



Effect of Food, Culture, and Tourism Resources in Sustaining the Regional Identity of the Pauri-Garhwal Region

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Abstract

This study examines the role and the impact made by food, culture, and resources of tourism in sustaining the regional identity of the tourist destination with special reference to the Pauri-Garhwal Region, Uttarakhand. The sense of belonging to a particular geographical region can develop a strong sense of affection and connection that generates a deep emotional bond, which is essential for the development of identity. Food, cultural values, and various other tourism resources of regional identity are well-known themes and the key focus of various tourist destinations in different countries. Food, wine, culture, art/craft, etc. are all products of differentiation based on regional identity. Garhwal and Pauri are popular regional entities in the state of Uttarakhand. The state is popular and known for its history, natural attraction, culture, as well as food. A sample of 141 respondents was collected from a "standard questionnaire," created on a five-point interval scale.

Keywords: Food practice, regional identity, local food, India, food tourism, culture.

Introduction

Tourism has witnessed strong growth and deep diversification in the past few years and has become one of the steadily growing economic sectors in the world. It is undeniable that food is a major form of a key portion of the travel experience for any tourist place. Food tourism is an authentic avenue of tourism research and it adds a missing outlook to knowledge related to tourism, particularly the sociocultural sustainability program. High demand for unique, local production has motivated the regeneration of traditional and cultural festivals, encouraged the appearance of educational traveler attraction, re-linked consumers with the region, motivated the retention and development of cuisines and other agricultural skills, etc. The association was

found between the increased level of interest in food and culture tourism along with the retention and development of the regional identity of a region, enhancing awareness and sustainability of the environment, rise in cultural and social advantages, the celebration of the production of local cuisine, and preserving traditional heritage, skills, etc. Tourism is considered a major source of employment and sustainable livelihood for the local people of the region. The civilization of India is one of the oldest and richest in the globe having a wide range of cultural and natural resources. It was the idea of sustainable development out of which the concept of sustainable tourism came out and was identified around 15 years ago. The focus of the principle of sustainable development is on taking a long-term and careful approach towards development ensuring that our kids can enjoy a good quality of life. How the tourism industry can make a considerable contribution to sustainable development was identified by sustainable tourism and it had continuously provided good quality, less impacted experiences. The four pillars of tourism, are ecological sustainability, economic sustainability, local sustainability, and cultural sustainability on which sustainable tourism is built (**Ahmed, 2013**). With the ongoing development of the tourism sector, a dramatic transformation in traditional culture can be seen at various World Heritage sites. Furthermore, the increasing dependency on the economies of various regions in the tourism sector has brought an inevitable shift in the perception of the rural population. All such changes include the influence of development in tourism and its economic competencies on the traditional value of inhabitants and interpersonal relationships. Food is a basic and the first need of anyone and it is considered to be the best way of expressing the tradition and culture of a community. Food is a tangible part of traditional and cultural demonstrations and keeps attracting more tourists from all over the world. Although, after the revolution of information, the majority of the facilities are at click distance, food is the one that requires the distance to be covered to identify the royal taste in the native arrangement. The pattern in which the community is residing is usually described by its food. The food that attracts travelers from foreign countries is based on the native resources and how they are prepared and presented. Few countries do not take their food as a means of earning and generating income but they consider it as a means to protect their regional identity (**Kunwar, 2017**). A significant part of the cultural heritage and its identity is represented by gastronomy. Eating food demonstrates much more than meeting the physiological requirements of someone as when it becomes an essential part of a culture, the role played by the food itself is no longer just to satisfy someone's appetite, it has a different and diversified role to play.

Literature Review

Lin, Marine-Roig, & Llonch-Molina (2021) found that how the food is presented in distinct regions and the knowledge and understanding behind it are the outcomes of the series of traditional processes like naturalization, inculcation, and conversion, the influence of which is the confirmation of a particular identity of gastronomy. Tourism products of gastronomic heritages catering to all types of tourists can bring significant opportunities for business along with the economic benefits for the destination, stakeholders of gastronomic tourism and the government should make resource investments to coordinate with the local population and to make contributions to preserve local gastronomy.

Rachao, Breda, Fernandes, & Joukes (2019) explained that innovations to preserve regional identity and safeguard local traditions and products and the transformation of typical dining system attracts travellers and this system is called the formation of “Terroir restaurants.” When talking about innovation, the concept of inventive attraction is established within food tourism. Museums and other resources are highlighted. One of the innovative approaches to gastronomy is the rise of the signature cuisine of the region and it is considered to be the best way to overcome the lack of traditional and cultural food ways.

Zhang, Chen, Law, & Zhang (2020) studied that the exclusive cultural heritage resources are the signs of regional identity that make a destination distinguished from others and is the way to attract travellers. The cultural identity of any region makes a positive and significant impact on the consumption intentions of tourists in heritage tourism activities, which confirms that cultural identity is a potent driving force for the promotion of tourists' consumption intentions. The unique cultural image of any destination can be made strong through sustainable tourism development; it also attracts more visitors and promotes the long- term development of the region.

Ahlawat, Sharma, & Gautam (2019) found that slow food has appeared as an uncharted supporter in the promotion of local tourism. Uttarakhand has various exclusive features that display its wide scope for being a successful tourist destination of slow food. A wide variety of rich and heritage-style cuisines are offered by the state. For food-loving visitors from all over the world, the food fairs are magnetic attractions. The success of food and cultural festivals is a great opportunity for economic benefits and brings good profits to rural and less popular regions. It has become important to focus on the development of the tourism industry in Uttarakhand. Slow food and other cultural activities can make the regional identity of the region sustainable.

Karush (2014) revealed that the globalization of the tourism sector has made a huge increase in the demand for visitors. Visitors demand innovative food and hospitality. Culinary professionals who are working in the tourism and hospitality sectors should be able to bring innovative ideas to attract new visitors and satisfy their demands in an inventive manner without any repetitions. Gastronomy helps in sustaining the regional identity as it provides the local foods and beverages that have the essence and flavour of the local region and it also attracts visitors. Culinary professionals must be trained to cook local and cultural food to satisfy the food demand of their tourists.

Serra, Antonio, Henriques, & Afonso (2021) explained the geographical or regional identity must be understood from a lively perspective because the geographical identity and other related pairing are in constant transformation along with the strengthening of inventive, changing, and creative gastronomy. It is a mixture of distinct products, etiquette, and culture. Sustainable development is considered essential in the scope of practices of tourism as well as the hospitality sector. Gastronomy tourism is linked with a regional and cultural pairing of food and wine helping in the development of high-quality services for visitors.

Karush & Sharma (2017) studied that when traveling away from home to a distant place the thing that cannot be neglected is food, and it also plays a considerable role in making an enhanced experience of travel. Visitors look forward to the new food, new tastes, and regional dishes that are associated with the region. Regional dishes and food as cultural heritage are considered valuable resources for the promotion of the destination and improving competition among other catering establishments. It plays a vital role in the development of brand image at the regional, national, as well as international level.

Negi, Kumari, Kukreti, & Dani (2020) revealed the Garhwali and Kumauni cuisines, which are regional cuisines of Uttarakhand. These cuisines are full of regional flavors, nutrition, and other natural species. Garhwal and Kumaon regions have a wide variety of traditional food prepared by the local people of the region. The method of preparation and cooking differs per region. Tourists love to visit these places and get attracted by the culture and natural resources of the region. Uttarakhand is not only famous for its nature and greenery, but it is also popular for its religious place and adventure. Adventures like river rafting, trekking, and various other adventurous activities.

Brokaj (2014) found that the regional food of any destination gives travellers an authentic experience of travel. Traditional food, which is served in traditional hotels, gives a cultural experience and a feel just like home. The culture of the region and the atmosphere are enjoyed by tourists and it always attracts them. When visitors eat local food, they get the feeling of originality and experience the original taste and life of the region. The study found that the encouragement to consume regional food includes five factors of motivation, which are rural development, taste quality, concern related to health, authentic experience, and awareness of knowledge. Authentic experience includes representation of the region, traditional cuisines, and distinctiveness.

Sati (2015) revealed that for peace of mind and prosperity thousands of pilgrim visitors visit highland pilgrimages of the Garhwal Himalayas. Pilgrimage tourism has a high potential in terms of socio-economic development and has become a major source of income for the local population of the region. Various unscientific actions like the construction of buildings, roads, and rivers would lead to disaster for nature and loss of regional identity. By practicing pilgrimage tourism, the socio-economic development of the region can be done with the sustainability of the environment kept in mind.

Bhatt, Bhartiya, Dhodi, & Dhodi (2018) studied the Garhwal region is blessed with a natural environment and distinctive regional culture, which is suitable for the promotion and development of nature tourism. The resources of natural tourism of the region are the unique selling points for the visitors and are a vital source for the growth of tourism. A well-prepared plan for tourism can help in the reduction of negative effects and would enhance the positive influence on the region. Impacts leave footprints on the resources of the region. The development of the local community must be at the heart of any plans for tourism promotions and development. The stakeholders of tourism must work together towards the enhancement of the image of the destination, and the life of the community of the region and help to reduce the negative influence on nature.

Bhatt & Bhartiya (2020) explained the tourism resource Bhilangana Valley of Garhwal Himalaya. It is considered a gold mine of natural resources and is home to glorious natural tourist resources that are available in the country. A huge part of the region is a biodiversity hotspot having a rare ethnic environment that represents the natural significance of the region. Though the region is a gifted attraction of tourism, the stakeholders of tourism and the state as well are unable to harness the benefits of tourism. The behind it may be the improper planning and strategies of development, which are implemented by the policies and decisions that are taken for the growth. The region is also facing issues such as illiteracy, migration, unemployment, deforestation, etc.

Karush & Sharma (2016) revealed local and regional food and cuisines are valuable resources to attract tourists and it promotes and improves the effectiveness of catering establishments. Local food plays a vital role in creating a brand image in the tourism industry. Regional food makes a regional impact on visitors. The style of cooking regional food keeps changing with the weather. Slow cooking and organic food meet the demand and necessity of mountain and cold climates.

Objectives of the Study

1. Measuring the impact of Food, Culture, and Tourism resources in sustaining regional identity.
2. To ascertain how the local cuisine and culture attract tourists.

Methodology

The study is empirical in nature. The number of respondents who participated in the study was 141. A structured questionnaire was prepared for the collection of data from respondents. Mean and t-test was applied to identify the result of the research. The method of sampling was convenience sampling.

Study's Outcome

Table 1 displays the Respondent's gender, males are 56.03%, and females are 43.97%. With reference to the age group, 25 to 30 years are 29.08%, respondents between 30 to 35 years were 40.42%, and respondents who were 35 years and above are 30.50%. About Attractions of tourists, Culture / Traditions is 27.66%, Food / Beverages is 39.00%, and Natural Beauty is 33.34%. Regarding occupation, Tour guides are 30.50%, Restaurants / Hotels are 43.26%, and Local retailers are 26.24%.

Table 1: Respondent’s Demographic Details

Variable	Number of respondents	%
Gender		
Male	79	56.03%
Female	62	43.97%
Total	141	100 %
Age		
25 to 30 years	41	29.08%
30 to 35 years	57	40.42%
35 years & above	43	30.50%
Total	141	100 %
Attractions of Tourists		
Culture / Traditions	39	27.66%
Food / Beverages	55	39.00%
Natural Beauty	47	33.34%
Total	141	100 %
Occupation		
Tour guide	43	30.50%
Restaurants / Hotels	61	43.26%
Local retailers	37	26.24%
Total	141	100 %

Table 2: Impact of Food, Culture, and Tourism Resources in sustaining regional identity

Sr. No.	Survey’s Statements	Mean Value	t- Value	Sig.
1.	Regional food and culture have the potential to attract travelers	4.31	15.829	0.000
2.	Food along with other resources of the region promotes a local and native culture	4.13	13.741	0.000
3.	Local community through cultural activities can support the development and promotion of regional identity	4.29	15.936	0.000
4.	The originality of traditional and cultural food should be maintained	3.15	1.816	0.036
5.	Government and tourism agents must support in the promotion of the regional identity of a destination	3.22	2.707	0.004
6.	Traditional Art and craft and other popular things of the region must be promoted	4.00	12.095	0.000
7.	Natural resources related to tourism must be preserved for sustainable regional identity	4.25	15.262	0.000
8.	A slow food system can be a good way to sustain the regional identity of a region	3.17	2.085	0.019
9.	Outside food and facilities must be avoided to maintain the regional identity of the region	4.17	14.176	0.000
10.	Local cuisines and culture attract tourists and help in retaining travellers	4.19	14.671	0.000

Table 2 and Figure 1 show the Mean values of the “Impact of Food, Culture, and Tourism resources in sustaining regional identity” The first statement of the T-test says “Regional food and culture has the potential to attract travelers” the mean score is 4.31, next statement says about the promotion of culture, “Food along with other resources of the region promotes local and native culture” the mean value is 4.13. The third statement is “Local community through cultural activities can support the development and promotion of regional identity” with a mean score of 4.29, next statement is about the originality of culture and tradition, “Originality of traditional and cultural food should be maintained” mean value is 3.15. The fifth statement is about the support of government and other agencies “Government and tourism agents must support in the promotion of regional identity of a destination” The mean score is 3.22, next statement is about traditional art and craft, “Traditional Art and craft and other popular things of the region must be promoted” with the mean score of 4.00. The next statement is “Natural resources related to tourism must be preserved for sustainable regional identity” The mean value is 4.25, next statement is regarding slow food, “Slow food system can be a good way to sustain the regional identity of a region” has the mean score of 3.17. The ninth statement “Outside food and facilities must be avoided to maintain the regional identity of the region” with a mean score of 4.17, and the tenth and last statement “Local cuisines and culture attract tourists and help in retaining travelers” has a mean score is 4.19. The t-value of each statement of the survey regarding the Impact of Food, Culture, and Tourism resources in sustaining regional identity is found to be significant as the t-value of each statement is positive and the significance value is found to be less than 0.05.

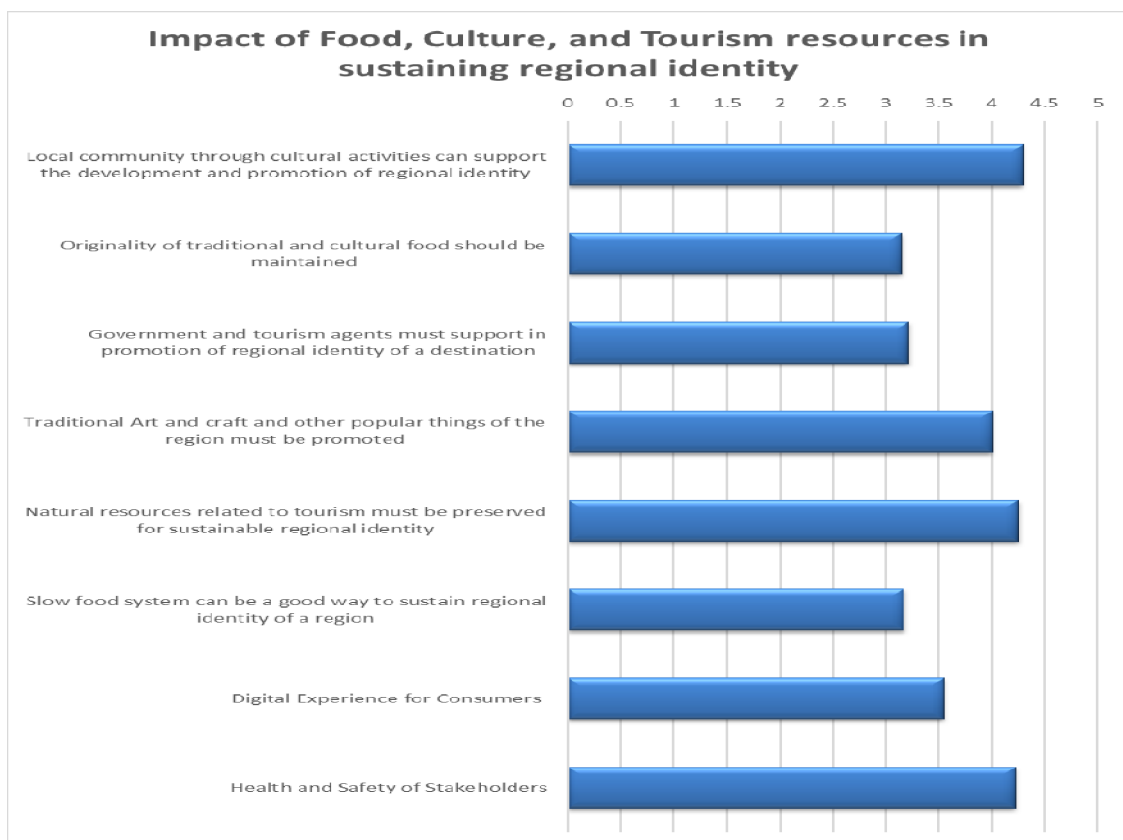


Figure 1: Impact of Food, Culture, and Tourism Resources in sustaining regional identity

Conclusion

The development of tourism prompts transformation in the social feature of a destination. Tourism is a global business activity and is presenting various challenges in terms of traditional culture. The regional identity of any regional destination can be sustained through traditional cuisines, its culture, and various other resources of tourism. Tourism stakeholders must take efforts in sustaining the regional identity of a region because it attracts tourists from all over the world and is a valuable thing to preserve. Tourists demand for traditional cuisines and cultural activities at the destination region because they want to enjoy and experience the natural and traditional environment. The host population must have knowledge and understanding of the tradition and culture of the region so that they can serve their customers in the proper way and fulfill their demands and give them a glorious experience of tourism. Keeping everything in mind, one should not forget to preserve their natural environment and work hard to safeguard them from getting exploited. A T-test was applied to identify the result of the study, as the significant values for all statements are less than 0.05 it will be considered significant.

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