

CULINARY EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS IN DAVAO CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the culinary experiences of international tourists in Davao City, focusing on four key dimensions: food quality, food-related cultural aspects, physical dining environment, and social interactions. A total of 300 foreign tourists were randomly selected and surveyed using adapted questionnaires. Data were analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency, mean, t-test, and ANOVA.

Findings revealed that international tourists placed high importance on food quality, preparation methods, interior design, and the social interaction between staff and guests. No significant differences were observed in culinary experience based on gender or civil status. However, age was found to significantly influence perceptions of the physical dining environment, particularly regarding ambiance. This suggests that creating a welcoming and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere is crucial for appealing to a broad age range of international diners.

The Insights from this study aim to assist restaurant establishments in enhancing their offerings, expanding their market reach, and gaining recognition for quality service.

Keywords: Culinary Experience, Food Tourism, Physical Dining, Tourist Perception, Davao City

INTRODUCTION

Food tourism offers a unique gateway for individuals to explore a country's traditions and history through its culinary heritage and interaction with local residents (Teo, 2018). It holds significant potential to boost local, provincial, and national economies by promoting sustainability and community integration. Additionally, food tourism benefits agricultural sectors and local food production, fostering growth within these industries (Rifai, 2017).

As culinary tourism rapidly expands worldwide, social media plays a vital role in shaping this trend, with travelers frequently sharing their exceptional gastronomic experiences online. Unlike traditional tourism, which often focuses on sightseeing, culinary tourism centers on experiencing food as a primary attraction (Buban, 2018).

Dining out has become a crucial part of modern life, reflecting ongoing changes and innovations in food culture. For tourists, consuming local food is not only essential for sustenance but also a significant incentive that enriches their overall travel experience and participation in various activities (Quan & Wang, 2004).

Despite the growing interest in culinary tourism, research remains limited regarding tourists' perceptions and experiences in this field (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Halls & Sharples, 2003; Quan & Wang, 2004; Wolf, 2006). Understanding gastronomic tourism provides valuable insights into tourist behavior and their connection to specific destinations. However, not all tourists are equally interested in native cuisines. Some view local food simply as a means to satisfy hunger rather than a cultural experience, while others see gastronomy as a vital cultural engagement and a key component in understanding a destination's heritage (Ting, Tan, & John, 2017).

This study aims to provide a comprehensive review and evaluation of the potential of culinary tourism to shape the experiences of international tourists and promote Davao City from the visitors' perspective. It specifically seeks to determine the level of culinary experiences of international tourists in Davao City across several dimensions, including food quality, the physical dining environment, food-related cultural aspects, and social interactions. Additionally, the study investigates whether significant differences exist in these culinary experiences when analyzed according to the demographic profiles of the tourists.

METHOD

Research Subjects

The study involved 300 international tourists randomly selected in Davao City. A simple random sampling technique was used to ensure unbiased selection of respondents, all of whom were foreign visitors. Data collection took place during the second semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

Research Instrument and Materials

Data were collected using an adapted survey questionnaire composed of two sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age, gender, and marital status of the respondents. The second section contained carefully designed questions aimed at assessing the different variables influencing the culinary experience of the tourists.

The study utilized several statistical tools to analyze the data. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine whether significant differences existed in the culinary experience levels of international tourists when analyzed according to their age, civil status, and gender. Frequency counts were used to describe the demographic profiles of the respondents based on these same categories. The mean was calculated to assess the overall level of culinary experience among international tourists in Davao City. Additionally, the t-test was applied specifically to identify significant differences in culinary experience levels between male and

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to systematically and accurately characterize the features and information of a specific population or area of interest. The design aimed to provide a precise representation and interpretation of the attributes, conditions, and categories of individuals or groups, as well as to explore possible relationships between selected variables. It also sought to address questions related to current phenomena within the study context (Dulock, 1993).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Level of Culinary Experiences of International Tourists in Davao City Regarding Food Quality, Food Cultural-Related Aspects, Physical Dining, and Social Aspects

Table 1 reveals that international tourists in Davao City place high importance on all measured aspects of their culinary experience, including food quality, food cultural-related elements, physical dining environment, and social interactions. Among these, food quality received the highest average rating with a mean score of 4.38. Tourists particularly valued the authentic sound, taste, and spiciness of Filipino cuisine, alongside factors such as modified flavors, exoticness, appealing aroma, and the use of fresh and familiar ingredients.

Table 1. Level of the Culinary Experiences of International Tourists in Davao City

Indicators	Mean	Std.Deviation	Description
Food Quality	4.38	0.643	High
Food Cultural-Related	4.17	0.706	High
Physical Dining	4.29	0.715	High
Social Aspect	4.33	0.741	High
Overall	4.29	0.617	High

Social aspects followed closely with a mean score of 4.33. Respondents highly appreciated the staff's communication skills, friendliness, responsiveness, and knowledge about the cuisine. Additionally, tourists valued dining environments where they could interact with others to learn more about Filipino culture and where the restaurant's ambiance clearly reflected Filipino heritage.

The physical dining environment received a mean score of 4.29. Respondents emphasized the importance of a pleasant ambiance and atmosphere, cleanliness, décor and layout that showcased Filipino uniqueness, and elements such as traditional Filipino music that reinforce cultural identity.

Finally, food cultural-related aspects had the lowest mean score among the four categories, at 4.17, though still indicating strong importance. Tourists valued the Filipino

methods of cooking, food presentation, eating customs, the availability of a wide variety of local dishes on the menu, and the opportunity to try traditional Filipino beverages.

Overall, these findings suggest that while all dimensions are highly valued, food quality and social interactions play the most significant roles in shaping the culinary experiences of international tourists in Davao City.

Differences in Culinary Experiences of International Tourists in Davao City by Gender

The results of the independent samples t-test reveal differences in the culinary experiences of international tourists in Davao City when analyzed by gender. According to Table 2, the ANOVA results indicate no significant differences in culinary experience levels based on gender, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Specifically, food quality showed the highest p-value at 0.473, followed by social aspects at 0.363, physical dining at 0.147, and food cultural-related aspects at 0.068. Although males reported slightly higher mean scores than females across all variables—food quality, food-cultural related, physical dining, and social aspects—the differences were not statistically significant. Additionally, the overall t-value of 1.405 and p-value of 0.161 further confirm the lack of significant gender differences, as the p-value exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test results show the differences in the Culinary Experiences of International Tourist in Davao City when analyzed by sex.

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value	Description
Food Quality	Male	4.41	0.656	0.718	0.473	Accept
	Female	4.36	0.633			
Food Cultural-Related	Male	4.25	0.625	1.829	0.068	Accept
	Female	4.10	0.760			
Physical Dining	Male	4.35	0.647	1.454	0.147	Accept
	Female	4.23	0.762			
Social Aspect	Male	4.35	0.692	0.911	0.363	Accept
	Female	4.29	0.778			
Overall	Male	4.35	0.560	1.405	0.161	Accept

Summary of ANOVA Results: Differences in Culinary Experiences of International Tourists in Davao City by Civil Status

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results analyzing the differences in the culinary experiences of international tourists in Davao City based on their civil status. The findings indicate no significant differences across all variables, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Specifically, food-cultural related aspects had the highest p-value at 0.780, followed by food quality at 0.473, physical dining at 0.366, and social aspects at 0.650. These results suggest that civil status does not significantly influence tourists' culinary experiences in Davao City.

Table 3. Summary of ANOVA result shows the differences in the Culinary Experiences of International Tourist in Davao City when analyzed by civil status.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision on Hypothesis Ho
Food Quality	Between Groups	0.621	2	0.311	0.750	0.473	Accept
	Within Groups	123.075	297	0.414			
	Total	123.697	299				
Food Cultural-Related	Between Groups	0.249	2	0.125	0.248	0.780	Accept
	Within Groups	149.023	297	0.502			
	Total	149.272	299				
Physical Dining	Between Groups	1.031	2	0.515	1.008	0.366	Accept
	Within Groups	151.864	297	0.511			
	Total	152.895	299				
Social Aspect	Between Groups	1.462	2	0.731	1.333	0.265	Accept
	Within Groups	162.926	297	0.549			
	Total	164.389	299				
Overall	Between Groups	0.678	2	0.339	0.890	0.412	Accept
	Within Groups	113.206	297	0.381			
	Total	113.884	299				

*p<0.05

Summary of ANOVA Results: Differences in Culinary Experiences of International Tourists in Davao City by Age

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results examining differences in the culinary experiences of international tourists in Davao City based on age. The analysis reveals no significant differences in food quality, food cultural-related aspects, and social interactions across age groups. However, a significant difference was found in the physical dining experience, with a p-value of 0.020, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. Therefore, the overall results lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that age significantly influences the physical dining aspect of the culinary experience.

Table 4. Summary of ANOVA results shows the differences in the level of the Culinary Experiences of International Tourist in Davao City when analyzed by age.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision on Hypothesis Ho
Food Quality	BetweenGroups	4.537	6	0.756	1.859	0.088	Accept
	WithinGroups	119.160	293	0.407			
	Total	123.697	299				
Food Cultural-Related	BetweenGroups	5.738	6	0.956	1.952	0.072	Accept
	WithinGroups	143.534	293	0.490			
	Total	149.272	299				
Physical Dining	BetweenGroups	7.602	6	1.267	2.555	0.020*	Reject
	WithinGroups	145.293	293	0.496			
	Total	152.895	299				
Social Aspect	BetweenGroups	5.672	6	0.945	1.745	0.110	Accept
	WithinGroups	158.717	293	0.542			
	Total	164.389	299				

* $p < 0.05$

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance culinary tourism in Davao City. First, the Department of Tourism Region XI (DOT XI) should create and maintain promotional content such as pages, advertisements, and vlogs on popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Since millennials spend a significant amount of time on these sites, such content can effectively attract international tourists by showcasing Davao City's unique culinary offerings. Additionally, DOT XI should prioritize the preservation of local food tourism to sustain the legacy of food businesses that contribute to tourist satisfaction. Engaging local communities, especially indigenous tribes with distinctive food traditions, is also recommended. Incorporating their unique dishes into restaurant menus can captivate tourists interested not only in tasting new foods but also in experiencing the local culture. Given millennials' enthusiasm for novel experiences and their habit of sharing them through photography and social media, encouraging tourists to capture and share their culinary adventures can serve the dual purpose of preserving memories and promoting Davao City's food tourism. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to build on this study by exploring further aspects of international tourists' culinary experiences in Davao City, using these findings as a valuable reference.

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