

GASTRONOMY'S INFLUENCE ON CHOOSING CULTURAL TOURISM DESTINATIONS: A STUDY OF GRANADA, SPAIN

Franklin CORDOVA-BUIZA 

Universidad Privada del Norte, Research, Innovation and Social Responsibility Department, Lima, Peru;
Universidad Continental, Faculty of Business Sciences, Huancayo, Peru, e-mail: franklin.cordova@upn.edu.pe

Lucía GARCÍA-GARCÍA 

Department of Business Organization, Faculty of Law and Business & Economic Sciences, University of Córdoba,
Córdoba, Spain, e-mail: z12gal@uco.es

Lucía CASTAÑO-PRIETO 

Department of Applied Economics, Faculty of Labour Sciences, University of Córdoba, Córdoba, Spain, e-mail: lcastano@uco.es

José VALVERDE-RODA 

Department of Economics and Business, University of Almería, La Cañada, Almería, Spain, e-mail: jvalverde@ual.es

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Abstract: The growing importance of gastronomy in travel decisions has made it a key factor in selecting cultural tourism destinations. This research analyzes tourists' interest in Granada's cuisine, a city with two UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Fieldwork involved 1,612 validated surveys from tourists in various local gastronomy establishments. Analysis revealed three tourist segments based on their interest in gastronomy: survivors, enjoyers, and experiencers. Survivors view gastronomy as a minor part of their experience, enjoyers appreciate it as part of their cultural immersion, and experiencers seek unique culinary adventures. Key findings indicate that different tourist types have distinct characteristics and perceptions of local cuisine as a cultural identity symbol. Understanding these segments helps in tailoring tourism offerings to meet diverse preferences. This research underscores the significance of innovative culinary offerings and improved facilities to enhance tourism competitiveness. Consequently, it is crucial to develop strategies that promote gastronomic innovation and improve service quality in order to attract and satisfy a broader range of tourists.

Keywords: segmentation, perceived value, World Heritage Site, gastronomy, gastronomic tourism

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INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy has become a pivotal element in tourism, significantly influencing tourists' satisfaction and their choice of destinations. This study examines tourists visiting Granada, a city renowned for its two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Alhambra and Generalife Gardens (designated in 1984) and the Albaicín neighbourhood (designated in 1994). By segmenting visitors based on their interest in local cuisine, we analyze their socio-demographic profiles, trip attributes, and perceptions of Granada's gastronomic offerings. Understanding the interplay between heritage, culture, and gastronomy is crucial, as it shapes the overall tourist experience and has been extensively explored in the literature.

This research paper makes a contribution to the existing academic literature on the gastronomic experiences of tourists. The principal objective pursued is to identify the different types of tourists according to their interest in gastronomy on their travels. In addition, an analysis is carried out of the segments identified in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the visitor, the characteristics of the trip, and their assessment of the attributes of the local gastronomy. Visitor segmentation is a crucial factor for both companies and public administrations in effectively managing a destination. Proper segmentation and identification of visitor types enable the design of specific tourism products tailored to the types of travelers a destination attracts. Through tourist segmentation, one can analyze tourists' interest in the destination's gastronomy. Motivational analysis is fundamental to understanding the gastronomic tourist, as the majority of tourists rely on restaurants or other catering establishments to meet their primary physiological needs during their trip.

The foundational assumption of this research is that while all tourists consume food to fulfill their fundamental physiological requirements, their interests and motivations concerning the gastronomy of the visited destination can vary significantly (Hjalager, 2004; Pesonen et al., 2011; López-Guzmán et al., 2019). Thus, visitors may be attracted to the local food and to receive gastronomic experiences, playing gastronomic expectations an important role in the selection of destination (Basil and Basil, 2009; López-Guzmán, 2007; Pérez, 2020; Olavarria-Benavides and Cordova-Buiza, 2023; Riofrio-Carbajal et al., 2023). Gastronomic tourists are different from so-called leisure tourists, they are those

* Corresponding author

who travel mainly for experiences related to the taste of food (Kim et al., 2019; Su, 2020). Regarding the interest in the gastronomy of the destination, we find, on the one hand, a tourist who has no particular interest in the cuisine of the place visited, he acts as a visitor who needs to feed himself throughout the time of his stay. In the opposite case, we find tourists interested in the gastronomy of the place visited, having as main or secondary motivation the gastronomy of the place visited, learning about the local gastronomy, or learning more about the culture of the place from its gastronomy. The identification of the tourist with a high interest in the gastronomy of the place is essential.

In this regard, researchers such as Fields (2002) or Hall et al. (2003) point out that this type of tourist usually has greater purchasing power and, therefore, the capacity to spend in the city. In addition, these authors indicate that the degree of demand for the quality and authenticity of the gastronomy of these tourists is higher. For a proper development of the research, an in-depth review of the available academic literature was conducted. In this regard, we have decided to summarize the state of the art of gastronomic tourism in the following four sections:

Concept of gastronomic tourism

According to Hall et al. (2003), gastronomic tourism is the visit to restaurants and other places to savor and/or have gastronomic experiences with products of the destination, gastronomic festivals, and primary or secondary food producers. In turn, Ellis et al. (2018) maintains the existence of two perspectives for the definition of gastronomic tourism. The first perspective is focused on the tourist himself, his activity, and his motivation. The second perspective centers on the destination itself, examining various aspects such as types of tourism, tourism products, available resources, and the promotion of the destination through its gastronomy. This comprehensive analysis includes identifying five key aspects that define the concept of gastronomic tourism: motivation, culture, authenticity, management and marketing, and the destination.

Research on food tourism has seen significant growth in recent years (Ellis et al., 2018). Within this expansive field, Henderson (2009) delineates four distinct lines of research. The first line focuses on the gastronomic behavior of tourists at their destinations. The second examines gastronomy as a tourist product. The third line investigates gastronomy as a marketing tool. Finally, the fourth line of research analyzes the importance of gastronomic tourism and its role in generating economic wealth for the destination. Ellis et al. (2018) highlight the presence of three distinct approaches to the examination of gastronomic tourism. The first approach centers on management and marketing, delving into areas such as market segmentation, consumer behavior, travel motivations, tourist satisfaction, destination promotion, and visitor loyalty to both the destination and its gastronomy. The second approach concentrates on cultural and social aspects, particularly addressing the cultural identity embedded within local gastronomy.

Lastly, the third approach emphasizes geographical considerations, with a focus on territorial development. Conversely, De Jong et al. (2018) propose that studies on gastronomic tourism can be divided into two primary categories. The first group emphasizes gastronomic heritage, encompassing elements such as cultural significance, local community perspectives, and gastronomic festivals. In contrast, the second group examines culinary expectations, exploring factors such as tourist attractions linked to gastronomy and/or the destination itself.

An additional line of research in gastronomic tourism examines street food stalls, particularly in developing countries. This alternative method of experiencing a destination's gastronomy is explored in various studies. For instance, Ghatak and Chatterjee (2018) analyze food safety at these culinary stalls. Torres Chavarria and Phakdee-Auksorn (2017) study these stalls as integral components of the local tourist attraction. Similarly, Ukenna and Ayodele (2019) investigate them as a significant informal sector in certain countries.

Tourist segmentation based on gastronomic interest.

Visitor segmentation is a critical component in the effective organization of a destination by both public institutions and private enterprises. Accurate segmentation and identification of visitor types enable the creation of specific tourism products tailored to the types of travelers that a destination attracts. Consequently, studies on tourist segmentation often incorporate variables such as lifestyles, motivations, and sociodemographic profiles. In this research, it is particularly important to identify groups of visitors who share common characteristics (Ko et al., 2018; Levitt et al., 2019), especially concerning their interest in the destination's gastronomy (Kivela and Crofts, 2015; Valverde-Roda et al., 2023).

Previous studies, such as those by Kivela and Crofts (2015) and Robinson (2018), suggest that visitors who place a high value on gastronomy typically have higher purchasing power. In other words, tourists with greater income levels are capable of higher daily expenditures at their destinations, making them highly desirable for these locales. Balderas-Cejudo et al. (2021) reinforce this observation, emphasizing the significance of the senior foodie market (aged 65 and older) as a demographic with high purchasing power and significant spending at destinations. Kivela and Crofts (2005) establish a typology of visitors based on three key aspects: the tourist's gastronomic knowledge, the importance of gastronomy in their choice of destination, and their gastronomic experiences during their trip. Based on these factors, Kivela and Crofts (2005) identify two segments of tourists: those with limited interest in local gastronomy who are more attracted to other destination resources, and those with a significant interest in learning about and tasting the local gastronomy.

McKercher et al. (2008) propose a model that classifies visitors by asking three questions: whether the visitor considers themselves a gastronomic tourist, whether they are interested in sampling the local gastronomic variety, and whether they consider the local gastronomy a primary motivation for choosing the destination. Based on these criteria, they identify five groups of travelers: defined culinary tourists, probable culinary tourists, possible culinary tourists, unlikely culinary tourists, and non-culinary tourists. Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016) present a segmentation model based on three questions: the extent to which the search for new gastronomic experiences motivates travel, the

influence of gastronomy on destination choice, and the relationship between satisfaction and the destination's gastronomy. According to the importance of these factors, they categorize tourists into three main segments. The first group, "experiencers," consists of tourists for whom gastronomy is a crucial aspect of their trip selection. The second group, "enjoyers," includes tourists with a moderate interest in gastronomy, although it is not a decisive factor for them. The third group, "survivors," comprises tourists who do not consider gastronomy important in their destination choice. This segmentation approach is commonly used in scientific literature; for instance, Pérez-Gálvez et al. (2020) apply this framework in their study of gastronomic tourism in Popayan, Colombia.

Finally, Robinson et al. (2018) group tourists according to their participation in different gastronomic activities that take place in the destination. In this way, these authors group visitors into two groups, erudite and ignorant, with the expenditure made by the tourists on local gastronomy determining their inclusion in one of these groups.

According to the previous literature, the hypothesis to be tested would be the following:

H1: Tourists show different attitudes towards gastronomy as a determining variable in the choice of destination.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the gastronomic tourist

According to Ignatov and Smith (2006), the segment of tourists who prioritize gastronomy in their choice of destination tends to be around 45 years old, possess a high level of education, and have a medium to medium-high income. Similarly, McKercher et al. (2008) suggest that culinary tourists typically have university-level education, moderate to high purchasing power, and fall within the age range of 35 to 45 years old. Correia et al. (2013) add to this profile, highlighting that women exhibit a higher level of interest in local gastronomy compared to men, often accompanied by a higher level of education. Additionally, Abdelhamied (2011) identifies culinary tourists as individuals with higher education and high-income levels. These findings are supported by studies conducted by Getz et al. (2014), Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016), Jiménez Beltrán et al. (2016), Levitt et al. (2019), and Pérez et al. (2020), which conclude that culinary tourists typically possess a high level of education (often university-educated), are aged between 35 and 45 years old, and have a medium to high income.

The sociodemographic profile of gastronomic tourists, as indicated by the analysis of scientific literature, is highly specific and serves as a valuable tool for various tourist destinations. This distinct profile comprises tourists with considerable purchasing power and significant spending capacity at the destination, thereby amplifying the economic impact that a destination can garner if it opts to develop gastronomic tourism (Du Rand et al., 2003). This aspect holds particular significance, especially for developing countries like Ecuador.

According to the scientific literature, the following research hypotheses can be put forward:

H2: The most favorable attitude towards local gastronomy increases with the age of the tourist.

H3: Travelers with a special interest in gastronomy have a higher educational background.

H4: Tourists more interested in local food have a higher income level and generate a greater economic impact.

Perceived value of the gastronomic tourist

The development of an attractive gastronomic proposal in a certain destination implies the possibility of a tourist development that can have a significant effect on other sectors and activities. Likewise, this development allows tourist activities to diversify and, in this way, break the seasonality in some tourist destinations. However, in order to achieve this development, it is necessary to reinforce an appropriate public-private policy where differentiating gastronomy is promoted to achieve the development of gastronomic tourism. This can be achieved through appropriate facilities, such as restaurants, routes, infrastructures, etc., as well as by promoting the development of these culinary activities (Ignatov and Smith, 2006).

Research such as that of Hernandez-Rojas et al. (2021) indicates that the quality of raw materials is a factor taken into account by gastro tourists. The fact of having a Protected Certificate of Origin (as in Andalucía) increases the gastronomic attractiveness of the destinations. It would be interesting to combine gastronomic experiences with others, such as wine tourism, thus allowing the visit to that place to become an exclusive and differentiated experience (Haven-Tang, and Jones, 2005). However, in order to achieve a memorable gastronomic experience, it is necessary that the culinary offer of that destination would be both recognizable and identifiable. In this sense, there must be a significant number of catering establishments that provide the visitor with a sufficient offer to make the gastronomic experience unforgettable (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2017a). To this end, it is essential to develop culinary processes based on tradition and innovation that let the conservation of gastronomy tradition and new gastronomic proposals (Getz et al., 2014; Kenji, 2016; Mgonje et al., 2016).

According to the scientific literature, the hypothesis to be tested would be the following:

H5: Tourists' perception of local food is significantly different, being more highly valued by tourists with a special interest in gastronomy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Questionnaire design

The methodology employed in this investigation involves fieldwork with a representative sample of tourists visiting the city of Granada, Spain. This approach aims to ascertain their opinions regarding local gastronomy and their motivations related to gastronomic tourism. The final format of the survey was achieved starting with a primary survey, and across to serial purifications, which involved making a pre-test to a sample of tourists who had comparable traits with the final sample. The aim was to reach a definitive version of the questionnaire in which the questions were as clear as possible and the answers were adjusted, in order to fulfill the aims, set out in the research, and the greatest possible specificity so that in this way the interview with the tourists surveyed does not last long. The surveys were conducted at various culinary

establishments and historical sites throughout the city, based on the assumption that respondents had spent sufficient time at the destination to provide informed opinions (Correia et al., 2013; Remoaldo et al., 2014). The questionnaire used in this study aligns with previous research by López-Guzmán et al. (2017), Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016), Pérez-Gálvez et al. (2017), and Kim et al. (2009), addressing various aspects of gastronomy and tourism.

For the design of the survey, starting with a beginning set of items, a filtering *procedure divided into three* was realized: (1) a researcher specialized in tourism examined the suggested items; (2) the resulting survey was reanalyzed by those in charge of tourist activity in the city of Granada; (3) a pre-test was carried out on 50 people. In the course of the debugging phase, it was discovered that respondents had certain problems understanding some questions, proceeding to correct them, and then, once the questions and the viability of the questionnaire had been tested, the final fieldwork was accomplished.

The questionnaire is structured into three main sections. *The first section:* focuses on gathering information about the trip or visit, including the duration of the stay and the type of accommodation utilized. *The second section;* addresses gastronomic aspects, exploring the significance of gastronomy in the respondent's travels, the motivations influencing a positive gastronomic experience, interest in discovering typical dishes of Granada's cuisine, and an assessment of the characteristics associated with the dishes sampled and the treatment received at the establishments visited. *The third section* encompasses sociodemographic characteristics of tourists, such as gender, place of origin, age, economic status, and educational background. Various types of questions were employed in the survey, including yes/no questions, open and closed questions, and questions utilizing a five-point Likert scale (1 = very little importance; 5 = very important).

Fieldwork

The questionnaires were carried out by a group of pollsters formed for this work and linked to the University of Córdoba. The surveys were passed in two languages - English and Spanish – which were selected according to the visitors' mother tongue and their origin, in order to cover as many tourists as possible.

A sum of 1,683 surveys, of which 1,612 were valid, were completed between April and August 2019. In order to try to obtain the widest possible range of people and situations the questionnaires were carried out on different days and at different times and in diverse gastronomy establishments in the tourist zone of the city of Granada. A non-probabilistic technical sampling was used, which is commonly employed in this type of research, in which respondents are accessible to be surveyed in a given space and time (Finn et al., 2000). The decision to use non-probabilistic sampling was driven by the need to efficiently capture a broad spectrum of tourist experiences within the constraints of time and resource availability. This methodological choice aimed to provide insights into tourists' perceptions of local gastronomy and their socio-demographic characteristics in a practical and accessible manner. Specifically, Convenience sampling was chosen due to its practicality and efficiency in gathering data from a diverse group of tourists. We did not stratify by gender, age, nationality, education, or by any other variable as this stratification is not found in preceding studies. The questionnaire did not have a high rejection rate. In no case, the duration of the survey was longer than 10 minutes.

Research simple and sampling error

The basis of our investigation is the tourist visiting the city of Granada (Spain), despite whether or not he stays overnight, or whether or not he visits other nearby places. Concerning how many tourists arrive in the city of Granada, we made use of the Hotel Occupancy Survey of the National Institute of Statistics in Spain (INE, 2019), with a total of 1,873,753 in 2018. Therefore, and as a guideline, if in this investigation, a simple random sampling had been employed, the sampling error for a confidence level of 95,0% would be $\pm 2,44\%$ (Table 1).

Table 1. Tourist Satisfaction

Conceptual Definition	Operational definition	Markers	Items	Measuring scale
Defined as the comparison of foreign tourists' expectations with their perceptions regarding the actual contact of the service, based on its quality and tourist offer.	The variable will be evaluated through a 10-item questionnaire (2 for service expectations, 4 for service quality, 4 for the tourism supply indicator).	Service Expectations	1	Ordinal
		Attributes of the services offered	2-24	
		Destination-specific attributes	25-32	

Data analysis

The tabulation and statistical analysis of the data were performed using SPSS v. 24 software. Statistical techniques were employed to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire responses, including Cronbach's alpha for reliability assessment. The multivariate technique of grouping cases (K-means clusters) was utilized to explore similarities or differences among respondents based on variables indicative of their varying levels of interest in gastronomy as a travel variable. To validate the clustering of cases obtained in the segmentation analysis, discriminant analysis was applied. Furthermore, statistical measures and association analyses were conducted on the obtained clusters or segments to examine potential patterns of association between variables, utilizing two-dimensional contingency tables. Additionally, non-parametric statistical procedures such as Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were employed to analyze significant differences between groups within the sample (Kruskal and Wallis, 1952; Mann and Whitney, 1947). The Kruskal Wallis H statistic allows us to contrast that the means compared are not equal between the different clusters, but it does not allow us to specify where the differences detected are to be found. To find out which mean differs from the other, the Mann-Whitney U statistic is used. These rigorous analytical methods were crucial for extracting meaningful insights and identifying relevant patterns within the dataset.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Segmentation of the gastronomic tourist

The analysis of interest in gastronomy was conducted by asking respondents to rate the importance of gastronomy in their travels using three items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the final scale was found to be 0.878, indicating commendable internal consistency among the scale's elements. This coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating complete lack of internal consistency and 1 indicating total redundancy among the items. Morales-Vallejo et al. (2003) suggest a minimum value of 0.5 for basic research, as in our case, and above 0.85 for diagnostic research. The critical level (p) of the Friedman χ^2 statistic (204.061) for testing the null hypothesis that all elements of the scale have the same mean was found to be less than 0.05, rejecting the hypothesis of equal means among the elements.

In academia, various segmentation approaches have been utilized. One common method in tourism literature is factor-cluster analysis (Park et al., 2009; Prayag, 2010). However, this approach has been criticized for its shortcomings, including erroneous assumptions, loss of original information, and abstract interpretation (Dolnicar, 2008; Dolnicar et al., 2012; Prayag and Hosany, 2014). In the present investigation, the segmentation approach suggested by Dolnicar (2008) was employed, which involves direct grouping of the original scores. This approach maintains a greater degree of the original data and provides a more accurate segmentation (Prayag and Hosany, 2014; Sheppard, 1996; Dolnicar, 2002).

Recent literature recommends utilizing a hierarchical followed by a non-hierarchical method for clustering (Hair et al., 2010). Accordingly, two hierarchical algorithms, namely full bond and Ward's method, were initially applied using squared Euclidean distances to identify possible clusters in the data. Examination of the resulting agglomeration schedules and dendrograms suggested two-, three-, or four-segment solutions. Subsequently, a non-hierarchical K-means cluster analysis was performed, confirming the appropriateness of the three-segment solution.

Following the model of Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016), each cluster was categorized into survivor tourists, enjoyers, and experiencers. As shown in Table 2, the first cluster comprised 10.8% of the surveyed tourists, exhibiting significantly low scores on all three items. This segment, characterized by low interest in gastronomy, was labeled as survivor tourists. The second group, representing 34.7% of the sample, exhibited intermediate scores on the items, indicating moderate gastronomic interest, and was labeled as enjoyers tourists. The third group, comprising 54.5% of respondents, demonstrated high scores on all three items, indicating a greater interest in gastronomy, and was labeled as experiencers tourists. The H statistic of Kruskal-Wallis (1952) confirmed that the compared means were not equal across different segments, while the U statistic of Mann-Whitney (1947) was used to identify specific differences among means.

Table 2. Segmentation of tourist based on their interest in gastronomy

Gastronomy Attitude	Food Clusters			H-Kruskal Wallis	
	Survivors	Enjoyers	Experiencers	X ²	Sig.
How important is gastronomy in your motivation to travel?	1.68 ¹	3.26 ¹	4.25 ¹⁾	1.027.886	<0.000
How important is the search for gastronomic experiences when choosing a destination for the visitor?	1.56 ¹	2.99 ¹	4.43 ¹	1.108.484	<0.000
How important is the gastronomic experience in the satisfaction of your trip?	2.08 ¹	3.49 ¹	4.58 ¹	915.467	<0.000

The resulting data supports the acceptance of one of the proposed working hypotheses: tourists exhibit varied attitudes toward gastronomy as a determining factor in choosing their destination (H1). The three groups identified align with categories described in existing scientific literature, wherein authors segment groups indicating that at least one group exhibits a high level of interest in gastronomy, while another group shows minimal interest.

Therefore, what this research terms "experiencers tourists" finds its counterpart in previous studies. Specifically, Hjalaberg (2004) refers to this group as experimental gastronomy tourists, while McKercher et al. (2008) identify them as definitive culinary tourists. Conversely, the group labeled as "survivors tourists" corresponds to categories described differently in previous research. Hjalaberg (2004) designates one of these groups as recreational, McKercher et al. (2008) categorize them as non-culinary tourists, and Thompson and Prideaux (2009) classify them as not interested.

The result of the segmentation has been validated through a discriminant analysis to know the percentage of subjects that are correctly assigned. Table 3 shows a contingency table between the individuals belonging to each segment and those who are correctly classified according to this analysis. What is relevant is that the segmentation into three groups correctly classifies 99.9% of the individuals.

Table 3. Summary of discriminant analysis

	Food Clusters			Total
	Survivors	Enjoyers	Experiencers	
Absolute Value				
Survivors	174	0	0	174
Enjoyers	0	557	2	559
Experiencers	0	0	879	879
Percentage				
Survivors	100%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Enjoyers	0.0%	99.6%	0.0%	100%
Experiencers	0.0%	0.0%	100%	100%

Socio-demographic characteristics of the visitor

Of the 1,612 people interviewed, 40.5% were men and 59.5% were women, with no significant differences in data collection throughout the different days. The visitors surveyed are, in general terms, young people. Table 4 shows how more than 70% of the sample is under 40 years old, with 48.5% of the total sample being under 30 years old. Regarding age, there are differences according to the segments of tourists identified (Kruskal Wallis H statistic = 13.020; $p = 0.001$). Given the data in Table 4, there is an inverse relationship between age and having a favorable attitude towards local gastronomy (gamma coefficient = -0.097; $p = 0.008$). This result does not allow us to contrast the proposed research hypothesis: a more favorable attitude towards local gastronomy increases as the age of the tourist increases (H2).

Table 4. Socio-demographic profile of tourists in the city of Granada

Variables	Categories	Gastronomic segments			Total
		Survivors	Enjoyers	Experiencers	
Gender (N = 1.604)	Man	45.4%	40.8%	39.2%	40.5%
	Woman	54.6%	59.2%	60.6%	59.5%
Age (N = 1.582)	Under 30 years old	54.1%	43.5%	50.6%	48.5%
	30-39 years	15.1%	24.1%	26.0%	24.1%
	40-49 years	11.0%	13.9%	12.3%	12.7%
	50-59 years	12.8%	12.4%	8.0%	10.1%
	60 years and over	7.0%	6.0%	3.1%	4.6%
Level of education (N = 1.597)	Primary education	3.4%	4.9%	5.2%	4.9%
	Secondary education	19.0%	22.3%	17.0%	19.0%
	University education	32.8%	34.4%	38.2%	36.3%
	Master/PhD	44.8%	38.4%	39.6%	39.8%
Occupation (N = 1.585)	Free professional	6.5%	7.3%	7.0%	7.1%
	Entrepreneur	5.3%	2.9%	5.8%	4.7%
	Civil servant	10.0%	8.9%	10.0%	9.7%
	Full-time employee	31.8%	38.1%	40.1%	38.5%
	Part-time employee	6.5%	6.0%	4.6%	5.3%
	Freelancer	4.1%	4.6%	4.7%	4.6%
	Student	27.1%	24.8%	21.8%	23.4%
	Unemployed	4.1%	3.8%	2.9%	3.3%
	Retired	4.1%	2.9%	2.1%	2.6%
Place of origin (N = 1.604)	Housework	0.6%	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
	Spain	41.5%	43.9%	51.5%	47.8%
	Rest of Europe	40.9%	35.6%	28.1%	32.1%
	North America	8.8%	8.3%	8.8%	8.6%
	Latin America	5.3%	6.7%	6.7%	6.6%
	Rest of the World	3.5%	5.4%	4.9%	4.9%

The level of academic training of the respondents is high, as shown in Table 4. A total of 76.1% of respondents reported having a university degree or postgraduate qualification. When analyzing the level of education according to age, a statistically significant association was detected between both variables (gamma coefficient = 0.103; $p = 0.001$), with older tourists having the highest education. On the other hand, no differences were detected by gastronomic segments (Kruskal Wallis H statistic = 3.190; $p = 0.203$). These results do not support the hypothesis (H3) that travelers with a higher level of education are more interested in gastronomy.

In terms of the professional category of the surveyed tourists, full-time salaried workers and students stand out. As for the place of origin of the visitors, national tourists represent 47.8%, followed by tourists from the rest of Europe 32.1%. By country, visitors from the United States (6.7%), Germany (6.0%), France (5.2%), Italy (4.6%), and the United Kingdom (4.1%) stand out, from a total of 63 countries. Thus, foreign tourists end up representing 52.2% of the total.

Characteristics of the trip

The analysis of the monthly level of family income reveals that 14.1% of the surveyed visitors declare that they have an income of less than 1,000€ per month, compared to 44.7% who affirm that they earn more than 2,500€ (27.6% of the sample declare an income of more than 3,500€) Table 5. These data reflect that tourists who visit the city of Granada have a high or very high purchasing power, with no differences according to the interest shown in local gastronomy (H statistic of Kruskal Wallis = 3.222; $p = 0.200$). Regarding the planned average daily expenditure, it stands out that 41.9% of respondents declared a daily expenditure of between 25€ and 75€, with no significant differences between the gastronomic segments (H statistic of Kruskal Wallis = 0.572; $p = 0.751$). These results do not support the hypothesis (H₄) that tourists more interested in the gastronomy of the destination tend to have greater purchasing power and generate a greater economic impact.

The study of the degree of repetition of the trip highlights an average rate of repetition of the visit to Granada (42.8%), being slightly higher in the case of tourists more interested in local gastronomy (experiencers, with a repetition rate of 54.8%). In this sense, significant differences can be seen, at a 90% confidence level, for the rest of the tourist segments (Kruskal Wallis H statistic = 5.572; $p = 0.062$). Among the visitors interviewed, only 10.4% state that they do not stay overnight in the city, and 75.8% stay at least two nights. The average rate of overnight stays was 5.9 nights, with no differences between the tourist segments (Kruskal Wallis H statistic = 2.815; $p = 0.245$). With the type of accommodation

used, the most required is the tourist apartment, followed by the 4 or 5-star hotel and by the 2 or 3-star hotel -table 5-. It should be noted that 25.6% of tourists spend the night in luxury or semi-luxury hotels. This data is interesting for the tourist managers of the city as it is an indication of the possible existence of a small luxury segment.

Table 5. Trip characteristics

Variables	Categories	Gastronomic segments			Total
		Survivors	Enjoyers	Experiencers	
Repeat journey (N = 1.612)	No	60.3%	59.7%	54.9%	57.2%
	Yes, 1 to 3 times	28.7%	25.4%	27.0%	26.6%
	Yes, more than 3 times	10.9%	14.8%	18.1%	16.2%
Income level (N = 1.487)	Less than €700	9.6%	4.0%	5.5%	5.4%
	From €700 to €999	5.7%	7.3%	10.1%	8.7%
	From €1.000 to €1.499	15.9%	18.6%	19.5%	18.8%
	From €1.500 to €2.499	24.2%	23.4%	21.4%	22.4%
	From €2.500 to €3.500	19.1%	17.6%	16.4%	17.1%
	More than €3.500	25.5%	29.1%	27.1%	27.6%
Average daily expenditure (N = 1.597)	Less than €25	7.0%	6.3%	4.3%	5.3%
	From €25 to €50	21.1%	20.5%	20.7%	20.7%
	From €51 to €75	14.6%	21.2%	22.4%	21.2%
	From €76 to €100	18.7%	15.2%	15.1%	15.5%
	From €101 to €125	14.0%	12.7%	10.6%	11.7%
	From €126 to €150	9.4%	7.2%	8.0%	7.9%
	From €151 to €175	2.3%	2.7%	5.6%	4.3%
	From €176 to €200	5.3%	4.9%	3.5%	4.2%
More than €200	7.6%	9.2%	9.6%	9.3%	
Stay (N = 1.589)	No overnight stay	9.8%	10.6%	10.4%	10.4%
	One night	12.7%	12.4%	14.9%	13.8%
	Two nights	38.7%	35.5%	38.4%	37.4%
	Three nights	24.3%	24.0%	21.0%	22.4%
	More than 3 nights	14.5%	17.5%	15.3%	16.0%
Overnight stay (N = 1.272)	4-5- stars hotel	24.8%	24.3%	26.5%	25.6%
	2-3- stars hotel	18.0%	20.9%	17.9%	18.9%
	1 star hotel/guesthouse	19.5%	13.9%	12.4%	13.7%
	Family/ Friends' house	10.5%	13.3%	11.5%	12.0%
	Tourist flat	27.1%	27.6%	31.7%	29.8%

Evaluation of the attribute of Granada's gastronomy

Visitors were requested to evaluate a list of attributes or aspects of local gastronomy to identify strengths and areas for improvement (Table 6). Notably, the attributes receiving the highest ratings include traditional gastronomy, service and hospitality, quality of dishes, and the ambiance of establishments.

Conversely, the study indicates that there is room for improvement in facilities and innovation, particularly concerning the introduction of new flavors in dishes. The analysis by gastronomic segments reveals a significantly different perception of Granada's gastronomy by tourists (Table 7). Thus, all gastronomic attributes are highly valued by the segment of tourists with a greater interest in gastronomy (Enjoyers and Experiencers).

Table 6. Evaluation of the attributes of the gastronomy in Granada

Attributes	Media	Ranking
Quality of the dishes	3.82	3
Prices	3.73	5
Facilities	3.65	6
The environment of the establishments	3.82	3
Innovation and new flavors in dishes	3.39	7
Service and hospitality	3.88	2
Traditional gastronomy	3.94	1
Cronbach's Alpha	0.859	

Table 7. Evaluation of the attributes of Granada's gastronomy according to gastronomic segments

Attributes of the gastronomy of Granada	Food Clusters			H-Kruskal Wallis	
	Survivors	Enjoyers	Experiencers	X ²	Sig.
Quality of the dishes	3.17 ¹	3.67 ¹	4.04 ¹	166.699	<0.000
Prices	3.19 ¹	3.63 ¹	3.91 ¹	81.720	<0.000
Facilities	3.27 ¹	3.57 ¹	3.77 ¹	51.100	<0.000
Establishment's environment	3.42 ¹	3.71 ¹	3.97 ¹	59.743	<0.000
Innovation and new flavors in the dishes	2.86 ¹	3.24 ¹	3.58 ¹	84.446	<0.000
Service and hospitality	3.46 ¹	3.77 ¹	4.03 ¹	53.846	<0.000
Traditional gastronomy	3.41 ¹	3.80 ¹	4.14 ¹	99.157	<0.000

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have led to the identification of three distinct segments of tourists based on the importance they attribute to gastronomy in their trips. These three groups align with categories described in existing scientific literature, where authors delineate segments indicating that at least one group exhibits a strong interest in gastronomy, while another group displays minimal interest. Therefore, what this research terms "experiencers tourists" corresponds to categories identified in previous studies. Specifically, Hjalaberg (2004) refers to them as *experimental gastronomy tourists*, while McKercher et al. (2008) characterize them as *definitive culinary tourists*. Conversely, the group labeled as "survivor tourists" corresponds to categories described differently in previous research. Hjalaberg (2004) designates one of these groups as *recreational*, McKercher et al. (2008) categorize them as *non-culinary tourists*, and Thompson and Prideaux (2009) classify them as *not interested*.

The results of this research reveal a higher participation of women. This is in line with the results of previous studies which state that women prefer gastronomically and culturally rich destinations to a greater extent than men (Remoaldo et al., 2014; Ramires et al., 2018). However, other research supports the opposite idea (Chen and Huang, 2018; Adie et al., 2018; Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2019). In terms of age, the results reveal that they are generally young tourists. This is in line with data from previous studies, such as Remoaldo et al. (2014), Antón et al. (2017), and Chen and Huang (2018). This differs from other research which shows a predominance of higher age ranges, for example: Correia et al. (2013) and Ramires et al. (2018).

In general terms, the level of academic education of the respondents is high. This result coincides with the results obtained by several previous studies conducted on this type of destinations (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2017a; Ramires et al., 2018; Adie et al., 2018). In addition, the results obtained show a higher number of visits by foreign tourists, coinciding with the findings of previous research conducted in other destinations with similar characteristics (Nguyen and Cheung, 2014; Báez-Montenegro et al., 2015). Likewise, it should be noted that the results obtained indicate that visitors to the city of Granada tend to have high purchasing power. Therefore, these results would be in line with those obtained by previous research (Antón et al., 2017; Chen and Huang, 2018; Ramires et al., 2018).

Based on the results obtained from the visitors' assessment of the different attributes of the local gastronomy, it is recommended to strengthen the presence of cultural aspects and the taste of the dishes in the local gastronomy. In addition, work should be done on the creation of plans to improve the facilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, in terms of the positioning of tourist destinations, gastronomic tourism is of vital importance because, for travelers, the gastronomic culture of the places they visit is increasingly important. Aspects such as visiting catering establishments or learning more about the gastronomy of a geographical area become motivations for travelers. In the present research, the connection between gastronomy and tourism has been analyzed in a destination with an important WHS, such as the city of Granada (Spain). Gastronomy, together with cultural and heritage tourism, has a certain incidence when analyzing tourist destinations, since tourists, when visiting a cultural destination, get to know the heritage of the place in addition to carrying out experiences of the senses. The relationship between gastronomy and culture is not surprising if we take into account that 76.1% of the tourists surveyed have a university or postgraduate degree.

Local gastronomy plays a direct role as a tourist attraction, being a relevant objective when visiting a tourist destination. This research affirms that visitors have different postures towards local gastronomy. Following the model of Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016) and taking into account the declared interest in gastronomy in travel, three types of tourists are obtained: survivors, enjoyers, and experiencers, where gastronomy is a key factor among tourists with a high gastronomic interest. Similarly, the greater interest in Grenadian gastronomy translates into significantly different perceptions about the attributes of local cuisine. Traditional gastronomy, service and hospitality, the quality of the dishes and the ambience of the establishments are more highly valued. The main practical application of this research is to know the attributes of the different visitor profiles that have been recognized and the valuation they make of local gastronomy. In this sense, and in making local gastronomy one more tool in the tourist competition, it is essential to create actions that support the improvement of facilities and innovation in the dishes. Indeed, the literature identifies a category of tourists known as "Foodies," who exhibit a strong passion for exploring diverse cuisines and frequently engage with food-related news and topics (Santos et al., 2020; Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2021; Gómez-Rico et al., 2021; Millan-Anaya et al., 2024).

One prevalent approach adopted by destinations is the organization of gastronomic festivals. These events serve as effective platforms for promoting the destination's tourist attractions, thereby contributing to local development (Pizzichini et al., 2021). Additionally, Bowen (2022) underscores the significance and opportunities presented by diaspora tourism for destinations and their stakeholders in the realm of promoting gastronomic tourism.

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