

Potential of Gastronomy as a Tool for Growth of Tourism in Gujarat (India)

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ABSTRACT

Many types of tourism have evolved over the years that are classified based on the purpose for which a trip is undertaken by the tourist. These emerging types of tourism such as educational tourism, medical tourism, wildlife tourism, adventure tourism etc. to name a few attract varied sectors of the tourist population. Among these another unique tourism sector that is fast emerging is Gastronomy Tourism. The term Gastronomy is often used to connote the art of cooking and eating fine food but some people also relate the concept of food to the local culture as well when talking about gastronomy. Tourists today not only want the luxury of five star hotels but also want to experience the local culture. And food forms an important part of a destination's culture. India is home to many cultures and has varied terrains with environmental conditions that change in a matter of a few kilometres. This factor has contributed significantly to the development of area specific gastronomy where techniques as well as raw materials used to prepare dishes are unique in their own ways. The state of Gujarat is famous for its vibrant and colourful culture that is a major attraction for tourists all over the globe. Gastronomy in this state has a long history that has evolved over the years. It is famous for its quick snacks and distinct sweet flavours. The existence of large rural and tribal areas in the state also has their own gastronomy tale that interests many. Tourists today are on the lookout for traditional cuisines and prefer visiting locals, rather than going to fancy restaurants to taste them. In Gujarat every festival and season is celebrated with great pomp and show and gastronomy is also an essential part of it. This paper studies and analyses how gastronomy experiences can be used as an effective tool for promoting tourism in Gujarat. The ancient traditions and customs around gastronomy can be used as a focus factor and promotional strategies can be developed in order to get more tourist inflow from the domestic as well as international market.

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KEYWORDS: *Gastronomy, Tourism, Gujarat, Cuisine, Food, Culture*

INTRODUCTION

Gujarat is home to the famous diamond industry as well as the textile industry. It also houses beautiful temples that have been an attraction for tourists since ages. Therefore this state has mostly attracted business as well as spiritual travellers. Even though cuisines of the state are unique, the ban on alcohol has been one of the major reasons for not being able to attract international as well as many domestic tourists for leisure and recreational activities.

Food has always been an essential part of any travel but it has not really been a primary reason to visit a particular destination. With the evolution of gastronomy tourism and destinations promoting their cuisines as a marketing tool to attract travellers, food has slowly started becoming the primary travel motive. Countries like Thailand, France, Spain, Mexico, Italy and even India are famous for their food and culture that attract tourists. Gujarat in

particular has a lot of potential but needs to make constructive efforts towards establishing itself as a gastronomy tourism destination. Highlighting the food of a particular region not only attracts tourists and increases the revenue earned through tourism but it also helps in the revival of long lost traditional and authentic recipes. This also significantly helps rural tourism and in a state like Gujarat that has a large rural population, this type of tourism is extremely beneficial.

Definition of Gastronomy Tourism: The UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) defines gastronomy tourism as a type of tourism in which the travellers' main experience is related with food and its related activities while on their travel. Gastronomy tourism is also known as food tourism and culinary tourism.

Objectives:

- To understand the popularity of gastronomy tourism
- To understand the history of gastronomy and its relation to culture in Gujarat
- To suggest ways in which gastronomy can be used to increase tourism in Gujarat

Review of Literature

Food and Tourism

Hall et al in 2003 defined a food tourist as someone who travelled with the primary objective to taste local dishes and thus his interest mostly lied in visiting food festivals, visiting local restaurants or visits to food producers.

According to a study conducted in 2009 by Henderson food and tourism go together and are closely linked with each other. He also mentioned that food has a great role to play in the growth and development of a region that can be beneficial to the macro economy of the place.

Tourists who are interested in studying different cultures are attracted to food tourism as food is an important part of any culture and it helps the tourist to differentiate between their own culture and that of the place they are visiting (Hegarty, J. A., O'Mahoney, G. B. 2001).

An interesting study was done by Kivela et al in 2005 in Hong Kong to find out the connection between food and tourism and the results revealed that there is indeed a strong connection between the two. Food does form an integral part of the overall tourism experience and tourists also come back to resample and savour the unique cuisines. This not only enhances the tourists experience but also help the traditional artisans and also industrial level food production and processing (S Boyne et al 2003)

Tikkanen in 2007 related food tourism with Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory and also suggested four distinct manners in which food and tourism are related to each other. Firstly food being an attraction in itself, secondly as a component of the tourist product, thirdly as a popular item and fourthly as a component of the local culture.

Another study revealed that food has a great potential to develop a tourist destination and thus efforts in marketing should be made in this direction to attract maximum tourists (Okumus, et al. 2007). Du Rand and Health in 2006 confirmed in their study that food tourism has a big role to play in the region's agricultural and economic development. Cook S (2020) in an article stated that in the West knowledge about Indian cuisines is restricted to some signature dishes and some regional cuisines only. Thus steps must be taken to break stereotypes about Indian cuisines and popularize them.

Cuisines of Gujarat

Gujarat is famous for its vegetarian delicacies and is closely related to its rich cultural heritage. The different seasons and festivals of Gujarat are all linked to various cuisines that specifically represent that particular occasion. For example, the uttarayan or the kite festival that falls in January every year is incomplete without *chikki*, *mamraladu*, *kachariyu* etc., scientifically also these food items help the body to keep warm during the winter season. Another favorite dish during the winters is *undhiyu* and *ponk*. These dishes are made of vegetables and grains that are specifically grown during winters and are very good for a healthy body. The very famous *gujaratithali* is also something that tourists look forward to. Although platters are available for many other regions like punjab, rajasthanetc but the popularity of Gujarati thali is unbeatable. A traveler's visit to Gujarat is incomplete if they haven't gorged on this wonderful assortment of gujarati dishes.

Cuisines of Gujarat can be very well classified based upon the region that they originate from. Uniquely different cuisines have evolved from the north and south of Gujarat as well as from the Kathiawad and Kutch regions. Northern Gujarat cuisines are famous for its snacks also called *farsan* like *khaman*, *khandvi* and *dhokla* while the south and kathiawad regions have food that have a liberal use of chillies in them. *Undhiyu* and *ponk* are famous from the south while *dhebras* belong to kathiawad. The kutchi food is however simpler with *kadhi*, *khichdi*, *rotlo*, *guvaar nu shaak* as the staple dishes (tourmyindia.com).

The names of the cuisines that one gets to hear when in Gujarat are so unique and different that they are not found anywhere else. Also the raw material used

along with the method and technique of cooking are specific to the particular region.

Methodology

The present paper follows a case study approach with the state of Gujarat as the unit of study. The qualitative analysis is based on the secondary data gathered from various sources and literature review. It also takes into consideration various articles and research papers published at different levels. The speciality cuisines of Gujarat are studied and strategies are suggested to make this region famous for gastronomy tourism.

Discussion

The success of gastronomy tourism in many destinations around the world is proof that food can be a primary motivator for tourists to visit a particular region. And food of Gujarat is one of the oldest and richest culinary treasures of India. A systematic approach towards developing gastronomy tourism in Gujarat will help in attracting more tourists to the destination. The state and tourism authorities need to develop strategies and marketing tools in this direction.

Following are the suggestions that may be adopted for this purpose:

- Developing a comprehensive literature about the traditional cuisines of all the regions of the state and creating them in the form of info graphics or gastronomy maps will attract tourists to the gastronomy of the state. Such material may also include facts, history and nutritional facts of the meals.
- Highlighting food experiences in itineraries for travellers and also providing opportunities to learn the traditional dishes from locals in the most authentic way.
- Organising food festivals specially dedicated to the lost recipes of the state that provides a platform to showcase the traditional and authentic methods and preparations that are sometimes forgotten over a period.
- Developing media promotional and marketing strategies in the form of food and travel shows can also help in promoting gastronomy tourism in the state.
- Breaking the notion among foreign tourists that Indian food is spicy, greasy and unsuitable for them, by organizing food tasting sessions when they are on their tours. With the development of tourist sites in Gujarat like Statue of Unity, Gir National Park etc. that attract not only domestic

but also international tourists, local food tasting sessions can be organised similar to the wine tasting sessions in many parts of the world.

- Food hygiene and safety standards to be more rigidly implemented and followed at every level in order to ensure pleasant food experience for the travelers.

If productive efforts are made in these lines then Gujarat will soon attract more tourists who are interested in the rich gastronomy and culture of the region.

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