intentions towards the destination and mediated through attitude towards local street food and food destination image. Theoretically, our study had strengthened the view point of considering food as a prominent factor for attracting the tourists as argued by prior researchers (Ozcelik & Akova, 2021). Our study can aid tourism practioners and restaurants serving street food in understanding the perceptions and needs of the food tourists, further our study also helps them to understand what attributes of street food the food tourists are looking forward. Through our results it is clear that street food vendors or businesses can thrive if they focus on delivering health value and quality value. Focusing on these two values will place them in a niche area of business giving them long term growth prospects. Generally street food is considered to be an unhealthy option barring many from trying it. Improving the quality value and health value of street food will attract more tourists. At a policy level, promoting Indian street food through government intervention by representing it as a cultural and geographical heritage will aid in increasing the food destination image and behavioral intentions of the prospective food tourists.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study is not beyond limitations, keeping the practical feasibility in mind; our study has taken Hyderabad and Delhi considering the tourist arrivals and street food market turnover. But as already mentioned above, Indian street food is highly diverse, future researchers can test the above constructs in other popular food destinations like Kolkata, Mumbai, Lucknow and Ahmedabad. From theoretical standpoint further works can focus on the cultural attributes of food tourists while studying their consumption value. Further we feel that adding experiential value as a construct while studying phenomenon can bring more inferences.

CONCLUSION

Present study has collected data at a single point of time, from methodological standpoint future studies can try to collect the data at Pre and Post consumption of local street food so that they can capture the phenomenon more clearly and arrive at deeper inferences. Lastly doing a mix method study i.e. taking the online reviews of the same street food market places may help in arriving to multidimensional and rich findings.

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