

Gastronomic Tourism and Festivals: Views from Potential Tourists in Greece and South Korea [†]

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Abstract: Tourism is multifaceted and primarily encompasses cultural activities, aiming mainly to ensure visitors' relaxation and rejuvenation. Therefore, activities that involve exploring the culinary richness of a destination, which provide elements of the local culture and history, are important. The purpose of this study is to outline the profile of potential gastronomic tourists in order to identify the motivating factors for tasting local cuisine. Additionally, gastronomic festivals are raising the question of whether they serve as a means to attract potential tourists and what conditions they must meet in order to become an attractive activity. A survey was carried out targeting two nationalities with a deep gastronomic culture: Greeks and Koreans. The findings indicate that despite their common perspectives on food selection motives and that the existence of a gastronomic festival at the travel destination interests both nationalities, they differ in terms of choosing a gastronomic festival as the primary factor in visiting a destination. Overall, it is deemed useful to implement and promote gastronomic festivals with a focus on the particular needs of the respective potential tourists.

Keywords: gastronomic tourism; festival; primary research; Greece; Korea



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1. Introduction

In this piece of work, an attempt was made to connect two concepts: the gastronomic tourism and gastronomic festivals. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to outline the profile of potential gastronomic tourists in order to identify their motivations concerning food choices at a tourism destination and their preferences regarding the content of a gastronomic festival. Starting with identifying the conceptual link between gastronomy and tourism, an effort was made to review the literature regarding the profile of gastronomic tourists. Based on the information gathered mainly from the models presented by [1] and [2], categories of food motivations, festival attendance criteria, and festival content, each referring to specific factors, were developed that could frame a gastronomic tourist's behavior during a gastronomic trip. Those were then included in the survey questionnaire, combining quantitative and qualitative elements.

2. Materials and Methods

An online questionnaire was created and distributed via Google Forms through social media in September 2021. The questionnaire comprised three categories that addressed each factor outlined in Table 1 by including closed- and open-ended questions. Greece and South Korea are selected as case study areas of particular interest due to their rich history and culinary culture, and in recent years, efforts to promote gastronomic tourism have been observed. The sample of research included Greek potential tourists, residents of Athens, Greece, Korean potential tourists, and residents of South Korea (221 in total: 168 Greeks and 53 Koreans). For this reason, the questionnaire was initially written in Greek and then

translated to Korean. The statistical analysis and processing of the results were performed using SPSS.

Table 1. Main preferences for each factor between Greeks and Koreans.

Categories	Factor	Greeks	Koreans
Food choice motivations	Behavioral/psychological	Trying food (from different countries)	
	Taste, price, quality, social environment, religion	Influenced by food quality	Influenced by food taste
	Tradition/culture	When it relates to the history and culture of the area	
	Gastronomic activities	Trying the local cuisine	
	Gastronomic image of the destination	I am familiar with Greek/Korean local cuisine	I am familiar with Greek/Korean recipes
Attendance criteria and conditions of a culinary festival	Primary reason for travelling	I am willing to plan a trip to taste the local cuisine	
	Place, season	Gastronomic festival: willing to attend if it is located within a short distance	
	Fame/image (marketing)	Gastronomic festival: willing to attend if it was suggested to me	
Content of a gastronomic festival	Specialized cuisine	preferring it if it utilizes local ingredients	preferring it if it focuses on local traditional cuisine
	Activities	preferring it if it includes tastings	
	Events	preferring it if they are selling food	

3. Results and Discussion

The main preferences of Greeks and Koreans are provided in Table 1 and are derived from the analysis of dispersion measures. The strongest correlation (r Pearson factor ≥ 0.7) was identified for the questions “Would it encourage me to visit a food festival again?” and “Would I recommend it to others?”. This is reasonable because a tourist who has already visited a festival that ultimately left them with a positive impression is followed by a positive assessment and, therefore, a recommendation to others [3,4]. Furthermore, 95.9% of those from the sample who desire to try food from different countries are associated with trying unknown food (strong correlation $r = 0.62$). In addition, the main preference under the behavioral subcategory (Table 1) was found to be “wanting to try food from different countries” for both nationalities. This indicates a general preference for consuming local cuisine during their travels, which may include foods that are unfamiliar to them which they would try. That particular subcategory was created with reference to the FNS scale (by [5]). Regarding specialized cuisine within the context of a food festival, Greeks prefer the use of local products, while Koreans focus on local traditional recipes. Specifically, the use of local products was found to be correlated with fusion cuisine. Therefore, they would seek to combine local traditional food with techniques or ingredients from other countries. Koreans, in a much higher percentage as compared to Greeks (81.1% versus 60.6%), were found to desire the food they consume to be connected to the history and culture of the region (see also [6]). A significant percentage of Koreans (64,1%) chose the answer “tasting the local cuisine” as the primary factor for travelling, whereas 48,9% of Greeks disagreed. Similarly, when it came to participating in gastronomic events or activities as a primary factor, while Koreans remained neutral, Greeks disagreed at a rate of 73.8%. These factors are correlated ($r = 0.69$), indicating that Greek tourists plan their trips primarily for other reasons, such as visiting museums and archaeological sites, a fact verified through open-ended questions (see also [7]). Ideally, both nationalities would prefer a food festival to take place in close proximity to their place of residence (see also [8]).

4. Conclusions

The present research falls short in exploring the contribution of a specific gastronomic festival to local tourism in a particular region in Greece and South Korea, as well as its impact on the perception of the gastronomic image of the place by tourists of other nationalities. The study was conducted during the global pandemic of COVID-19, which did not allow for the survey to address tourists at a festival. The collection of questionnaires should ideally have taken place during a gastronomic festival during a period of high tourist arrival rates, aiming to gather data from tourists of various nationalities. This would contribute to a more comprehensive outcome, especially concerning Section 1: gastronomic image of the area. However, the respondents were limited to those directly involved in the research, namely Greek and Korean potential tourists. Moreover, the strengths and weaknesses of this particular festival would be identified, which would serve to enhance its content and conditions.

However, it seems that the two nationalities participating in the research are interested in modern culinary variations, such as trying international or fusion cuisine, and they share common views regarding food consumption in a travel destination, focusing on taste, quality, and local culinary culture, particularly the use of local products in gastronomic festivals. A significant difference was observed in the visitation of a gastronomic festival, with only Koreans tending to view it positively. It would be interesting to further investigate the reasons as to why Greeks do not consider gastronomic festivals as primary factors, even though they have visited them in the past at a much higher rate compared to Koreans and had positive impressions. Nevertheless, it is notable that the majority would visit a gastronomic festival if they heard that it takes place in their travel destination, partially confirming tourists' need to find entertainment options during their trip but not contributing to an increase in visitor influx to the respective area. On the contrary, Koreans would plan their trip to specifically visit a gastronomic festival, which would generate a tourist influx even in remote areas.

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