

Research Article 05

Gastronomy Tourism and Destination Image: The Mediating Role of Tourism Satisfaction in Sri Lanka's Southern Province

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Abstract

Gastronomy tourism involves the study of culinary traditions and experiences, which plays an important role in guiding tourists' ideas. When understanding the impact of gastronomy tourism, it is particularly important because Sri Lanka is known for its rich culinary heritage. By taking an in-depth look at the Southern Province's gastronomic offerings, including traditional food, cooking methods and cultural significance, providing much better evidence for Sri Lanka's Culinary Art. The main objectives of this study are to identify the impact of gastronomy tourism on destination image and to identify the role of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image. The sample of the study was foreign tourist who visited Southern province and the convenience sampling technique was used as the sampling technique. The sample size was 384 respondents. Data is collected by using a self-administered questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used as the data analysis method, and Smart PLS is used as the data analysis tool. However, findings showcase there is a strong positive relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image with the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the effectiveness of indicators that are used to measure the latent variables. The results of the study highlighted that this concept is fair enough for employees and students, which needs further advancement and fair gathering of knowledge in the area of gastronomy tourism, considering tourist satisfaction on destination image in Southern Province, Sri Lanka. Therefore, Sri Lanka's taste can be brought to the world, and Sri Lanka can be marketed as a gastronomic destination.

Keywords: Culinary heritage, destination image, gastronomy tourism, Southern Province, tourism development, tourist satisfaction

Introduction

Gastronomic tourism is a niche market of tourism that tries to achieve a perfect balance between useful and pleasant, and between the daily needs of food and culinary experiences that can positively mark tourists (Gheorghe, Tudorache & Nistoreanu, 2014). One of the most used definitions of Gastronomic tourism is one proposed by (Lee et al., 2015): gastronomic tourism "is a journey, in regions rich in gastronomic resources, ho generate recreational experiences or have entertainment purposes, which include: visits to primary or secondary producers of gastronomic products, gastronomical festivals, fairs, events, cooking demonstrations, food tastings or any activity related to food." (Gheorghe, Tudorache & Nistoreanu, 2014).

For destination managers, researchers, and marketers, culinary tourism is a current issue, given that food consumption is one of the essential components of the tourist sector (Henderson, 2009; Robinson and Getz, 2014). In 2018, Rana says that authentic and interesting cuisine can draw tourists to a place. Due to its representation of regional, national, and individual identities, local cuisine can improve the perception of a place (Bessière, 1998; Chang et al., 2010; Henderson, 2009). According to Grande (2001), gastronomy has begun to be acknowledged as a symbolic value reflecting regions and cultures in tourism, and symbolising and appreciation of local culture and authenticity have become aspects of the new trend.

Local food reflects a region's identity and culture, shaping how people see a place, as Bessière and Grande (2001) noted. Food-based tourism is always compounded with fun and function by giving tourists hands-on food experiences, like farm visits, culinary experiences as well as food festivals. The way tourists view a destination is important because it includes their feelings about a place. The perception of the leisure activities really shapes this image, which affects their satisfaction and decision-making among the tourists. Previous studies highlight that satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend a destination to others. Therefore, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling customer expectations for both private and public sector organizations.

Gartner (2015) stated that destination image is a composite concept where food and heritage are part of it. Prior studies on the suggested topic indicate a lack of research focusing on the Southern Province and especially in terms of impacts that could help to unravel how dining experiences form a destination. UNWTO (2019) also emphasizes that culinary experiences play a central role in guest satisfaction and are an essential part of the destination as a whole. In spite of being a well-known destination for its cuisine, Roe (2020) argues that there is an extensive research deficit in Sri Lanka, with no exclusive studies so far on the impact of gastronomy tourism on the nation.

Moreover, there is a lack of research on culinary tourism that concentrates on particular areas within nations, with the Southern Province of Sri Lanka receiving especially little attention (Hall, 2011). The Southern Province's distinct culinary traits and destination image dynamics are not taken into consideration when results are generalized across various locations (Smith, 2018). When identifying the research gap of this study, it concerns the lack of studies that are focused on the impact of gastronomy tourism, especially in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image.
2. To identify the mediator relationship of tourist satisfaction on relation between gastronomy tourism and destination image

Literature Review

Gastronomy Tourism

The word of “Gastronomy” is derived from the Greek word 'gastros,' which means stomach or 'gnomos” (Guzel, 2016). There are some misunderstandings on the meaning of two terms “culinary” and “gastronomy”, but the meaning of both terms has slighting. Culinary tourism is defined as *“a way of experiencing other cultures through food”* (Long, 2004). *“Travelling and tasting the primary and secondary food developers, food festivals, restaurants, and special locations which offer special food with high quality and provide unforgettable experiences of a specific food product is the primary motivation for travel”* (Hall&Mitchell, 2005). Culinary is a branch of gastronomy that refers to dishes, foods, and food preparation methods. Gastronomy encompasses more than just food; it also includes beverages (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Gastronomy tourism is critical for the host country because it conveys prestige and status while also fostering cultural and cultural identity (Chaney & Ryan, 2012). Gastronomy can be described as tourism where an opportunity for memorable food and drink experiences contributes significantly to travel motivation and behaviour (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2010). Gastronomy tourism includes both food and beverages. It's not just about eating and drinking; the experience should be one-of-a-kind and memorable for customers (Karim & Chi, 2010). Gastronomy has its own point of view, and people can look at gastronomy life through the lens of social and environmental sustainability (Boyne, Hall, & Williams, 2003). Gastronomy means "the guidelines and instructions for what kind of foods and drinks should be eaten and where, when, and how to eat those food items, combining what kind of items" (Santich, 2004). Tourists also followed the above guidance because it gave them a novel experience. In this period, gastronomy tourism has become a motivating factor in tourist destination selection. Gastronomy tourism becomes a factor in selecting or visiting specific destinations (Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2013).

Sri Lankan Cuisine and Gastronomic Tourism

In Sri Lanka, there are significant regional varieties of food. Rice is the main food in Sri Lankan Cuisine, and it is always served steamed or cooked with a variety of curries. Sri Lankans always prepare and eats traditional dishes for everyday consumption at home, while they have fast food outlets in their regions. Being an island as one might expect, fish and seafood feature heavily in the everyday diet along with fruits and vegetables, which are themselves cultivated on the island. Depending on wherever they are from the North, South, West, East, or the hill country- Sri Lanka offers distinct regional cuisines with distinct flavors and aromas (Fernando, 2019). In a typical Sri Lankan Meal, there should be a fish, meat or poultry curry as a main curry dish and different kinds of other curries such as vegetables and lentils like pulses. It contains dishes like chutney, sambol etc. (Devaraja, M.M. 2013). These chutneys and sambols are usually spicy, and they consist of a variety of ingredients such as coconut, onion, chili, and lime juice. At the same moment, every dish is put on the table set to be consumed. Even though Sri Lankan cuisine is yet to make its fingerprint in globally. Sri Lankan traditional cuisine is now being recognized among international communities distinctly. According to Fernando (2019), BBC’s Good Food has

rated Sri Lankan food the top culinary trend for 2019. This increasing recognition creates an opportunity for the development of gastronomy tourism in Sri Lanka (Fernando, R et al 2021).

Destination Image

A tourist destination is a combination of the area's human and natural resources, and it not only has the conditions for the growth of tourism but also plays a significant role in the social, cultural, and economic development of the region as a whole. While having resources is a crucial precondition, they must be put to use in order to create an attractive tourism offer and become competitive in the travel industry (Pavlović et al., 2023). The image, or how visitors experience and view a particular tourist location, is a crucial component in the examination of the notion of a tourist destination itself. To evaluate the perspective of the tourist on destination image is an important aspect in tourism studies because it is very helpful to understand the exact way of image formation, but also the process of choosing a destination, the motivation of tourists and their future behaviour (Wu & Shimizu, 2020; Jeong & Kim, 2020). According to a number of journalists, the destination image is the conclusion of all of one's perceptions, assumptions, expectations, and recollections of a certain location across time (Crompton, 1979; Kim & Richardons, 2003). The perception of the destination affects travelers' preference for location, behavior while on vacation, and level of satisfaction and experience (Stylidis, 2020; Zhang, Leung, & Qu, 2021). The positive image of tourists about tourist destinations can affect their satisfaction, and in the end, it will have an impact on their intention to visit again (Kim et al., 2013).

Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is determined by the overall attractions, accommodation, accessibility, facilities, and amenities, as well as whether expectations are met or not (Rajesh, 2013). The characteristics of the quality of tourist offers are used to measure tourist satisfaction. Modern tourists are increasingly motivated by the desire to gain new experiences by visiting a specific destination's traditions and cultures (Björk&Räsänen, 2014). Tourists want to satisfy their desire when they try new experiences. Understanding and managing customer satisfaction is critical, especially for customers who purchase tourism products, because customers behave differently depending on their level of satisfaction (Correia, Moital, Costa, & Peres, 2008). This experiential motivation suggests that tourists seek satisfaction through the consumption of authentic and memorable destination experiences (Kim, 2014). Empirical evidence indicates that destination attributes and destination image influence tourist satisfaction, which in turn affects key behavioral outcomes such as revisit intention, word-of-mouth, and destination loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008; Žabkar, Brenčič, & Dmitrović, 2010). Furthermore, understanding and managing customer satisfaction is essential in tourism because tourists exhibit differential post-purchase behaviors depending on their level of satisfaction (Correia, Moital, Costa,&Peres, 2008).

Destination Image and Gastronomy Tourism

The 1970s saw a lot of activity such as fine dining tourism, national cuisine reputation building etc. in the areas of destination image and gastronomy tourism, and these developments would eventually have an impact on local cuisine, culture, and food service. Furthermore, the choice of a vacation destination is mostly determined by the positive way the traveller perceives the location to be (Leisen, 2001). Even though destination image is thought to be a major component of brand equity (Koechnic & Gartner, 2007), it is also a critical factor and driving force behind tourist behaviour (Butler & Bennett, 2008). It also

influences return intention, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth communication. Examining the relevant literature revealed that there are very limited studies examined the variables of gastronomic tourism, destination image, and tourist satisfaction together as a whole. However, studies focused on gastronomic tourism argued that it is possible to increase tourist satisfaction (Fabianto, 2018; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Studies focusing on tourist satisfaction and destination image also emphasize that tourist satisfaction predicts behavioral intentions (Bui & Le, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

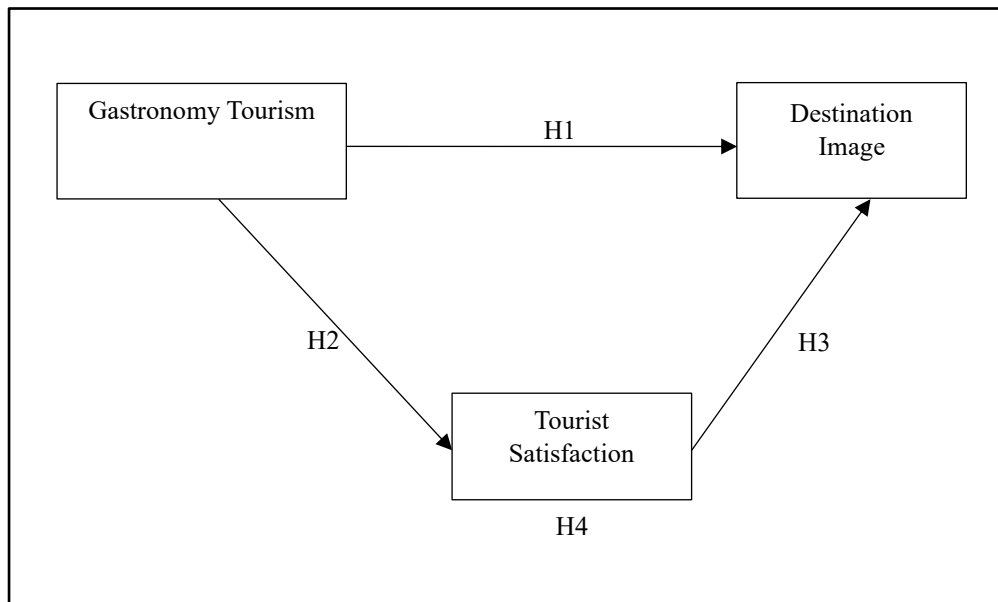


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by Researcher based on previous literature (2024)

Hypothesis Development

H1 – There is a relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image.

H2 – There is a relationship between gastronomy tourism and tourist satisfaction.

H3 – There is a relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction.

H4 – There is a mediating effect of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative research approach to identify the impact of Gastronomy Tourism on Destination Image in Sri Lanka. By utilizing quantitative methods, such as statistical analysis and numerical data collection, the research aims to provide empirical

evidence and insights into how Destination Image affects tourist satisfaction. The primary data were collected from a sample of 384 respondents from foreign tourists who have visited in Southern Province using the convenience sampling technique. A self-administered questionnaire was developed based on a 5-point Likert scale, and the questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section intends to analyze the demographic profile of the respondents with six questions, and the remaining sections comprise questions related to Gastronomy Tourism, Destination Image, and Tourist Satisfaction variables. The collected primary data was analyzed using the structural equation modelling technique in Smart PLS software.

SEM is defined by (Hair, 2010) as a family of statistical models that seeks to explain the relationship among multiple variables. Smart PLS is a kind of computer-based software that is used to analyze the collected data and test the proposed research model (Becker et al, 2023). Furthermore, it has the ability to examine multiple relationships by performing multiple regression equations. This allows us to identify and test the hypothesized relationships among constructs. Smart PLS software was used to analyze the collected data and test the proposed research model (Becker et al, 2023). The measurement model was assessed to ensure the reliability and validity of the latent constructs. The composite reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity all contribute to the measurement model's quality. (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The structural model was estimated to analyze the relationships between latent constructs. Path coefficients were used to determine the strength and significance of relationships between constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Results and Interpretations

Reliability of the Study

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the measurement scale. The reliability coefficients were interpreted using the following criteria: $\alpha \geq 0.90$ indicates excellent reliability, $\alpha = 0.80-0.89$ indicates good reliability, $\alpha = 0.70-0.79$ indicates acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.60-0.69$ indicates questionable reliability, $\alpha = 0.50-0.59$ indicates poor reliability, and $\alpha < 0.50$ indicates unacceptable reliability.

The result of Cronbach's alpha value is shown in the tables below.

Table 2: Reliability of Gastronomy Tourism

Reliability Statistics		
Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
GT	0.966	11
DI	0.964	7
TS	0.954	8

Source: Survey Data (2024)

PLS-SEM Model Assessment

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Destination Image	0.964	0.966	0.97	0.825
Gastronomy Tourism	0.966	0.973	0.971	0.756
Tourist Satisfaction	0.954	0.964	0.962	0.762

Source: SmartPLS data output (2024)

Higher reliability of measures was indicated by all composite reliability, as stated in above table, between the values of (0.964 to 0.973) which are critical values. Out of the 26 indicators, all indicators have given a significant contribution to constructing reliability. Convergent validity was established based on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and it consists of values (0.756 to 0.825) $AVE > 0.5$ is the acceptable validity while Composite Reliability > 0.6 . As shown in the above table, all of the AVE loadings are larger than 0.5, indicating that the scales were convergent valid when they were greater than the conventional criteria for robust PLS models. Therefore, to establish discriminant validity, indicators as well as cross loading of the indicators were observed.

Descriptive Statistics

Data relevant to measuring Gastronomy Tourism and Destination Image were collected by using five-point Likert scale questions. To interpret the data, the researcher conducted a descriptive analysis of the data. These descriptive statistics were used to examine frequency, mean, standard deviation, and skewness. The researcher calculated and described the level of each construct and its amount of variance using the mean and standard deviation. The average degree of variation in the researcher's data is called the standard deviation. Furthermore, the variance is the sum of the squares of the standard deviation. The degree of spread in the data can be seen in the variance. The table below shows the researcher's analysis of the descriptive statistics.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis

	Number of Observations Used	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Excess Kurtosis
DI1	384	4.57	5	0.848	-2.215	4.53
DI2	384	4.125	4	0.753	-1.201	3.081

DI3	384	4.594	5	0.814	-2.324	5.302
DI4	384	4.576	5	0.707	-2.113	5.993
DI5	384	4.602	5	0.832	-2.379	5.462
DI6	384	4.643	5	0.771	-2.68	7.493
DI7	384	4.591	5	0.792	-2.418	6.137
GT1	384	4.391	5	0.868	-1.423	1.577
GT10	384	4.586	5	0.818	-2.196	4.488
GT11	384	4.57	5	0.711	-2.127	6.047
GT2	384	4.542	5	0.812	-2.053	4.29
GT3	384	4.651	5	0.783	-2.701	7.528
GT4	384	4.615	5	0.639	-2.026	5.4
GT5	384	4.633	5	0.822	-2.651	6.982
GT6	384	4.849	5	0.585	-4.046	15.567
GT7	384	4.612	5	0.891	-2.743	7.222
GT8	384	4.625	5	0.774	-2.589	7.257
GT9	384	4.63	5	0.831	-2.547	6.164
TS1	384	4.701	5	0.726	-3.035	9.836
TS2	384	3.742	3	1.045	-0.169	-0.698
TS3	384	4.633	5	0.615	-2.001	5.445
TS4	384	4.643	5	0.787	-2.552	6.655
TS5	384	4.625	5	0.608	-1.953	5.477
TS6	384	4.034	4	0.988	-0.41	-0.969
TS7	384	4.672	5	0.701	-2.769	8.749
TS8	384	4.661	5	0.692	-2.603	7.977

Source: SmartPLS data output (2024)

Correlation Coefficient

In path analysis, the path coefficient can be identified as the partial correlation coefficient between the two independent and dependent variables. A correlation coefficient is a partial coefficient partitioning into measures of the independent and dependent variables. It can

affect directly and indirectly. Correlation coefficients are frequently used in social science, management, and finance-related modules to assess the relationship between two variables, factors, or data sets. The statistical measurement of the strength of a linear relationship between two variables is known as the correlation coefficient. Correlation values can range from -1 to 1, where a correlation coefficient of -1 represents a perfect negative or inverse.

A correlation coefficient of 1 represents perfect positive correlation. When the correlation coefficient is 0, it means that there is no relation in between the variables.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

	Destination Image	Gastronomy Tourism	Tourist Satisfaction	P
Destination Image	1	0.966	0.953	0
Gastronomy Tourism	0.966	1	0.946	0
Tourist Satisfaction	0.953	0.946	1	0

Source: SmartPLS data output (2024)

According to the above table, there is a correlation between the independent variable (GT), the mediator variable (TS) and the dependent variable (DI) and which implies that there is a strong positive relationship between variables. Moreover, the p-value of 0.000 emphasizes that there is a highly significant association between these variables.

SMART PLS – Structural Equation Model

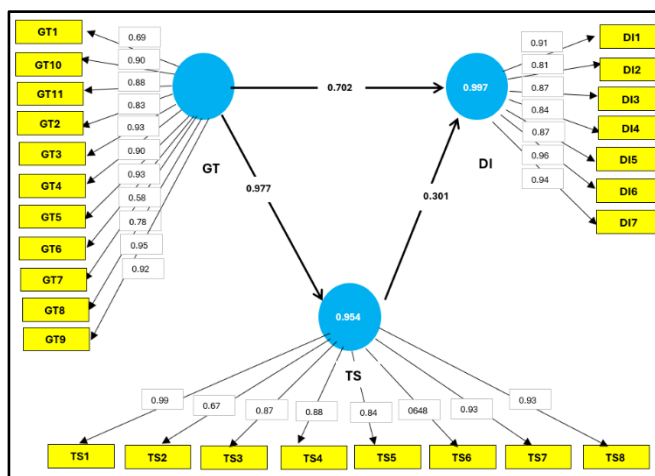


Figure 2: SEM Algorithm

Source: SmartPLS data output (2024)

Table 6: Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Path	B	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Value	P values
H1	GT ->DI	0.706	0.079	8.839	0
H2	GT ->TS	0.977	0.005	206.024	0
H3	TS ->DI	0.297	0.08	3.776	0

Source: SmartPLS data output (2024)

Based on the objectives of the study, Hypothesis 1 proposed that there is a relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image. The Direct path coefficient of the GT and DI = 0.706 and $t = 28.839$, $P < 0.05$, respectively. Therefore, the statistics demonstrate a somewhat higher positive association and a significant effect on the relationship's dependent variable. The connection is significant at the 99% significance level since the t -statistic is almost greater than 2 and the $P > 0.00$. As a result, the significant path coefficient supported to Hypothesis 1, there is a relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image.

Hypothesis 2 states that there is a relationship between gastronomy tourism and tourist satisfaction. The direct path coefficient of the GT and TS is equal to 0.977, and the t -statistic is 206.024, according to the statistics presented in the table, which were obtained using the partial least squares approach. The P -value is likewise less than 0.05. This relationship's path coefficient is modest and positive in nature.

Between TS and DI, there is a strong favorable influence. The calculated t -statistic for this association is almost 3.776 and the P -value is less than 0.05. According to this, the relationship between TS and DI is statistically significant at a 99% confidence interval. As a result, hypothesis 2 was shown to be true. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were accepted due to the considerable correlations between latent variables. Another goal of this research is to determine the role of tourist satisfaction in mediating the relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image. The researcher employed a consistent PLS bootstrapping technique to determine the mediation effect.

Table 7: Specific Indirect Effects

Specific indirect effects	
GT ->DI ->TS	0.568

Source: SmartPLS data output (2024)

PLS output offers one particular indirect effect in this table. Above table shows that at the 90% significance level, all the specified indirect effects are significant. Identify the tourist satisfaction (TS) as a mediator between gastronomy tourism (GT) and destination image (DI) among the indirect effects.

Mediator analysis

In this research, Tourist Satisfaction works as a mediator. According to the statistics in the direct path coefficient and Measures of Specific Indirect Effect, the researcher can identify that there is partial mediation in the model, since both direct and specific indirect paths were significant. After that analysis, it is seen that Tourist Satisfaction mediates the relationship between gastronomy Tourism and Destination Image in Sri Lanka, especially in Southern Province, because Hypothesis 3 is acceptable.

Discussion

Objective 01: To identify the Relationship between Gastronomy Tourism and Destination Image

The first objective is to examine the relationship between both dependent and independent variables. There is a direct relationship between these two variables: gastronomy tourism and destination image. According to the results, path coefficient was 0.702 in simple regression analysis between the two variables. When gastronomy tourism increases by one unit, destination image will automatically enhance in 0.702 unit. There is a substantial positive relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image, according to the correlation analysis. Moreover, the adjusted R² value is recorded as 0.934; it seems that gastronomy tourism has a favorable impact on destination image. Because the R² value is positive and greater than 0.5. With the relation of objective one, hypothesis one is constructed: there is a relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image. According to the results H1 can be accepted.

Objective 02: To identify the mediating Relationship of Tourist Satisfaction on relation between Gastronomy Tourism and Destination Image

The second objective is to analyze the indirect relationship between the independent variable, mediator variable, and the dependent variable in the research. The second objective is to identify a relationship between those variables. To find the relationship between the variables, the researcher calculates path coefficient correlation. Moreover, the outcome of the value is positive. (GT-> DI- 0.702) and (GT -> TS- 0.977), and so, according to the outcome of the software, can be accepted with hypothesis 4 it means tourist satisfaction has a significant mediating relationship between Gastronomy Tourism and Destination image. Moreover, the p-value of the constructs is 0. So that means the relationship is significant. Furthermore, hypotheses 2 and 3 is regarding with this objective; the second hypothesis is that there is a relationship between gastronomy tourism and tourist satisfaction, and the third hypothesis is that there is a relationship between destination image and tourist satisfaction. After calculating these analyses, H2 and H3 can be accepted.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Primarily, this study is focused on the theme of gastronomy tourism & destination image in Sri Lanka with special reference to the Southern Province. Additionally, this research has an independent variable, a mediator variable and a dependent variable; therefore, gastronomy

tourism, tourist satisfaction and destination image. The research study was done through the quantitative method and the information that was needed in order to question these three constructs was collected by a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. To achieve those objectives, a Smart PLS tool was used. The results revealed that the latent variables have a strong and positive relationship with one another. The quantitative method is associated with researcher-designed research, which was conducted among travellers to the Southern Province of Sri Lanka.

The researcher designed the study; however, the quantitative method used and data collected were associated with travellers' travel to the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. Smart PLS has been used for data analysis with the help of error-free filled questionnaires. The relationship between the dimensions of gastronomy tourism and destination image, which has an impact on tourist satisfaction, was also tested, and it will be discussed accordingly as well. Finally, we intend to discuss the most important dimension in determining gastronomic tourist satisfaction. The research concluded the significant impact of culinary tourism, particularly from the Southern Province on the overall image of Sri Lanka and where they succeed in the gastronomic landscape. Their offer is rich and diverse, which makes the region even more attractive. For tourists, the Southern Province is distinguished by local cuisine and culinary traditions as well as food-related activities.

In the Southern Province, as a focal point of research, culinary tourism also played an important role in the overall perception of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the breadth of unique and varied food possibilities significantly adds to the region's allure. For a tourist, the authentic local cuisine and culinary practices, as well as numerous other food-related activities that are peppered throughout, make it even more distinct from other locations in the island of Sri Lanka. The research emphasizes the fact that culinary tourism is something beyond a certain level for food buffs and gives an impetus to the wider cultural experience of tourists. Tourists bond more effectively with a place if they include regional food in their travel, which then has a long-term positive effect. This means that using food as a strategic tool enables the destination to improve its image and can drive tourism growth.

This part of the study also investigates the mediating effect of tourist satisfaction in the relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image. Food therapy, quality and image of destination: Testing the mediating role of satisfaction/enhancing effect on the relationship between gastro tourism and positive impact on destination image. According to the US Travel Association, when visitors have positive dining experiences, their overall perception of the destination is markedly boosted. Satisfaction comes from things such as the flavor and authenticity of dishes, the genuineness and respect of employees serving you at restaurants, and the vibes that each particular restaurant gives out. When travelers leave happy, they are more likely to share their good experiences with others, offline and online, thus building the reputation of a place over time. Therefore, it needs to ensure its high-quality gastronomy tourism experiences that result in stimulated tourist satisfaction to capitalize on the destination image of Sri Lanka's Southern Province through the benefits of gastronomy tourism. This view emphasizes that continued development in both the food and service provided is essential even to sustain and improve guests' favorable perceptions.

Recommendation

As the researcher maintained above, gastronomy tourism is a fairly novel concept for each and every person in our country. However, this concept is mostly used in several countries. This section presents the general suggestions and recommendations for the hotel industry to use gastronomy tourism to promote Sri Lanka as a gastronomic tourism destination. There is a lack of existing literature supporting this concept. Moreover, there are no any researcher looks back on the topic in the tourism industry. In here measures the impact of gastronomy tourism on destination image. The findings show that there is a strong relationship among latent variables. The results of the study highlighted that this concept is fair enough for employees and students, which it needs further advancement and a fair gathering of knowledge. However, more effective procedures are needed for gastronomy tourism, because Sri Lanka is a one of the flavors. With that Sri Lanka's taste can be brought to the world, and Sri Lanka can market as a gastronomic destination. Respondents suggested getting more government support for this effort as well.

The study gives hotel managers and other hospitality owners ideas they can use for their business. They should try to add local foods and flavors to their menu. They could add food from the Southern Province to their menu. They could have events where people come to try food from that part of the country. They should also tell their workers about local food and tell them how to recommend it to customers. They should also work with farmers and food artists. This way they can always have fresh, local, high-quality ingredients for their food. This also helps the local economy. They could also spend money promoting a food travel package or themed stay. They might be able to attract a special group of food travelers. Hotels could also get other benefits from working with travelers on meals. They could gather and look at what guests say about the food they ate. This way, they can always find new ways to do better and add new things to their menu. Hotel managers could also set their hotel apart by focusing on gastronomy tourism and finding unique food experiences to give to their guests.

The study on how food and drink tourism changes the way people think about Sri Lanka as a travel spot especially in the Southern Province gives useful facts for the travel trade. It shows how eating and drinking makes how visitors think and how it makes the place more attractive. By showing the different flavors and ways, the South Province makes food travel leaders can use food as an important way to tell others about the place and make it different from other spots to visit. This might lead to the making of food tours that fit into what people want and food shows and classes that get people who love food and travel to come to the South Province and learn about other customs. Also, the results show how the travel leaders and local food suppliers might work together to make real and fun food trips. Making a link between old ways of cooking and what it means to the place and its past can make Sri Lanka a more diverse and fuller of culture travel spot and can make more people visit it and help the local economy grow.

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