Gastronomy as an element of attraction in a tourist destination: the case of Lima, Peru

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1. Introduction

The World’s 50 Best Restaurants List corresponding to the year 2017 indicates that two of the 10 best restaurants of the world are found in the city of Lima (Peru). Specifically, they are the Central Restaurant (position 4) and the Maido Restaurant (position 8). This data reinforce the importance of Peruvian gastronomy in recent years. In fact, culinary resources are currently one of the great images that Peru holds as a tourist destination [1] and one of the greatest commitments of the country [2].

This article aims to contribute to the existing academic literature on the gastronomic experiences of the visitors in tourist destinations. It presents research that focuses on the segmentation, motivation, and satisfaction of the foreign tourists visiting the city of Lima (Peru) in relation to gastronomy. Segmenting the tourists and analyzing their motivations are essential for understanding the importance of local food. Therefore, although all the tourists necessarily consume food, their perceptions and their motivations in relation to gastronomy can be very different [3,4]. The travelers can be interested in the local food and in obtaining gastronomic experiences, and these experiences can even play an important role in the choice of the destination [5,6] and in their level of satisfaction.

The study of gastronomic tourism involves the analysis of the visitor’s behavior. A tourist who is not especially interested in the gastronomy of the site or who does not travel with the principal or secondary intention of trying behaves like a visitor who only needs to have nourishment during his time in the chosen destination. On the contrary, the tourists interested in gastronomy are found. They travel with the principal and/or secondary motivation of discovering a different cuisine, learning more about it, relaxing by tasting the typical local dishes, cultural enrichment, etc. Therefore, in this regard, it is important to analyze the perception that the visitors have with respect to the local food, especially in the developing countries [7], and the authenticity of the local gastronomy [8,9]. Furthermore, the relationship between food and tourism can be examined from three different perspectives [10]: consumer, producer, or destination development.
2. Review of the literature

2.1. Segmentation of tourists according to gastronomy

With respect to the importance gastronomy has in the segment-ation of the tourists of a certain destination, it is necessary to respond, following Kivela and Crotts [11], to three different issues: first, the analysis of the relationship the tourists have with gastronomy, in other words, whether or not gastronomy is a principal or secondary motivation for visiting the destination, while at the same time, determining the sociodemographic profile of each of the groups; second, the analysis of the relationship that each of the groups has with respect to the local food; and third, the study of the economic impact that each of these groups of tourists has on the city.

In relation to the segmentation of the travelers and their relationship with the local food, one of the first segmentations that was made, and which has been useful as a basis for an entire series of subsequent research, is that made by Charters and Ali-Knight [12] where the tourists are divided according to their interest in wine (and gastronomy). In this way, Charters and Ali-Knight [12] segmented this type of tourists into four different groups: the wine lover, the connoisseur, the wine interested, and the wine novice. Hjalager [3], focusing exclusively on gastronomy, segmented the travelers into four different groups: recreational, existential, diversionary, and experimental gastronomy tourists. In turn, Hall et al [9] presented a segmentation model of the gastronomic tourist that allows using tools to identify the importance that gastronomy and/or wine has in the tourist destinations.

The scientific literature approaches the segmentation of the visitors based on gastronomy in three different fields: tourist destinations [11,13] and food festivals [14]; involvement and perceived satisfaction [6]; and food markets [15].

In this research, the model developed by Björk and Kauppinen-Raisänen [16] is followed. This model is based on segmenting the visitors by analyzing the responses to three questions: how important are food and eating as motives for traveling; how important are food and eating experiences when choosing a destination; and how important are food and eating for travel satisfaction. In line with these questions, Björk and Kauppinen-Raisänen [16] indicated three types of travelers: first, experiencers, those who travel to gain food experiences; second, enjoyers, those with a positive attitude toward food; and third, survivors, those with very little or no interest in food.

In accordance with the review of the literature, the following hypothesis would be examined:

H1. Tourists show different attitudes toward gastronomy as a determining variable in their choice of destination.

2.2. Socioeconomic characteristics

The analysis of the sociodemographic profile of tourists and their relationship with gastronomy is carried out in different studies. McKercher et al [13] indicated that the general academic level of the tourists most interested in gastronomy is the university, and they are aged between 36 and 45 years and have a high salary level. López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Canizares [17] indicated that the educational level is high because 65% of the surveyed tourists interested in gastronomy presented university studies and a mean age of around 40 years. Mgonja et al [7] showed that the visitors interested in gastronomy are usually middle-aged, with university education and high economic income.

According to the literature review, the hypotheses to examine would be the following:

H2. The more favorable attitude toward the local gastronomy increases with the age of the tourist.

H3. The travelers with special interest in gastronomy have a higher academic level.

2.3. Motivations and gastronomy

The study of gastronomic tourism involves referring to the visitor’s behavior. In line with Fields [8], it is possible to identify four types of gastronomic motivations associated with tourism: the physical type, the cultural type, the interpersonal type, and the status and prestige type. Therefore, based on the motivations in relationship with gastronomy, Quan and Wang [18] presented a conceptual model of the tourist experience in which the tourist, when traveling, is found with different primary and secondary motivations. Gastronomy would be framed as a primary or secondary motivation. It would be a primary motivation, for example, for those people who visit a certain place with the principal aim of enjoying its culinary offer. It would be a secondary motivation, for example, for those people who, although their primary motivation is not that of knowing the gastronomic wealth of a destination, consider this option as very important in planning their trip.

Anderson et al [10] grouped these motivations into different experiences that can be obtained: sensory, cultural, and social. In turn, Babolian Hendijani [19] indicated that the gastronomic experience can be a fundamental motivation for visiting a certain destination.

In line with the literature review, the following hypothesis would be examined:

H4. The culinary motivations are heterogeneous and conditioned by a tourist’s attitude toward gastronomy on his/her trips.

2.4. Gastronomy and satisfaction

A tourist destination is something more than a conglomerate of natural, cultural, or artistic resources because it also has to reflect the experience that the traveler seeks [20]. Based on this, the destinations should consider the importance of gastronomy as a tool that contributes to a unique experience [21]. Babolian Hendijani [19] indicated that satisfaction that the tourist has with the local food depends on the cultural heritage of the cuisine and on the ingredients used being fresh and healthy.

Therefore, gastronomy as a primary or secondary motivation is considered an essential aspect of the traveler’s satisfaction [16,6], bringing together the concepts of motivation, experience, and satisfaction.

In line with the literature review, the hypotheses to examine would be the following:

H5. Gastronomy is a factor that contributes and conditions the experience and, therefore, tourist satisfaction.

H6. The degree of satisfaction with the local gastronomy is conditioned by the culinary motivations of the tourist.

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey design

The methodology used in this research is based on conducting field work through a representative sample of foreign tourists who visited the city of Lima, with the aim of getting to know their opinion in relation to gastronomy. The surveys were conducted in different culinary establishments of the historic city center, on
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