



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Exploring the mediating role of gastronomic experience in tourist satisfaction: A multigroup analysis

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## Abstract

Gastronomic experience encountered by tourists in a famous local food outlet plays a crucial role in delivering overall satisfaction with the destination. This empirical analysis presents a novel approach in investigating the mediating role of gastronomic experience in the relationship between gastronomic motivation and overall satisfaction of the tourists who are segmented according to the relevance of local gastronomy in their destination selection in the context of famous local food outlets which offer delectable traditional Punjabi cuisine in the holy city of Amritsar, proclaimed as the food capital of Punjab. Data was gathered through a well-structured and self-administered survey questionnaire circulated amongst the tourists after their gastronomic encounter at 14 of these randomly selected food outlets. The constructs of the study were specified as reflective or formative as per the nature of their measurement indicators. Hierarchical and K-means cluster analysis was used for segmentation, and PLS-SEM was further utilized to conduct multigroup analysis after ascertaining the common method bias and measurement invariance using the MICOM process. The results reveal full mediation exhibited by gastronomic experience and an insignificant difference between the tourist segments on the strength of proposed relationships amongst the study's constructs. Implications and suggestions are provided for the owners, and managers of local food outlets, the government and all other stakeholders linked to the enhancement of tourist experience at the destination. Future studies may replicate the current model in other tourist destinations, to further validate the findings.

**Keywords:** Local food, Famous, Tourists' segmentation, Gastronomic experience, Tourist satisfaction.

## Introduction

Gastronomy is an essential element of individuals' social and cultural heritage (López *et al.*, 2017), embodying a unique lifestyle in various geographical areas. Countries like Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore consider local cuisine as a crucial aspect of their destination's identity, organizing a range of gastronomic activities such as food festivals, culinary gatherings, awards, and competitions, thereby expanding the realm of food tourism beyond conventional dining

experiences. However, for nations like India, establishing a distinguished gastronomic destination brand presents a significant challenge. The guidelines introduced by the "World Tourism Organization and Basque Culinary Centre in 2019" could potentially assist emerging gastronomic destinations like India in surmounting the barriers in shaping their culinary image (Kaur, 2021). India is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in World tourism receipts, with a 2.08 % share in international tourism earnings. Analysis of the distribution of foreign tourist visits in India from January to May of 2023 indicates that nearly half of them (47.5 %) arrived for leisure and recreational purposes (Ministry of Tourism, 2023b).

Punjab was among the top 10 states in India in terms of foreign tourist arrivals in 2022 (Ministry of Tourism, 2023a). The state distinguishes itself by virtue of its cuisine, culture, and historical importance, highlighting the city of Amritsar, which attracts more than half of Punjab's entire tourists and operates an international airport with connections to major global cities (Invest Punjab, 2022). In recent years, Amritsar, also known as the culinary capital of Punjab (Dhillon & Bhinder, 2021), has experienced a surge in tourism, becoming one of the most frequented cities in India. The number of air passengers exceeded 2 million in 2022, up from over 1 million in 2015, while the city's hotels

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consistently operate at full capacity, indicating progress (Brar, 2023). The sacred Golden Temple in Amritsar attracts around 1.25 lakh visitors daily, surpassing the renowned Taj Mahal in tourist footfall. Additionally, the Wagah Border and Jallianwala Bagh are major attractions in the city.

This exploratory study aims to promote gastronomy tourism in Amritsar and raise awareness of local cuisine. To achieve the desired outcome, a survey questionnaire was designed to collect input from patrons of famous local food outlets that base their preparations on conventional recipes made with good quality local ingredients.

## Review of Literature

### **Tourism and Gastronomy Connect**

According to Ellis *et al.* (2018), studying the concept of gastronomic tourism necessitates looking into how travelers behave and how they relate to the local cuisine of the place they are visiting. However, not every tourist is lured to a destination purely because of the local food. There is a kind of visitor who views the local cuisine as a way to fulfill their fundamental requirement for nourishment rather than as something that sets the place apart.

On the other hand, some tourists view gastronomy as a unique and concrete means of exploring the customs, culture, and uniqueness of the area or city they are traveling to, which adds a great deal of value to their trip. For this segment of tourists, food is either the main or secondary reason to travel, and it eventually influences the choice to go to a particular location (López *et al.*, 2017).

### **Famous Local Food Outlets**

Various gastronomic studies have delved into the distinct categories of dining venues: high-end restaurants (Chen & Peng, 2018), sustainable dining establishments (Yurtseven, 2011), eateries highlighted in prestigious guides (Hernández-Rojas *et al.*, 2019), dining options within hotels (Gordin *et al.*, 2016), establishments ranging from restaurants to street food vendors (Irigüler & Öztürk, 2016), Halal-certified restaurants (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018), and fast food chains (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020), among others.

Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of research focusing on traditional eateries that focus on the local food of their region. Local gastronomy stands as the second most alluring factor after the Golden Temple in Amritsar (Paul, 2018), which has numerous local dining spots, with this study encompassing the renowned ones frequented by both local and international tourists, which were at least 25 years old. Sidhu (2019), and Pasricha (2018) provide a list of these outlets in the publications released by the Department of Tourism & Cultural Affairs, Government of Punjab.

### **Tourists' Segmentation via Relevance of Local Gastronomy in Destination Selection**

Numerous research endeavors have concentrated on categorizing gastro-tourists. Kivela and Crotts (2005) utilized

specific surveys to define potential visitor segments for a tourist destination based on existing knowledge of culinary aspects, as well as the importance, traditions, and interests associated with the gastronomic journey at the destination. Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016) proposed a tourist classification where experiencers are individuals who consider cuisine a fundamental element of their travels. Enjoyers, the second category, comprise individuals with a keen interest in culinary experiences. Survivors, the third category, include travelers for whom cuisine plays a minor role in their travel experiences. Trung *et al.* (2021) recommended further exploration of variables that could significantly influence assessments of critical factors like the values linked to dining experiences.

### **Gastronomic Motivation, Gastronomic Experience and Overall Satisfaction of Tourists'**

Tourists' propensity to choose gastronomy as the essence for their travel is influenced by their attitude towards the consumption and non-consumption of local traditional food (Sutiadiningsih *et al.*, 2023). Their pleasure with the destination is positively impacted by the quality of their culinary experience, with food quality having the greatest influence (Ademoğlu & Şahan, 2023). In order to improve the service offered to different tourists, it is crucial to know their gastronomic motivation, gastronomic experience and post-dining overall satisfaction (Villagómez-Buele *et al.*, 2022). A recent study by Moral-Cuadra *et al.* (2023), highlighted that the association between gastronomy experience and destination loyalty is mediated by destination satisfaction. Culinary experience has a favorable impact on visitors' contentment with the location, which in turn indirectly affects their interest and intention to return (Yang *et al.*, 2024). Accordingly, Widjaja *et al.* (2020) discovered a direct relationship between satisfaction with a dining experience and satisfaction with a destination.

Although past studies have established the relationships between gastronomic motivation->gastronomic experience and gastronomic experience->overall satisfaction, they have not emphasized the mediating role of gastronomic experience in a specified context between tourists' gastronomic motivation and their overall satisfaction. Also, they have not precisely compared these relationships for the distinct segments of tourists, therefore ignoring the heterogeneity in the population (Cheah *et al.*, 2020). This void in the reviewed research theme is attempted to be filled up by carefully considering the aspect of measurement misspecification, as highlighted by Mikulić, J., & Ryan (2018). Therefore, gastronomic motivation and gastronomic experience were measured with formative indicators and the overall satisfaction of the tourists used reflective indicators to study the relationship between these variables in context of famous local food outlets of the city, and compare these relationships between the three segments of tourists

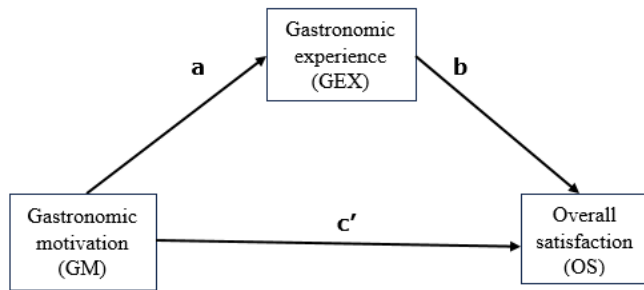


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

clustered according to the relevance of local gastronomy in their destination selection. This lays down the foundation for the study’s conceptual model, as shown in Figure 1.

As per the reviewed literature, this study’s objective is to explore the mediating influence of gastronomic experience in the relationship between gastronomic motivation and overall satisfaction for all tourist segments. The following hypotheses are proposed to achieve the laid down objective:

H<sub>a</sub> 1.1: Gastronomic experience significantly mediates the relationship between gastronomic motivation and overall satisfaction.

H<sub>a</sub> 1.2: There are significant differences with respect to the impact of (a) gastronomic experience -> overall satisfaction, (b) gastronomic motivation -> gastronomic experience, and (c) gastronomic motivation -> overall satisfaction between the tourist segments.

**Methodology**

The survey design implied for this study is cross-sectional, which are quick, easy, and may assist in assessing a variety of questions, inspire further research, and also have a lesser rate of dropouts. The study utilized PLS-SEM technique, which is a well-suited method to estimate the models depicting cause-and-effect relationships in the field of management research (Gudergan *et al.*, 2008). This study involved convenience sampling (n = 490) of both domestic and international tourists who consumed the delicacies at a famous local food outlet of Amritsar and had been in the destination for at least 20 hours, therefore, they could give an informed opinion.

The survey was conducted upon tourists after their gastronomic experience, outside the premises of selected 14 famous local food outlets of Amritsar. These spots were randomly selected from the famous eateries list published by Department of Tourism & Cultural Affairs, Government of Punjab. These selected outlets were spread across the city, had greater representativeness of international and domestic tourists, and were at least 25 years old.

In order to obtain a clear understanding of the tourists’ perception of the study variables, valid responses (n = 416) were taken ahead for further analysis after screening for incompleteness and marking errors. This sample size was considered sufficient for this study as a minimum of 68 samples were required for each group in accordance with the power analysis done using G\*Power 3.1.9.7 (Kang, 2021),

Table 1: Sampling location, questionnaire distribution & response rate

S. No.	Name & location of famous local food outlet	Established since	Speciality	Number of tourists approached
1	Kulcha Land, Ranjit Avenue	1947	Special Amritsari kulchas	35
2	Kanha Sweets, Lawrence road	1995	Chhole poori, Gur ka halwa, & Pinni	35
3	Ahuja Milk Bhandar, Hathi gate	1957	Saffron lassi	35
4	Bharawan da dhaba, Town hall	1912	Makki di roti & Sarson ka saag	35
5	Kesar da dhaba, Chowk Passian	1916	Mah ki dal & Lachha paratha	35
6	Sucha Singh’s dhaba, Maqbool road	1962	Amritsari kulcha	35
7	Beera Chicken, Majitha road	1967	Tandoori chicken & Keema naan	35
8	Shri Krishna Mishthan Bhandar, Katra Ahluwalia	1995	Fried snacks and sweets	35
9	Pal da dhaba, Hathi gate	1966	Trotter’s soup & Brain curry	35
10	Parkash Meat shop, Maqbool road	1949	Mutton champ	35
11	Gian di lassi, Katra Sher Singh	1921	Punjabi lassi	35
12	Vijay’s shop (Mahan Singh gate)	1965	Amritsari fermented & baked kulcha with chhole	35
13	Surjit Chicken house, Lawrence road	1976	Tandoori chicken & mutton tikka	35
14	Makhan fish corner, Majitha road	1962	Amritsari fish	35
Total number of attempted questionnaires				490
Final number of valid responses				416
Response rate				84.89 %

Source of the locations for sample collection: Sidhu, 2019; Pasricha, 2018; Paul, 2018)

for detection of medium effect size of 0.15 at a significance level of 5% and a power level of 80%, with two predictors (GM & GEX) for the proposed model. The survey period lasted for a duration of three months from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

Sampling location, questionnaire distribution & response rate is presented in Table 1. Tourists were asked to complete the pen and paper survey, printed in simple English language, post their consumption, and were rest assured that their identity and responses would not be revealed.

The questionnaire was adapted from several similar previous studies and had two major sections. Section one dealt with questions on the sociodemographic profile of the respondents, whereas section two comprised of close-ended questions on the study’s latent variables, each having several indicators, to be marked as per Likert’s 5-point scale, where 1 meant strongly disagree and 5 stood for strongly agree, with 3 being the neutral point.

**Results and Discussion**

**Sociodemographic Profile of the Respondents**

The majority of participants in the overall sample were citizens of India (68.5%), with a smaller percentage being foreign nationals (31.5%). The distribution of age groups reveals a notable representation in the 20 to 39 age bracket (45.0%), followed by the 40 to 59 category (27.2%). In terms of gender, males accounted for 57.9% of the respondents. There was a variety of educational backgrounds, with the highest proportion being graduates (47.4%). Occupation-wise, the most prevalent sectors were private employment (27.9%), business (22.8%), and government positions (12.7%). Concerning monthly family income, the majority fell within the bracket of INR 40001 to INR 80000 (47.1%). The primary reason for travel was religious pilgrimage (54.6%), and most individuals journeyed with their families (39.7%), while others traveled alone (23.1%). The typical duration of stay ranged from 2 to 3 days (77.8%), and a considerable number of participants had previously visited Amritsar, with 43.5% having made a single prior visit.

**Tourists’ Segmentation Using Cluster Analysis**

According to Byrne (2010), ordinal data with five or more categories may be considered analogous to its continuous scale equivalent. The inter-item Pearson’s correlation

was statistically significant, ranging from 0.670 to 0.771, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity among the four observed variables (O’Brien & Sharkey, 2012). The reliability of the clustering variables was also assessed and found to be excellent as it was above 0.9 (Hair *et al.*, 2019), as shown in Table 2.

The utilization of K-means cluster analysis was extended to delineate the constituents of three distinct tourist segments, which underwent clustering *via* hierarchical cluster analysis. Attainment of convergence for a three-cluster solution was observed after the sixth iteration, with a maximum absolute coordinate change of 0.000 for any center and a minimum distance of 3.873 across initial centers. The determination of the number of clusters was based on the halting criteria, requiring a substantial decrease in agglomeration coefficients before plateauing, as shown in Figure 2. Additionally, the validation of three clusters solution was confirmed through visual examination of the dendrogram, as depicted in Figure 3. Analysis of mean scores (Figure 4) to discern variations between clusters indicated that all four dependent variables (RLG 1, RLG 2, RLG 3, RLG 4) significantly influence the assignment of a case to a particular cluster. Cluster 1 was denoted as experiencers (34.85%), cluster 2 as enjoyers (36.77%), and cluster 3 as survivors (28.36), aligning with the terminology originally proposed by Björk & Kauppinen-Raisanen (2016) and adopted in various prior studies (Valverde-Roda *et al.*, 2022; cordova *et al.*, 2021). Experiencers had a profound interest

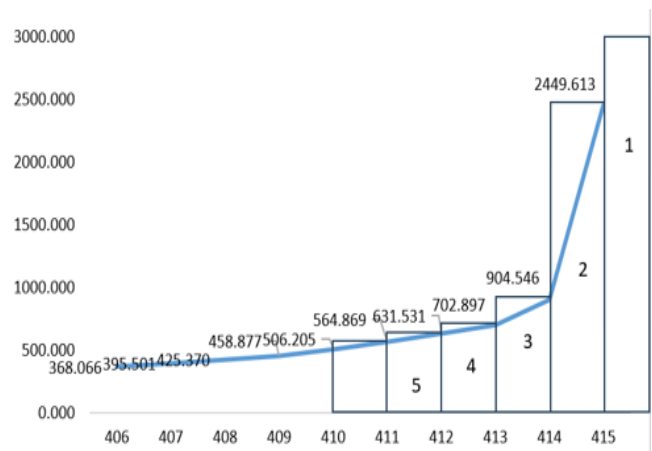


Figure 2: Agglomeration schedule coefficients

Table 2: Clustering variables

Observed variable	Statement	Cronbach's alpha (if item deleted)	Cronbach's alpha
RLG 1	In general, I am interested in gastronomy.	0.868	0.911
RLG 2	I usually search for gastronomic experiences while selecting my travel destination.	0.898	
RLG 3	Exploring local gastronomy is usually a primary or secondary motive of my trip.	0.887	
RLG 4	Gastronomic experience is important for my overall satisfaction with the visit.	0.882	

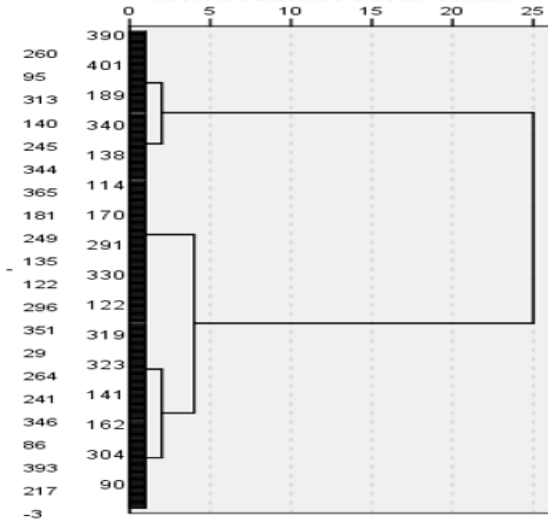


Figure 3: Dendrogram

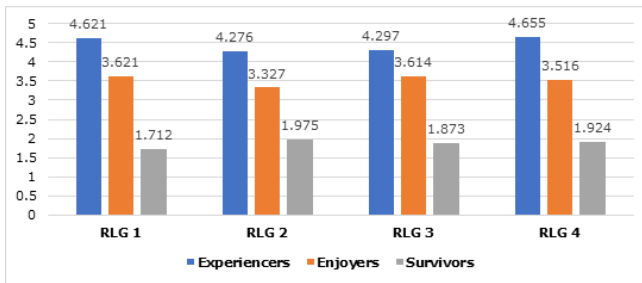


Figure 4: Final cluster centers

in local gastronomy and considered it a decisive element in destination selection. Enjoyers displayed a moderate level of interest in local culinary experiences, whereas survivors had the least emphasis on local gastronomy’s relevance in their choice of destination, aligning with the conclusions drawn from recent studies.

**Measurement Model**

Assessment of reflective construct (Overall satisfaction) was done through examination of outer loadings, Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) values. No item was found with a factor loading of less than 0.600. All Cronbach’s alpha values and composite reliability for the reflective latent variable exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.700. AVE was also found to be above 0.5. Since the model only contains one reflective construct, discriminant validity assessment is not relevant.

Formative indicators are supposed to be free from error (Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000) and may not correlate highly, as they represent independent causes of the construct. Therefore, the concept of internal consistency or reliability and convergent validity are meaningless. Redundancy was examined through the extent of multicollinearity in the hypothesized model, which does not become a problem if

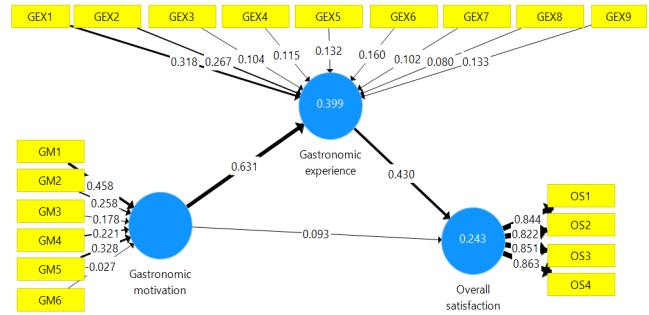


Figure 5: PLS-SEM model of the study

the VIF values are less than 3 (Hair *et al.*, 2021). Notably, all the VIF values were found to be below 3, which confirmed that there is no issue of multicollinearity in the model. PLS-SEM model of the study shows outer weights for formative indicators of latent variables (GM & GEX), outer loadings for reflective indicators of latent variable (OS), along with path coefficients for inner model, and R<sup>2</sup> values of endogenous latent variables is represented in Figure 5, and Table 3 shows the indicators of each latent variable along with their source, reliability, collinearity, and validity testing. The hypothesized model’s global fit was assessed using standardized root mean square (SRMR) value, which was 0.027 for the complete data set, 0.044 for the experiencers, 0.055 for the enjoyers, and 0.054 for the survivors, indicating a good model fit.

**Structural Model**

Inspection of the inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values reveals that the data is not exhibit any significant concern for common method bias, as all the VIF values were quite less than the recommended threshold of 3.3 lower than 3.3

Proposed hypotheses of path relationships were tested using the bootstrap technique for 5000 samples (F. Hair Jr *et al.*, 2014), with the bias-corrected accelerated method, 300 iterations and stop criterion of 10<sup>-7</sup>, for calculation of confidence intervals of standardized regression along with determination of statistical significance using t statistics (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). The results reveal that, the relation GEX -> OS was positive and significant for experiencers ( $\beta = 0.335, t = 3.369, p = 0.001$ ), enjoyers ( $\beta = 0.407, t = 3.845, p = 0.000$ ), survivors ( $\beta = 0.512, t = 5.898, p = 0.000$ ), as well as the complete data set ( $\beta = 0.430, t = 7.790, p = 0.000$ ).

The relation GM -> GEX was also positive and significant for experiencers ( $\beta = 0.397, t = 5.376, p = 0.000$ ), enjoyers ( $\beta = 0.514, t = 7.645, p = 0.000$ ), survivors ( $\beta = 0.532, t = 6.929, p = 0.000$ ), as well as the complete data set ( $\beta = 0.631, t = 20.327, p = 0.000$ ). Further, the relation GM-> OS was positive, but insignificant for experiencers ( $\beta = 0.157, t = 1.572, p = 0.116$ ), enjoyers ( $\beta = 0.095, t = 0.811, p = 0.417$ ), survivors ( $\beta = 0.106, t = 0.922, p = 0.357$ ), as well as the complete data set ( $\beta = 0.093, t = 1.657, p = 0.098$ ). Therefore, it can be said that there is no significant direct relationship found between gastronomic motivation and overall satisfaction of the tourist segments.

**Table 3:** Indicators source, reliability, collinearity and validity

Constructs and their indicators	Valid respondents (n = 416)						
	Source	VIF	Outer weight	t statistic	p-value	Outer loadings	p-value
<i>Gastronomic motivation (Formative construct)</i>							
GM 1: Local food of a destination allows me to explore the culture of that place.	Cordova-Buiza <i>et al.</i> , 2021	1.270	0.458	7.162	0.000	0.763	0.000
GM 2: Consuming local food gives me a chance to interact with the local people.	Rodríguez-Gutiérrez <i>et al.</i> , 2020	1.460	0.258	3.144	0.002	0.666	0.000
GM 3: Local food consumption refreshes my senses from daily routine.		1.457	0.178	2.233	0.026	0.654	0.000
GM 4: Authenticity of local cuisine attracts me to that destination.	Berbel-Pineda <i>et al.</i> , 2019	1.356	0.221	2.694	0.007	0.632	0.000
GM 5: Unique flavor of local cuisine is always an attraction for me.		1.479	0.329	3.973	0.000	0.719	0.000
GM 6: Local food is fresh and healthy in my opinion.		1.440	-0.27	0.375	0.708	0.517	0.000
<i>Gastronomic experience (Formative construct)</i>							
GEX 1: Quality of the food met my expectation.	Babolian Hendijani, 2016	1.689	0.318	4.643	0.000	0.793	0.000
GEX 2: Pricing of the food was justified.		1.726	0.267	3.65	0.000	0.777	0.000
GEX 3: Portion size of the food was adequate.	Berbel-Pineda <i>et al.</i> , 2019	1.767	0.104	1.553	0.120	0.693	0.000
GEX 4: Taste and appearance of food was authentic.		1.973	0.115	1.599	0.110	0.740	0.000
GEX 5: Waiting time for my food order was appropriate.	Martin <i>et al.</i> , 2021	1.598	0.132	2.031	0.042	0.662	0.000
GEX 6: Ambience and decor of the outlet reflected the culture of Punjab.	Antón <i>et al.</i> , 2019	1.737	0.160	2.204	0.028	0.725	0.000
GEX 7: Staff was humble and knowledgeable.		1.347	0.102	1.452	0.147	0.572	0.000
GEX 8: Handwash & washroom facilities were satisfactory.		1.323	0.080	1.338	0.181	0.524	0.000
GEX 9: Cleanliness & hygiene of the dining area was satisfactory.		1.394	0.133	1.971	0.049	0.594	0.000
<i>Overall satisfaction (Reflective construct)</i>		VIF	Alpha	Outer loadings	rho_A	CR	AVE
OS 1: I am happy with my decision to visit Amritsar, post-dining in famous local food outlet.	Babolian Hendijani, 2016	2.288	0.867	0.845	0.868	0.909	0.714
OS 2: My satisfaction level towards Amritsar's gastronomy has been noteworthy.	Cordova-Buiza <i>et al.</i> , 2021	1.863		0.820			
OS 3: My satisfaction level towards the encountered gastronomic experience is pleasing.	Moral-Cuadra <i>et al.</i> , 2023	2.148		0.853			
OS 4: I have had a positive general opinion about Amritsar as a gastronomic destination.	Ullah <i>et al.</i> , 2022	2.288		0.863			

The explanatory power of the model was assessed through R<sup>2</sup> value, which was 0.399 for the endogenous latent variable "GEX", indicating a high effect of GM, and 0.243 for the endogenous latent variable "OS", indicating a medium effect of GM & GEX (Cohen, 2016). This means that 39.9% of variance in GEX is accounted for by GM, and 24.3% of variance in OS is caused by the combination of GM & GEX. Predictive power of the model was also assessed, which helps to forecast fresh or future observations (Cho *et al.*, 2023). Absence of symmetry in the histograms of manifest variable (MV) directed to the

comparison of mean absolute error (MAE) of PLS-SEM and linear model (LM). MAE for PLS-SEM was less than LM for majority of the indicators, therefore the model had medium predictive power (Shmueli *et al.*, 2019).

Next, measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM) procedure (Henseler *et al.*, 2016) was followed to assess the measurement invariance between the three tourist segments.

Step I of the MICOM process required the establishment of configural invariance. Consequently, it was made sure

**Table 4:** Measurement invariance testing (MICOM)

Groups	Construct	Configural invariance	Compositional invariance		Partial invariance established
			Original difference	Permutation p-value	
Experiencers-Enjoyers	GEX	Yes	0.859	0.646	Yes
	GM	Yes	0.877	0.567	Yes
	OS	Yes	0.996	0.154	Yes
Experiencers-Survivors	GEX	Yes	0.903	0.592	Yes
	GM	Yes	0.865	0.239	Yes
	OS	Yes	0.998	0.245	Yes
Enjoyers-Survivors	GEX	Yes	0.970	0.962	Yes
	GM	Yes	0.947	0.747	Yes
	OS	Yes	0.999	0.410	Yes

that: (i) equal indicators were used in all three groups to check validity and reliability; (ii) similar data treatment (e.g., mean value replacement or case-wise deletion for missing values); and (iii) the same PLSPM algorithm configurations (e.g., path weighting with a maximum of 300 iterations along with a stop criterion of  $10^{-7}$ ) were applied (Cheah *et al.*, 2020).

Permutation procedure was used to assess step II of the MICOM procedure, after specifying the groups, which need to be compared (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2011). This technique employs random resampling procedure, similar to bootstrapping. Permutation was set to the recommended value of 5000, and a two-tailed test was performed at a significance level of 0.05. Comparison of the values of correlation between the pair of groups composite scores with 5% quantile in order to evaluate the outcome of the permutation process conducted to assess the compositional invariance showed that for every construct, the quantile was less than or equal to correlation. This conclusion was also supported by the permutation's *p-values*, which were greater than 0.05 and indicated that the correlation was not significantly smaller than one (Cheah *et al.*, 2020). Upon meeting the configural and compositional invariance, as illustrated in Table 4, it became viable to perform a multigroup analysis and compare the standardized path coefficients between the groups (Henseler *et al.*, 2016).

### Mediation Analysis

The stepwise analysis of indirect, direct and total effects of the model lead to the acceptance of  $H_a$  1.1, and reveal that the impact of gastronomic motivation on overall satisfaction with the destination is fully mediated through gastronomic experience, irrespective of the grouping of tourists. The results presented in Table 5 reveal that the indirect effect of gastronomic motivation  $\rightarrow$  overall satisfaction was positive and significant for complete data ( $\beta = 0.271$ ,  $t = 6.743$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), experiencers ( $\beta = 0.133$ ,  $t = 2.407$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ), enjoyers ( $\beta = 0.209$ ,  $t = 3.083$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), and survivors ( $\beta = 0.272$ ,  $t = 0.066$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The examination of confidence

intervals also revealed a significant indirect effect, as they did not have a zero falling within the 2.5 and 97.5 % limits, therefore confirming the presence of a mediator in the model.

Next step was to assess the direct effect of gastronomic motivation  $\rightarrow$  overall satisfaction, in the presence of the mediator "gastronomic experience". It was found that the impact of the independent variable (GM) on the dependent variable (OS) was positive but insignificant for complete data ( $\beta = 0.093$ ,  $p = 0.097$ ), experiencers ( $\beta = 0.157$ ,  $p = 0.118$ ), enjoyers ( $\beta = 0.095$ ,  $p = 0.424$ ), and survivors ( $\beta = 0.106$ ,  $p = 0.351$ ). Finally, the total effect of gastronomic motivation  $\rightarrow$  Overall satisfaction was also found to be positive and significant for complete data ( $\beta = 0.364$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), experiencers ( $\beta = 0.291$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), enjoyers ( $\beta = 0.304$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and survivors ( $\beta = 0.378$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

This finding emphasizes that a satisfactory dining experience at a renowned outlet can enhance overall satisfaction with the destination for all types of tourists, regardless of the importance of local cuisine in their choice of destination. Additionally, it indicates that gastronomic motivation may stimulate individuals to sample local cuisine at a famous outlet, influencing their gastronomic satisfaction to a certain degree, but not directly impacting overall satisfaction with the destination (Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2019).

### Multigroup Analysis

The PLS-SEM bootstrapping approach for conducting a multigroup analysis (Cheah *et al.*, 2020), showed that there was no significant difference while comparing the impact of gastronomic experience  $\rightarrow$  overall satisfaction between experiencers and enjoyers (path difference =  $-0.072$ ,  $p = 0.611$ ), experiencers and survivors (path difference =  $-0.177$ ,  $p = 0.165$ ), enjoyers and survivors (path difference =  $-0.105$ ,  $p = 0.438$ ). Similarly, there was no significant difference while the comparison was done on the impact of gastronomic motivation  $\rightarrow$  gastronomic experience between experiencers and enjoyers (path difference =  $-0.117$ ,

**Table 5:** Mediation analysis

Group	Indirect effect of GM on OS (GM->GEX->OS)				Confidence interval	Direct effect (GM->OS)		Total effect (GM->OS)	
	$\beta$ coefficient	Std. deviation	t value	p-value		$\beta$ coefficient	p-value	$\beta$ coefficient	p-value
Complete	0.271	0.040	6.743	0.000	[0.203,0.362]	0.093	0.097	0.364	0.000
Experiencers	0.133	0.055	2.407	0.016	[0.068,0.276]	0.157	0.118	0.291	0.000
Enjoyers	0.209	0.068	3.083	0.002	[0.104,0.367]	0.095	0.424	0.304	0.000
Survivors	0.272	0.066	4.125	0.000	[0.187,0.447]	0.106	0.351	0.378	0.000

**Table 6:** Multigroup analysis

Path	Difference (Experiencers-Enjoyers)	2-tailed p value (Experiencers vs Enjoyers)	Difference (Experiencers - Survivors)	2-tailed p value (Experiencers vs Survivors)	Difference (Enjoyers-Survivors)	2-tailed p-value (Enjoyers vs Survivors)
GEX -> OS	-0.072	0.611	-0.177	0.165	-0.105	0.438
GM-> GEX	-0.117	0.229	-0.135	0.196	-0.018	0.848
GM-> OS	0.063	0.673	0.052	0.735	-0.011	0.934

$p = 0.229$ ), experiencers and survivors (path difference =  $-0.135$ ,  $p = 0.196$ ), enjoyers and survivors (path difference =  $-0.018$ ,  $p = 0.848$ ). Difference in path coefficients on the last hypothesized relationship: gastronomic motivation -> overall satisfaction was also found to be insignificant between experiencers and enjoyers (path difference =  $0.063$ ,  $p = 0.673$ ), experiencers and survivors (path difference =  $0.052$ ,  $p = 0.735$ ), enjoyers and survivors (path difference =  $-0.011$ ,  $p = 0.934$ ). As all the p values of these hypothesized relationships were greater than .05, it indicates that hypotheses  $H_a$  1.2a,  $H_a$  1.2b, and  $H_a$  1.2c were unsupported by the findings. It was discovered that segmentation of tourists, based upon their attitude towards local gastronomy as a decisive factor in destination selection, did not matter when it comes to the relationship between (a) gastronomic experience -> overall satisfaction, (b) gastronomic motivation -> gastronomic experience, and (c) gastronomic motivation -> overall satisfaction, in context of dining at a famous local food outlet. Thus, it can be inferred that gastronomic experience plays a crucial role in shaping overall satisfaction towards the destination. Table 6 displays the results for multigroup analysis.

## Conclusion

This research contributes to the knowledge base regarding the significance of gastronomic experience in the overall satisfaction of tourists towards a destination, in context to the famous local food outlets of Amritsar.

While not every tourist actively seeks culinary or gastronomic experiences, but every traveler is likely influenced by food and food-related pursuits at the destination.

Owners of renowned local culinary establishments can apply the research findings to enhance the quality of

services and products, aiming to create a memorable dining experience for all categories of tourists. This, in turn, will result in their contentment and subsequent positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

It is essential for local eateries to establish an inviting and aesthetically pleasing physical setting, encompassing factors such as ambiance, decor, and cleanliness, as these elements play a crucial role in attracting and retaining tourists.

Special attention should be given to delivering exceptional intangible services, such as friendly and attentive customer service, which contribute significantly to elevating the overall dining experience and fostering repeat visits by tourists.

Apart from highlighting the excellence of their cuisine, these establishments can also improve convenience aspects like location, accessibility, and reservation procedures.

Engaging in partnerships with tourism entities, hotels, and online travel platforms can further enhance their visibility and draw more tourists.

## Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This research exhibits certain limitations that warrant consideration in subsequent research endeavors. Primarily, the scope of generalizability of the conclusions was constrained due to the utilization of a non-probability sampling method. Future inquiries in this domain may also consider employing a qualitative approach, given the dynamic nature of consumers' decision-making processes in selecting a dining establishment. These studies could expand on the foundation established in this study, providing essential guidance for devising strategies to enhance the culinary tourism experience in Amritsar, thereby enhancing the city's reputation as a renowned



religious hub. Conducting research on popular food establishments in several other cities could facilitate the comparison of the study's findings. Further, exploration, association with stakeholders, and the implementation of sustainable measures could bolster Amritsar's position as a leading gastronomic destination, attracting more tourists and fostering the development of travel and tourism industry.

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