

GASTRONOMY TOURISM IN KOLKATA: ECONOMIC IMPACT, EMPLOYMENT, AND STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS

Payel Sarkar

Ph.D. Scholar, IGNTU/IITTM, Email- payel.sarkar0521@gmail.com

Dr. Jitendra Mohan Mishra

Professor and Head, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management Central Tribal
University of Andhra Pradesh, Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh-535003 Email-
j.m.mishra@ctuap.ac.in

Dr. Charu Sheela Yadav,

Assistant Professor Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Noida, Sector -62 UP-
201309 Email-charusheela.yadav@iittmnoida.ac.in

Abstract

This study examines the socioeconomic effects of culinary tourism in Kolkata, with a particular emphasis on employment patterns, local company expansion, and income production. More and more people are realizing how gastronomy tourism may improve travel destinations by providing genuine culinary experiences that are representative of cultural heritage. This study synthesizes theoretical insights and empirical facts to provide a comprehensive framework, based on a conceptual literature review technique. Important conclusions draw attention to the substantial economic benefits of gourmet tourism, which include jobs in the hospitality, food production, and allied industries as well as income generating for nearby companies. In order to efficiently and sustainably utilize Kolkata's culinary advantages and promote economic growth while maintaining cultural traditions, the study highlights the significance of policy support. In order to improve Kolkata's attractiveness as a culinary tourist destination and to inform strategic planning, future research should concentrate on longitudinal impacts and comparative studies.

Keywords: *Gastronomy tourism, Kolkata, socio-economic impact, local business growth, employment trends, revenue generation, cultural heritage preservation, policy implications*

Introduction

In order to be considered a tourist destination, a place needs to provide both tangibly and intangibly defined goods and services, with food being a crucial component. The importance of food in enhancing tourism destinations is becoming more widely acknowledged. Although it includes more, gastronomy is most usually defined as the art of cooking and excellent eating.

Gastronomy, according to experts, is the study of the interactions between food and culture, encompassing food preparation, cooking, tasting, experimenting, altering, and documenting. Gastronomy, to use definitions from Brillat-Savarin (1994) and Gillespie and Cousins (2012), is the art and science of preparing food and beverages for enjoyment and appealing to the senses. The selection of vacation destinations, level of happiness, and propensity to return are all strongly influenced by gastronomic experiences (Kim et al., 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012). As a reflection of the destination's distinct traditions and legacy, local food is an essential component of the visitor experience (Bjork & Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2016; Tsai, 2016; Chang et al., 2018; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). The tourism sector focused on gastronomy is expanding and gives destinations a competitive advantage (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2013). Destinations like Morales and Cordova (2019) have capitalized on their culinary advantages in marketing and national identity, realizing the significance of food. This is consistent with the findings of Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015), who found that food-related interest increases travel and increases the value of culinary activities.

Gastronomic tourism is a developing travel product, since food makes about one-third of travel costs. Eating meals from the area is essential to a vacation. According to Lee & Scott, (2015) gastronomy tourism is "a journey that provides recreational experiences or has entertainment goals, in locations rich in gastronomic resources." This type of tourism includes events, festivals, tastings, cooking demonstrations, and visits to food producers. In addition to advancing globalization, the tourism sector cultivates a sense of place (Dozier, 2012). Travelers compete with one another for market share because they want authentically local experiences. The relationship between food and hunger has influenced Calcutta's/Kolkata's sociopolitical culture; even before the famine of the 1940s, diet was a divisive topic. In "Nation on a Platter," Jayanta Sengupta examines Bengal's discussions on healthful eating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Europeans were unsure about what constituted a healthy diet, Bengali nationalists wrote treatises on traditional diets in the tropics (Mitra, 2019).

Objectives

This study aims to investigate the socio-economic effects of gastronomic tourism in Kolkata with particular attention to employment trends, local business growth, and revenue creation. The objective of the study is to measure the degree to which gastronomy tourism contributes to various aspects of the city's economy through thorough data analysis and rigorous empirical research. Furthermore, the research aims to pinpoint the fundamental elements that contribute to the accomplishment of culinary tourism endeavors in Kolkata and offer practical suggestions for decision-makers, tourism industry participants, and nearby enterprises to leverage the industry's capacity to promote sustainable economic growth.

Literature Review

The Greek words "gnomos," which means science and law, and "gastros," which means stomach, are the sources of the English word "gastro." And a culinary nation or location is one that serves or prepares food according to its country of origin (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). A different idea claims that gastronomy and cuisine comprehend and have an appreciation for the preparation and serving of food (Albala, 2011). Moreover, Horng& Tsai (2010) provide a more comprehensive explanation of gastronomy in relation to the popular conception of eating and drinking, especially when delectable food is savored as a kind of exquisite art that is a component of an elevated way of life. Furthermore supporting the definition is Gillespie's assertion, "Gastronomy is about the recognition of a variety of factors relevant to the foods and beverages ate and consumed by a group, in locality,region or even nation" (Gillespie et.al, 2002). This comprehension includes the location of the meal service. In addition, the qualities of the ingredients, food preparation, cooking technique, and culinary history, cultural components, serving and eating practices, and cooking style can all be considered relevant considerations when discussing food and drink.

Prior research on the financial effects of culinary tourism has demonstrated the substantial boost it provides to regional economies. According to Hall and Sharples (2008), gastronomy tourism has a significant positive impact on the local economy by drawing visitors who spend money on lodging, dining, transportation, and cultural events. This multiplier effect boosts employment and local businesses. According to Everett and Aitchison's (2008) research, culinary tourism boosts local economies in rural parts of the United Kingdom by creating specialty markets and providing support for small-scale food producers. The revenue that culinary tourists bring in to eateries, food markets, and specialized stores supports regional agriculture and food production. Moreover, gourmet tourism encourages innovation and entrepreneurship in the travel industry. According to Telfer and Wall's (2000) research, areas such as Tuscany and Provence that have a strong culinary heritage see a rise in investments in food-related tourist infrastructure, which improves visitor experiences and builds a strong supply chain that helps local farmers, chefs, and craftsmen. Kivela and Crotts (2006) stress that the promotion of regional identity and branding through gastronomic tourism increases demand for travel and elevates the visibility of locally produced goods. Destinations may set themselves apart in the competitive market, draw devoted visitors, and guarantee steady economic growth by utilizing their culinary legacy.

Method

This study investigates sustainable gastronomic tourism in Kolkata using a conceptual literature review methodology. It incorporates theoretical insights and empirical results from the body of current literature to construct a conceptual framework. A thorough analysis of secondary sources, such as books, government documents, industry reports, scholarly journals,

and industry publications about sustainable and culinary tourism, serves as the main technique of gathering data. This guarantees a thorough comprehension of best practices and current knowledge. The literature that makes a substantial contribution to the research issue is chosen through the use of purposeful selection, with an emphasis on highly cited and seminal publications. The process of thematic content analysis involves extracting important themes and concepts, coding, spotting patterns, and integrating the results to create a solid conceptual framework. In order to provide stakeholders and policymakers with useful implications, the analysis seeks to emphasize the opportunities and obstacles in establishing sustainable gastronomic tourism in Kolkata.

Economic Impact of Gastronomy Tourism in Kolkata

Local economies benefit greatly from gastronomy tourism since it generates income and expands commercial ventures. Local establishments like restaurants, cafes, and food markets report a rise in patronage and spending from tourists looking for authentic culinary experiences, which boosts sales and profitability (Hall & Sharples, 2008; Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Studies by Kim et al. (2013) and Kim and Eves (2012) highlight how gastronomy influences travelers' destination choices and spending, emphasizing its economic importance. Additionally, gastronomy tourism spurs innovation and entrepreneurship within the local food industry. Small-scale producers and artisans experience increased demand, encouraging business expansion and diversification (Telfer & Wall, 2000; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Investments in culinary infrastructure like cooking schools and food festivals further attract tourists and boost local economies (Hall & Mitchell, 2006). In addition to fostering long-term economic stability and community development, gastronomy tourism generates jobs in the hospitality, transportation, and cultural sectors (Richards, 2003; Dwyer & Edwards, 2009). Gastronomy tourism encourages sustainable economic growth and cultural preservation, boosts destination competitiveness, and nurtures culinary traditions and business innovation (UNWTO, 2012; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

Employment Generation

The hospitality and food industries immediately benefit from the creation of jobs created by gastronomy tourism, as do other connected industries. Direct employment includes jobs in cafes, restaurants, hotels, and food production facilities where a rise in tourists requires hiring more managers, waiters, and cooks (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Hall & Sharples, 2008). Growing culinary tourism frequently results in the opening of new restaurants and the growth of already-existing ones (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Furthermore, the hospitality industry gains from the hiring of additional workers by hotels and resorts to handle food tourists (Kim et al., 2013). Retail, transportation, and agriculture all produce indirect jobs. Demand for food is rising, which benefits farmers and food producers by creating jobs in the food supply chains (Telfer & Wall, 2000) the demand for regional items created by tourism benefits small-scale

producers and local craftspeople, encouraging economic diversification and entrepreneurship (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Transportation services and retail sectors, such as local markets and specialty food shops, also thrive, as tourists purchase local delicacies and souvenirs, further stimulating local economies (Richards, 2003; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2013). These interconnected employment opportunities contribute to regional economic stability and sustainable development (UNWTO, 2012; Dwyer & Edwards, 2009).

Revenue Generation for Local Economy

Gastronomy tourism improves local economies by producing tax revenues and money for local suppliers. Spending by tourists on lodging, food, and drink raises sales taxes and other local levies, giving local governments more money to invest in infrastructure and community services, thus increasing the destination's allure (Hall & Sharples, 2008; Richards, 2003). For example, gourmet tourism generates substantial tax payments for France and Italy, which support the upkeep of tourist attractions and public spaces (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). As tourists look for genuine, locally sourced food, local suppliers—farmers, fishers, and artisanal food producers—see a rise in demand for their goods (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Demand-driven improvements in pricing and sales promote sustainable farming and production methods (Sims, 2009). Furthermore, the expenditures made by tourists immediately help local companies, such as food markets, restaurants, and specialized shops; this can result in higher earnings and even greater opportunities for business expansion (Hall & Mitchell, 2003). By fostering a strong economic ecology that both benefits from and encourages culinary tourism, this spending helps a number of local economic sectors (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Telfer & Wall, 2000).

Successful Gastronomy Tourism Initiatives in Kolkata

In order to showcase its rich culinary legacy, Kolkata has seen a number of successful gastronomy tourism projects. Occasions like the Kolkata Food Festival draw visitors from both domestic and foreign travel, showcasing an array of traditional Bengali delicacies. Such initiatives benefit small food sellers and artisans by giving them a platform to reach a wider audience, in addition to promoting local cuisine (Rekow, L. (2020). Due in large part to these festivals, Kolkata has been known as a top culinary tourism destination, showcasing the dynamic food culture of the city.

Impact of Gastronomy Festivals or Events

Kolkata's food festivals have a big effect on the community and local economy. Ahare Bangla events have grown to be yearly draws for sizable crowds, which helps the local economy and hospitality industry (Sengupta & Sen, 2022). These festivals support the preservation and appreciation of Bengal's culinary traditions by bringing in large sums of money, opening up employment possibilities, and promoting local delicacies. During these occasions, there is a surge in tourism, which raises spending in other industries like lodging and transportation.

Collaborations between Tourism Sector and Local Businesses

The tourism industry's cooperation with neighborhood businesses in Kolkata is essential to the growth of gourmet tourism. In order to showcase and make authentic regional cuisines available to tourists, hotels, restaurants, and local food producers form partnerships (Sims, R. (2009). Through the provision of excellent, locally produced culinary alternatives and the promotion of sustainable tourism practices, these partnerships improve the visitor experience. In order to enhance Kolkata's reputation as a culinary destination, collaborative initiatives also include marketing campaigns and food tours that highlight the city's culinary offers.

Challenges and Opportunities to Gastronomy Tourists

When it comes to serving food tourists, local businesses in Kolkata have a number of obstacles to overcome, including as poor infrastructure, unstable supply chains, and restricted access to marketing resources. According to Upadhyaya et.al, (2022), small food vendors frequently have challenges in upholding consistent quality and fulfilling the elevated expectations of foreign tourists. Additionally, regulatory hurdles and lack of financial support hinder their ability to expand and innovate. The competition with established restaurants and the need to adapt traditional recipes to suit diverse palates without losing authenticity further complicate their efforts. Kolkata's culinary tourism industry has a lot of room to grow and innovate, despite its obstacles. According to Chakrabarti, (2023), local eateries and food festivals can greatly increase their visibility by utilizing digital marketing and social media platforms. Novelties like culinary excursions, fusion food, and cooking classes can draw a wide range of tourists. Embracing sustainable practices, such as sourcing local ingredients and reducing food waste, can also appeal to environmentally conscious travelers and provide a competitive edge in the tourism market.

Policy Implications for Supporting Gastronomy Tourism

Improving the accessibility of food districts and tourist destinations for visitors is one way that policy can enhance gastronomy tourism in Kolkata (Hall & Sharples, 2008). To strengthen Kolkata's reputation as a culinary destination, cultural preservation initiatives should concentrate on preserving and recording traditional recipes and cooking techniques (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Granting financial incentives and streamlining rules to local food entrepreneurs can foster innovation and business expansion (Richards & Wilson, 2006). It is possible to increase Kolkata's exposure and attractiveness to travelers looking for real food experiences by including gastronomy into larger tourism strategies and marketing campaigns (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Integrating gastronomy into broader tourism strategies and marketing campaigns can enhance Kolkata's visibility and appeal to tourists seeking authentic culinary experiences (Telfer & Sharpley, (2015).

Conclusion

This research concludes by highlighting the critical role that gastronomy tourism plays in Kolkata and its potential to stimulate economic growth, protect cultural heritage, and enhance visitor experiences through a diversity of gastronomic offerings. Key conclusions emphasize how important it is to preserve culinary traditions, invest in infrastructure, and put supportive policies in place in order to fully utilize Kolkata's culinary riches. Policy implications indicate that while promoting sustainable tourism practices, actions like creating food districts, conserving culinary heritage, and assisting local business owners might increase Kolkata's appeal as a destination for foodies. Future research should concentrate on tracking the long-term effects of gastronomy initiatives on local economies and community well-being, identifying best practices through comparative studies across various regions, and understanding visitor perceptions and behaviors towards gastronomy tourism in Kolkata. By filling in these research gaps, stakeholders will be better equipped to strategically and sustainably handle the difficulties of culinary tourist development.

References:

- Albala, K. (Ed.). (2011).** *Food Cultures of the World Encyclopedia [4 volumes]:[4 volumes]*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Björk, P., & Kauppinen-Räsänen, H. (2016).** Local food: a source for destination attraction. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 28(1), 177-194.
- Blichfeldt, B. S., & Halkier, H. (2014).** Mussels, tourism and community development: a case study of place branding through food festivals in rural North Jutland, Denmark. *European Planning Studies*, 22(8), 1587-1603.
- Brillat-Savarin, J. A. (2009).** *The Physiology of Taste: or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy; Introduction by Bill Buford*. Everyman's Library
- Chakrabarti, D. (2023).** *Heritage, Crafting Communities and Urban Transformation: Durga Puja Festival, Kolkata*. Taylor & Francis.
- Chang, M., Kim, J. H., & Kim, D. (2018).** The effect of food tourism behavior on food festival visitor's revisit intention. *Sustainability*, 10(10), 3534.
- Dozier, B., (2012).** Barbra Dozier Blog. [Online] (<http://barbradozier.wordpress.com/2012/02/20/gastronomy-tourism-trend-in-australia/>)
- Dwyer, L., & Edwards, D. (2009).** Tourism product and service innovation to avoid 'strategic drift'. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 11(4), 321-335.

- Everett, S., & Aitchison, C. (2008). The Role of Food Tourism in Sustaining Regional Identity: A Case Study of Cornwall, South West England. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(2), 150-167.
- Gillespie, C., & Cousins, J. (2012). *European gastronomy into the 21st century*. Routledge.
- Gillespie, C., Cousins, J., & Pelham, P. (2002). European Gastronomy into the 21 st Century. *Food Service Technology*, 2(2), 107-107.
- Hall, C. M., & Mitchell, R. (2006). Gastronomy, food and wine tourism. In *Tourism business frontiers* (pp. 137-147). Routledge.
- Hall, C. M., & Sharples, L. (2008). *Food and wine festivals and events around the world: Development, management and markets*. Routledge.
- Hall, M., & Mitchell, R. (2003). Tourism as a force for gastronomic globalization and localization. In *Tourism and gastronomy* (pp. 85-102). Routledge.
- Horng, J. S., & Tsai, C. T. S. (2010). Government websites for promoting East Asian culinary tourism: A cross-national analysis. *Tourism management*, 31(1), 74-85.
- Kim, Y. G., & Eves, A. (2012). Construction and validation of a scale to measure tourist motivation to consume local food. *Tourism management*, 33(6), 1458-1467.
- Kim, Y. G., Eves, A., & Scarles, C. (2013). Empirical verification of a conceptual model of local food consumption at a tourist destination. *International journal of hospitality management*, 33, 484-489.
- Kivela, J., & Crofts, J. C. (2006). Tourism and gastronomy: Gastronomy's influence on how tourists experience a destination. *Journal of hospitality & tourism research*, 30(3), 354-377.
- Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (2000). Tourist satisfaction with Mallorca, Spain, as an off-season holiday destination. *Journal of travel research*, 38(3), 260-269.
- Lee, K. H., & Scott, N. (2015). Food tourism reviewed using the paradigm funnel approach. *Journal of culinary science & technology*, 13(2), 95-115.
- Mitra, R. (2019). Eating Well in Uncle's House: Bengali Culinary practices in a bucolic Calcutta/Kolkata in Amit Chaudhuri's A Strange and Sublime Address. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 11(2).
- Morales, O., & Cordova, C. (2019). Gastronomy as a national identity element: the Peruvian case. In *Diversity within Diversity Management* (Vol. 21, pp. 157-174). Emerald Publishing Limited.

- Rekow, L. (2020).** Integrating food culture with socio-environmental recovery: case study perspectives from the global south. *Humanities*, 9(4), 134.
- Richards, G. (2003).** Gastronomy: an essential ingredient in tourism production and consumption?. In *Tourism and gastronomy* (pp. 17-34). Routledge.
- Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2006).** Developing creativity in tourist experiences: A solution to the serial reproduction of culture?. *Tourism management*, 27(6), 1209-1223.
- Sanchez-Cañizares, S., & Castillo-Canalejo, A. M. (2015).** A comparative study of tourist attitudes towards culinary tourism in Spain and Slovenia. *British Food Journal*, 117(9), 2387-2411.
- Sengupta, M., & Sen, S. (2022).** The commercialization of Bengali food: insights into caste, class and commensality in colonial Bengal. *Social History*, 47(2), 169-197.
- Sims, R. (2009).** Food, place and authenticity: local food and the sustainable tourism experience. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 17(3), 321-336.
- Telfer, D. J., & Sharpley, R. (2015).** *Tourism and development in the developing world*. Routledge.
- Telfer, D. J., & Wall, G. (2000).** Strengthening Backward Economic Linkages: Local Food Purchasing by Three Indonesian Hotels. *Tourism Geographies*, 2(4), 421-447.
- Tsai, C. T. (2016).** Memorable tourist experiences and place attachment when consuming local food. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(6), 536-548.
- UNWTO. (2012).** *Global report on food tourism*. World Tourism Organization.
- Upadhyaya, A. S., Kolås, Å., & Beri, R. (2022).** *Food Governance in India*. Routledge.