Available online at www.centmapress.org

Int. J. Food System Dynamics 15 (6), 2024, 623-641

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.18461/ijfsd.v15i6N4

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON FOOD SYSTEM DYNAMICS

Flavours of wanderlust: tourist segmentation and the pull of famous local food outlets

Karan Berry and Shiv Kumar

MMICTandBM (HM), Maharishi Markandeshwar (deemed to be University), Mullana-133207, Ambala, Haryana (India)
chefkaranberry@gmail.com; shivk1999@gmail.com

Received March 2024, accepted September 2024, available online November 2024

ABSTRACT

Local food plays an important role in delivering a memorable experience to tourists. In fact, previous research has identified various types of tourists, based upon their commitment to eating and their interest in local dishes and food habits. This paper makes a novel contribution, as no previous studies to date, have explored the priority of selection factors for dining in famous local food outlets according to various segments of tourists, which are segmented as per the relevance of local gastronomy in their destination selection. To achieve the proposed objectives, a structured questionnaire has been used to find out the opinion of diners in the outlets which base their offerings on traditional preparations made with quality local ingredients, in the city of Amritsar- regarded as the food capital of Punjab. The study identifies and validates three segment of tourists using cluster and discriminant analysis respectively. Selection factors prioritized by each segments, are assessed using Garrett ranking technique. Implications of this research are beneficial for proprietors of food outlets, government and all other stakeholders associated with gastronomy tourism. Future research can study the association between dining experience and satisfaction of tourists in famous local food outlets, as per the identified segmentation.

***Keywords**: Famous, local food outlet, selection factors, gastronomy, tourist segmentation.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy constitutes an integral part of the social and cultural legacy of individuals (López et al., 2017; Mgonja et al., 2017), which reflects a distinct way of life across diverse geographical regions. Renowned culinary destinations such as Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, Hong-Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore perceive local cuisine as an essential component of destination branding, and also offer a calendar of gastronomic events, including culinary gatherings, food festivals, awards, accolades, and competitions, thereby expanding the scope of food tourism beyond mere restaurant dining. For developing nations like India, establishing a reputable gastronomic destination brand proves to be a formidable challenge. The guidelines for the advancement of gastronomy tourism released by the "World Tourism Organization and Basque Culinary Centre in 2019" may aid emerging gastronomic destinations like India in overcoming the obstacles encountered in the creation of their culinary brand image (Kaur, 2021).

India occupies the 14th position in World Tourism Receipts and holds a 2.08 percent share in international tourism receipts (in US$ terms). A breakdown of the purpose-wise percentage share of foreign tourist arrivals in India from January to May of year 2023 reveals that the majority of them (47.5 percent) visited for leisure holidays and recreational purposes (Ministry of tourism, 2023b). Punjab ranks among the top 10 states in India in terms of foreign tourist visits in 2022 (Ministry of tourism, 2023a).

Punjab stands out as a prominent province due to its cuisine, culture, and historical significance. The delectable dishes prepared in Punjab, some of which have been influenced by Mughlai cuisine, attract a considerable number of tourists to the province, particularly in Amritsar, Jalandhar, and Patiala (Rana et al., 2018). Amritsar receives more than half of the tourists visiting Punjab. This city has an international airport which provides direct flights to some of the major cities around the World (Invest Punjab, 2022).

Over the past few years, Amritsar- regarded as food capital of Punjab (Dhillon and Bhinder, 2021), has witnessed a surge in tourism, emerging as one of the most visited cities in the country. The number of air travellers surpassed 2 million in 2022, up from over 1 million in 2015, and the city's hotels are consistently fully booked, both of which serve as indicators of progress (Brar, 2023).

Amritsar has an immense potential to develop into a popular tourist destination due to its rich culture and heritage (Chaudhary and Aggarwal, 2012). Around 1.25 lakh people visit the sacred Golden Temple in Amritsar every day, which is a major source of tourist traffic in Punjab. This number of tourist visits is more than the famous Taj Mahal. Wagah Border and Jallianwala Bagh are the other two main attractions of the city (Kunnappally, 2019; Dhillon, 2020). The city offers mouth-watering and wonderful, traditional Punjabi food (Amritsar, n.d.).

Although, several studies have emphasized upon the segmentation of tourists to study their gastronomic experience and satisfaction (Singh et al., 2024; Martín et al., 2020; Levitt et al., 2019; Daries et al., 2018), especially in context of European regions (Boiko et al., 2021; Kovalenko et al., 2023), but there seems to be a paucity of gastronomic tourism research in developing nations like India (Kumar R, 2023), and how these clustered tourist segments differ in the selection of a dining outlet. The purpose of this exploratory study is to increase culinary awareness and encourage food tourism in the holy city of Amritsar, and alike destinations all over the World which offer culinary specialities to wow the tourists. In order to accomplish the intended goal, a self-administered survey questionnaire was developed to gather feedback from visitors dining at well-known local food outlets that base their menu items on traditional recipes created using premium local products (Hernández and Huete, 2021).

2 Review of Literature

2.1 Connection between gastronomy and tourism

Within the context of tourism, gastronomy plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall visitor experience. When examining the phenomenon of gastronomic tourism, it becomes imperative to investigate the behaviour of tourists and their connection with the culinary heritage of the destination they are exploring (Ellis et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, not all travellers are drawn to a particular place solely for its local cuisine. There exists a type of tourist who does not perceive the culinary traditions of the destination as a distinguishing feature, but rather sees it as a means to satisfy their basic need for sustenance. On the other end of the spectrum, however, there are tourists who perceive gastronomy as an exceptional and tangible way to delve into the culture, traditions, and distinctiveness of the region or city they are visiting, thus adding significant value to their experience (Ting et al., 2017). For this particular category of tourists, gastronomy serves as a primary or secondary motivation for undertaking a journey (Fields, 2003), ultimately influencing the decision to visit a specific destination (López et al., 2017).

2.2 Relevance of local gastronomy in destination selection (RLG) as a segmenting variable

Segmentation analyses often encompass motivations, lifestyles, or socio-demographic profiles, which is important for private companies and public managers to develop and oversee a tourist destination. Hence, it is of utmost importance to ascertain those visitor groups that possess homogeneous characteristics, such as individuals who visit a destination due to their interest in its gastronomy (Santos et al., 2020; Levitt et al., 2019; Ko et al., 2018), as well as the level of interest exhibited by tourists (Kivela and Crotts, 2005).

Recent research has investigated the importance of local gastronomy in selection of a destination, exposing different tourist segments according to their attitudes toward local cuisine. According to research conducted on Spain's Costa del Sol, three tourist groups have a range of gastronomic fascination and contentment (Pérez-Priego et al., 2023). Similarly, studies done in Quito, Ecuador (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2017), Popayán, Colombia (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2020), and Córdoba, Spain (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2021) revealed significant differences in culinary motivations among visitors. Numerous other studies have focused on the classification of gastro-tourists (Mc Kercher et al., 2008; Björk and Kauppinen, 2016; Thomas, 2018). Kivela and Crotts (2005) employ specific inquiries to delineate potential visitor categories to a tourist destination based on prior knowledge of culinary aspects, as well as the significance, customs, and desire attributed to the gastronomic experience in the place they visit. These studies classified people into "survivors", "enjoyers", and "experiencers" depending on their gastronomic preferences according to the classification of tourists proposed by Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2016). Experiencers are travellers who view cuisine as an essential component of their journey. The second category of travellers, referred to as enjoyers, consists of travellers who have a particular interest in cuisine and dining experiences. Survivors, the third kind of travellers, consists those travellers for whom cuisine is not a major component of their experience. Furthermore, a direct association among tourists' attitudes toward gastronomy and their spending was found (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2017). Trung et al. (2021) suggested to conduct further investigation on the variables that could significantly impact evaluations of crucial factors, such as values associated with dining out as emphasized by Türker and Süzer (2022). All these studies emphasize the significance of local gastronomy as a variable of interest for foreign tourists, as well as its ability to build and strengthen tourist destinations, especially around World Heritage Sites and areas with well-established culinary traditions.

2.3 Selection factors for dining in famous food outlets

Scholars have investigated the importance of eating at neighbourhood ethnic eateries as a driving force behind people's desire to travel to the nation where the cuisine originated, regardless of whether respondents had visited that destination previously (Kim and Cho, 2022; Jeon and McKercher, 2021).

The crucial factors that drive consumers' decision-making process when selecting a dining establishment, encompass elements such as the quality of food, adherence to food hygiene and safety standards, taste preferences, cleanliness levels, staff behaviour, location convenience, reputation, and price considerations (Kim and Cho, 2022; Chua et al., 2020; Min, 2016; Ha et al., 2016; Harrington et al., 2013; Duarte et al., 2013; Ali and Nath, 2013). In the case of Muslim tourists, their focus is specifically on Halal outlets and certified Halal food options (Zainol et al., 2021). On the other hand, foreign tourists in Bangkok take into account factors such as discovery opportunities, advertisements, available menus, and cultural cues when selecting ethnic restaurants (Batra, 2008).

Further, sales promotional offers also help to draw in customers (Sinha and Verma, 2018). Tools for sales promotion offer both utilitarian and hedonic benefits (Chandon et al., 2000), which can create a positive opinion of a particular brand. Brand value may also grow as a result of this favourable perception (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2012). Level of food safety and hygiene associated with dining considers factors such as the type of food and its source, staff competence and hygiene practices, the condition of the premises, and overall ambiance (Kolanowski et al., 2021; Bai et al., 2019).

When it comes to making online decisions about restaurants, consumers pay close attention to advertisements generated by the companies during the browsing stage and are particularly drawn to visual content incorporated within user-generated reviews during the evaluation stage (Li et al., 2022). They also rely on smartphones and social media platforms to gather information and make informed choices about where to dine (Hwang et al., 2021).

The utilization of anthropomorphic labels for food items, such as "Thin cookie" or "Fat burger," can significantly influence individuals' food choices, particularly among those who are overweight or obese (Kee et al., 2023; Maezawa and Kawahara, 2021). Additionally, factors such as the quality (Baydeniz et al., 2023) and origin of ingredients, as well as the desire for fresher and higher quality food products, play a crucial role in consumers' decision-making process when selecting a restaurant (Fidan et al., 2018).

2.4 Famous local food outlets of Amritsar

"Every dish has a story, and every ingredient maps the history of the destination", according to the "World Tourism Organization" (UNWTO, 2017, p.12). Tourists are compelled to participate in meals at small local eateries for a variety of reasons.

From an academic perspective, different types of restaurants as reflected in numerous gastronomy studies are: upscale restaurants (Chen and Peng, 2018), sustainable restaurants (Yurtseven, 2011), restaurants featured in prestigious guides (Hernández Rojas et al., 2019), restaurants located in hotels (Gordin et al., 2016), restaurants or street food stalls (İrigülerand Öztürk, 2016), Halal restaurants (Yousaf and Xiucheng, 2018), or fast food restaurants (Rajput and Gahfoor, 2020), among others. One specific investigation has revealed that Chinese tourists, including Generation Z adults, are motivated by the desire to encounter new and distinct culinary experiences that are not integrated into their daily lives (Tănase et al., 2023; Jeon and McKercher, 2021; Ding et al., 2022). The authenticity and uniqueness of the local cuisine offered at these establishments also serve as crucial factors in attracting and satisfying tourists (Kala, 2020; Suntikul et al., 2019).

However, there are fewer studies that focus on traditional restaurants, that centre their offerings around the traditional cuisine of their locality. Such restaurants revitalize the production of local ingredients, the flavour of the regional cuisine, the gastronomic tradition, and the dining experience of consumers. Authors have demonstrated how traditional restaurants emphasize the significance of local food and attract visitors (Chen et al., 2020). Local cuisine is the second-best attraction after the Golden Temple in Amritsar (Paul, 2018). There are countless local food outlets in Amritsar (Pasricha, 2018), but those included in this study (n=14), were selected from the original population universe (N=34), as published by Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Government of Punjab (Sidhu, 2019). Due to the limited size of the sampling universe, finite population correction (FPC) factor was applied to the initial sample size (n_0 = 23) estimated through online sample size calculator (Raosoft Inc., 2024) at 90% confidence level, 10% margin of error, and 50% variability; to arrive at the appropriate adjusted sample size (Cochran, 1977).

$$n = \frac{n_0 N}{n_0 + (N-1)}$$

$$n = \frac{23 \text{ X } 34}{23 + (34-1)} = \frac{782}{56} = 13.94$$

Inserting the values of n_0 = 23, and N = 34 in the formula gives the adjusted sample size (n=14). The calculation revealed that a total of fourteen famous local food outlet locations which are almost fifty years old and are frequented by both domestic and foreign tourists, out of the thirty-four, may be included as sampling locations for the tourists' survey. Sampling was done from each of the fourteen below mentioned outlets, selected for the study.

Special Amritsari kulchas are renowned as a prevalent and highly esteemed breakfast option, characterized by a filled baked bread that is manually crumbled and garnished with a dollop of butter. Kulcha Land stands out as a distinguished establishment that has been in operation since prior to the partition of India in 1947.

Chole poori, *Gur ka halwa*, and *pinni* constitute another distinctive Punjabi breakfast selection featuring puris cooked in pure desi ghee, accompanied by chole and a zesty potato curry at Kanha sweets, an enterprise that commenced its operations in 1909. This establishment also caters to orders for confectioneries and savouries throughout India.

Kesar lassi, available at Ahuja milk bhandar, possesses a notably dense and velvety texture, necessitating the use of a spoon to extract it from the glass. This outlet has been serving customers since 1957.

Makki di roti and *sarson da saag* represent a seasonal delicacy crafted from a blend of mustard leaves, fenugreek leaves, and spinach leaves, served with maize flour roti at Bharawan da dhaba, a dining establishment that has been in existence since 1912.

Mah ki dal and *Lachha paratha* comprise black lentils cooked overnight over low heat with milk, white butter, and fresh cream at Kesar da dhabha, an eatery founded in 1916.

Amritsari kulcha, the renowned Amritsari kulcha dhaba established by Sucha Singh in 1962, has been delighting patrons with delectable tandoori kulchas ever since.

Tandoori chicken and *Keema naan* are meticulously prepared and served with rich flavors at Beera chicken centre, a culinary venue renowned for its tandoori chicken since 1967.

Desi ghee fried Jalebi, a delectable treat relished by numerous tourists and locals, is prepared in clarified butter by Gurdas Ram jalebi wala since 1956.

Trotter's soup and *Brain curry* are signature dishes at Pal da dhaba, a dining establishment that commenced operations in 1966 and is particularly renowned for its Paya (trotters' soup) and goat brain curry.

Barra kebab (Tandoori meat), succulent mutton chops shallow-fried and served at Bittu meat wala since 1953, are a favored choice among non-vegetarians.

Punjabi lassi in a variety of flavors, such as sweet, salty, special, and peda, is offered at Giani di lassi, an establishment founded in 1921 at Katra Sher Singh.

Special Aam papad, a tangy and flavorful mango leather, is served at Ram Lubhayaand sons, a culinary establishment in operation since 1965.

Tandoori chicken has been a specialty at Surjit chicken house, where juicy, smoked tandoori chicken has been served since 1976.

Amritsari fish, featuring delicious batter-fried fish, is a popular dish at Makhan fish corner, a culinary destination since 1962.

As per the literature reviewed, this study is built around the following research questions:

1. What is the relevance of local gastronomy in tourists' selection of a destination?
2. Are there significant differences amongst tourists' in terms of selection factors for dining in famous local food outlets?

To answer these research questions, the study proposes the following objectives:

1. To segment the tourists' according to the relevance of local gastronomy in their destination selection.
2. To compare the selection factors for dining in famous local food outlets amongst different tourist segments.

3 Methodology

3.1 Survey design

The selected survey design for this study is cross-sectional in nature, as they are quick and easy to use, may evaluate a variety of factors, may inspire more research, and have a lower dropout rate (Brière, 2021; Levin, 2006). The specific framework of this research pertains to both, domestic and foreign tourists (MOSPI, n.d.) who dined at one of the famous local food outlets of Amritsar. The study aims to know their perception about local gastronomy as a decisive factor in destination selection and assessing the priorities of three segments of tourists on ten selection factors for them to dine in these food outlets.

The famous local food outlets chosen as survey points respond to a criterion of greater representativeness and distribution, to cover as much of the city as possible, on the premise that tourists complete the survey once they have enjoyed the service and tasted the dishes, responding from their own experience (Correia et al., 2013; Remoaldo et al., 2014).

Convenience sampling was used; individuals surveyed were those who were available at a certain time and place (Finn et al., 2000). The survey's rejection rate was extremely low and unaffected by any of the variables. The respondents took eight to ten minutes on average to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed based on a review of previous literature. The questionnaire was printed and distributed in English language, as response rates to e-mail surveys have decreased steadily over the past decades (Sheehan, 2001). There were three parts of the questionnaire. Six questions in the first block relate to the sociodemographic characteristics of each tourist (nationality, age group, gender, educational level, occupation, and family monthly income), the second block formed by four Likert type questions measured on 5 point scale (1 denoting strongly disagree to 5 denoting strongly agree), includes questions related to relevance of local gastronomy in their destination selection which were adapted from similar previous studies (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2021; Correia et al., 2009).

These four questions are:
1. In general, I am interested in gastronomy (RLG 1),
2. I usually search for gastronomic experiences while selecting my travel destination (RLG 2),
3. Exploring local gastronomy is usually a primary or secondary motive of my trip (RLG 3), and
4. Gastronomic experience is important for my overall satisfaction with the visit (RLG 4).

Hereafter, these four questions will be represented by their acronyms. Finally, the third block contains 10 items based on a single rank- based question regarding preference of selection factors for dining in famous local food outlet, extracted after a thorough analysis of earlier research on restaurant management (Daries et al., 2018; Ullah et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2020; Chua et al., 2020; Scozzafava et al., 2017; DiPietro, 2017; Namin, 2017), and the respondents were asked to give ranking from 1 to 10 according to their priority, where 1 means – most important factor and 10 means least important factor.

The ten selection factors were:
1. traditional local preparations,
2. old establishment year,
3. reputation of outlet,
4. online reviews from customers through Trip Advisor, social media etc.,
5. past dining experience,
6. word of mouth recommendations from people known to you,
7. location is easily accessible,
8. price of dishes is reasonable,
9. sales promotion (special menu items, advertisements, discounts, coupons), and
10. food safety and hygiene standards.

3.2 Data collection

The survey was carried out at the famous local food outlets of the city, with the premise that the tourists surveyed had been in the destination for at least 24 hours, and therefore, could give an informed opinion (Remoaldo et al., 2014). Data was randomly and independently sampled to represent the population. Representativeness refers to how well the sample drawn for the questionnaire research compares with the population of interest. Sample size concerns may also be impacted by limitations in terms of money, time, resources, and various other factors (Kotrlik et al., 2001). For a Pearson Correlation study, a minimum of 200 specimens are needed (Guilford, 1954). A minimal observation to variable ratio of 5:1 is suggested by the sample-to-variable ratio; however, ratios of 15:1 or 20:1 are recommended (Hair et al., 2020). The sample size should be ten times larger than the total number of variables when doing multivariate data analysis (Gravetter et al., 2021).

As per the raised expectations of the journal editors, the response rates approximating 60% for most of the studies should be the goal of researchers (Fincham, 2008). A total of 346 printed survey questionnaires were distributed to tourists after they dined at the famous local food outlets in the city of Amritsar during the period of three months from1st October to 30th December 2023. Once collected, they were scrutinized for completeness, and finally, 300 surveys were found valid, which accounts for 86.70 percent of response rate.

3.3 Data analysis

The statistical program SPSS v.25 and Microsoft excel 2019 was used to carry out the statistical analysis. As the collected responses were in hard copy, it was easy to identify the incomplete questionnaires, and these were rejected. Collected data was carefully fed into SPSS, taking care not to commit any typographic error. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted using 40 randomly selected tourists from a few famous local food outlets in Amritsar. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed for all 4 Likert scale questions, using Cronbach's alpha, and was found to be good, as it was above 0.7 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The analysis continued with the assumptions testing and application of multivariate techniques.

4 Results

4.1 Sociodemographic profile of the respondents

The primary sociodemographic variables used in this study are listed in Table 1, which also offers details on the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1.
Sociodemographic profile of the respondents

Group	Sociodemographic variable	Frequency	Percent
Nationality	Indian	208	69.3
	Foreigner	92	30.7
Age group	Below 20	39	13.0
	20-39	134	44.7
	40-59	83	27.7
	Above 59	44	14.7
Gender	Male	169	56.3
	Female	131	43.7
Educational level	High school	27	9.0
	Undergraduate diploma	58	19.3
	Graduate	140	46.7
	Post graduate and above	75	25.0
Occupation	Student	50	16.7
	Private job	77	25.7
	Government job	44	14.7
	Business	66	22.0
	Retired	32	10.7
	Housewife	31	10.3
Monthly family income in INR	Upto INR 40000	44	14.7
	INR 40001-INR 80000	135	45.0
	INR 80001- INR 120000	85	28.3
	Above INR 120000	36	12.0
	Total	**300**	**100.0**

According to the distribution of nationalities, out of the 300 participants, 69.3% were Indian and 30.7% were foreigners. When it comes to age group, most people (44.7%) belong to the 20–39 age group, while 27.7% are in the 40–59 age group. The sample's gender distribution reveals that 56.3% of participants were men and 43.7% were women. According to the degree of education attained, a significant portion of the participants (46.7%) hold graduate degrees, and the largest group of workers (25.7%) hold private jobs. There is variation in the household income distribution; 45.0% of families earn between INR 40001 and INR 80000.

4.2 Tourists' Segmentation using Cluster Analysis

As per Byrne (2010), ordinal data with five and more categories can be treated as its continuous scale counterpart. Inter item Pearson's correlation was significant and was found to be in the range of .541 to .645, which indicated that there was no issue of multi-collinearity (O'Brien and Sharkey, 2012) between the four observed variables, framed upon five point Likert scale.

Unlike univariate classification, when participants assign themselves to a category, cluster analysis acts as a multivariate technique to classification (George and Mallery, 2019). Of the hierarchical methods, agglomerative processes are most likely the ones that are employed the most. They generate a sequence of data partitions: the first is composed of n single member "clusters," and the last is composed of a single group that includes all n individuals. In practice, agglomerative algorithms are applied rather frequently (Timm, 2002). The halting criteria, which calls for a significant percentage decline in the agglomeration coefficients before reaching a plateau, was used to determine the number of clusters. A visual inspection of the dendrogram and the agglomeration schedule coefficients verified the results as well, thereby producing three clusters. Figure 1 shows the agglomeration schedule coefficients and dendrogram revealing the formation of three distinct clusters.

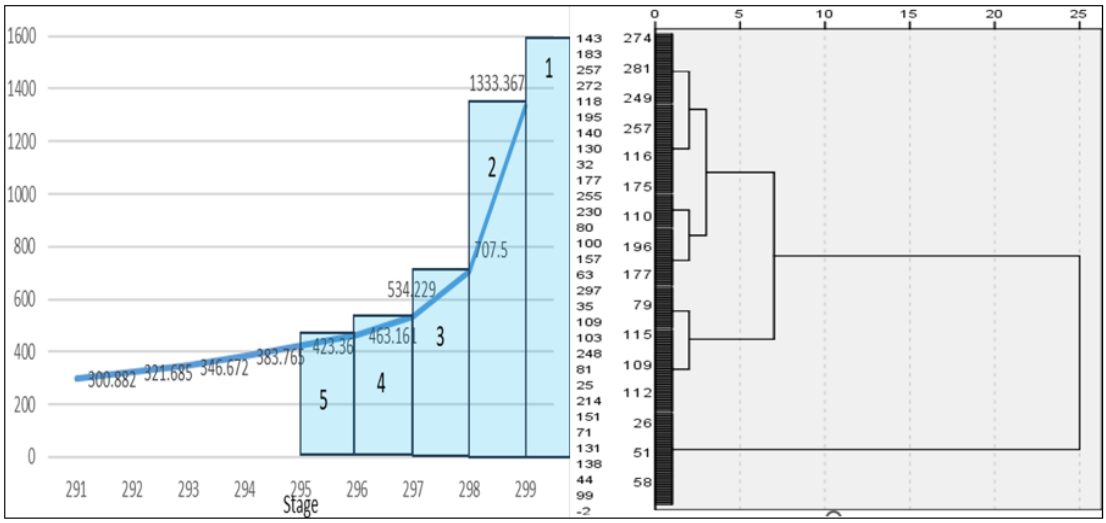

Figure 1. Agglomeration schedule coefficients and Dendrogram

Moving further, K-means cluster analysis produced three segments that seemed more consistent with similar previous studies (Cordova et al., 2021; Castillo et al., 2020; Pérez et al., 2019; Correia et al., 2009), namely: Enjoyers (43.33%), Survivors (19.66%), and Experiencers (37.00 %). Convergence for 3 clusters solution is achieved at seventh iteration due to no or small change in cluster centers, where the maximum absolute coordinate change for any center is 0.000, and the minimum distance between initial centers is 4.123. Mean squares for examining the differences between clusters revealed that all four dependent variables (RLG 1, RLG 2, RLG 3, RLG 4) have a significant impact on determining which cluster will a case belong to. It can be seen that the mean square of all the clusters for each of the four variables is significantly different from each other (p<.05). Bar graph of final cluster centers shown in Figure 2 shows that cluster 3 has the highest score, followed by cluster 1, and cluster 2 had the lowest scores on all the four variables.

4.3 Validation of Formed Clusters using Canonical Discriminant Analysis

A projection hyper plane within k-dimensional space is identified by canonical discriminant analysis, a classification model, so that the projections of similar categories are as close to each other as possible and those of different categories tend to be as far apart as possible. This classification result is regarded as legitimate if the cluster analysis results can be fitted using the equation of discriminant analysis (Klecka, 1980).

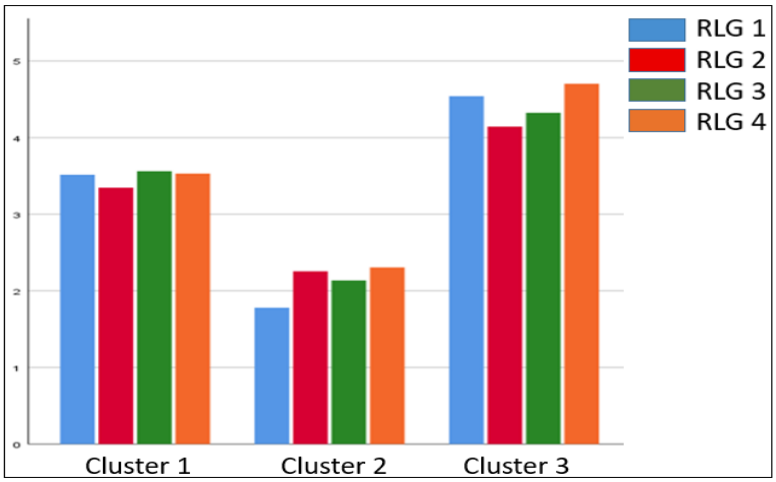

Figure 2. Final cluster centers

Assumption of no outliers is tested using residuals for all four dependent variables. Mahalanobis value should be less than the critical value mentioned in the table of critical chi-square values. Cook's distance should be less than 1 (Owen, 1967). For discriminant analysis with 4 dependent variables, maximum allowable critical value for Mahalanobis distance is 18.467 at .001 level of significance, and the obtained results were less than this maximum threshold. It was 12.366 and maximum value of Cook's distance was .024, which was also within prescribed limits. Assumption of multivariate normality of residuals is tested using skewness and kurtosis values which were found to be within the limits of -2 to +2 (Collier, 2020; George and Mallery, 2010), indicating multivariate normality for the data. Linear relationship between each pair of dependent variables across each level of independent variable is also tested by obtaining scatterplot of residuals in SPSS.

Malhotra (2020) recommends to divide the available data in two sets which are roughly equal, for validating the results of discriminant analysis. The results for cases selected and cases not selected, both should be more than 80 percent. Therefore, the data was divided into 2 sets using Bernoulli random variable (Monroe, 2017) function in SPSS, for conducting the discriminant analysis, where "1" denotes analysis sample (n=157) and "0" denotes validation sample (n=143). Mean values for response of each cluster on independent variables, given in Table 2 reveal that experiencers are those who have a higher mean value in all the four variables, followed by enjoyers and lowest mean values are shown for survivors. This analysis also signifies that those clusters which have higher mean score for the first independent variable (RLG1), are more likely to fall in enjoyers or experiencer category.

Tests of equality of group means reveals that there is a significant difference between the three clusters on all the independent variables ($p < .05$). It provides strong statistical evidence of significant differences between means of Enjoyers, Survivors, and Experiencers for all independent variables (RLG1, RLG2, RLG3, RLG4) with RLG1 and RLG 4 producing very high value F statistic. Assumption of Box's M, homogeneity of variance was met as its significance value was .553, which was above the required level of .05 at 95% confidence level. This signifies that there was no issue of multicollinearity in the data. Log determinants, which are a measure of the variability of the groups, also indicate that there is not a large difference between them for the three clusters. Their values were -3.878 for cluster 1, -3.162 for cluster 2, and -4.098 for cluster 3. This means that their covariance matrices are similar in nature.

Table 2.
Mean values and Standard deviation of analysis sample (n=157)

Cluster Membership	RLG 1		RLG 2		RLG 3		RLG 4	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Enjoyers (n=73)	3.48	.626	3.26	.688	3.53	.579	3.53	.625
Survivors (n=33)	1.73	.674	2.42	.614	2.09	.723	2.27	.719
Experiencers (n=51)	4.57	.608	4.12	.553	4.43	.671	4.67	.589

As per Table 3, the first function accounts for 99.5% of the discriminating ability of the discriminating variables and the second function accounts for 0.5%. Canonical correlation of the first function derived from SPSS reaches 94%, and second function is 19.3% with the two functions together explaining 100% of the variance. Furthermore, the closer the Wilks' lambda value is to 0, the better the group is identified, and the significance of the first function was 0.000 in

Wilks' lambda test (Table 4). Therefore, it may be ascertained that the results of the cluster analysis are successfully captured by using the first function only. With only one function it provides an index of overall model fit which is interpreted as being the proportion of variance explained (R^2). The effect size is computed as square of canonical correlation value of function 1, which comes out to be $(.940)^2 = .8836$. This means that the model explains 88.36 % of the variation in the grouping variable, i.e. whether a tourist belongs to Enjoyer, Survivor or Experiencer segment. A large effect size means that research finding has practical significance, while a small effect size indicates limited practical applications. Effect sizes are independent of the sample size (Bhandari, 2023).

Table 3.
Eigen values

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical correlation
1	7.629[a]	99.5	99.5	.940
2	.039[a]	.5	100.0	.193

First two canonical discriminant functions were used in the analysis

Table 4.
Wilk's Lambda

Test of function(s)	Wilk's Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 2	.112	334.444	8	.000
2	.963	5.793	3	.122

Further, the cross validated classification results show that 98.1% of the selected original group cases were correctly classified and 97.2 % of the unselected original group cases were correctly classified. This shows that the results of the cluster analysis can be successfully tested with discriminant function as both the analysis sample (n=157) and validation sample (n= 143) yield positive classification results which are above 80 % (Hair, 2009; Murtagh and Heck, 2012). It is also observed in cross validated results, that 100% of the observations in group 1 are correctly placed, 93.9% of the observations in group 2 are correctly placed, and 98% of the observations in group 3 are correctly placed. Results of the classification are shown in Table 5.

Table 5.
Discriminant classification results

Actual groups	No. of cases	Predicted group membership		
		Enjoyers	Survivors	Experiencers
Enjoyers	73	73 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Survivors	33	2 (6.1%)	31 (93.9%)	0 (0%)
Experiencers	51	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	50 (98%)

4.4 Group comparison using one-way ANOVA

All the four dependent variables (RLG 1 to RLG 4) were transformed to one continuous variable carrying their mean value, and named as "RLG", to conduct one-way ANOVA. No outliers were found after examining the boxplot. Normality of residuals of dependent variable (RLG) across different levels of independent variable (Cluster membership) is assessed using histogram and normal Q-Q plot of residuals for RLG. Absolute value of skewness (-.288) and kurtosis (-.297) is within the permissible range of -2 to +2. The ANOVA results suggest that the perception regarding relevance of local gastronomy in destination selection across different clusters of tourists differs significantly (*Welch statistic*= 1052.214, $p < .001$). This result is in accordance with the earlier studies, which mentioned that tourists' attitude towards gastronomy are heterogeneous in nature (Bjork and Kauppinen, 2016; Thompson and Prideaux, 2009).

Since the Levene's Statistic is significant (<.05), equal variance of the groups was not assumed. To check for individual differences between groups post-hoc comparisons were assessed using Games Howell's test. The test indicated that the mean scores for all the three groups namely Enjoyers ($M = 3.4885$, $SD = .29178$), Survivors ($M = 2.1186$, $SD = .35766$) and Experiencers (M=4.4279, SD=.25537) were significantly different from each other. All these mean differences were significant at the 0.05 level. The eta square is a measure of the effect size and signifies proportion of variation in the response variable: (Relevance of local gastronomy) that can be attributed to the independent variable (Cluster membership). It was .890, which means 89% of variance in dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. Table 6 summarizes one-way ANOVA results.

Table 6.
Results of One-way ANOVA (Enjoyers, n= 130; Survivors, n= 59; Experiencers, n=111**)**

Robust tests of homogeneity of variances and equality of means						
Group	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**	**Levene's statistic**	**Significance**	**Welch statistic**	**Significance**
Enjoyers (n=130)	3.4885	.29178	5.749	.004	1052.214	.000
Survivors (n=59)	2.1186	.35766				
Experiencers (n=111)	4.4279	.25537				

Group Differences				
Groups	**Mean difference**	**Significance**	**95 % Confidence interval (Lower limit- Upper limit)**	
Enjoyer-Survivor	1.36982*	.000	1.2433	1.4963
Enjoyer-Experiencer	-.93947*	.000	-1.0226	-.8563
Survivor-Experiencer	-2.30928*	.000	-2.4344	-2.1842

4.5 Group preferences of selection factors for dining in famous local food outlets

With an aim to ascertain the priorities of the tourists with regard to enjoyers, survivors, and experiencers, a total of 10 selection factors for dining in famous local food outlet. The analysis starts with the Kruskal-Wallis test, which was conducted to determine whether there is an effect of cluster membership (Enjoyers, n= 130; Survivors, n= 59; Experiencers, n=111) on the rankings of selection factors (SF1 to SF 10). Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in ranking of all the selection factors (SF-1 to SF-10) across the three clusters, for which the results are summarized in a tabular form in Table 7.

Table 7.
Kruskal Wallis H test (Grouping variable- Cluster Membership)

Selection factor	Kruskal Wallis H test	df	Asymp. Significance
SF1	206.295	2	.000
SF2	206.572	2	.000
SF3	236.206	2	.000
SF4	222.983	2	.000
SF5	21.481	2	.000
SF6	204.138	2	.000
SF7	146.575	2	.000
SF8	145.990	2	.000
SF9	145.784	2	.000
SF10	192.957	2	.000

Next, after assessing that there are statistically significant differences across the three clusters on the ranking of selection factors, Kendall's W which is an index of interrater reliability of ordinal data (Kendall, 1948), is used to test for association within all the tourists (n=300), irrespective of their cluster membership. The results of Kendall's W (Landis andKochh, 1977), indicated that there was slight agreement (W= .105, x^2= 282.517, p <.001) between the ranks given by all the tourists collectively. But when it was tested for all the three clusters individually, it was found that there was a moderate agreement (W= .566, x^2= 662.084, *p* <.001) between the ranks given by Enjoyers, a substantial agreement (W= .794, x^2= 421.661, *p* <.001) between the ranks given by Survivors, and a moderate agreement (W= .542, x^2= 541.573, *p* <.001) between the ranks given by Experiencers. Therefore, null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rank for all the selection factors, was rejected as the significance value of Kendall's W test for all the clusters was found to be significant (*p*<.05). Kendall's W values for each segment of tourists is mentioned in Table 8.

Table 8.
Kendall's coefficient of concordance within the clusters

Cluster	Chi-square	Sig.	Kendall's W Value	Kendall's W Interpretation
Enjoyers	662.084	.000	.566	Moderate agreement
Survivors	421.661	.000	.794	Substantial agreement
Experiencers	541.573	.000	.542	Moderate agreement

Moving further, Garrett's ranking technique, which has a major advantage over a basic frequency distribution in that the limitations are ranked according to respondents' subjective severity, is used to determine the most important factor influencing the respondent. As a result, different ranks may have been assigned by the same number of respondents to two or more limitations. Its purpose is to identify the most important element that affected the respondent's behaviour (Pradhan et al., 2022). The ranking of alternatives using Garrett method is done by calculating the respondent's data as a factor of the percentage position value using the following equation (Dhanavandan, 2016):

$$\text{Percent position} = \frac{100\ (Rij - .05)}{Nj}$$

where:
Rij - Rank given for the ith factor by the jth individual
Nj - Number of factor ranked by the jth individual.

The table provided by Garett (1953) is used to translate the % position into scores. Next, the total number of individuals for whom the scores were added, was divided by the sum of the individual respondents' scores for each factor. The factors that had the greatest influence were determined by assigning ranks to the mean scores for each factor, which were grouped in descending order. Table 9 shows percent positions of each rank and its corresponding Garrett score.

Table 9.
Percent positions and Garret Values

Rankings	$\frac{100\ (Rij - .5)}{Nj}$	Calculated value	Garrett score
1	100 (1-.5)/10	5	82
2	100 (2-.5)/10	15	70
3	100 (3-.5)/10	25	63
4	100 (4-.5)/10	35	58
5	100 (5-.5)/10	45	52
6	100 (6-.5)/10	55	48
7	100 (7-.5)/10	65	42
8	100 (8-.5)/10	75	37
9	100 (9-.5)/10	85	30
10	100 (10-.5)/10	95	18

Finally found out the Garrett mean scores for each selection factor, individually for all the three segments (Enjoyers, Survivors, Experiencers). The most significant factor is the one having the highest mean score (Manikandan and Bhuvanesvari, 2023). This is depicted in Table 10.

Table 10.
Garett ranking of selection factors by three segments of tourists

Selection factor	Description	Enjoyers		Survivors		Experiencers	
		Garett mean score	Rank	Garett mean score	Rank	Garett mean score	Rank
SF1	Traditional local preparations	45.80	VI	48.50	IV	68.94	I
SF2	Old establishment year	43.77	VII	44.05	V	67.17	II
SF3	Reputation of outlet	68.91	I	32.98	VIII	44.28	V
SF4	Online reviews from customers through TripAdvisor, Twitter, Blogs, Facebook, YouTube etc.	67.81	II	31.45	IX	42.13	VII
SF5	Past dining experience	46.40	IV	20.72	X	48.98	IV
SF6	Word of mouth recommendations from people known to you	64.90	III	40.88	VI	43.29	VI
SF7	Location is easily accessible	33.36	IX	72.50	I	32.27	IX
SF8	Price of dishes is reasonable	30.74	X	70.93	II	31.75	X
SF9	Sales promotion (special menu items, advertisements, discounts, coupons)	38.96	VIII	68.23	III	40.24	VIII
SF10	Food safety and hygiene standards	45.98	V	40.37	VII	65.23	III

As shown by the results from Garrett ranking in Table 11, all three groups of the tourists are having varied important factors for dining in famous local food outlet.

Table 11.
Most important selection factors for three segments of tourists

Cluster Name	1st important factor	2nd important factor	3rd important factor
Enjoyers	Reputation of outlet	Online reviews from customers through TripAdvisor, Twitter, Blogs, Facebook, YouTube etc.	Word of mouth recommendations from people known to you
Survivors	Location is easily accessible	Price of dishes is reasonable	Sales promotion (special menu items, advertisements, discounts, coupons)
Experiencers	Traditional local preparations	Old establishment year	Food safety and hygiene standards

5 Discussion

Three segments of tourists emerged after a thorough cluster analysis procedure, which was conducted upon the four relevant items pertaining to the relevance of local gastronomy in tourist's destination selection, as per the first objective of the study. These segments were further validated using Canonical Discriminant Analysis, which revealed that that 100% of the observations in the first segment (Enjoyers) are correctly placed, 93.9% of the observations in the second segment (Survivors) are correctly allocated, and 98% of the observations in the third segment (Experiencers) are appropriately placed.

This research endeavour further investigated the preference of selection criteria among three distinct groups when choosing to dine at a renowned local food establishment of the city. It is evident that the priority of selection criteria varied across the three groups.

The Enjoyers consisted of those who perceived food and culinary experiences as important, but not decisive in destination choice. This means that they may search for culinary-gastronomic experiences; but instead of having a push effect for destination choice, forthcoming food experiences have a so-called pull effect (Pesonen et al., 2011). They rely upon the reputation of the outlet, online reviews of customers, and word of mouth popularity, while choosing to dine in local food outlet. This means that these travellers take a more casual attitude towards food and eating, which though is perceived as a pleasurable pastime activity (Henderson, 2009).

The Survivors, considered food as a necessity just to satisfy their physiological needs, and were not committed to the food they consumed (Tikkanen, 2007). They ponder less about the authenticity of food and the cultural aspect associated with it. Therefore, the first important factor for this group is location of the outlet which is easily accessible, as most of them are situated close to the tourist sites. Second most important factor for them is reasonable pricing, which supports Lewis's (1990) claim that pricing plays a major role in differentiating products within a given group. The third important factor for them is sales promotion offers like happy hours, discounts, coupons etc.

The Experiencers, perceived quality of food (Pesonen et al., 2011), and culinary experience important in their decision making, which align well with the earlier findings of Wang (2023), which pronounce their search for food-related peak experiences as a supporting experiential activity. Therefore, the first important selection factor for them is traditional local preparations, second is old establishment year of the outlet, and third is food safety and hygiene standards maintained. It is interesting to note that past experience was rated as the fourth most important factor by both, the enjoyers and experiencers. This reveals that pleasant past experience acts as a strong motivation to pull the tourists who have a moderate to high level of interest in gastronomy.

The aforementioned selection criteria were not surprising, as experiencers are individuals with a strong desire to explore the local cuisine, while enjoyers exhibit varying levels of interest in the local culture and food. Meanwhile, survivors show minimal interest in exploring local food but seek out sophisticated dining options within their vicinity and budget (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016).

6 Conclusion

This research contributes to the body of information regarding the relative significance of restaurant selection criteria in light of the intricate phenomenon of tourists' gastronomic attitude, which is assessed through the perceived relevance of local gastronomy in their destination selection. This study is first of its kind to be conducted in context of

famous local food outlets, and not just any food outlet of the city, as the gastronomic experience encountered in a quality oriented and reputed outlet has more probability of granting satisfaction to the customer.

First, among the ten factors that tourists consider when selecting a famous local food outlet, location, menu price and sales promotion are found to be the most significant factors for survivors who have the least concern about relevance of local gastronomy. Another group called as enjoyers, select the famous local food outlet based upon the reputation, online reviews and word of mouth recommendations from their friends and relatives. The last group, known as experiencers are most inclined towards the relevance of local gastronomy in their destination selection and therefore decide to dine in a famous local food outlet due to its' traditional local preparations, old year of establishment, food safety and hygiene standards.

Proprietors of famous local food outlets must try to upkeep their standards, which help them to be proclaimed as famous local food outlets, and draw various categories of tourists towards them, and not just the gastronomic tourist. They must also strive to deliver better services and quality of products, so that the dining experience of all three groups of tourists becomes memorable, which will in turn lead to their satisfaction, revisit and further recommendation through word of mouth (Longart, 2010). Local food outlets should create a pleasant and appealing physical environment, including ambiance, decor, and cleanliness, which can also help in attracting and retaining tourists. Emphasis must be laid upon providing excellent intangible services like friendly and attentive staff, which has the ability to enhance the overall dining experience and encourage tourists to visit the local food outlets. In addition to showcasing the quality of their food (Bashir et al., 2014), these food outlets can also enhance convenience factors such as location, accessibility, and the ease of making reservations. Collaborating with tourism agencies, hotels, and travel platforms can also increase their visibility and attract more tourists.

7 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study has few shortcomings which should be looked at for subsequent investigations. First, the conclusions generalizability was limited because of the non-probability sampling technique (Althubaiti, 2023). To get comparable data, popular food outlets in other cities could be researched. Subsequent research on this area of study might employ a qualitative approach, since consumers' decision-making process while selecting a food outlet is dynamic and subject to new influences.

There are differences in the number of sample sizes among the groups of tourists. It is recommended for future studies to balance the sample sizes for these categories.

Further studies can explore the dining experience and overall satisfaction of these three different groups of tourists, to ascertain whether dining in a famous local food outlet can affect their satisfaction level.

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