Exploring Diverse Stakeholder's Perspectives on the Motivational Factors Influencing Foreign Tourists' Culinary Engagement with Indian Cuisine

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Indian cuisine, foreign tourists, motivational factors, stakeholder perceptions, culinary engagement.	This study aimed to explore the differences in perceptions among foreign tourists, hotel managers, and independent restaurant managers regarding the motivational factors influencing foreign tourists to engage with Indian cuisine during their visit to India. A structured survey questionnaire was administered to 100 hotel managers, 100 independent restaurant managers, and 202 foreign tourists, with a final valid sample size of 402 respondents. Using the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) technique, the study tested the hypothesis that there was no significant difference in stakeholder perceptions. The findings revealed significant differences in perception among the three groups, with hotel managers attributing the highest importance to factors such as the medicinal value of spices, authenticity, and traditional dishes. Independent restaurant managers emphasized value for money, variety, and pricing, while foreign tourists rated emotional satisfaction as the most influential factor. The study provided insights into the varying priorities of stakeholders, emphasizing the need for tailored marketing strategies to enhance the appeal of Indian cuisine to foreign tourists by aligning services with foreign tourist's expectations. Future research could explore how cultural backgrounds influence culinary engagement and examine similar patterns in other culinary destinations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Travellers' increasing desire for genuine culinary experiences has led to the rise of culinary tourism as a major sector of the global tourism industry (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Travellers are increasingly looking for immersive culinary experiences that let them experience local customs and flavours because food is fundamental to cultural identity and legacy. Indian cuisine is unique among international culinary destinations because of its profound historical relevance, aromatic spices, and rich and varied flavours. The nation's diverse geography and culture have influenced its cuisine, which offers a range of regional specialities that suit a broad spectrum of foreign palates.

In addition to eating, food tourism involves learning about the preparation methods, cultural narratives, and history of each dish (Hjalager, 2004). Indian food has gained international acclaim for its traditional meal presentation, varied cooking methods, and liberal use of spices. In order to sample traditional regional cuisine, including biryani, dosa, butter chicken, and street snacks like pani puri and samosas, many foreign visitors come to India. Curiosity, health advantages, cultural appreciation, and emotional fulfilment are some of the reasons they are drawn to Indian food.

Hotel managers, independent restaurant owners, and tourism boards are among the players in the hospitality business who must comprehend the driving forces behind foreign visitors' interest in Indian food. The authenticity and cultural legacy of food offerings may be given priority by hotel management, whereas independent restaurant managers may place more emphasis on menu variety, cost, and portion sizes. Foreign visitors, on the other hand, could be swayed by firsthand knowledge, emotional fulfilment, and the novelty of sampling new flavours. These differences in stakeholder views emphasise the necessity of a thorough analysis to match gastronomic offers with the expectations of tourists.

Culinary tourism has also been greatly impacted by the globalisation of food culture. Tourists' desire to sample new foods has also been fuelled by the growing popularity of food blogs, social media sites, and travel documentaries (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). The hospitality industry must adjust to digital changes and increase the visibility of Indian food on international platforms since tourists rely on online evaluations and suggestions. Additionally, travellers are increasingly choosing farm-to-table dining experiences and organic food options, making sustainability and ethical consumption important components of food tourism (Kim et al., 2013).

Using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) approach, the research aims to identify distinct stakeholder preferences and priorities. By examining these perspectives, the study offers valuable insights for the hospitality and tourism industry to tailor marketing strategies, enhance menu offerings, and improve overall guest experiences. The findings can help strengthen India's position as a premier culinary tourism destination by ensuring that food-related experiences align with the diverse expectations of foreign visitors. This study examines the differences in perceptions among three key stakeholder groups—foreign tourists, hotel managers, and independent restaurant managers—about the motivational factors that inspire foreign tourists to engage with Indian cuisine.

Additionally, by supporting regional food enterprises, fostering sustainable travel, and conserving cultural heritage, culinary tourism makes a substantial economic contribution (Kim & Eves, 2012). Stakeholders may provide specialised culinary experiences that not only increase visitor happiness but also foster the expansion of India's hospitality and tourism industry by knowing what drives tourists to try Indian food. This study emphasises the value of a cooperative strategy in the hospitality sector, wherein lodging facilities, dining establishments, and travel bureaus cooperate to enhance India's gastronomic appeal on a worldwide scale.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Culinary Tourism and Motivational Factors

The industry of culinary tourism is expanding quickly as more and more travellers look for unusual and genuine culinary experiences while planning their trips (Kim & Eves, 2012). Research shows that eating is not only a need but also an experience that greatly affects how appealing a place is (Mak et al., 2012). With its wide variety of flavours and regional specialities, Indian food is a major draw for tourists from other countries. Authenticity, novelty, health benefits, and emotional fulfilment are some of the reasons why tourists choose to try local cuisine (Seo et al., 2013).

Stakeholders' Perspective on Culinary Engagements

The way that various hotel industry stakeholders view culinary participation varies. To improve brand positioning, hotel management frequently emphasise authentic and traditional eating experiences (Okumus et al., 2007). They highlight things like traditional food, the therapeutic benefits of spices, and first-rate service. However, independent restaurant owners place a higher priority on value for money, affordability, and portion sizes (Tsai & Wang, 2017). They provide travellers looking for a variety of affordable dining options.

Since their main motives are experiential dining and personal fulfilment, foreign visitors offer a completely different viewpoint (Kim et al., 2010). Their interaction with Indian cuisine is shaped by their emotional attachments to food, which are impacted by elements such as sensory appeal, nostalgia, and adventure (Lai et al., 2019). When selecting their meals, tourists might not take business-oriented tactics or economic considerations into account, in contrast to industry stakeholders.

The Role of Culture in Culinary Engagement

A major factor in travellers' culinary participation is culture. Research has indicated that people with diverse ethnic backgrounds have varying tastes in regional cuisines (Chang et al., 2010). Based on perceived authenticity and novelty, some tourists are open to trying new flavours, while others are looking for well-known ones. Indian cuisine offers a special scenario for comprehending cross-cultural eating preferences because of its regional diversity and heavy usage of spices.

Gap in Research and contribution of Study

Although a lot of study has been done on culinary tourism, few studies have looked at how different players in the hospitality sector perceive the driving forces behind food tourism. Previous studies have mostly concentrated on the preferences of tourists or the tactics used by hospitality enterprises, but they have not taken into account the viewpoints of other groups. By examining the perspectives of hotel managers, independent restaurant managers, and international visitors, this study closes

that gap and identifies the primary motivators affecting culinary engagement.

This study advances our knowledge of the elements that influence foreign visitors' interest in Indian food by incorporating the viewpoints of various stakeholders. The results give hospitality workers important information that enables them to modify their products and advertising tactics to meet the needs of travellers. The study also emphasises how stakeholders must work together to increase India's appeal as a destination for gourmet tourists.

Objective of the study

The objective of the research paper was to examine the differences in perceptions among various stakeholders (foreign tourists, hotel managers, and independent restaurant managers) regarding the motivational factors influencing foreign tourists to engage with Indian cuisine during their visit to India. The study aimed to identify and analyze the factors that motivated tourists to try Indian food, such as unique flavors, medicinal value of spices, and authenticity. The research employed a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) technique to test the hypothesis and determine if there were significant differences in stakeholder perceptions based on these motivational factors.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select respondents, comprising 100 hotel managers, 100 independent restaurant managers, and 202 foreign tourists. Before data collection, approvals were obtained from participants, and their participation was entirely voluntary, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. A structured survey questionnaire, administered in English, was designed to collect demographic details and perceptions regarding factors motivating foreign tourists to try Indian cuisine. The questionnaires were distributed in person, with a total of 453 administered. Upon scrutiny for missing values, incompleteness, or incorrect entries, 51 questionnaires were identified with inconsistencies and subsequently excluded to maintain accuracy and reliability. Hence the final sample size considered for analysis was reduced to 402. To address potential concerns of common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, revealing a percentage variance of 28.34%, which was below the 50% threshold, indicating no significant concerns regarding common method variance. The collected data was then systematically organized and entered into IBM SPSS software version 26 for further analysis. This methodological approach ensured that the data was reliable and valid, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the factors influencing foreign tourists' inclination to try Indian cuisine.

Data Analysis and Results

A comparative demographic analysis of foreign tourists, hotel managers, and independent restaurant managers was done to highlight significant differences across various factors, including age, gender, marital status, education, and annual income. In terms of age distribution, the majority of foreign tourists (61.9%) were between 25-40 years old, while hotel managers were slightly younger, with 45.5% falling in the 25-35 years' category, followed by 31.7% in the 35-45 years' age group. In contrast, independent restaurant managers were generally older, with 34.8% in the 46-60 years' age range and 39.1% in the 31-45 years' group. This indicated that restaurant managers had more experience in the industry, while hotel managers were relatively younger.

Gender distribution showed that all three groups were male-dominated. Among foreign tourists, 58.4% were male, whereas hotel managers had a significantly higher proportion of males at 71.3%. Independent restaurant managers had the highest male representation, with 85.8% being male. This pattern reflected the male-dominated nature of the hospitality industry, particularly in managerial roles within restaurants. Marital status analysis revealed that 53.4% of foreign tourists were single, whereas the majority of hotel managers (74.2%) were married, with only 25.8% being single. Similarly, independent restaurant managers also had a higher proportion of married individuals, accounting for 62.3%, while 37.7% were single. This suggested that hotel and restaurant managers were more likely to be settled in their personal lives compared to tourists.

Regarding educational qualifications, foreign tourists had the highest percentage of post-graduates, with 37.6% holding a post-graduate degree and 34.7% having completed graduation. Among hotel managers, 50.6% were post-graduates, and 46.3% were graduates, indicating a strong educational background in hospitality management. On the other hand, independent restaurant managers had a lower percentage of post-graduates at 34.3%, while 24.5% were graduates, suggesting that experience played a more significant role in their career progression. Annual income distribution varied across the three groups. Among foreign tourists, 33.7% earned below $25,000, 31.2% fell within the $25,000-$50,000 range, and 19.3% had an income between $50,000-$75,000. For hotel managers, 38.8% earned between ₹200,001-₹400,000, 25.9% had an income between ₹400,001-₹600,000, and 15.3% earned ₹600,001-₹800,000. Similarly, independent restaurant managers had 27.2% earning ₹200,001-₹400,000, 26.5% falling within ₹400,001-₹600,000, and 16.2% earning ₹600,001-₹800,000. This indicated that hotel managers generally had higher earnings compared to restaurant managers, while foreign tourists had a more diverse income distribution.

Overall, the demographic analysis demonstrated that while tourists were younger, more diverse in gender and marital status, and had varying income levels, hotel and restaurant managers were predominantly male, married, and had relatively stable

income patterns, with hotel managers having higher educational qualifications and earnings.

After studying and taking insights from the demographic data of the respondents the analysis was carried further to determine the difference in the perception of different stakeholders regarding the factors that motivate the foreign tourists to try Indian cuisine during their visit to India. For this, a null hypothesis H_0 i.e. *"There is no significant difference in perception of different stakeholders regarding the factors that motivate the foreign tourists to try Indian cuisine during their visit to India"* was formulated and tested using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). While applying MANOVA technique, 16 Indian cuisine motivational factors were taken as dependent variables whereas category of stakeholders (foreign tourists, hotel managers, independent restaurant managers) was taken as independent variable. Now, to determine the overall impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables, the significance of the multivariate F was examined by Wilk's Lambda test. If the significant value of Wilk's Lambda test was found to be less than .05, it meant that there was a significant difference amongst the perception of different stakeholders regarding Indian cuisine based on factors that motivated foreign tourists to try Indian cuisine during their visit to India. After obtaining the significant results from the multivariate test of significance, Test of Between-Subjects Effect outputs were observed to analyse the impact of independent variable on each dependent variable. In this analysis the cut-off value of .05 was chosen as the significant value (*same as in case of Wilk's Lambda test*) to indicate the significant influence of the independent variable on each dependent variable. The values of multivariate significance test (Wilks' Lambda = .543, F value =13.706 and p value = 0.000) confirmed that there was significant difference in the perception of different stakeholders regarding Indian cuisine with regards to the factors that according to them motivated foreign tourists to consume Indian cuisine food items during their visit to India (Table 1). Furthermore, the univariate significance test revealed that the p value of between-subjects effect of each motivational factor was below the significant alpha level of .05 which meant that different stakeholders had different opinions about the factors that motivated foreign tourists to consume Indian cuisine food items.

Table 1: MANOVA results for difference in perception of different stakeholders regarding the factors that motivate the foreign tourists to try Indian cuisine

Indian Cuisine Motivational Factors	Mean Score Of Stakeholders' Perception			Between-Subjects Effect	
	Hotels (N=100)	Restaurants (N=100)	Foreign Tourists (N=202)	F value	p value
Knowledge about unique taste and flavors	4.34	4.46	3.678	51.237	.000
Aromatic Indian spices impart good taste and flavor	4.56	4.37	4.218	10.405	.000
Spices and herbs used have medicinal value	4.51	4.13	4.162	9.473	.000
Fresh ingredients are used in preparations	3.79	4.25	3.91	9.021	.000
Experience of traditional local dishes	4.52	4.11	4.067	15.283	.000
Satisfaction from authentic food experience	4.37	4.02	3.894	16.371	.000
Destination only available food items	4.13	3.88	3.741	9.337	.000
Food items are healthy and nutritious	4.25	3.36	3.655	27.203	.000
Portion sizes are sufficient	4.11	3.53	3.331	28.498	.000
Meal combination is exciting	4.02	3.82	3.468	17.849	.000
Food items are well presented and colorful	3.88	4.02	3.769	3.495	.031

Food items are moderately priced	3.36	4.19	3.882	21.887	**.000**
There is wide variety in menu	3.5	3.98	3.94	11.001	**.000**
Traditional food service style	3.81	3.99	3.729	3.545	**.029**
Good value for money spent	4.02	4.57	4.317	15.820	**.000**
Emotional satisfaction from food items	4.19	4.03	4.289	6.735	**.001**
Multivariate Significance Test: *Wilks' Lambda = .543, F value =13.706, p value =0.000*					

Table 1 depicting mean differences in the of perception of different stakeholders illustrates that *Hotels* had the highest mean scores for 8 out of 16 Indian cuisine motivational factors. These factors were, "Aromatic Indian spices impart good taste and flavour", (4.56); "Spices and herbs used have medicinal value", (4.51); "Experience of traditional local dishes", (4.52); "Satisfaction from authentic food experience", (4.37); "Destination only available food items", (4.13); "Food items are healthy and nutritious", (4.25); "Portion sizes are sufficient", (4.11) and "Meal combination is exciting" (4.02). The factors that had highest mean scores from the perspectives of Restaurants were, "Knowledge about unique taste and flavours", (4.46); "Good value for money spent", (4.57); "Traditional food service style", (3.99); "Food items are well presented and colourful", (4.02); "Fresh ingredients are used in preparations", (4.25); "Food items are moderately priced", (4.19) and "There is wide variety in menu", (3.98). The only factor that had the highest mean score from the perspectives of Foreign Tourists was "Emotional satisfaction from food items" (4.289). The bar chart below (Figure 1) depicts the difference in perception of different stakeholders regarding factors that according to them motivated foreign tourists to consume Indian cuisine food items during their visit to India

Figure 1: Difference in means of perception of different stakeholders regarding the factors that motivate the foreign tourists to try Indian cuisine
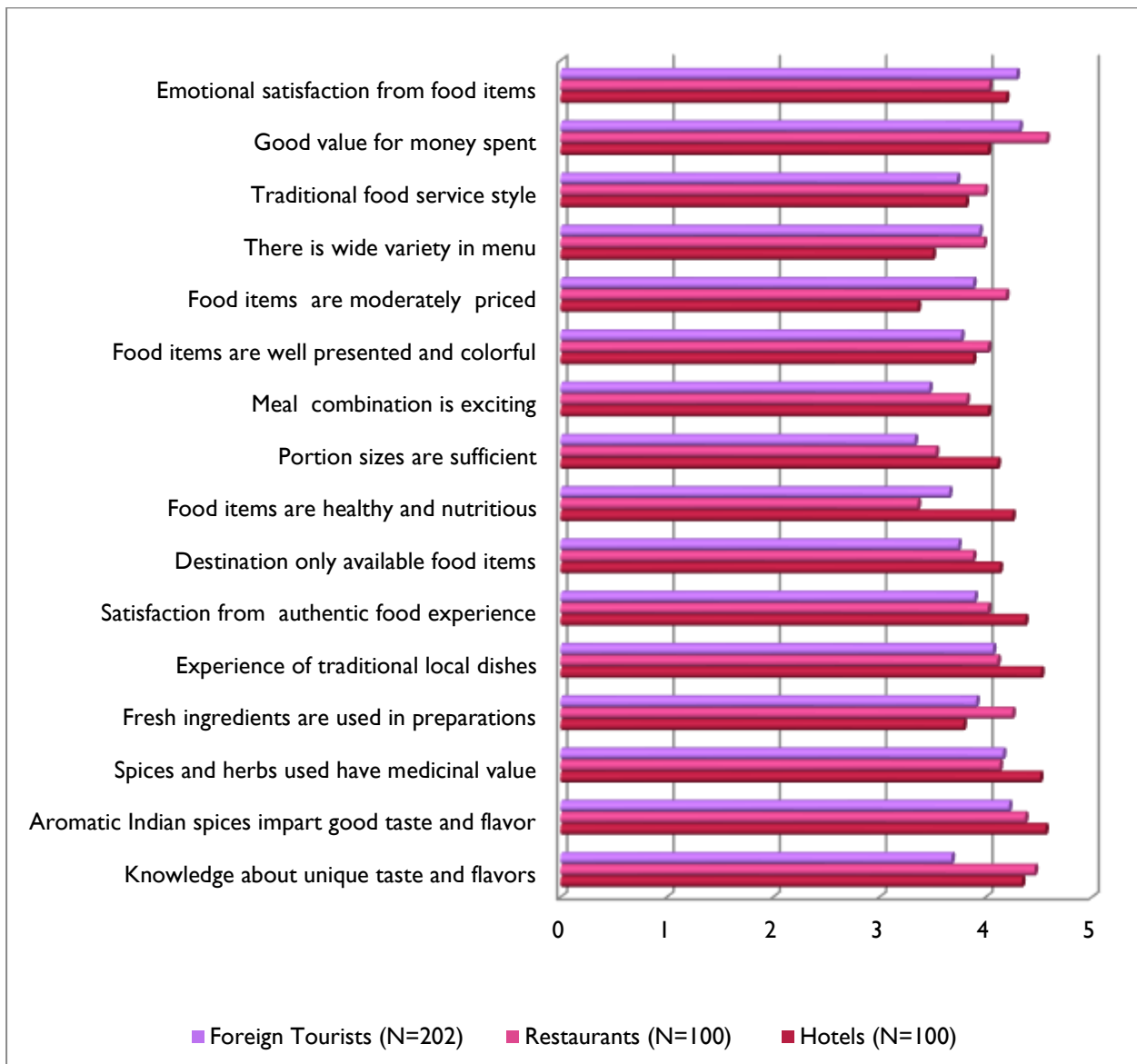
The results of the MANOVA technique confirmed that there were significant differences in the perception of different stakeholders (Hotels, Restaurants and Foreign Tourists) regarding Indian cuisine based on motivational factors. The mean scores of the responses of the three stakeholders for Indian cuisine motivational factors revealed that *Hotels* accounted for higher mean score of maximum 8 factors out of 16, followed by *Restaurants* who accounted for higher mean score of maximum 7 factors and *Foreign tourists* who had a higher perception about one factor only. The overall analysis of the MANOVA test concluded that since p- value of the between-subjects effect of all 16 Indian cuisine motivational factors was below the significant alpha level of .05, hence our null hypothesis ***H₀ i.e. "There is no significant difference in perception of different stakeholders regarding the factors that motivate the foreign tourists to try Indian cuisine during their visit to India"*** was rejected.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that there were significant differences in the perception of foreign tourists, hotel managers, and independent restaurant managers regarding the motivational factors influencing tourists' engagement with Indian cuisine. Hotel managers placed the highest importance on factors such as the medicinal value of spices, authenticity, and traditional dishes, suggesting their inclination toward promoting the cultural and health benefits of Indian cuisine. Independent

restaurant managers, in contrast, emphasized economic factors such as pricing, variety, and good value for money, highlighting their focus on customer affordability and satisfaction. Foreign tourists, however, rated emotional satisfaction as the most influential factor, indicating that their dining experiences were driven by personal enjoyment and fulfilment rather than economic or cultural considerations. The MANOVA results further reinforced these findings, as the mean scores varied significantly across the three groups. Hotel managers had the highest mean scores for eight out of sixteen factors, independent restaurant managers led in seven, and foreign tourists had a higher mean score in only one factor. The rejection of the null hypothesis confirmed that different stakeholders perceived the motivational factors differently. These findings highlighted the necessity of a strategic approach in the hospitality industry, where hotels, restaurants, and tourism authorities could align their offerings based on the specific preferences of foreign tourists. Understanding these variations in perception could aid in the development of more targeted marketing strategies, menu customization, and overall dining experiences that cater to foreign tourists' expectations. By integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives, the hospitality sector could enhance the global appeal of Indian cuisine and strengthen India's position as a culinary tourism destination.

Future Implications for Different Stakeholders

The findings of this study carried important implications for different stakeholders within the hospitality industry. Hotel managers could leverage the insights by focusing on promoting the health benefits and authenticity of Indian cuisine in their marketing strategies. Emphasizing the medicinal properties of Indian spices and traditional cooking methods might attract health-conscious tourists and those seeking cultural experiences. Independent restaurant managers, on the other hand, could use the findings to develop pricing strategies, improve menu variety, and enhance the value-for-money perception among foreign tourists. By offering competitive prices and a wide selection of traditional dishes, restaurants could appeal to a broader audience. Tourism boards and policymakers could also benefit by tailoring their promotional campaigns to highlight the emotional and experiential aspects of Indian cuisine, which resonated most with foreign tourists. Additionally, culinary tourism operators could design food experiences that align with tourists' expectations, such as curated dining events, food festivals, and cooking workshops. Future research could further explore how cultural background influences foreign tourists' culinary engagement and whether similar findings hold in other culinary destinations. By implementing these insights, stakeholders could contribute to the growth of India's culinary tourism sector while ensuring a satisfying experience for foreign visitors.

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