

Gastronomy, Tourism and Destination Differentiation: A Case Study in Spain

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Abstract: Gastronomy is becoming a key factor in the competitiveness of tourist destinations. The aim of this paper is to present an analysis of food tourism in the city of Cordoba (Spain) and its relation with the motivation. Similarly, the paper shows the connection between local cuisine and the satisfaction of tourists. The main results of this study reflect the high level of education of this kind of travelers, the importance of gastronomy for visiting this city and the satisfaction with both the local food and the rest of the resources available to tourists in the city. The main implication of this study could be the opportunity to design a tourism product and to promote the destination through its gastronomy.

JEL Classifications: L83, O52, Q10

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1. Introduction

There have been widespread changes in supply and demand throughout the tourism industry during the first few years of the 21st century. New trends such as low-cost airlines, the ubiquity of the internet and the effects it has on tourism, the movement towards shorter and more frequent holidays, and the desire to visit newer and more exotic destinations, are bringing about major changes in tourist destinations and in the structure of the tourism industry. Tourists are increasingly motivated by new attractions and novel experiences.

Until now, tourism has been principally driven by just one of the senses - sight - at the expense of the other senses. This has converted the traveller into a mere observer of dramatic landscapes, impressive architecture, or pictures of art in a gallery. This implies that the tourist has perhaps not fully used his or her other senses when travelling. Tourists are now beginning to react against this strong sensual bias by demanding holidays that stimulate the other senses. Gastronomy tourism and wine tourism have now emerged to meet this new demand. Wine tourism offers a rich array of sensory experiences that satisfy taste, smell, touch, sight and hearing (Getz, 2000). Gastronomy tourism can also stimulate the senses, above all taste. It has a cultural value and can be seen as the expression of a place's social and cultural capital (Bertela, 2011). Tradition notwithstanding, there is still a need for innovation in the products offered by gastronomy tourism, both to increase added value and to compete with other tourist destinations (Richards, 2002). The visitor bonds better with his or her chosen destination, and better appreciates its character and culture by sampling the local

cuisine, more so than when the visitor is merely an observer (Cohen and Avieli, 2004) and the tourist has a relation between the travel dining experience and the local gastronomy (Chang *et al.*, 2011). Food and wine form an integral part of local life, and the history, the culture, the economy and the society of a given area, and have been shaped through history by local lifestyles. This intensifies the contrast between one locality and another, and between rural tradition and urban modernity (Mitchell and Hall, 2006). Thus culinary tourism is a possible competitive advantage and an area's gastronomy reflects the cultural identity and heritage of that specific place (Henderson, 2009).

The objective of this paper is to present an analysis of gastronomy tourism and of the principal motivations of the tourist, with the aim of understanding the role that cuisine plays in motivating tourists and in determining their choice of destination (Henderson, 2009). It also presents the results of a study into culinary tourism in Córdoba (Spain), and it gives a profile of the visitor to Córdoba whose prime interest is to sample its gastronomy. In the second part of this paper, the current literature is summarised, the geographic area of the study is outlined in the third part, the methodologies are listed in part four, and the main results are given in part five.

2. Background

A series of important papers have been published which study the phenomenon of gastronomy tourism and which try to deal with the needs of this new type of tourism. The most important among them is Hjalgar and Richards's review (2002) which brings together the conclusions of a series of works published by experts in the field of gastrotourism; Boniface's paper (2003); Long's review (2004), which also tries to describe and characterise food tourism; Cohen and Avieli's studies (2004); and the two publications by Professor Hall, which investigate gastronomy (Hall *et al.* 2003) and wine (Hall *et al.* 2004).

Tourists have some basic needs, whether they find themselves at home or whether they are travelling; the most basic of which is to eat. Tourists are increasingly interested in consuming dishes and food products that are characteristic of the area they are visiting. Consequently, a new type of tourist has emerged, one who is specifically interested in trying local food products. Hall *et al.* (2003) define the food tourist as someone whose primary motivation is to sample local food products. This might mean visits to primary or secondary food producers, attendance at food festivals, or visits to restaurants to try dishes typical of the area, thus reinforcing the importance of local food and the local actors involved in the supply chain (Montanari and Staniscia, 2009). Gastronomy is recognised as a part of the local culture of which the tourist is exposed to and experiences, as an element in the promotion of tourism, as a means of local economic development, and as a factor which influences the local economy and patterns of consumption (Tikkanen 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to define the role and the importance of food as an element which attracts tourists and as one of the basic elements of the area (Fox, 2007).

Academic literature proposes that gastronomy and wine interact with tourism in four distinct manners (Tikkanen, 2007): as an attraction in its own right which the destination can use to promote itself; as one component of the tourism product, in which it is used to establish food routes or wine routes; as an experience, due to the existence of one or a few places where the cuisine on offer has acquired a very high level and has become famous in its own right, for example thanks to the presence of a handful of master chefs; and as a component of the local culture, in which it is sustained by a series of food or wine festivals. This implies that food tourism is better developed in localities where the local cuisine is better connected with the local culture, and *vice versa* (Riley, 2005). Following on from Okumus, *et al.* (2007) cuisine has great potential for the development of tourist destinations and it is therefore fundamental to establish adequate marketing tools in order to increase the number of tourists. By extension, food tourism stresses the importance of using local ingredients, the quality of primary foodstuffs, the preservation and teaching of traditional cooking methods and the enjoyment of the end product. Nevertheless, various resources are required for

culinary tourism to flourish. The presence of good restaurants is one obvious requirement. So too are food routes and wine routes; organised activities such as food and wine tasting events in wineries or restaurants combine education, publicity and leisure; events such as food and wine festivals; and the recommendations and advice given by organisations such as the Michelin Guide, which can endorse the quality of the local cuisine on offer (Smith and Xiao, 2008). In this way, food routes and culinary tourism combine the local food resources together with cultural and environmental factors, and must also count on the presence of actors such as restaurants, hotels and travel agencies (Corigliano, 2002).

Following on from Henderson (2009), there are four possible relationships between food and tourism: first, food as a tourism product; second, the marketing of food to tourists; third, food tourism as instrument for general development in the destination; and four, implications for practitioners.

We can identify four distinct types of motivation: physical, cultural, social, and prestige (Fields, 2002). Physical motivations arise from our simple need to eat. Cultural motivations arise from the desire to better understand a given locality or culture. Our desire for social interaction urges us to connect with the people of a given area. Finally, we can earn admiration and prestige from our greater knowledge of foreign cultures. The motivations underlying the desire to travel have been studied in depth by Fodness (1994) and by Gorssens (2000). Tikkanen (2007) suggests five connections between gastronomy, tourism and motivation: food as a tourist attraction, food as part of the tourism product, food as an experience in tourism, food as part of the local culture, and the relationship between tourism and food production.

Quan and Wang (2004) propose a conceptual model of the tourist experience, given that when a tourist takes a trip, he or she does so in order to satisfy various primary and secondary motivations. These motivations will depend upon the lifestyle and activities of the tourist in their normal life. Travel can satisfy these motivations by allowing the tourist to escape routine and have new experiences (contrast), to have experiences occasionally tried at home (intensification), or to consume food and dishes that are familiar while away from home (extension). Gastronomy can be classified as the primary motivation of the tourist who travels specifically to experiment with the local cuisine, and as a secondary motivation when the tourist considers the local cuisine as an important, but not the only, option among other attractions available in the chosen destination. As indicated above, gastronomy can interact with these primary or secondary motivations by contrast, by intensification or by extension with the everyday life of the tourist. Thus we can speak of contrast when a tourist samples food and dishes completely different from those available at home. This contrast is made possible by the conversion of distant localities into important international travel destinations, such as Hong Kong or Lima, due to the force of attraction (including culinary attraction) they exert on the traveller. We can speak of intensification when the tourist tries dishes they frequently consume at home (for example, the tourist who regularly eats Italian food at home and travels to Rome), or of extension when the tourist eats dishes that differ little from what they eat in their normal lives. For example, the tourist who chooses dishes that are typical of their home country and which they habitually eat at home.

3. Geographical Description of the Area Studied

The city of Córdoba is in Andalucía (Spain), and has a population of approximately 325,000. Its economy is based mainly on the service sector, an important part of which is tourism. The strength of the tourism industry is due to the rich historical heritage of the city centre, which was declared a World Heritage Site in 1994. The old town is dominated by the Cathedral-Mosque, which itself was declared a World Heritage Site in 1984. Córdoba is one of the most important destinations for cultural tourism, and thousands of visitors come each year to experience the heritage, history and culture of the city. Tables 1 and 2 list the number of Spanish and foreign visitors recorded in the city, and the duration of their stays in the city in the period 2006 - 2010.

Table 1 Changes in the number of tourists visiting Córdoba 2006 - 2010

Year	Total	Spanish visitors	Foreign visitors
2006	726,674	473,817	252,857
2007	754,130	464,327	289,803
2008	706,112	433,349	272,772
2009	661,147	419,056	242,091
2010	697,139	418,801	278,338

Data Source: National Statistics Institute of Spain (2011)

Table 2 Overnight stays in Córdoba by tourists 2006 - 2010

Year	Total	Spanish visitors	Foreign visitors
2006	1,137,897	773,890	364,007
2007	1,194,462	772,076	422,386
2008	1,134,349	728,470	405,879
2009	1,058,241	697,681	360,560
2010	1,103,093	692,483	410,610

Data Source: National Statistics Institute of Spain (2011)

Córdoba's gastronomy is characterised by Christian, Jewish and, above all, Muslim influences, and the city has thus been able to develop and consolidate its particular identity. The Arab presence has undoubtedly been the most important influence on the city's cuisine. The use of local primary products, the most outstanding of which is olive oil, is particularly important, thus reinforcing the importance of food as a part of the identity and development of an area (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Córdoba lies in the heart of the world's most important olive growing region, and olive oil finds its way into many of the dishes most typical of the region.

The gastronomy of Córdoba is also characterised by the style of its eating establishments, the so-called *tabernas*. These are typically located in old houses and are decorated in the local Andalusian style, thus integrating the architectural and historical heritage of the city with its culinary traditions. *Tabernas* are mostly found in the historic centre of the city, and tourists can therefore enjoy the city's historical heritage with its culinary traditions. The *tabernas* of Córdoba also have a special method of food presentation. *Tapas* are small portions of a very wide range of dishes. The visitor can order numerous *tapas* and so experiment with a wide variety of different products and share them with other companions, which makes eating a more social occasion. *Tapas* represent a very old tradition in Spanish and Andalusian cuisine and are at the same time at the forefront, as they allow for experimentation and extension in the variety of recipes, tastes and dishes that can be presented to the consumer. Furthermore, the concept of *tapas* has been successfully exported, and nowadays *tapas* establishments can be found in many cities across the world. Together with restaurants and *tabernas* which reflect the cuisine typical of the area, within the tourist area of Córdoba there are also numerous restaurants which offer different kinds of cuisine (Mexican, Italian, Indian, etc.), alongside fast food establishments. This allows the tourist to fulfill his or her basic need to eat. Moreover, in the various tourist areas, there are also restaurants which attempt to imitate Córdoba's traditional establishments, creating a totally artificial environment, a far cry from authentic Córdoba cuisine. These restaurants allow a certain kind of tourist to eat in a completely false environment which attempts to recreate artificially the cultural traditions of Andalucía, encapsulating an array of clichés.

Furthermore, the gastronomy typical of the area is also allowing different kinds of related events to take place. Thus, in the last few years, events related to *salmorejo* (Córdoba's most

representative dish), the area's wine and, above all, the range of favours created through the use of olive oil have been developed. Moreover, this is allowing added value to be created for different products and, at the same time, giving rise to an increase in sales by primary producers (Hall and Sharples, 2008).

4. Methodology

A list of restaurants and food establishments which offer dishes typical of Córdoba and which are frequently visited by tourists was prepared. The selection of establishments was made after consultation with HOSTECOR (*Asociación Empresarial de Hostelería de Córdoba*) and with professional restaurateurs based in Córdoba. The final list contained approximately 40 establishments.

The questionnaire on the supply was personally handed into the selected establishments. A total of thirty-one questionnaires were accepted. The fieldwork was carried out in October and November 2009. Five questionnaires were developed and tested beforehand to ensure absence of question bias or error. The questionnaire consisted of 21 items asking about the features of the establishment, the tourists' place of origin, the ordering of typical dishes by tourists and the restaurateur's perception of culinary tourism in the city.

In relation to the demand, the data was also derived from questionnaires. Some 15 pre-questionnaires were developed and tested beforehand to ensure absence of question bias or error. The final questionnaire contained 22 questions which asked about the motivations for the visit to Córdoba, the choice of restaurant, their assessment of the city's cuisine, their opinion of the local wine, and their socio-economic status. The questionnaire was written and offered in Spanish and in English, in accordance with the subject's native language. The questionnaires were presented in restaurants selected at random from the final list, and the questionnaire was completed by diners during their time in the restaurant, with the assistance of professional researchers. A total of 207 valid questionnaires were obtained from ten different establishment where the main motivation for visiting Cordoba was gastronomy. The data was collected during October and November 2009.

The data obtained from the questionnaires was compiled into a database suitable for statistical analysis and was then analysed using univariant and bivariant analysis (contingency tables, chi-square contrasts and correlations).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Supply

In Table 3, information on the surveyed establishments is given, including the kind of business, the number of employees and the investment made in employee training.

Table 3 Kind of business, number of employees and investment made in employee training

Kind of business	Share (%) (N =31)	Number of Employees	Share (%) (N =30)	Employee Training	Share (%) (N =29)
Restaurant	45.16	1-4	20.0	Several times a year	31.0
<i>Taberna</i>	25.80	5-9	46.6	Once a year	20.7
Both Res. and <i>Tab.</i>	29.04	10-15	6.7	Very occasionally	41.4
		16-20	6.7	Never	6.9
		21 or more	20.0		

The results of the survey also show that 46.7% of tourists visit restaurants for both lunch and dinner, 40% for lunch and 13.3% for dinner. Similarly, 43.3% of restaurateurs believe that the majority of customers who are not from Córdoba come back to their restaurant again, which highlights the high degree of fidelity that the restaurant business in Córdoba enjoys. Furthermore, restaurateurs believe leisure to be their customers' main reason for visiting the city. Similarly, in the opinion of restaurateurs, a large proportion of tourists know either the majority (60%) or some (26.7%) of the dishes typical of the city and, as can be seen in Table 4, *Salmorejo* is the most well known.

Table 4 Most well known and frequently ordered dishes by tourists

In addition to *salmorejo*, the majority of restaurateurs believe that *rabo de toro* is also quite well known. Nevertheless, the other two typical Córdoba dishes (*flamenquín* and *pastel cordobés*) are still a long way from being widely recognised.

Dish	Percentage (%)
<i>Salmorejo</i>	96.6
<i>Rabo de toro</i>	86.2
<i>Flamenquín</i>	48.3
<i>Pastel Cordobés</i>	13.8
Other	3.4

Furthermore, very few tourists know about other dishes, such as *berenjenas con miel* (aubergine with honey) which demonstrates the need to promote other dishes typical of Córdoba and not just the two most well known. However, Córdoba does offer food which is recognisable to tourists, which is a fundamental aspect in promoting a tourist destination (Harrington and Ottenbacher, 2010). In terms of wine, the majority of restaurateurs (80%) stated that customers ask them to recommend a suitable wine to accompany their meal, although they also stated that customers do not specifically request that it be a *Montilla-Moriles* wine (the wine produced in this area). Only 35.7% of restaurants would say that tourists generally know and regularly order this variety of wine. In relation to tourist satisfaction, restaurateurs believe it to be high: not a single restaurant surveyed classified tourist satisfaction as low, although this option appeared in the questionnaire.

Table 5 Methods of promotion used by eating establishments

The main findings with regards to the kind of advertising used by restaurants are shown in Table 5. The vast majority of food establishments surveyed have their own website as a means of promoting their business. Together with internet presence, they also employ use of commercial brochures and advertising in various areas of the media, particularly at local level.

Kind of advertising	Percentage (%)
Own website	96
Brochures	84
Media	76
Tour operators	32
Own business	32
Attendance at fairs, exhibitions etc.	32

Table 6 Periods of high demand by tourists in eating establishments

As regards to the origin of their diners, the restaurateurs surveyed believe that, in addition to regular customers from the city of Córdoba, a significant number come from Madrid, followed by other areas of Andalucía (not Córdoba) and the rest of Europe. These results highlight the need to advertise more intensively to foreign tourists who are visiting the city so that they too can sample its cuisine. In terms of the relationship between the demand and the time of year, winter is generally when the lowest number of visitors is recorded, with work days being when there is the lowest demand. On the other hand, the periods with the largest flow of tourists visiting eating establishments are shown in Table 6.

Period	Percentage (%)
Easter	78.6
Long weekends and public holidays	71.4
Weekends	53.6
Christmas	35.7
Local holidays	25.0

5.2 Demand

Table 7 presents a socio-demographic profile of tourists whose primary motivation for visiting Córdoba was gastronomy and reasons given for the choice of establishment.

Table 7 Demographic profile of the sample group whose motivation was gastronomy and Reasons given for the choice of establishment

Variable		Share (%) (N=207)	Reasons for choices	Share (%) (N=207)
Gender	Male	55.1	Recommendation from friend or family	28.1
	Female	44.9	Recommendation from hotel staff	20.3
Age	<30	6.7	Revisit	18.3
	30-39	30.4	Chance finding	14.9
	40-49	23.2	Public information	7.3
	50-60	30.4	Internet	3.9
	>60	9.3	Others	7.2
Education	Left school at 16	12.1		
	Left School at 18	18.3		
	University	69.6		

There appears to be little association between the gastro-tourist and the socio-demographic variables included in this study: gender ($cc = 0.128$, $p = 0.486$); educational level ($cc = 0.264$, $p = 0.470$); or nationality ($cc = 0.217$, $p = 0.267$). However, the results presented here concur with the belief that visitors whose primary motivation is gastronomy often have a high level of education. Similarly, Spanish citizens represent 48.1% of the sample group, other European Union citizens 35.4%, visitors from the USA 7.4%, and other countries 9.1%.

These tourists travel for leisure (70.4%) and frequently stay in Córdoba for either one night (46.3%) or between two and six nights (38.9%). The duration of the visit to Córdoba is again in accordance with the findings of Kivela and Crofts (2006). Therefore, we consider that the promotion of culinary tourism could be very effective in increasing the number of visits to Córdoba.

The level of satisfaction reported by food tourists in relation to the gastronomy of Córdoba is significantly high. Using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied), all of those questioned reported satisfaction levels of 4 or 5, with an average of 4.74. This shows that Córdoba's cuisine is highly thought of, and the city should use this asset to increase both the number and the length of stays made by visitors to Córdoba. Furthermore, over 90% of those questioned reported themselves as being satisfied or very satisfied with their stay in the city. There was also a significant correlation between the level of satisfaction with the cuisine and the level of satisfaction expressed about the city itself (Spearman correlation 0.577, $p = 0.000$). In sum, the Córdoba's cuisine forms a large part of the image of the city as a whole.

Similarly, table 7 lists the reasons for choosing a given establishment. The majority based their choice on recommendations from friends, family or hotel staff. Another 18.5% said that they were revisiting an establishment they had already visited during a previous trip. Very few had acted upon recommendations made by advertising aimed at tourists or information available on the internet. There is a need to reinforce these areas of the media for tourists in order to bring to their attention the full range of dishes on offer. Some 73.3% of the people questioned said that this was their first visit to the establishment, therefore there is not a clear trend of visiting a particular establishment regularly, although this may be influenced by the very high numbers of first-time visitors to the city (59.9%).

Among the strengths of Córdoba's gastronomy (Table 8) were the quality of the dishes served, customer service and the atmosphere of the establishment. It is important to remember how

important and how highly valued these establishments are by the visitor, and how much they contribute to the image of Córdoba. A factor which could be improved is the range of dishes on offer, which differs little between establishments. This in turn impacts upon the quality-price ratio, which is another factor where improvement is needed.

Table 8 Strengths and weaknesses of Córdoba's cuisine

Strengths	Percentage(%)	Weaknesses	Percentage(%)
Quality of dishes	79.3	Value for money	20.8
Customercare	50.9	Variety	20.8
Atmosphere	45.3	Food quality	11.3
Value for money	18.9	Novelty	7.5
Novelty	18.9	Fixtures and fittings	7.5
Fixtures and fittings	13.2	Customer care	5.7

Another objective of the study was to assess the familiarity and preferences that visitors expressed towards the dishes typical of Córdoba. The responses are shown in table 9.

Table 9 Recognition and preferences expressed with regard to dishes typical of Córdoba

Dishes	Recognised (%)	Favourite (%)
Salmorejo	80.8	64.7
Rabo de toro	75.0	51.0
Flamenquín	36.5	21.6
Pastel cordobés	25.0	11.8
Others	19.2	13.7

As indicated in table 9, the most well known dishes continue to be *salmorejo* and *rabo de toro* in that order, both of which are highlighted as popular favourites. As previously mentioned, there is a need to innovate and extend the range of dishes on offer, as relatively few tourists - just 19.2% - were aware of alternatives such as *berenjenas con miel* (aubergines with honey) fried fish, or *tapas* in general.

Together with gastronomy, this study also deals with the connection between local cuisine and local wines produced in and around Córdoba. Visitors were asked to give their opinions on the wines produced in the region, above all *Montilla-Moriles* wines. Just over half of those tourists visiting Córdoba for its gastronomy were familiar with this variety of wine (53.8%), of which 67.5% had a high or very high opinion. We consider it essential to promote and produce more information about *Montilla-Moriles* wines, especially as 76% of visitors confirm that they ask for specific recommendations about which wines to drink with their meals.

6. Conclusions

Gastronomy tourism presents a great opportunity to promote and strengthen particular tourist destinations, especially as tourists are ever more aware of the cuisine available in their chosen destination. It is well known that the key objective of some tourists is to visit a particular eating establishment or to generally indulge themselves in the local cuisine. For many more, the quality of the cuisine on offer is an important part of the holiday experience as a whole. Destinations must bear this in mind when developing their long-term plans for the local tourism industry.

In this paper we have presented an analysis of gastronomy tourism available in the city of Córdoba (Spain). The field work was carried out with the help of tourists dining in certain

establishments the city, who were asked about their reasons for coming to Cordoba and to what extent the local cuisine attracted them to the city. We found that the local cuisine was the most or second most important reason for the majority of visitors choosing to come to Cordoba. We also found that these visitors are very often university graduates and often stay in the city for an above average length of time.

Furthermore, conclusions have also been drawn from the supply questionnaire, completed by restaurateurs in order to ascertain their opinion on the perception that tourists eating in their restaurant have of the local cuisine. In analyzing the results, the importance that restaurateurs attach to the use of new technology as a means of promoting their businesses and the large number of tourists who visit these restaurants at certain times of the year is evident.

Our results detect a high level of general satisfaction among visitors regarding the local cuisine, and particular satisfaction with the local dishes *salmorejo* and *rabo de toro*. Visitors valued both traditional local restaurants (*tabernas*) and the typical *tapas* offered therein.

The main limitations of this study are related to the time of the year in which the study was carried out, that is to say low season in Córdoba; the selection of those surveyed through a simple random sample; and in the choice of different eating establishments where the surveys were carried out, all of which could imply a lack of in-depth analysis of different kinds of tourists in the city.

Finally, we consider local cuisine to be a vital part of the character of any tourist destination. All organisations involved in the tourism industry, whether public or private, must give it a key role in the promotion and development of the destination.

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