Tourist Satisfaction with Himachali Culinary Experiences: A Comparative Study of Domestic and International Visitors

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study explores the satisfaction levels of domestic and international tourists with Himachali culinary experiences, focusing on food quality, service quality, ambiance, and cultural authenticity. Utilizing a sample of 570 respondents selected through purposive sampling, data were collected via structured questionnaires. The reliability of the measurement scales was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics, while regression analysis, ANOVA, and correlation analysis were used to test hypotheses and examine relationships between variables. The findings reveal that food quality is the most significant determinant of overall tourist satisfaction, followed by service quality, cultural authenticity, and ambience. These results align with previous research in culinary tourism, emphasizing the importance of these factors in enhancing tourist experiences. ANOVA results indicate significant differences in satisfaction levels between domestic and international tourists, suggesting the need for tailored culinary offerings to cater to diverse preferences. The study's implications highlight the necessity for tourism authorities and local businesses to focus on maintaining high food quality, improving service standards, and preserving the cultural authenticity of Himachali cuisine. Additionally, creating a culturally immersive ambience can further enhance tourist satisfaction. The socio-economic benefits of culinary tourism, such as employment generation and support for local agriculture, are also underscored. Limitations of the study include the use of purposive sampling and self-reported data, which may affect generalizability and accuracy. Future research should consider random sampling techniques, longitudinal studies, and a broader range of variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors affecting tourist satisfaction with culinary experiences. Keywords: Culinary Tourism, Tourist Satisfaction, Himachali Cuisine, Cultural Authenticity

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a multifaceted and dynamic industry that significantly influences many destinations' economic and cultural landscapes. Among the various facets of tourism, culinary experiences have emerged as a vital component that enriches the overall visitor experience. The comparative study of tourist satisfaction with culinary experiences between domestic and international visitors sheds light on diverse cultural expectations and preferences, which are crucial for enhancing tourism strategies and destination management. Tourist satisfaction with culinary experiences is a complex construct influenced by various factors, including food

quality, service, ambience, and the overall dining experience. Research on culinary tourism highlights the importance of understanding tourists' motivations, experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty. For instance, a study by Agyeiwaah et al. (2018) found that culinary tourists' motivation significantly influences their culinary experience and satisfaction, affecting their loyalty to the destination. This interrelationship underscores the need for destination management organizations (DMOs) to develop sustainable strategies catering to tourists' culinary needs and experiences. In Indonesia, the culinary experience of domestic tourists has been studied to understand how local food influences their destination experience. Kristanti, Jokom, and Widjaja (2019) conducted a study in Denpasar and Yogyakarta, revealing that the quality of culinary experiences positively impacts both culinary and overall destination satisfaction. This finding is significant for local tourism stakeholders as it highlights the critical role of culinary quality in enhancing tourist satisfaction. Similarly, research in Kolkata examined the satisfaction levels of domestic tourists with local cuisine, identifying three distinct visitor categories based on their culinary preferences. The study by Roy and Pradhan (2022) concluded that tourist engagement with local gastronomy positively influences their overall satisfaction and perception of the destination. Such insights are invaluable for tourism stakeholders in planning and executing effective strategies.

International tourists also play a crucial role in the culinary tourism sector. Widjaja et al. (2018) explored the culinary experiences of international tourists in Indonesia, highlighting the significance of culinary experience quality on destination satisfaction and future behavioral intentions. This study reinforces that positive culinary experiences can enhance the tourist experience, increasing satisfaction and loyalty. The comparative analysis of international tourists' satisfaction in different regions also provides valuable insights. For example, a study in Mongolia by Yu and Goulden (2006) examined international tourists' satisfaction with various aspects of their travel experience, including culinary experiences. The findings suggested that understanding regional differences in tourist satisfaction can help target tourism markets more efficiently and improve tourism services. Moreover, the study of holiday satisfaction in Penang, Malaysia, by Omar et al. (2015) highlighted the similarities and differences in satisfaction levels between domestic and international tourists. The study emphasized the need for improvements in food and tourist amenities to enhance tourists' positive experiences, particularly domestic visitors. The role of hedonic value, escapism, and psychic distance in explaining the higher satisfaction levels of international visitors compared to domestic tourists was explored by Ponsignon et al. (2020). The study found that the more excellent hedonic value derived from the experience abroad contributes to higher satisfaction among international visitors. This highlights the importance of creating immersive and pleasurable culinary experiences to attract international tourists. Understanding the factors influencing dining experiences and tourist satisfaction is crucial for destinations aiming to enhance their culinary tourism offerings. A study by Satchapappichit (2020) on Chinese visitors' dining experiences with Thai cuisine in Bangkok revealed that food image, cultural aspects of food, perceived price, and travel characteristics significantly influence overall satisfaction. Such findings are essential for developing targeted culinary tourism strategies. Thus, the comparative study of tourist satisfaction with culinary experiences between domestic and international visitors reveals critical insights into tourists' diverse expectations and preferences. By understanding these factors, destination management organizations can develop effective strategies to enhance the tourist experience, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty. Culinary tourism enriches the visitor experience and is a powerful tool for promoting cultural understanding and destination branding. Therefore, continuous research and adaptation of culinary tourism strategies are necessary to meet the evolving needs of both domestic and international tourists.

Despite the growing interest in culinary tourism and its impact on tourist satisfaction, there remains a notable gap in the literature, specifically addressing the comparative experiences of domestic and international tourists with Himachali cuisine. The existing studies largely focus on broader culinary experiences across different regions or specific tourist destinations but lack a concentrated examination of Himachal Pradesh's unique gastronomic offerings. Previous research has extensively explored the general influence of culinary experiences on tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Agyeiwaah et al., 2018; Kristanti et al., 2019), and the role of local cuisine in destination branding (Desy, 2023). However, the distinctive culinary traditions of Himachal Pradesh, such as the Dham feast, have not been thoroughly investigated in terms of how they impact the satisfaction levels of domestic versus international visitors. Further, while some studies have examined the satisfaction levels of tourists in various Indian states (Roy & Pradhan, 2022; Updhyay & Sharma, 2014; Sahoo, 2020), there is limited research that compares the specific elements of Himachali culinary experiences that appeal differently to domestic and international tourists. This gap is particularly significant given the unique cultural and culinary landscape of Himachal Pradesh, which could offer valuable insights into developing targeted marketing strategies and tourism policies.

Moreover, while studies have explored the broader aspects of tourist satisfaction in Himachal Pradesh (Thakur & Chaturvedi, 2023), and the seasonal concentration of tourism in the region (Rana, 2014), there is a lack of focused research on how culinary experiences specifically contribute to these satisfaction levels. Additionally, the role of traditional food preparation methods and their impact on tourist perceptions and satisfaction have not been extensively covered, leaving a gap in understanding the full spectrum of culinary tourism potential in Himachal Pradesh. To address these gaps, future research should focus on a detailed comparative analysis of domestic and international tourist satisfaction with Himachali culinary experiences. This research should consider the unique aspects of Himachali cuisine, including traditional dishes and preparation methods, and

how these elements influence overall tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Doing so can provide valuable insights for stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sectors to enhance the culinary tourism offerings and improve the overall tourist experience in Himachal Pradesh.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Culinary tourism has become a significant tourism industry component, contributing to economic development and cultural exchange. This literature review explores various aspects of culinary tourism, focusing on cuisine and comparing the satisfaction levels of domestic and international tourists. Agyeiwaah, Otoo, Suntikul, and Huang (2018) examined the relationships between motivation, experience, satisfaction, and loyalty among culinary tourists. Their study, conducted with international tourists at cooking schools in Chiang Mai, Thailand, found that motivation positively influences the culinary experience and satisfaction. This, in turn, enhances tourist loyalty. The findings underscore the importance of understanding tourists' motivations and satisfaction in developing sustainable culinary tourism strategies. In Himachal Pradesh, the unique gastronomic offerings, such as the traditional Dham feast, are crucial in attracting tourists. Verma and Rana (2023) highlighted the need for innovative roles in promoting regional food in the hospitality sector. Their study emphasized the importance of traditional food, like Dham, in providing fresh, hygienic food that supports local agriculture and labor.

Thakur and Chaturvedi (2023) analyzed tourist satisfaction with basic tourism facilities in Himachal Pradesh. They found that while the state has abundant natural beauty and cultural richness, significant infrastructure and service quality gaps must be addressed to improve tourist satisfaction. Sahoo (2020) explored the perceptions of tour guides about gastronomy tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The study revealed a growing demand for specialized food guide training programs and the branding of Himachali cuisine through ethnic restaurants and culinary tours. Bisht, Verma, Kishtwaria, and Pathania (2014) examined the economic impact of tourism in Himachal Pradesh. Their study highlighted the significant role of tourism in providing employment and generating income. However, they also noted the social problems associated with tourism, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices. Roy and Pradhan (2022) investigated the food motives of domestic tourists in Kolkata. They identified three categories of visitors based on their culinary preferences and found that tourist engagement with local gastronomy positively influences their overall satisfaction.

In a broader context, Rana (2014) analyzed the seasonal concentration of tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The study used the Gini coefficient to compare the arrivals of domestic and international tourists, providing insights into the seasonal patterns of tourism in the region. Chaudhary et al. (2021) focused on tourists' perceptions and revisited intentions at prominent holy places in Himachal Pradesh. They emphasized the importance of proper attention to tourist needs to ensure positive feedback and repeat visits. Tanwar et al. (2018) discussed Himachali Dham's cultural and nutritional aspects, highlighting its role in local festivals and special occasions. They noted that Dham adheres to Ayurvedic principles and offers significant nutritional benefits. Upadhyay and Sharma (2014) explored the culinary preferences of foreign tourists in India. They identified key factors such as taste, quality, preparation, and cultural aspects of food that influence tourist satisfaction. Their findings are crucial for marketers aiming to enhance culinary tourism offerings.

Thakur (2023) examined tourism growth in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. The study highlighted tourism's socioeconomic benefits, including job creation and economic prosperity, while stressing the need for sustainable practices to mitigate environmental impacts. Verma et al. (2023) analyzed the challenges and trends in rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh. They emphasized the importance of involving local communities and creating alternative sources of income through rural tourism. Kumar and Rana (2017) discussed the formulation of flexible strategies for pilgrimage tourism in Himachal Pradesh. They proposed a strategic crystal framework to address the continuous and changing forces affecting tourism, aiming to improve the overall experience for spiritual tourists. Barbhuiya (2023) proposed post-pandemic tourism strategies for Himachal Pradesh. The study identified key issues and sustainable strategies to rebuild tourism in the region, focusing on confidence-building and image enhancement. Raj (2017) examined the role of cultural tourism in the socioeconomic development of host communities in Himachal Pradesh. The study highlighted the importance of preserving cultural heritage while promoting tourism. Rana and Kumar (2017) proposed the development of extended tourism through destination discontinuity and branding in Himachal Pradesh. They emphasized the importance of creating a unique destination identity to attract tourists.

Chauhan, Sharma, and Alene (2013) explored the potential of Himachali fruit wines in tourism. They identified gaps in the wine industry and proposed strategies to enhance the production and marketing of fruit wines to attract tourists. Thakur and Chaturvedi (2023) analyzed tourist satisfaction levels with basic tourism facilities in Himachal Pradesh. They found significant infrastructure and service quality gaps, emphasizing the need for improvements to enhance tourist satisfaction. Verma and Rana (2023) highlighted the need for innovative roles in promoting regional food in the hospitality sector. Their study emphasized the importance of traditional food, like Dham, in providing fresh, hygienic food that supports local agriculture and labour. In line with the above discussion, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H1: Domestic tourists are more satisfied with Himachali culinary experiences than international tourists due to greater familiarity and cultural resonance with the local cuisine.

H2: The quality of food, service, and ambience significantly influences the overall satisfaction of international tourists with Himachali culinary experiences, impacting their likelihood of repeat visits and recommendations.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the satisfaction levels of domestic and international tourists with Himachali culinary experiences. The research methodology encompasses the selection of respondents, sampling technique, data collection process, and the sources of variables used in the study. A total of 570 respondents participated in this study. The sample includes domestic and international tourists who visited Himachal Pradesh and experienced local culinary offerings. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents directly exposed to Himachali cuisine. This non-probability sampling method was chosen to ensure that participants possess the relevant experience and knowledge required for the study, which aligns with the approach outlined by Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire to capture various dimensions of tourist satisfaction. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather comprehensive insights. The closed-ended questions used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure respondents' satisfaction levels across different variables.

The primary variables examined in this study include food quality, service quality, ambience, cultural authenticity, and overall satisfaction with the culinary experience. These variables were derived from existing literature on culinary tourism and tourist satisfaction. For instance, Agyeiwaah et al. (2018) identified motivation, experience, satisfaction, and loyalty as key constructs in culinary tourism. Similarly, the study by Upadhyay and Sharma (2014) highlighted taste, food quality, preparation, and cultural aspects as significant factors influencing tourist satisfaction. Data analysis was conducted using statistical software to ensure accurate and reliable results. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the respondents' demographic characteristics and responses to the questionnaire items. Inferential statistics, including regression analysis, were employed to test the relationships between the variables and identify significant differences in satisfaction levels between domestic and international tourists. The structured questionnaire, combined with the purposive sampling method, enabled the collection of rich, relevant data that provided insights into the satisfaction levels of tourists with Himachali culinary experiences. By focusing on respondents with firsthand experience of local cuisine, the study aimed to produce meaningful and actionable findings for stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

4. RESULTS

The data analysis for this study was conducted using various statistical techniques to examine the relationships between the variables and to understand the satisfaction levels of domestic and international tourists with Himachali culinary experiences. The analysis was performed using statistical software such as SPSS.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics
The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicate a diverse sample with a relatively balanced distribution of males and females. Most respondents are between 25-34 years, followed by those in the 35-44 age group. Most respondents are domestic tourists (62.28%), with a significant portion being international tourists (37.72%). Regarding visit frequency, 36.84% are first-time visitors, while 43.86% have visited 2-3 times, and 19.30% have visited more than three times. This distribution provides a comprehensive perspective on the varied backgrounds and experiences of the tourists surveyed.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
18-24	95	16.67
25-34	185	32.46
35-44	140	24.56
45-54	95	16.67
55-64	45	7.89
65 and above	10	1.75
Gender		
Male	290	50.88
Female	280	49.12
Nationality		
Domestic	355	62.28
International	215	37.72
Frequency of Visits		
First-time visitor	210	36.84

Visited 2-3 times	250	43.86
Visited more than 3 times	110	19.30

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis shows that all the variables have Cronbach's alpha values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. Quality of Food (0.82) and Overall Satisfaction (0.84) have the highest reliability, suggesting that the items measuring these constructs are highly consistent. Service Quality (0.79), Cultural Authenticity (0.80), and Ambiance (0.75) also demonstrate satisfactory reliability. These results confirm that the measurement scales used in the questionnaire are reliable and can be trusted for further analysis.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Quality of Food	0.82
Service Quality	0.79
Ambience	0.75
Cultural Authenticity	0.80
Overall Satisfaction	0.84

4.3 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis results indicate that all four independent variables significantly influence overall satisfaction, as their p-values are less than 0.001. Quality of Food has the highest Beta Coefficient (0.35), indicating the strongest impact on overall satisfaction. This is followed by Service Quality (0.28), Cultural Authenticity (0.26), and Ambiance (0.22). The t-values for all variables are also significant, confirming their influence on overall satisfaction. These findings suggest that improvements in these areas could significantly enhance tourists' overall satisfaction with Himachali culinary experiences.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Beta Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Quality of Food	0.35	6.42	<0.001
Service Quality	0.28	5.18	<0.001
Ambience	0.22	4.02	<0.001
Cultural Authenticity	0.26	4.89	<0.001

4.4 ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

The ANOVA results reveal a significant difference in overall satisfaction between domestic and international tourists, with an F-value of 8.56 and a p-value of less than 0.01. This indicates that the origin of the tourists (domestic vs. international) significantly impacts their overall satisfaction with Himachali culinary experiences. This finding underscores the need for tailored culinary tourism strategies to address different tourist groups' preferences and expectations.

Table 4: ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	12.34	1	12.34	8.56	<0.01
Within Groups	815.46	568	1.44		
Total	827.80	569			

4.5 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis shows significant positive relationships between all the independent variables (Quality of Food, Service Quality, Ambiance, and Cultural Authenticity) and Overall Satisfaction. The strongest correlation is between Quality of Food and Overall Satisfaction (0.68), indicating that food quality improvements are likely to impact overall satisfaction substantially. Service Quality (0.62), Cultural Authenticity (0.64), and Ambiance (0.56) also show strong positive correlations with Overall Satisfaction. These results highlight the importance of these factors in enhancing tourists' culinary experiences and overall satisfaction.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Quality of Food	Service Quality	Ambience	Cultural Authenticity	Overall Satisfaction
Quality of Food	1				
Service Quality	0.45**	1			
Ambience	0.38**	0.40**	1		
Cultural Authenticity	0.42**	0.43**	0.35**	1	
Overall Satisfaction	0.68**	0.62**	0.56**	0.64**	1

Note: $**p < 0.01$

5. Discussions

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the satisfaction levels of domestic and international tourists with Himachali culinary experiences. The results reveal that various factors, including food quality, service quality, ambience, and cultural authenticity, significantly influence tourist satisfaction. These findings align with previous research in culinary tourism, highlighting the importance of these dimensions in enhancing tourist experiences.

Food quality emerged as the most critical factor affecting overall satisfaction, consistent with Agyeiwaah et al. (2018), who emphasized that food quality strongly influences culinary tourists' motivation and satisfaction. In the context of Himachal Pradesh, traditional dishes like Dham play a crucial role. Verma and Rana (2023) underscored the importance of traditional food in the hospitality sector, emphasizing that fresh and hygienic food supports local agriculture and labor, enhancing tourist satisfaction. This study's strong positive correlation between food quality and overall satisfaction (0.68) further corroborates these assertions. Service quality was the second most influential factor, which aligns with existing literature. Upadhyay and Sharma (2014) noted that service quality significantly impacts tourists' culinary experiences and satisfaction. The current study's regression analysis showed a substantial beta coefficient (0.28) for service quality, indicating its vital role in shaping tourist perceptions. This finding suggests that improving service standards in Himachal Pradesh can greatly enhance tourist experiences, aligning with the broader hospitality industry's emphasis on high service quality as a determinant of satisfaction.

Ambience and cultural authenticity also significantly affect overall satisfaction, though to a lesser extent than food quality and service. The importance of ambience in dining experiences has been well-documented in previous studies (Ryu & Jang, 2007). This study's finding that ambience has a beta coefficient of 0.22 indicates that the environment in which food is consumed plays a significant role in the overall dining experience. Cultural authenticity, with a beta coefficient of 0.26, underscores the importance of preserving and promoting traditional culinary practices. This is supported by the work of Tanwar et al. (2018), who highlighted the nutritional and cultural significance of Himachali Dham, noting that such traditional dishes are integral to the region's culinary heritage and appeal. The ANOVA results indicated significant differences in satisfaction levels between domestic and international tourists, suggesting that these groups have distinct expectations and experiences. This finding aligns with the study by Roy and Pradhan (2022), which highlighted different culinary preferences among domestic tourists. The significant variance in satisfaction levels points to the need for tailored culinary offerings that cater to the diverse tastes of domestic and international tourists. This is particularly important for destination management organizations (DMOs) aiming to enhance the overall tourist experience and foster loyalty among different tourist segments.

Previous research has also emphasized the socio-economic benefits of culinary tourism. Bisht et al. (2014) noted that culinary tourism is crucial for employment and generating income in Himachal Pradesh. The current study's findings further support this, suggesting that improving culinary experiences can boost tourist satisfaction, leading to increased tourist arrivals and, consequently, greater economic benefits for local communities. However, the study also highlighted several areas that require improvement. Despite the high ratings for food quality, service quality, ambiance, and cultural authenticity, gaps still need to be addressed to enhance overall satisfaction. Thakur and Chaturvedi (2023) emphasized the need for better infrastructure and service quality to improve tourist satisfaction in Himachal Pradesh. The current study's findings support this view, indicating that while tourists appreciate the cultural and culinary offerings, improvements in these areas could further enhance their experiences. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on culinary tourism by comprehensively analysing the factors influencing tourist satisfaction with Himachali culinary experiences. The findings highlight the critical role of food quality, service quality, ambience, and cultural authenticity in shaping tourist experiences and satisfaction. Moreover, the significant differences between domestic and international tourists underscore the need for tailored culinary offerings to cater to diverse tourist segments.

5.1 Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sectors in Himachal Pradesh. First and foremost, the importance of food quality in driving tourist satisfaction cannot be overstated. Tourism authorities and local businesses should focus on maintaining and enhancing the quality of traditional Himachali dishes. Ensuring that using fresh, locally sourced ingredients and preserving traditional cooking methods can help achieve this goal. Verma and Rana (2023) highlighted the significance of traditional food in the hospitality sector, suggesting that promoting dishes like Dham can attract more tourists and enhance their overall experience. Service quality also emerged as a critical factor influencing tourist satisfaction. Training programs for staff in the hospitality sector should be prioritized to improve service standards. Upadhyay and Sharma (2014) noted the impact of service quality on culinary experiences, suggesting that enhanced service can significantly improve tourist satisfaction. Investing in customer service training and adopting best practices from other successful culinary tourism destinations can help achieve higher service quality standards.

The ambience of dining establishments also plays a crucial role in shaping tourist experiences. Creating a welcoming and culturally authentic environment can enhance the overall dining experience. Ryu and Jang (2007) emphasized the importance of ambience in dining satisfaction. Restaurants and food outlets should focus on creating an ambience that reflects the cultural heritage of Himachal Pradesh, incorporating traditional decor and music to provide an immersive experience for tourists. Cultural authenticity is another significant factor that influences tourist satisfaction. Promoting traditional culinary practices and preserving the authenticity of Himachali cuisine can attract tourists seeking unique and culturally rich experiences. Tanwar et al. (2018) highlighted traditional Himachali dishes' nutritional and cultural significance. Tourism authorities should support initiatives that promote traditional food festivals and culinary events, showcasing the region's rich culinary heritage. The significant differences in satisfaction levels between domestic and international tourists suggest the need for tailored marketing strategies. Domestic tourists may have different expectations and preferences compared to international tourists. Roy and Pradhan (2022) highlighted the distinct culinary preferences among domestic tourists. Tourism authorities should develop marketing campaigns highlighting the unique aspects of Himachali cuisine that appeal to domestic and international audiences. For domestic tourists, emphasizing regional pride and the nostalgic value of traditional dishes can be effective. For international tourists, promoting Himachali cuisine's uniqueness and cultural richness can attract their interest.

Furthermore, the socio-economic benefits of culinary tourism should be leveraged to support local communities. Bisht et al. (2014) noted the economic impact of tourism in Himachal Pradesh. By promoting local culinary traditions and supporting local food producers, tourism authorities can create sustainable economic opportunities for local communities. Initiatives such as farm-to-table programs, where tourists can visit local farms and taste fresh produce, can enhance the culinary tourism experience while supporting local agriculture. Lastly, addressing the infrastructure and service quality gaps is essential for improving overall tourist satisfaction. Thakur and Chaturvedi (2023) emphasized the need for better infrastructure in Himachal Pradesh. Investing in transportation, accommodation, and dining facilities can create a more comfortable and enjoyable experience for tourists. Public-private partnerships can effectively develop the necessary infrastructure to support the growing culinary tourism sector.

5.2 Limitations and Scope for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into tourist satisfaction with Himachali culinary experiences, it has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, using purposive sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings. Although this sampling method ensures respondents have relevant experience, it may not fully represent the broader tourist population. Future research should consider using random sampling techniques to enhance the sample's representativeness. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability and recall bias. Respondents may have provided responses they believed were expected or favorable rather than their true opinions. Future studies could incorporate observational methods or experimental designs to validate self-reported data and provide a more objective assessment of tourist satisfaction.

Third, the study focused on a specific geographic region and cultural context, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other destinations. While Himachali cuisine has unique characteristics, the factors influencing tourist satisfaction with culinary experiences may vary in different cultural and regional contexts. Future research should explore similar studies in diverse geographic and cultural settings to compare and contrast findings.

Fourth, the study's cross-sectional nature provides a snapshot of tourist satisfaction at a single point in time. This approach does not account for changes in tourist perceptions and satisfaction over time. Longitudinal studies that track changes in tourist satisfaction and preferences over multiple visits could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of culinary tourism. Fifth, the study focused on a limited number of variables: food quality, service quality, ambience, and cultural authenticity. While these factors are significant, other variables, such as pricing, accessibility, and marketing efforts, could influence tourist satisfaction. Future research should incorporate a broader range of variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting tourist satisfaction with culinary experiences.

Finally, the study did not explore the impact of demographic factors such as age, gender, and income on tourist satisfaction. These factors may influence tourists' culinary preferences and satisfaction levels. Future research should examine the role of demographic variables in shaping tourist experiences and satisfaction with culinary tourism. Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable contributions to understanding culinary tourism and tourist satisfaction. It highlights the critical role of food quality, service quality, ambience, and cultural authenticity in shaping tourist experiences. The findings underscore the need for tailored culinary offerings and marketing strategies to cater to diverse tourist segments. Moreover, the study provides practical implications for tourism authorities and local businesses, emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting traditional culinary practices to enhance tourist satisfaction.

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