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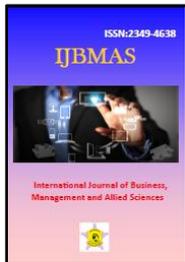
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**CULINARY TOURISM: PROMOTION AND CHALLENGES IN JAMMU
AND KASHMIR**

TAHIR AHMAD KHAN

PhD in Tourism Management, MUIT, Lucknow

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ABSTRACT

Culinary expertise of a destination plays a crucial role in attracting tourists towards that place. Gastronomy is the best way to indulge tourists in food related activities. Food's unique features and qualities play a great role in building image of the destination and Jammu and Kashmir's local food is rich in quality and has many distinct features. There are many challenges which hinders the promotion and growth of culinary tourism in J & K.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century various changes took place in respect to travel motivations. The behavior of tourists has changed and nowadays holidays become shorter but more frequent. More and more new destinations and trends are developing to satisfy this new preference of tourism (Lopez-Guzman et al. 2009). Food and beverages have always played a major role in the tourism product, although they were mainly seen as a supply to the tourists via hotels, restaurants and resorts. In recent years the meaning of food and beverages has changed (Hall 2004). As Hall (2004, p.2) wrote, "Food and wine mean more than just eating and drinking."

More recently food and beverages in connection with tourism have been acknowledged as an important subject of research and study. Even more, they are now seen as a part of the character and culture of a destination. Tourists can experience this in various ways such as visiting local restaurants, gourmet fairs or festivals, markets, cooking classes, gourmet dining, guided tours of food and beverage produces and many others (Hall and Sharples 2003). However, this field of study is still developing and Hall and Sharples (2003) underline the shortage of research into food tourism. This makes it difficult to draw the demographic indicators of food tourists. Furthermore, he believes the information that exists is trivial. Nevertheless, single demographic profiles of independent studies do exist (Dreyer, 2010).

Culinary tourism is an essential feature of local tourism advertisement for a destination. It promises an element of regional agricultural and economic growth and a differentiated component to a rival destination market. Food and beverages do not only get more attention from researchers and

destinations, but media also focuses more heavily on this topic. Specific magazines such as the *Gourmet Traveler*, *Food & Travel*, *Cuisine*, radio shows, internet platforms and various food and lifestyle channels on TV focus solely on food and beverages. One can say that this reflects the shifting way of living and the importance certain products and services have as a status symbol. The task as a destination is to encourage such lifestyle and to identify the relevance of food and beverages in terms of quality, originality, taste, representation and experience. Now it is about how and why we eat as this shows who we are, our society and culture we live in and how and why we travel (Hall and Sharples 2003).

Regarding the definition of food tourism there are at least as many different versions existing as there are different names. Ignatov and Smith (2006, p.238 cited Mason & O'Mahony 2007) defined culinary tourism as "tourism trips during which the purchase or consumption of regional food (including beverages), or the observation and study of food production (from agriculture to cooking schools) represent a significant motivation or activity...culinary tourism concerns the self-aware and conscious interest in experiencing a destination through its foods." This definition allows one to look at the culinary tourism from a broader perspective. It states that foods express the variety and distinction of a destination and that culinary tourism is the deliberate act of experiencing the region through its food and beverage. Moreover, it mentions the significance of food production and consumption and so the diversity of places where culinary products can be purchased and experienced (Mason & O'Mahony 2007).

Jammu and Kashmir state is having a strong food culture. All the three different regions are having a wide range of gastronomic products. Kashmiri cuisine is already famous in many parts of world and is appreciated by many food lovers but state authorities and concerned departments need to promote the cuisine of other two regions i.e. Dogri food and Ladakhi food too. This paper aims to study culinary tourism in case of Jammu and Kashmir and what challenges it faces in the promotion of tourism at the state level.

➤ **The Cultural Food of Jammu and Kashmir**

Culinary expertise of a destination plays a crucial role in attracting tourists towards that place. Gastronomy is the best way to indulge tourists in food related activities. Food's unique features and qualities play a great role in building image of the destination and Jammu and Kashmir's local food is rich in quality and has many distinct features. Like it is spicy, tasty, and nutritious and has medicinal values, good aroma and tempting in appearance. All these attributes make it unique and different which can simply influence consumers for positive response towards cuisine. Glanz, Basil, Maibach, Goldberg, & Snyder (1998) and Jang et al. (2009) and many other studies examined food image on the basis of their features like price, taste, nutrition etc. But Glanz et al. (1998) found that taste is the most important feature of a cuisine and other features like cost, nutrition etc come later. And Jammu and Kashmir's food is very high in terms of taste. Not only food but local ingredients that are used in food have many qualities like Saffron which is used in many local dishes has many medicinal values i.e. it helps to fight against cold and infections, helpful in body and joint pains and also good in aroma and colour and taste. Similarly walnuts (a local ingredient) are good for brain and provide energy to the body, Anardana (pomegranate seeds) is good for stomach, Kala Zeera is good for digestion etc. All these ingredients when used in local dishes make them remarkable in appearances. According to Drewnowski & Moskowitz (1985), food's appearance acts as a major factor influencing people for tasting particular food or cuisine.

Although appearance is a major factor while making food choice but there are many tourists who focus on other attributes like nutrition, taste, medicinal property, aroma, flavor etc. Jang et al. (2009) in their study found that Americans give more weightage to taste in comparison to other attributes. But state's local food is capable of satisfying every type of tourist because this food is rich

in every attribute. All such unique features of the food can help in image building of the state as gastronomic tourism destination. Because more the number of tourists get satisfied with the local food, more will be the positive publicity of the destination through various sources like references and positive word of mouth and more will be revisiting intentions. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into three main regions-Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh. All these three regions are famous among tourists. Kashmir is the crown of India, Jammu is the city of temples and Ladakh is a beautiful cold desert. All the three regions have variety of exotic dishes to offer.

(A) Authentic Cuisine of Kashmir

Kashmir is rich in both vegetarian and non vegetarian dishes. Non vegetarian exotic dishes are preferred by Kashmiri Muslims which include meat dishes and mutton known as wazwaan. Following are few authentic dishes Vegetarian dishes that are preferred mostly by Kashmiri Pandits include: □ Dum aloo (Potatoes) □ Nadru Zakhni (lotus stem cooked in curd and Ghee) □ Hak Saag (kashmiri Spinach) □ Zafrani Pulao (saffron flavored rice)

Wazwaan is a multi course meal which showcases Kashmiri Muslims' culture that includes traditional recipes prepared at special occasions like marriages and other celebrations. Almost all dishes are non vegetarian made up of chicken and meat. Following are few of them:

Rista (meatballs cooked in red sauce) □ Rogan Josh (lamb in spices) □ Tabak Maaz (ribs of lamb) □ Daniwal Korma (a mutton curry with main ingredient as coriander) Aab Gosht (lamb curry) □ Marchwangan Korma (an extremely hot lamb preparation) Seekh Kabab (minced meat roasted on skewers over hot coals) □ Gushtaba (meatball in white yoghurt gravy) □ Yakhni (delicately spiced yoghurt curry)

(B) Culinary Heritage of Jammu

Jammu is also rich in its culinary heritage and some authentic dishes are as under: Rajma (kidney beans), Dal (lentils), Ambal (savory dish of pumpkin), Khmeera (kind of bread), Kheer, Khyoor (a fried dish prepared with refined flour), Kalari (a kind of cottage cheese), Auriya (potato dish), Sund panjeeri (mixed dryfruits and dry powdered ginger dish), some pickles and chutneys (dips) are timru ki chutney, kasroad, tarad(kind of taro), girgle pickle, mango pickle and gol gappas, kachalu, gulgule and Khatta meat are a few authentic dishes of the region. In beverages desi chai (tea) is being drunk.

(C) Cultural Food of Ladakh

Ladakh is a cold desert which can actively grow crops only in a few months because atmosphere here is not too favorable for vegetation and the whole area remains covered with snow for maximum time in a year. But inspite of all these difficulties, Ladakh has a wide variety of gastronomic products that can be served to tourists and can be promoted on large scale. According to Angchok et al. (2009), Barley is Ladakh's chief crop and a wild fruit that is used in Jam preparation is tsestallu. The Ladakhis roast barley and then grind it and use it as flour and also make a local beer with it known as chang. Tsampha /Namphey is grounded roasted barley and Kholak is semisolid substance made with powder of barley, wheat or any other in to liquid like butter milk, water or tea, chang etc.

➤ Role of Culinary in promoting tourism

Cuisine is a crucial element that should be prominent in local tourism advertisement for a destination. It acts as an important component of regional, agricultural and economic growth and is also a unique product which differentiates destination from its competitors. Gastronomy tourism promotion needs dedicated and sincere efforts from all sides whether it is policy makers, Government, concerned departments, service providers, hoteliers, restaurants, dhaba walas, tourism

professionals, students and even local people. Local media, whether print or electronic media, should give more attention to the gastronomy tourism in the state. Specific TV shows, magazines, radio shows, internet sites should solely work on local food and beverages in order to create awareness among tourists and other consumers. As now-a-days food has become a motivation for travelling for many people all over the world, it is very important for the destination to properly promote its local food in order to build its image as gastronomic tourism destination.

Culinary tourism needs to be looked from a broader perspective. Like food depicts the variety and distinction of a destination, through culinary tourism one can experience it. Mason & O'Mahony (2007) found that culinary tourism has significant impact on food production and consumption and also on the diversity of places. Jammu and Kashmir is already a tourism state and every year, it welcomes a huge number of tourists and this provides an opportunity for the state to promote its food among them and build its image as gastronomic tourism destination. But a few things should always be remembered while promoting and developing food tourism;

- Local/regional food being served to tourists should be authentic and should be of best quality. □
- Culinary-related activities such as visit to cooking schools, visiting a food or beverage production/processing site, a farmer's market should be organized for the visitors.
- Create unique dining and beverage experience for tourists in a beautiful and clean ambience.

Because a true food lover will always ask for regional authentic food and once he is satisfied with food and its quality, he will act as self promoter through positive word of mouth among its fellows. Hughes (1995) studied that tourists love to discover food from local or ethnic regions. So, it becomes the basic duty of every food provider in the state that he should serve good quality, authentic food to the tourists in order to build state's image as gastronomic tourism destination. According to Misiura (2006), food has been recognized as: (i) Element of the local culture which tourists experience during their visit; (ii) Factor that can be used for destination marketing; (iii) Element that acts as a source of regional, rural and economic growth; (iv) Local element which is consumed and appreciated by the tourists.

The potential of food tourism for a destination is slowly getting its pace and due recognition. According to Shankman (2015), an "American Culinary Traveler Report," published by Mandala Research in 2013 revealed some facts like U.S. vacation travelers, who travel for unique gastronomic products, rise from 40% to 51% between 2006 and 2013. The report estimates that 39 million U.S. travelers have a strong preference for the gastronomic activities while choosing the destination for holidays, while another 35 million search for culinary activities once they finalized the destination. Local Gastronomic products are strong response to increased global competition and they can also be used for improving official state relations. Many destinations are using the recent gastrodiploacy concept as it is a borderless dimension. The term gastrodiploacy was first used in an Economies article on food promotion (Food as Ambassador, 2002). Later, this gastrodiploacy gained popularity swiftly (Chapple-Sokol, 2013). In gastrodiploacy, countries use their local food to promote their cultures, for building their images, for globalization of their food industries, for catching the attention of foreign tourists, and developing strong relations with foreign delegates and diplomats (Pham, 2013). Similarly, Jammu and Kashmir can also use this concept of gastrodiploacy for its image building and cultural promotion.

➤ CULINARY CHALLENGES IN J & K STATE

Tourism is a big source of economic growth in the Jammu and Kashmir state but the state is still lagging behind in terms of services they provide to the visitors. All such deficiencies in service sector create hindrances in gastronomic image building of the state. Following are few such barriers:

1. Food Safety and Hygiene

Food safety and hygiene is one such big challenge which tourists face during travelling and they are highly concerned about it. The food served by vendors and restaurants, hawkers etc is prepared in unhygienic conditions which causes illness and health disorders to tourists. According to Burusnukul et al. (2011), a U.K. based study revealed that 14 percent of intestinal diseases are caused to visitors because of international travelling and consuming unhygienic food. India is also facing the food safety issues, food prepared and sold by street vendors, at roadside food stalls, and in some cases, in restaurants is unhygienic (Choudhury, Mahanta, Goswami & Mazumdar, 2011). Jammu and Kashmir is also facing the same problem. Food served by food joints at the railway station, bus stand and adjoining areas is very unhygienic, and from this experience, tourists get a first impression of the gastronomy of the place. The one major reason to such problem is that most of food vendors, food joints, restaurants are unaware of basic food hygiene and safety issues. Moreover, the state does not have any strict rules related to food quality and safety, as this state is a tourism state and every day hundreds of tourists dine in restaurants, dhabas, street vendors and hawkers. As a result, tourists suffer from food borne diseases and this causes negative publicity of the state's food among other potential visitors too inspite of the fact that the state has a wide range of local gastronomic food to offer. Ungku Fatimah, Boo, Sambasivan and Salleh (2010) found that tourists' food safety related fears often have strong impact on their purchase choice and behavior. Moreover, this affects tourists' revisit intentions too. Thus, it clearly shows that unsafe and unhygienic food is a big challenge and a road blocker in gastronomic image building of the state. So, in order to deal with this big problem, our policy makers should frame a certain set of strict rules for food sellers related to food safety and hygiene and also charge hefty fine if somebody is found guilty because food safety and quality plays an important role in the overall image building of the destination as gastronomy tourism destination.

2. High Pricing

Jammu and Kashmir is a pilgrimage state and many tourists come here as pilgrims and they belong to different social groups. Pilgrimage tourists are generally an amalgamation of both richer and budget class tourists. And this creates an obstacle for tourism service providers who want to attract people for food and beverages of the state because food price setters in the state have to satisfy each social group through their competitive pricing strategies for various food items being served to tourists during their visits. Providing variety of cuisine on affordable prices will encourage different social classes with different incomes for its tasting and can attract a wide range of tourists towards the state's local food. But on the contrary if the prices of local food products are very high, tourists will hesitate in spending money on them because many of them are not familiar with the actual taste of these local dishes. But if the state tourism authorities want to build the food image of the state, they should offer local authentic food to visitors on affordable and genuine prices so that more and more tourists get an opportunity of tasting it and expressing their views for the local food products. This will ultimately help in image building of the state as gastronomic tourism destination.

3. Lack of Food related Information

Most of the tourists are non-experimental in nature and they would not like to take the risk of tasting local food if they do not have the right kind of information about it. No doubt, Jammu and Kashmir state is rich in its culinary heritage and almost every place, whether it is a small town or a village, has something unique to offer. For example, Samroli a small village in Jammu province on Jammu Kashmir highway, has one special food product i.e. Kalari (a kind of cottage cheese). Many tourist buses and vehicles pass this place on daily basis but very few tourists get a chance of tasting it because tourists do not have proper information about this speciality and similar is the case with other places too. Many good recipes and unique local products of the state are still undiscovered. So it becomes the duty of the tourism service providers, state authorities and local people that they should

properly guide tourists about the local gastronomic products. Also in order to fight with this problem, locals and government should take joint initiatives like providing proper information to visitors about the local food by opening information counters at railway stations, bus stands, airport and by starting helpline service with 24-hour assistance to tourists and so on and so forth. Also posters and brochures having information about the local food should be distributed among tourists at various tourists arrival places like railway stations, airports etc. Also, government should make it mandatory for all the food vendors in the state that they should incorporate local dishes in their existing menus at their specific food joints and properly guide tourists about it and also get feedback from them about the local food for future improvements.

4. Adulteration and Unethical Practices

Adulteration is a process of degrading the quality of food products by adding other low-priced substitute in original products. Many people in the state for profitability add adulterants in local ingredients and sell them to tourists. For example, Kashmiri Saffron (kesar) is very much famous among tourists but a few profit seekers in spite of selling pure kesar sell another things treated with colouring agent which looks similar to kesar. This activity is really shameful and sends a negative message among tourists for the state and also tourists create negative word of mouth. Similarly, a few food sellers also use adulterated ingredients in their dishes and offer to tourists and in this way tourists are not able to taste the real taste of local food. Sometimes it has been observed that food served to tourists is not even fresh which is offence.

Persistently it has been noticed that local food products have been promoted with wrong information or with wrong messages like if local food is not having any medicinal properties but during promotions, far from facts we promote it as beneficial for the health in order to attract health conscious tourists or many-a-times, vendors weigh less quantity food products and charge for full quantity from tourists. At times, local vendors sell degraded quality products and charge for higher quality. For example, many vendors at Shri Mata Vashino Devi sell bad quality walnuts to tourists and charge for best quality and when tourists return to their native places and realize the fact they spread negative words for the state and become a source for negative publicity and this further creates hindrances in destination's food image building process.

5. Language Barriers

Sometimes language also acts as a barrier in food selection. Improper knowledge of ingredients, cooking method and taste also causes problems. Also sometimes tourists are not able to read the name of dishes in restaurant menus and the local staff in the restaurants is not able to explain them properly. According to Chheang (2011) and Cohen & Avieli (2004), language barrier is a big problem that travelers may face during culinary tourism. Thus, it should be made mandatory for food joints that their menus should be both in English and Hindi and their staff should be capable of interpreting and explaining dishes so that tourists can easily order them and can enjoy the local delicacies fully.

6. Absence of Food Joints Offering Local Dishes

Though Jammu and Kashmir state is bestowed with a wide range of local delicacies, still these dishes are not fully served at food joints. There are only a few restaurants which offer dogri authentic food with proper use of recipes in Jammu region and similar is the case with Ladakhi food also. Only Kashmiri wazwaan's selected dishes are served and that too not in all the food joints. But actually the state's local food has enough potential that it can be promoted globally and should be offered in every food joint in the state so that every tourist gets a chance to taste the cuisine of the state.

7. Lack of Culinary Education in the State

Being a tourism state and potential destination for culinary tourism, the state of Jammu and Kashmir is not having any culinary school where students can go and learn and explore about authentic recipes which are rare and disappearing with time. So, culinary schools should be opened in the state that give chance to young minds to come up with new ideas of food promotion and service which further will help in image building of the destination as gastronomic tourism destination. So, government should start new courses related to gastronomy within the state.

8. Non -Familiar Ingredients

Often tourists are unaware of local ingredients. So they avoid tasting them. For example, Thimru is a local herb used by dogras in Jammu for preparing Chuteny (dip) and it is good for health but tourists are unaware of it so they hardly try it. Thus in such a case, it becomes the duty of local people and food servers that they properly guide about such herbs and about their medicinal values to tourists so that tourists can freely enjoy it without any hesitation and if they find it worthy, they can also buy it from local markets which in turn brings economic benefits for the state. Also the food joints of the state should include more and more local herbs in their food items.

9. Poor Initiative of Government Agencies

Government agencies are recognized as an important catalyst for destination image building. But in some cases, these agencies do not play their role effectively and in spite of strengthening the image of the destination, through its local food, they create hindrances in the process of gastronomy image building of the destination. All this happens only if government agencies are not aware of the actual role of local food in image building and about other various destination promotional strategies. So, it becomes the duty of concerned government agencies to take affirmative initiative in exploring the power of local food and gastronomic products in image building and then support them consequently. According to Fetscherin (2010), governments have strong belief that positive image helps in the nation's sustainable development. Also Anholt (2005) found that positive image could enhance a country's reputation globally.

Conclusion

Culinary expertise of a destination plays a crucial role in attracting tourists towards that place. Gastronomy is the best way to indulge tourists in food related activities. Food's unique features and qualities play a great role in building image of the destination and Jammu and Kashmir's local food is rich in quality and has many distinct features. Like it is spicy, tasty, and nutritious and has medicinal values, good aroma and tempting in appearance. All these attributes make it unique and different which can simply influence consumers for positive response towards cuisine. Tourism is a big source of economic growth in the Jammu and Kashmir state but the state is still lagging behind in terms of services they provide to the visitors. All such deficiencies in service sector create hindrances in gastronomic image building of the state. Food safety and hygiene is one such big challenge which tourists face during travelling and they are highly concerned about it. The food served by vendors and restaurants, hawkers etc is prepared in unhygienic conditions which causes illness and health disorders to tourists. According to Burusnukul et al. (2011), a U.K. based study revealed that 14 percent of intestinal diseases are caused to visitors because of international travelling and consuming unhygienic food. Most of the tourists are non-experimental in nature and they would not like to take the risk of tasting local food if they do not have the right kind of information about it. No doubt, Jammu and Kashmir state is rich in its culinary heritage and almost every place, whether it is a small town or a village, has something unique to offer. Government agencies are recognized as an important catalyst for destination image building. But in some cases, these agencies do not play their

role effectively and in spite of strengthening the image of the destination, through its local food, they create hindrances in the process of gastronomy image building of the destination.

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