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Abstract

This paper has made an attempt to examine the contributing factors that influence the consumption of local/traditional food and beverages as a tourist attraction in the destination of their visit, i.e. Shimla. The researcher has made an attempt to obtain an understanding into the local food experiences through semi-structured and open ended questionnaire with 30 individual tourists visiting to Shimla. The study categorized experience into the following factors: 'motivational factors' (i.e. whether the food has become an essentiality or an experience to cherish, whether it is a matter of health concern, or adds to the culinary knowledge); and the second category is based on the 'demographic factors/profiling of the tourists' (i.e. based on the gender, age, and education). This study established an in-depth understanding of consumption of local food by tourists in Shimla.

Keywords:

Traditional food, Food consumption, Culinary tourism

Traditional Food Consumption as a Tourist Attraction: A Grounded theory Approach on Tourists in Himachal Pradesh

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Introduction

The study by Telfer and Wall (2000) duly support the importance of eating out. This study brought a striking data in heading that spending on eating out during a holiday constitutes approximately one-third of all tourist expenditures. Tasting local food is considered as one of the important tourist experience as stated by Hjalager and Richards 2002; Fields, 2002; Ryu and Jang, 2006; Sparks, 2007). Following list consist of the various studies on the food and its consumption in tourism:

- Local food as tourist attractions in terms of economic benefits and local development (Bessiere, 1998; Tellstrom et al., 2005).
- Examination of success factors for culinary tourism in the marketing of tourism destinations (Getz, 2000; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2003; Okumus et al., 2007).
- Attraction of and impediments to local food experiences (Cohen and Avieli, 2004)

- Conceptualizing the relationship between food consumption and the tourist experience (Quan and Wang, 2004)
- Effects of gastronomy on the tourist experience at a destination (Kivela and Crotts, 2006).

Motivations to consume local food and beverages at a destination included various motivational factors like; exciting experience, escape from routine, health concern, learning knowledge, authentic experience; sensory appeal, and dwell in the physical environment. These were developed through exploration of participants' experiences of local food and beverages and the linkages between existing literature on food choice and travel motivation theories. The demographic factors including gender, age, and education were based on interviewees' social, physiological, cultural backgrounds. It was also emphasized that food in a destination is a physical experience through people's sensory perceptions, such as sight, taste and smell. Secondly, according to McIntosh et al. (1995), cultural motivators are related to the need to not only experience different cultures, such as lifestyle, music, food, and dance but also to gain knowledge about other countries in terms of cultural activities. With respect to food in tourism, Fields (2002) indicated that food can be included amongst cultural motivators because when experiencing new local cuisines, tourists are also experiencing a new culture. Thirdly, interpersonal motivators relate to a desire to meet new people, spend time with family and friends, visit friends or relatives, and/or get away from routine relationships (McIntosh et al., 1995). Fields (2002) also suggested that having a meal during a holiday can be regarded as a means of reproducing social relations. Lastly, McIntosh et al. (1995) included status and prestige motivators, which are associated with self-esteem, recognition and the desire to attract attention from others. From this point of view, Fields (2002) stated that eating nice food in a nice place can be recognized as a means to be distinguished from others in terms of social status.

The purpose of the current study is to gain an insight into the motivational factors to consume local food and beverages on trips and holidays. The study determines factors influencing consumption of local food and beverages on holiday using a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach was adopted as an accepted method of textual investigation, with the goal of revealing motivational factors and constructing a research model of travel motivations linked to local food. This study can be thus

seen as exploratory, forming the groundwork for building a model of local food consumption on holiday.

Research Methodology

Research design and sample selection

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach as it aimed to investigate and describe local food experiences and later build a theoretical model in relation to local food consumption at a tourist destination. An interview approach was used to understand the meanings that the respondents attached to issues and phenomenon in more depth, which was achieved through the use of questionnaires.

The aim of the study was to obtain an insight into the experiences of the interviewees in their own words. Thus this study adopted a grounded theory research design to analyze the data collected by a means of individual interviews (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory has been used extensively across a variety of social science disciplines (Charmaz, 2006; Mehmetoglua and Altinay, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). A grounded theory approach is defined as a qualitative research method using a systematic set of processes to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This theory has been primarily used to develop derived theory about a phenomenon where either theory had previously not existed or where the theory is judged to be inadequate.

People who had experienced local food and beverages on their holiday were identified through a purposive sampling technique.

Interviews and data analysis

The study in its starting phase was done over a sample of 10 participants, who participated for the identification of the main points for their opting of local food and beverage product on their holidays. This discussion ranged for a period ranging between 15 and 20 minutes. This helped in the generation of an interview guide for the data collection phase.

The semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire thus built consisted of 23 questions, excluding the information regarding the study and the set of questions related to the participants demographic profiling. The questions were arranged in 5 different sections. The first section laid its focus on the preferred tourist destination; that included destinations

ranking in Himachal Pradesh, purpose of travel, times of visit, source of information about the destination, accompanying person and mode of travel. The second section was related to the local food experience focusing on questions like refreshment/ local food consumed in transit, and the information available about the same. The third section aimed at ascertaining the availability of the local/ traditional food at the place of halts, the type of food (steamed/ fried/ boiled). The fourth section focused on the motivational factors influencing the choice for local food, items pleasurable/ not pleasurable on the menu, modifications required to suit the taste of the tourists (if any). The next section aimed at getting the opinion of the tourists for the promotional steps of marketing local food as a tourist attraction through options like subscription mailers, email/ postal/ telephonic messages or advertisements through newspaper and tourism magazines and the best season to organize local food festivals/ stalls. The last section gained an insight of the demographic profiling of the tourists through their name, gender classification, age, marital status, educational background, occupation and nationality.

Demographic profile of interviewees

Table 1
Profiling of respondents (n = 20)

No	Gender	Age	Marital status	Education	Occupation	Nationality
1	F	21-25	Married	UG degree	House wife	Indian
2	M	21-25	Married	UG degree	Private Organisation	Indian
3	F	41-45	Married	PG degree	Career consultant	Indian
4	M	Above 50	Married	PG degree	Govt. Employee	Indian
5	F	41-45	Married	UG degree	House wife	Indian
6	F	Above 50	Married	UG degree	Govt. Employee	Indian
7	F	36-40	Married	UG degree	Business	Indian
8	M	26-30	Single	UG degree	Private Organisation	Indian
9	M	21-25	Single	Secondary schooling	Student	Indian
10	F	36-40	Single	Secondary schooling	Private Organisation	Indian

No	Gender	Age	Marital status	Education	Occupation	Nationality
11	F	36-40	Single	PG degree	Private Organisation	Indian
12	M	Above 50	Married	UG degree	Private Organisation	Indian
13	F	41-45	Single	Secondary schooling	Student	Indian
14	M	21-25	Single	UG degree	Student	Indian
15	M	36-40	Single	UG degree	Govt. Employee	Indian
16	F	36-40	Single	Doctoral	Govt. Employee	Indian
17	M	36-40	Married	UG degree	Accountant	Indian
18	F	16-20	Single	Secondary schooling	Student	Indian
19	M	21-25	Single	UG degree	Student	Indian
20	M	26-30	Married	PG degree	Student	Indian

The table 1 above describes the demographic profiling of each of the interviewees. As evident from the above table, among 20 participants, 10 of the interviewees were female, and 10 were male. The lower range of their age was between 16 and 20 and the highest were above 50. Ten of them were married and remaining was single. There was one female who had Ph.D. and others were varying between Undergraduate course and Post graduate course, with a majority having UG level of educational backgrounds. All of them were Indian nationals.

Chart 1
Preferred Tourist Destination

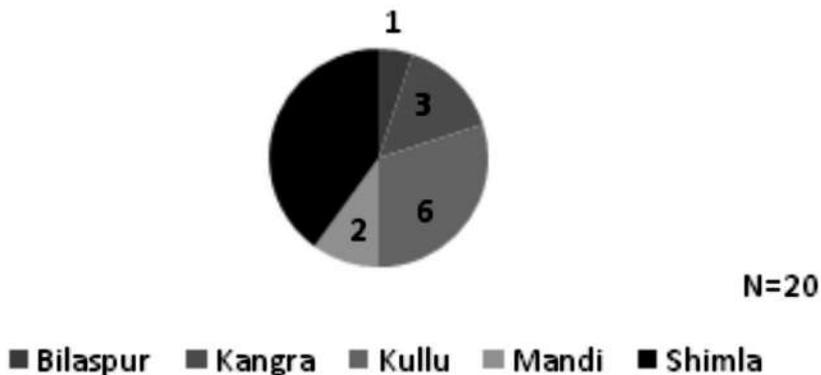


Chart 1 above signifies the preference of tourist's destinations in Himachal Pradesh among 20 tourists. Eight tourists preferred Shimla, with Kullu

being the second most preferred destination having 6 respondents and Kangra with three, Mandi two and Bilaspur with only one tourist response.

Table 2
Preferred Travelling Companion

Spouse	Business partner	Friend	Family	Others (Alone)	Total
10	3	4	2	1	20
50%	15%	20%	10%	5%	100%

Out of the 20 participants, 10 favored travelling with their spouses, 3 with business partners, 4 with their friends, 2 with family members and 1 alone.

Findings and discussion

The findings of the qualitative survey of 20 interviewees were classified into two categories, 'motivational factors', and 'demographic factors'. Motivational factors were categorized into; exciting experience, escape from routine, health concern, learning knowledge, authentic experience, sensory appeal, and dwell in the physical environment, whereas the Demographic factors contained gender, age, and educational level.

Motivational Factors:

Exciting experience

Three respondents related their interest in tasting local food and beverages to exciting and thrilling experiences. They mentioned that eating local food that they have not eaten before, or that they have seen travel guidebooks was really an exciting experience.

Escape from routine

Two interviewees-articulated that travelers may indulge in eating the local food and beverages as they want to escape from daily routines or experience different things. Although the participant seemed to be happy with his present living conditions, a person may still need something new to help him feel strong and comfortable.

Health concern

Health concern was also found as to be a key factor in determining the interest of the food traveler in local food and beverages. Six of the respondents believed tasting local food in the fresh environment to be a means for improving their health either mentally or physically. They indicated that local food made with local ingredients should be fresher and better for health.

Learning knowledge

The three interviewees including the one indulged in the hotel business thought that tasting local food paved a road to learn and understand about the local culture. They also concluded that consumption of the local food allows them to understand the local food habits of the community as well as to observe and understand new things.

Authentic experience

Some of the participants had a belief that the authenticity of the cooking can be seen as new and unique experiential factor of food related travelling. They focused on local food and beverages in terms of its uniqueness and originality.

Sensory appeal

Several people felt that sensory factors can lead to their local food choice. In addition, their experience of local food and beverages was satisfied through the smell, taste and visual image of local food. Especially, flavor was considered a chief contributing standard for consumption of local food and beverages.

Physiological factors:

On the basis of the results generated by the above study, the category of physiological factors was formulated with the assumption that tourists taking part in food tourism may have a tendency towards an urge to taste something new, which may be termed as food friendly. Along with the explorers there is a category of people who are afraid or a reluctant to taste new food.

Gender

In terms of gender, the study revealed that Female respondents were especially interested in tasting local food and were also excited about local food on their holiday. The demographic factor of gender is demonstrated as a critical element on food choice and eating behavior.

Age

In relation to the gender classification, it is opined that middle aged and senior citizens lay emphasis on consuming food as a matter of health concern and have been shifting to healthier foods as compared to the youngsters who have expressed their interests in consuming and trying richer food.

Education

The majority of the participants had a relatively medium to higher levels of educational background. The participants with higher educational level are more often inclined towards learning knowledge and consuming local food to understand the local cultures.

Conclusions

The study was undertaken in the framework of the ever rising consumption of local food and beverages on trips and holidays. Through a semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire and review of related literature on common travel motivations and food consumption, it identified the motivations influencing local food consumption of local food experiences on trips and holidays.

Fields (2002) suggested that motivators for consumption of food and beverages in a tourist destination can be theoretically conceptualized within four categories provided by McIntosh et al. (1995): 'physical motivators', 'cultural motivators', 'interpersonal motivators', and 'status and prestige motivators'. Firstly, physical motivators refer to refreshment of a person's body and mind, physical rest, desire for recreation, participation in sports. These motivators are associated with reducing physical tension (McIntosh et al., 1995), and Fields (2002) proposed that they can be closely connected with the opportunity to taste new and exotic foods.

The current study thus demonstrates that tasting local food and beverages satisfies tourists' appetite and offers local cultural experiences. Older and experienced participants also suggested that people while visiting a tourist destination are also concerned with the healthy eating as well as they are concerned with trying new food of the community to understand their local cultures.

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