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The Role of Hotels in Shaping Culinary Tourism: An Empirical Study in Gurugram, India

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Abstract:

Culinary tourism has become a significant segment of the global tourism industry, with travelers increasingly seeking unique food experiences that reflect local traditions and heritage. This study examines the role of hotels in promoting culinary tourism in Gurugram, India, a rapidly growing commercial hub near Delhi. Gurugram offers a distinctive mix of modern and traditional culinary experiences, making it an ideal case for understanding the intersection of hospitality and food tourism.

This research employs a structured survey of 200 tourists to analyze their food preferences, satisfaction levels, and the influence of hotel dining on their perception of Gurugram as a culinary destination. Statistical methods, including ANOVA and t-tests, are used to assess variations in tourist experiences and the factors contributing to their overall satisfaction. The findings highlight how hotel restaurants serve as key facilitators of food tourism by offering curated dining experiences that showcase regional flavors while catering to international tastes.

The study provides valuable insights into the evolving role of hotels in culinary tourism and offers strategic recommendations for enhancing Gurugram's food tourism sector. Strengthening collaborations between hotels and local food producers, incorporating cultural storytelling in menus, and improving gastronomic marketing can further position Gurugram as a premier culinary destination.

Keywords: *Culinary tourism, tourism industry, culinary experiences, culinary destination*

Introduction:

Culinary tourism, also known as gastronomy tourism, has gained global prominence as travelers increasingly seek immersive food experiences beyond traditional sightseeing. This sector focuses on exploring local cuisines, dining at specialty restaurants, and participating in food-related activities that showcase a region's cultural heritage. Food is not just a necessity; it serves as a key component of a traveler's journey, offering insight into local traditions, history, and lifestyle.

Recent studies have highlighted that tourists' food experiences are influenced by various push and pull factors, including taste, socialization, cultural experiences, and the appeal of traditional and local foods (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009).

India, renowned for its diverse culinary landscape, is emerging as a significant destination for food tourism. Each state presents unique flavors and traditional cooking techniques, making the country ideal for gastronomic exploration. Haryana, particularly the city of Gurugram, stands out due to its blend of modern urban development and rich culinary heritage. While often recognized as a corporate hub, Gurugram also offers a vibrant food scene that includes luxury hotel dining, regional delicacies, and a robust street food culture. With its strategic location near Delhi and an increasing influx of business and leisure travelers, Gurugram has the potential to establish itself as a premier culinary tourism destination (Pal & Chatterjee, 2021).

Hotels play a pivotal role in shaping culinary tourism, serving as a bridge between tourists and authentic local food experiences. Many upscale hotels have integrated regional flavors into their menus, offering guests opportunities to taste traditional dishes with contemporary twists. By collaborating with local chefs, sourcing indigenous ingredients, and organizing food festivals or culinary workshops, hotels enhance the overall food tourism experience. Research indicates that such initiatives not only enrich guest experiences but also contribute to the destination's gastronomic branding. Additionally, the rise of digital platforms and social media has amplified the significance of hotel dining, as travelers increasingly rely on online reviews and influencer recommendations when selecting dining options.

This study aims to analyze the contribution of hotels in promoting food tourism in Gurugram, India. It investigates how hotels integrate local flavors into their offerings, how these culinary experiences impact tourist satisfaction, and how Gurugram is perceived as a culinary destination compared to other major Indian cities. Furthermore, this research seeks to understand the relationship between tourist demographics and their food preferences, offering insights into the role of hotels in fostering sustainable and culturally enriching food experiences.

By exploring these aspects, this study contributes to the broader discourse on food tourism and hospitality management. The findings will assist hotels, tourism authorities, and policymakers in developing strategies to enhance culinary tourism in Gurugram, ultimately positioning it as a leading gastronomic hub in India.

Research Objectives:

- To examine the role of hotels in promoting culinary tourism in Gurugram.
- To assess the impact of hotel dining experiences on tourists' perceptions of Gurugram as a culinary destination.
- To analyze tourist preferences and satisfaction levels related to hotel dining.

- To provide strategic recommendations for enhancing Gurugram's food tourism sector through hotel initiatives.

Research Hypotheses:

1. H1: Hotels in Gurugram significantly impact tourists' perceptions of the city as a culinary tourism destination.
2. H2: Tourists who experience local cuisine in hotels report higher satisfaction levels compared to those who do not.
3. H3: The type of hotel (luxury vs. budget) significantly affects tourists' culinary satisfaction levels.

Literature Review:

1. Studies by Hall and Sharples (2003) suggest that food tourism can stimulate regional economic development by encouraging the growth of small food enterprises and culinary events.
2. Tourists often seek local delicacies that provide a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage of a destination. Studies indicate that culinary experiences influence travelers' decisions, with many destinations marketing their food culture as a key attraction (Kivela & Crofts, 2006).
3. Studies indicate that tourists' dining choices are influenced by cultural exposure, dietary restrictions, and previous culinary experiences (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006).
4. Additionally, gastronomy tourism provides employment opportunities in both rural and urban areas, supporting local food artisans and entrepreneurs (Everett & Aitchison, 2008).
5. Henderson (2009) highlights that luxury hotels often emphasize gastronomic experiences to attract high-spending tourists, integrating local flavors into their offerings to enhance guest satisfaction.
6. Research by Mak et al. (2012) highlights that food neophilia (willingness to try new food) and food neophobia (hesitation towards unfamiliar foods) significantly impact tourist food choices. Moreover, generational and demographic factors play a role in determining whether tourists engage in food-based travel experiences (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009).
7. Previous research highlights that food plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' experiences (Horng & Tsai, 2012).
8. According to Mak, Lumbers, Eves, and Chang (2012), food consumption during travel serves as a form of cultural engagement, allowing tourists to connect with local traditions and communities.
9. Research by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) suggests that user-generated content, such as food blogs, Instagram posts, and YouTube videos, plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' dining

decisions.

10. Furthermore, experiential dining concepts such as food and wine pairing, cultural storytelling through food, and interactive chef-led experiences are becoming popular in hotels and culinary destinations (Hjalager, 2015).
11. Tourists often prefer local food experiences that align with their dietary preferences while also providing novelty and authenticity (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016).
12. With the rise of digital platforms, travelers are increasingly relying on social media and online reviews to decide on dining options (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018).
13. Studies suggest that hotels contribute to food tourism by offering authentic dining experiences (Mohanty, 2018).
14. High-end hotels with specialty restaurants often serve as key attractions for culinary tourists. Hotels not only introduce tourists to traditional and regional dishes but also influence their perception of local cuisine through menu design, ambiance, and storytelling (Okumus et al., 2018).
15. Studies by Okumus et al. (2018) further highlight that hotels and restaurants that actively engage in digital marketing can significantly enhance their appeal to culinary tourists.
16. Recent studies indicate that food tourism is evolving with the increasing demand for personalized and immersive experiences. Travelers are now seeking farm-to-table dining, organic food experiences, and cooking workshops to gain hands-on exposure to local gastronomy (Stone, Migacz, & Wolf, 2019).
17. Research shows that promoting local cuisine through tourism can boost local businesses and cultural heritage (Di-Clemente et al., 2020). The collaboration between hotels and local food producers can create economic benefits, ensuring sustainable growth in both the hospitality and agricultural sectors.
18. The influence of social media on food tourism is further supported by findings that online food reviews and influencer endorsements impact tourists' perceptions of authenticity and quality (Lai, 2020).
19. Sustainable food tourism is also gaining traction, with an emphasis on reducing food waste and promoting ethical sourcing (UNWTO, 2021).

Recent Literature:

1. Dimensions of Culinary Tourism and Hospitality in Golden Triangle of India (ResearchGate, 2021) – Examines how culinary tourism and hospitality create niche segments in food tourism.
2. The Importance of Regional Food in Gastronomy Tourism: A Case Study of Haryanvi Food (ResearchGate, 2022) – Highlights the significance of regional cuisine in attracting travelers

and enhancing their culinary experiences.

3. Gastronomy Tourism: How Indian Hotels Are Elevating Culinary Experiences (Economic Times Hospitality, 2023) – Discusses how Indian hotels are transforming culinary offerings into attractions that enhance the overall travel experience.
4. Examining the Role of Culinary Tourism in Destination Image Perception (Journal of Tourism Insights, 2024) – Explores the relationship between culinary tourism, destination image perception, and tourist motivation.
5. Culinary Delights: How Indian Cuisine Is Redefining the Global Food Scene in Hospitality (Hotelier India, 2024) – Discusses the impact of Indian cuisine on the global hospitality industry.
6. Culinary Tourism in India: A Global Perspective (Hospitality Biz India, 2023) – Explores India's diverse culinary heritage and its potential for economic growth.

Research Methodology:

Study Area: The research focuses on Gurugram, known for its luxury hotels and diverse dining options.

Sample Size: 200 tourists staying at various hotels in Gurugram were surveyed.

Data Collection: A structured questionnaire was used to gather data on tourist demographics, food preferences, and satisfaction levels.

Statistical Tools: ANOVA and t-tests were used to analyze the data and determine the significance of hotel dining experiences in influencing tourists' perceptions.

List of Hotels Surveyed:

- Trident, Gurugram
- The Leela Ambience Gurugram
- Taj City Centre Gurugram
- Hyatt Regency Gurugram
- ITC Grand Bharat
- Westin Sohna Resort & Spa
- Vivanta by Taj

Table 1: Data Analysis and Findings

Factor	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Significance (p-value)
Hotel Dining Experience	4.5	0.7	0.01*
Local Cuisine Availability	4.3	0.8	0.03*
Tourist Satisfaction	4.6	0.6	0.02*

ANOVA Results: The ANOVA test showed significant differences in tourist satisfaction based on the type of hotel and its dining offerings ($p < 0.05$).

T-Test Analysis: The t-test results indicated a significant difference between tourists who dined in hotels offering local cuisine versus those who did not ($p = 0.01$).

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Hotels play a crucial role in shaping culinary tourism in Gurugram. The study finds that tourists who experience authentic local cuisine in hotels report higher satisfaction levels and a positive perception of Gurugram as a culinary destination.

Recommendations:

- **Incorporate More Regional Dishes:** Hotels should feature traditional Haryanvi and North Indian cuisine in their menus.
- **Culinary Workshops & Food Tours:** Collaborating with local chefs for food-related activities can enhance guest experiences.
- **Digital Marketing Strategies:** Hotels should utilize social media campaigns and influencer marketing to promote their dining experiences.
- **Quality & Hygiene Standards:** Ensuring high food quality and hygiene will attract more culinary tourists.
- **Local Collaborations:** Partnering with farmers and food artisans can offer authentic and sustainable food experiences.
- **Guest Engagement Initiatives:** Interactive food events and storytelling menus can enhance the appeal of hotel dining.

Future Scope:

Further research can compare culinary tourism trends in Gurugram with other major Indian cities to develop a national-level strategy for food tourism growth. Additionally, studies focusing on the role of street food vendors in culinary tourism can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the sector.

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