Food tourism research in India – current trends and future scope

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Abstract
Purpose – This study aims to enhance the knowledge by offering perspectives from an emerging market by reviewing the existing literature on food tourism. This study applies a multimethod analysis, providing insights into the advancement of food tourism in India, the contributions, critical findings and emerging research themes.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopted a multimethod analysis using descriptive, narrative and bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer to analyze research papers published on food tourism in India shortlisted from Scopus and Google Scholar.

Findings – Future research should focus on gauging the potential of food tourism in different regions of the country, applying theoretical frameworks that have not been used. “Culinary Diversity and Heritage,” “Sustainable and Responsible Food Tourism,” “Consumer Behavior and Food Tourism Experiences,” “Rural Development and Economic Impact,” “Technology and Digitalization,” “Stakeholder Collaboration,” “Food Safety and Hygiene” and “Policy and Regulation” were the identified future research themes. These findings are significant for emerging economies across the globe.

Research limitations/implications – This study summarized the progress of food tourism research in India, the contributions and emerging themes, supplementing the need to study food tourism in India. This study contributed methodologically to the literature by adopting a multimethod review combining descriptive, narrative and bibliometric analysis. Finally, by proposing ideas and constructs for future research, this study provides directions for future food tourism research from an emerging market’s perspective.

Practical implications – Findings will assist managers and stakeholders in comprehending the factors influencing tourists, destination marketing and branding, aiding in effective planning and executing food tourism strategies to promote destinations. The identified themes and keywords can help academicians and researchers dwell upon the emerging research themes in food tourism.

Originality/value – To the best of the author’s knowledge, this is the first study analyzing food tourism research in India adopting a multimethod analysis. The study provides an in-depth analysis applying descriptive, narrative and bibliometric analysis, highlighting the critical trends and research themes. A framework for future studies was also proposed.

Keywords Literature review, Food tourism, India, Multi-method analysis, VOSviewer, Tourist behavior framework

Paper type Literature review
Investigación sobre turismo alimentario EN LA India: tendencias actuales Y alcance futuro

Resumen

Objetivo: El estudio tiene como objetivo mejorar el conocimiento al ofrecer perspectivas de un mercado emergente mediante la revisión de la literatura existente sobre turismo gastronómico. Este estudio aplica un análisis de múltiples métodos, que proporciona información sobre el avance del turismo gastronómico en la India, las contribuciones, los hallazgos críticos y los temas de investigación emergentes.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: El estudio adoptó un análisis multimétodo mediante un análisis descriptivo, narrativo y bibliométrico utilizando VOSviewer para analizar los artículos de investigación publicados sobre el turismo gastronómico en la India preseleccionados de Scopus y Google Scholar.


Implicaciones teóricas: Este estudio resumió el progreso de la investigación sobre turismo alimentario en la India, las contribuciones y los temas emergentes, complementando la necesidad de estudiar el turismo alimentario en la India. Este estudio contribuyó metodológicamente a la bibliografía al adoptar una revisión multimétodo que combina el análisis descriptivo, narrativo y bibliométrico. Por último, al proponer ideas y constructos para futuras investigaciones, este estudio proporciona orientaciones para futuras investigaciones sobre el turismo gastronómico desde la perspectiva de un mercado emergente.

Implicaciones practices: Los resultados ayudarán a los gestores y a las partes interesadas a comprender los factores que influyen en los turistas, el marketing de los destinos y la creación de marcas, contribuyendo a una planificación y ejecución eeficaces de las estrategias de turismo gastronómico para promocionar los destinos. Los temas y palabras clave identificados pueden ayudar a los académicos e investigadores a profundizar en los temas de investigación emergentes en el turismo gastronómico.

Originalidad/valor: Se trata del primer estudio que analiza la investigación sobre turismo gastronómico en la India adoptando un análisis multimétodo. El estudio proporciona un análisis en profundidad aplicando un análisis descriptivo, narrativo y bibliométrico, destacando las tendencias críticas y los temas de investigación. También se propone un marco para futuros estudios.

Palabras clave: Revisión bibliográfica, Turismo gastronómico, India, Análisis multimétodo, VOSviewer, Marco de comportamiento del turista.

Tipo de papel: Revisión de literatura.

1. Introduction

Tourists’ food consumption has evolved from a functional to a highly experiential and sensual experience (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016a; Chen and Huang, 2016). The relationship between food consumption, tourists and destinations has become more intimate in the current century (Antón et al., 2019; Sánchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán, 2012). Therefore, food experiences play an essential role in choosing tourist holiday destinations (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017; Chang et al., 2021). Food tourism can increase tourist spending at a destination and extend the tourist season beyond the regular season. Tourists spend a significant portion of their budget on food-related expenses during travel (Zhang et al., 2019); hence food tourism has been extensively researched.
Over the past few years, food tourism has been growing as an essential form of tourism worldwide, garnering interest from academicians and researchers as a unique research area (Badu-Baiden et al., 2022; Naruetharadhol and Gebsombut, 2020). Hence, there is a need to analyze and understand how food tourism research has evolved globally in different regions. Gauging the progress of food tourism research, many researchers have studied the evolution of themes in food tourism research globally (Ellis et al., 2018; Okumus et al., 2018, 2021) as well as regionally, food tourism research in South East Asia (Naruetharadhol and Gebsombut, 2020). Food tourism research in the Indian context has been limitedly studied compared to studies across the globe (Mehul Krishna Kumar, 2019).

India is among the growing emerging global markets (Sheth, 2011). Until recently, developed economies across the globe have been the central focus of studies in food tourism. Comparatively, emerging markets have different orientations in marketing concepts like consumer behavior, market segmentation and brand equity, offering opportunities to develop and discover new perspectives in marketing to extend knowledge (Sheth, 2011).

Gifted with diverse food resources and a history of food culture spread across different regions and states of India has led to the advent of a new niche segment, the domestic culinary tourists. Destinations across India can harness food tourism as a significant destination attraction to potential tourists to become the leader among emerging markets in food tourism (Rana et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2014).

Analyzing food tourism in the Indian context will extend the knowledge and provide insights from the emerging markets perspective. A thorough examination using qualitative and quantitative measures is required to synthesize the present status of food tourism research in India (Okumus, 2021). To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first attempt to measure food tourism research in the Indian context by applying descriptive, bibliometric and narrative analysis. Hence, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

**RQ1.** How has the literature on food tourism in India progressed over time, identifying the growth in publications, collaboration among authors, geographical focus and theoretical frameworks applied?

**RQ2.** What are food tourism research’s contributions and critical findings highlighting the various orientations?

**RQ3.** What are the emerging themes of research in the Indian food tourism industry?

**RQ4.** Propose various themes/constructs for future food tourism research in India.

This study analyzes scholarly research on food tourism in the Indian context providing a complete picture of the evolution and status of food tourism research in India. The proposed constructs may provide researchers with a starting point to explore various facets of food tourism in future studies from an emerging market perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1 Food tourism research – global vs India

Food tourism globally gained distinction as a unique field of interest, leading to numerous research studies (Chen and Huang, 2016; Okumus, 2021). The role of food tourism in developing destination brand identity (Metaxas and Karagiannis, 2016), regional food identity (Ellis et al., 2018) and destination development (Castillo-Villar, 2020; Rachão et al., 2019; Sormaz et al., 2016) was studied.

Behavioral studies of tourists aimed at understanding the meaning of tourist food experiences qualitatively (Frisvoll et al., 2016; Sthapit, 2017) and predicting behavioral intentions of food tourists using popular theories like the theory of reasoned action, theory of planned behavior, model of goal-directed behavior and theory of consumption values.
Food tourism research in India garnered interest among researchers recently owing to the gaining popularity of the theme outside India, which provided theoretical frameworks and research ideas. Hence, the number of studies in India has been limited compared to those outside India. Food tourism research in India has been carried out under various themes, emerging role of food tourism (Chand et al., 2007; Sabari Shankar, 2022), foreign tourists’ culinary preferences (Updhyay and Sharma, 2014), using food tourism to market destinations (Abraham and Kannan, 2015; Kumar and Singh Rana, 2016; Mehul Krishna Kumar, 2019; Pal, 2020; Rana et al., 2018; Sahoo, 2020), importance of food tourism (Mohanty et al., 2020; Mohapatra, 2017), street foods and tourists experiences (Gupta et al., 2019a; Gupta et al., 2019b; Gupta and Sajnani, 2019; Khanna et al., 2022), sustainability using street foods (Panicker and Priya, 2021), food image and local cuisine (Chatterjee and Suklabaidya, 2021; Gupta et al., 2020), food culture and tourism (Mekoth and Thomson, 2018; Mohanty et al., 2020), slow food and tourism development (Ahlawat et al., 2019), food neophobia and food event revisit intentions (Payini et al., 2020), food tour experiences of tourists (Kaushal and Yadav, 2020), local food consumption experiences of tourists (Mawroh and Dixit, 2023; Piramanayagam et al., 2020), satisfaction and loyalty among local food festival visitors (Zargar and Farmanesh, 2021), measuring gastro-nostalgia among food festival visitors (Mandal et al., 2022) and development of a foodie scale (Setia et al., 2022).

Based on the above discussion, there arises a need to study food tourism from both the demand and the supply side in India to gauge the marketing potential for future tourism development plans of various regions of the country. Thus, this study evaluates the current progress of research in food tourism and proposes possible directions for future studies.

2.2 Review studies in tourism and food tourism

The field of tourism has garnered tremendous attention among academicians and researchers, resulting in numerous literature review studies being published (Okumus, 2021). Although the theme of food tourism is relatively new, its popularity in tourism, especially in destination promotion and marketing, has been highlighted by numerous researchers (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2019; Chen and Huang, 2018; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017). Many researchers applied bibliometric methods highlighting the methodology, top authors, institutions and knowledge domain based on geography, year and various research themes within the tourism domain (Gomezelj, 2016; Peña Aguilera et al., 2019; Rachão et al., 2020). Bibliometrics were also used to analyze multiple themes within the tourism domain, namely, sustainable tourism (Niñerola et al., 2019), rural tourism (Ruiz-Real et al., 2020), creative tourism (Galvagno and Giaccone, 2019), halal tourism (Yagmur et al., 2019), sports tourism (Jiménez-Garcia et al., 2020), agri-tourism (Dimitrovski et al., 2019), understanding tourism research outputs (Wong et al., 2020), tourism recreation (Vishwakarma and Mukherjee, 2019), smart tourism (Johnson and Samakovlis, 2019) and social media (Nusair et al., 2019).

In the food tourism context, studies predominantly applied bibliometric analysis identifying themes in destination food research (Lyu et al., 2020), the interrelationship between food tourism and other disciplines (De Jong et al., 2018) and networking of food tourism studies in Southeast Asia (Naruetharadhol and Gebsombut, 2020). Few studies applied systematic
qualitative reviews (Ellis et al., 2018), systematic quantitative reviews (Rachão et al., 2019, 2020) and narrative reviews (Okumus, 2021) to investigate food tourism.

A multimethod literature review has not been attempted in the field of food tourism, which can provide better insights into the growth of the area and future research directions (Okumus, 2021). This study aims to fulfill this gap. This research is one of the first to combine descriptive, narrative and bibliometric analysis in food tourism, highlighting the current status and proposing future research directions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

For a comprehensive understanding of food tourism research in the Indian context, peer-reviewed academic journal articles in the English language were sourced from the Scopus database and Google Scholar to the latest issues in 2022. The study applied “Food,” “culinary,” “gastronomy,” “cuisine,” “street food,” “tourism” and “India” as search keywords among the “Article Title, Abstract, and Keywords.” Peer-reviewed journal articles provide an updated and reliable academic source of information, which is a cost-effective source of information unaffected by the research process or the researcher’s presence (Ellis et al., 2018). The study proposed to use VOSviewer software; hence, journal articles only were shortlisted for analysis, and other kinds of publications like conference proceedings, working papers and books were excluded (Lyu et al., 2020). There were 136 research articles in the search output, which, when limited to “journal articles,” trickled down to 99.

Further, the shortlisting of an article to be included in the analysis was based on its focus on the food tourism theme in India. The researchers read through all articles, retaining those that focused on food tourism in the Indian context for further analysis. This process filtered out articles that did not focus on food tourism. No criteria were set for the year of publication, as we wanted to include all the available articles on food tourism research in India. As a result, this study analyzes 34 articles in total, 22 from the Scopus database and 12 from Google Scholar between 2007 and 2022.

3.2 Data analysis

The articles collected were systematically analyzed in three stages. First, a descriptive analysis was carried out using an Excel spreadsheet to delineate and analyze information in the papers, such as the number of publications, geographical focus and theoretical underpinnings. Previous review studies in tourism and food tourism have used a similar approach (Lyu et al., 2020; Naruetharadhol and Gebsombat, 2020; Rachão et al., 2019).

Further, the articles’ methodology, scope and critical findings were reviewed systematically using narrative analysis. This method can lead to an in-depth understanding of the area of study. Narratives have been predominantly applied in tourism review studies (Mura and Sharif, 2017; Okumus, 2021).

Finally, using VOSviewer, a bibliometric analysis was carried out, analyzing the co-occurrence of author keywords and bibliographic coupling of articles, highlighting interrelationships between the articles and emerging themes of research (Donthu et al., 2021; Koseoglu et al., 2016). Gephi, Pajek and BibExcel are other alternatives to carry out bibliometric analysis, but VOSviewer is preferred as visualization and networking can be evaluated (Van Eck and Waltman, 2017). Hence, this study adopts VOSviewer to analyze the co-occurrence of author keywords and bibliographic coupling of articles.
4. Results

4.1 Descriptive analysis of food tourism research in India

The number of publications on a topic highlights the focus of researchers on the subject over time. Figure 1 shows the tally of food tourism research year-wise in India. There has been upward growth in the number of publications after 2019. The overall number of publications year-wise is shown in Figure 1. The number of publications in Scopus-indexed journals has only significantly increased in the past few years.

Figure 2 presents the classification of articles based on the study’s geographical area. The greater focus of the studies has been on Delhi, India’s capital, followed by multiple states. Delhi, the country’s capital and a significant gateway to tourists, has attracted most studies. In contrast, though popular among tourists, the country’s other regions have attracted less attention from researchers.

4.1.1 Theoretical underpinnings identified. Surprisingly, 29 (85%) of the 34 articles examined did not have a theoretical underpinning to frame the research. Further examination revealed that the majority of these studies were carried out before 2020,

![Figure 1: Number of publications per year](image1)

Source: Figure by author

![Figure 2: Geographical focus of the publications](image2)

Source: Figure by author
comprising 16 survey studies, 12 case studies and one mixed-method study that used no theory. There were no literature review studies carried out. In their analyses, few studies discussed theoretical concepts and used constructs such as tourists’ perceptions, experiences, satisfaction, preferences, willingness to eat food, food image, local food experiences and memorable experiences.

The rest five (15%) articles have a theory underpinning the research frame. The actor-network theory (Sahoo, 2020), personality trait theory (Payini et al., 2020) and extended theory of planned behavior (Khanna et al., 2022) were tested. Gastro-nostalgia theory was proposed and empirically tested (Mandal et al., 2022), and a new foodie scale was developed and validated (Setia et al., 2022).

4.2 Narrative analysis of food tourism research in India

The focus, situation and perspectives of the published articles are analyzed in this section based on three levels, macro, micro and consumer, depending on their orientations (Naruetharadhol and Gebsombut, 2020).

The macrolevel research highlights articles on food tourism from the national scope. These studies broadly discuss the concept of food tourism and then focus on the multiple roles of food tourism in specific regions of the country. Stakeholders and destination marketing organizations identified food tourism as positively contributing to tourism promotion (Banerjee, 2013; Chand et al., 2007) and sustainable development (Panicker and Priya, 2021). Enhancing the image by branding destinations, this new form plays a crucial role in promoting and marketing destinations in India (Mohapatra, 2017). Urban food destinations are the future prospective markets to attract potential food tourists, which must be marketed and positioned (Amore and Roy, 2020). Macrolevel studies collected qualitative data and applied qualitative methods to describe gastronomy, food, culinary and cuisine tourism. The studies focused on the role of food tourism as a promotional tool, developmental tool, destination marketing and attraction.

The research at the microlevel perspective focuses on the business viewpoint in food tourism. These studies discussed the relationship between food, tourism, culture and culinary heritage. Unique food and culture could be new alternatives used in destination marketing and attraction of tourists (Mohanty et al., 2020; Sabari Shankar, 2022). All the studies have used a qualitative approach in their analysis.

Finally, the consumer viewpoint articles focused on understanding tourists’ behavior in specific situations. Quantitative methods were adopted predominantly in these studies to understand consumer behavior. They can be further classified under three categories.

The first group studied the relationship between food, tourism and destination marketing. Tourists’ awareness and food authenticity perception were significant factors affecting destination choice. Consequently, local governments need enhanced marketing efforts and well-planned strategies to harness food tourism’s potential (Berry, 2014).

The second group focuses on foreign tourists’ perception of Indian cuisine. Indian street foods and local foods have the potential to create a favorable destination image to attract foreign tourists (Abraham and Kannan, 2015). Authenticity, hygiene, infrastructure, food preparation, tradition, nutrition, taste, quality, dining etiquette, aroma and cleanliness were the factors that were vital in enhancing foreign tourists’ destination experiences and increasing revisit intentions (Updhyay and Sharma, 2014).

The last group examined tourists’ perception, satisfaction and revisit behaviors in relation to various constructs like street food, ethnic food, restaurant ambience, food quality, service quality, food image, food festivals, food neophobia and memorable experiences (Chatterjee and Suklabaidya, 2021; Kala, 2020; Khanna et al., 2022; Mawroh and Dixit, 2023; Payini et al., 2020;
Piramanayagam et al., 2020; Zargar and Farmanesh, 2021). Religion, nationality and culture also influence consumer behavior in food tourism (Mekoth and Thomson, 2018).

4.3 Bibliometric analysis of food tourism research in India

A bibliometric analysis was carried out using the VOSviewer program to underline the relationship between the studies. Quantitatively, bibliometric analysis assesses previous research by applying statistical techniques to specific criteria like the author, journal or citation (Gomezelj, 2016). This study creates a graphical map of the bibliographic material with indicators like the bibliographic coupling network of publications and co-occurrence of author keywords to understand the interrelationships and highlight the research themes on food tourism in the Indian context.

4.3.1 Co-occurrence analysis of keywords. Co-occurrence analysis of author keywords can highlight interrelated themes and their relations to the concept (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2018). The node’s size indicates the keyword’s relevance, and the connections in the network signify the most intricately linked items. The distance between two nodes is inversely proportional to the number of co-occurrences between keywords. Thus, a shorter distance between keywords suggests greater co-occurrence.

The co-occurrence of author keywords measures the most common keywords used in the documents. Figure 3 shows 11 clusters of keywords with “culinary tourism,” “urban tourism,” “consumer behavior,” “street foods,” “foreign tourists,” “destination image,” “consumer preferences,” “tourist satisfaction” and “culture” being the most used terms in the existing literature on food tourism in India. Figure 4 shows the average publication year of papers in which a keyword appears. The keywords culinary tourism, foreign tourists, segmentation

![Figure 3: Co-occurrence of author keywords](image)

**Notes:** Node size = The number of citations a keyword receives; line thickness indicates multiple connections; line length is insignificant. 11 clusters of keywords (79 Keywords)

**Source:** Authors illustration using VOSviewer software
and preferences are bluish, signifying that these keywords were most used in 2018. The next set of keywords, consumer preference, street foods, food authenticity, urban tourism and destination branding, was the most used in 2019. Researchers explored topics like tourist satisfaction, behavioral intentions, memorable tourist experiences, local food, experiencescape, food neophobia and revisit intention, which were used in the year 2020. Focus shifted to contemporary topics like sustainability, food festivals, gastro-nostalgia, ethnic foods and foodies from 2021 onwards.

4.3.2 Bibliographic coupling of publications. This bibliographic coupling analyzes the articles on food tourism research in India based on the number of references they share (Figure 5). Each node represents an article, and each node’s size represents the number of citations received. The thickness of the line indicated multiple connections between the studies. The article by Updhyay and Sharma (2014) received the most citations, with direct citations of 21 and a total link strength of 35, followed by Gupta et al. (2019b), with citations of 12 and a total link strength of 86; these two were the most cited articles.

The VOSviewer classified journals into four clusters. The red cluster comprised seven articles centered on Updhyay and Sharma (2014). The green cluster centered on Gupta et al. (2019a) comprises four articles. The blue and yellow clusters had four articles each, centered on Khanna et al. (2022) and Mekoth and Thomson (2018), respectively.

5. Discussions and conclusions

As the first attempt, this study critically reviewed India’s food tourism research by investigating the current state of knowledge and the nature of food tourism studies in India. The study used multmethod analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research area in India. Comparing the status of food tourism research in India with global research, research constructs and ideas for future studies were discussed. Figure 6 summarizes the findings of this research and future research directions.
Answering RQ1, this research investigated the food tourism research in India, depicting its progress over time using descriptive analysis. Research on food tourism in India has progressed very slowly; the maximum number of articles published was in 2019 and 2020 only. The publications in Scopus-indexed journals also significantly increased in the past few years only. This phenomenon could be due to the growing popularity of the theme outside India, providing theoretical frameworks and research ideas to Indian Researchers; therefore, food tourism research in India can still be considered an emerging research theme. Study results suggest a greater focus was on Delhi, India’s capital, a significant tourist destination. Future research could also focus on gauging the potential of food tourism in other regions of the country, applying various theoretical frameworks which have not been adopted.

Narrative analysis was adopted to address RQ2. Consumer perspective was the most focused theme compared to macro and micro perspectives. The importance of food tourism as a promotional and developmental tool for destination development was discussed. Numerous types of products, services and activities based on food in different regions of India could be promoted to attract tourists to this unique form of tourism with the aid of appropriate government policies, tourism strategies and online marketing of India as a food tourism destination. The findings reveal that though studies on tourists’ consumer behavior and food consumption experiences at destinations have been gaining importance and researched extensively, there is a need to study a holistic view of the food tourism experiences of tourists at a destination level (Chen and Huang, 2016).

Bibliometric analysis portrayed research themes in the food tourism industry, addressing RQ3. The most researched themes were consumer behavior, street foods, foreign tourists and tourist satisfaction. The potential future themes identified were sustainable development, memorable experiences, destination branding, experiencescape, urban tourism, food festivals and food neophobia. Most of the themes are in their nascent stage in India and are essential to understanding food tourism. Although all the keywords have received few citations only, they offer high-potential research opportunities. The findings of the bibliometric analysis in food tourism research in India have highlighted past and current research themes.
Further to the findings based on various analyses and theoretical underpinnings among food tourism studies in the Indian context, research carried out among studies across the globe is discussed in this section, paving the way to propose ideas and constructs for future studies in food tourism (RQ4).

Various theoretical frameworks have been applied worldwide in food tourism studies; resource-based theory (Horng and Tsai, 2012), intimacy theory (Brisson and Luppicini, 2015), theory of reasoned action (Kim et al., 2011), theory of planned behavior (Ting et al., 2019; Vesci and Botti, 2019), model of goal-directed behavior (Levitt et al., 2019), theory of consumption values (Choe and Kim, 2019; Rousta and Jamshidi, 2020), Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model (Chen and Huang, 2016), values and lifestyle theory (Sohn and Yuan, 2013), motivation, opportunity and ability theory (Yang et al., 2020), image theory (Mgonja et al., 2017) and finally, use and gratification theory (Bu et al., 2020) have been applied in food tourism context to understand the behaviors and experiences of tourists predominantly using empirical methods. In contrast, very minimal theories have been used and studied in the Indian context, which points to a significant lacuna among the studies in the food tourism context. There are no literature review studies in the area of food tourism as well.
Thus, for future research, we suggest that studies develop and test various theoretical frameworks to understand food tourism, as many of the reviewed articles lacked an explicit theoretical foundation. Methodologically, though few studies have applied content analysis and thematic analysis, there is scope for using alternate qualitative techniques such as netnography, grounded theory, discourse analysis, qualitative interviewing, focus groups and participant observation to understand tourist behaviors in food tourism.

With gaining popularity worldwide, food tourism presents a significant opportunity for developing nations like India having diverse food traditions and cultures. Future research agendas on food tourism in India could focus on the following significant areas:

- **Culinary diversity and heritage**: Researching historical, social and cultural aspects of Indian cuisine and highlighting indigenous ingredients, cooking techniques, and food customs can help create unique food tourism experiences enhancing the depth and authenticity of the tourism experience and promoting unexplored destinations.

- **Sustainable and responsible food tourism**: Future research can examine the impact of food tourism on the local food producers assessing the sustainable practices and evaluating the social and economic benefits supplementing policy development.

- **Consumer behavior and food tourism experiences**: Understanding factors influencing destination choices, food-related travel behaviors, social media impact and food experiences’ role in shaping overall travel experiences can help develop effective marketing strategies and aid in destination branding.

- **Rural development and economic impact**: The potential of food tourism as a tool for rural development, supporting local economies and promoting entrepreneurship can be researched. Understanding socio-economic impacts like contribution to employment, income generation and economic growth can aid policymakers and stakeholders in developing conducive strategies to maximize positive impact.

- **Technology and digitalization**: Emerging technologies and digital platforms are reshaping food tourism landscapes in developing economies like India. Understanding the impact of social media, digital apps and tools can identify future opportunities to leverage technology to enhance the food tourism experience, improve destination marketing and foster innovation in food tourism.

- **Stakeholder collaboration**: Examining the dynamics among stakeholders, viz. local communities, food producers, chefs, restaurateurs, tour operators, policymakers and tourists, highlights the challenges and opportunities to develop sustainable and responsible strategies, fostering collaborations and building partnerships among the stakeholders in food tourism.

- **Food safety and hygiene**: Assessing the safety of food and hygiene practices like food handling, storage, transportation and preparation in the Indian food tourism industry has been an under-researched area. Insights from the research can identify the loopholes, develop best practices and reiterate the need for establishing food safety standards for a safe and hygienic food experience for tourists promoting destination competitiveness.

- **Policy and regulation**: Research on the existing policies and regulations concerning street food vending and licensing, development of food tourist clusters, food safety and hygiene, and other relevant aspects of food tourism can aid in identifying gaps, challenges and opportunities for improving the regulatory environment for food tourism, promoting entrepreneurship and fostering sustainable growth of the food tourism sector in India.

In conclusion, India’s food tourism offerings provide valuable insights for other regions and countries to create diverse, sustainable and immersive food tourism experiences that showcase local cuisines, culinary heritage and cultural traditions. Developing countries
across the globe can create compelling and memorable food experiences by incorporating elements such as culinary diversity, street food culture, farm-to-table experiences, culinary heritage, sustainability, diverse food experiences and the fusion of tradition and innovation tourism offerings for travelers.

Based on the above future agendas, we propose a framework that we hope will enhance research on understanding tourist behaviors in food tourism. This framework addresses the need to holistically understand tourists’ behaviors in food tourism, proposing constructs to study tourists’ pretravel, during-travel and posttravel experiences. Few researchers have previously examined tourists’ behavior holistically in food tourism (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016b; Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Chen and Huang, 2016).

The framework proposed and illustrated in Figure 7 below is intended to trigger further studies into understanding consumer behaviors in the Indian food tourism context. The framework presents a holistic view of tourists’ food experiences aiding in understanding the numerous factors affecting tourists’ experiences and highlighting the potential of food tourism in marketing destinations from the demand side.

This study provides the following critical theoretical implications; first, this study summarizes the progress of food tourism research in India, the contributions and emerging themes, thus contributing to the need to study food tourism in India. Second, this study adopted a multi-method review combining descriptive, narrative and bibliometric analysis contributing methodologically. Finally, research agendas, ideas, constructs and a framework for future research were discussed, contributing to the literature on food tourism. This study provides food tourism researchers with a starting point to explore various facets of food tourism in future studies.

Furthermore, this research will assist managers and stakeholders in comprehending the factors influencing tourists, destination marketing and branding, aiding in creating effective food tourism strategies to promote destinations. Moreover, the keywords identified can help academicians and researchers to dwell upon the emerging research themes in food tourism. Also, researchers would be encouraged to apply bibliometric analysis using software like VOSviewer, BIBExcel, Gephi, Pajek and HistCite in related areas of study.

The limitations of this study are discussed below. First, this study is focused on India, limiting the number of articles selected to be analyzed ($n = 34$). As the first review study of
food tourism literature in India, it addressed only some essential questions in this topic area. Future researchers can focus on areas not covered in previous studies.

Second, the articles were retrieved from Scopus and Google Scholar, which may have omitted certain articles related to the theme. Future studies can focus on additional themes related to food tourism in their analysis. Future studies can also analyze books, conference papers and other food tourism publications. Further, researchers can use advanced bibliometric techniques to better understand food tourism research.

References


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