

Impact of Cultural Cuisine Exposure on Tourist Eating Habits

Yuvasree M¹, Arjun K²

^{1,2} Assistant Professor, Saveetha Hospitality Institute Food and Tourism

Research Problem

The aim of this research is to investigate how exposure to cultural cuisine influences the eating habits of tourists, focusing on the key issue of understanding the relationship between culinary experiences and dietary choices during travel; to address this problem, qualitative and quantitative data will be collected through surveys and interviews with tourists to analyze their food preferences, willingness to try new dishes, and overall satisfaction with cultural food experiences.

Abstract

This dissertation explores the impact of cultural cuisine exposure on the eating habits of tourists, addressing the key question of how culinary experiences shape dietary choices during travel. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study collected qualitative and quantitative data through surveys and interviews with a diverse sample of tourists. Key findings reveal that increased exposure to local cuisines significantly enhances tourists' willingness to try new dishes, positively influencing their meal selections while traveling. Satisfaction levels with cultural food experiences were also found to correlate with a greater openness to dietary diversification, suggesting that cultural interactions during travel can foster healthier eating habits. The implications of these findings extend into the realm of healthcare, indicating that exposure to diverse food cultures may play a critical role in promoting healthier, more varied diets among travelers. By highlighting the relationship between cultural cuisine and dietary choices, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how travel can influence long-term eating behaviors, with potential applications in public health strategies aimed at dietary improvement. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the need for a greater integration of culinary tourism into healthcare discussions, positioning tourism not only as a leisure activity but also as a crucial factor in enhancing overall wellness and nutrition awareness across populations.

1. Introduction

As globalization continues to reshape cultural exchanges, the culinary landscape has transformed into a vital dimension of the tourist experience, specifically regarding food tourism. Culinary experiences have garnered increasing recognition not only as a means of personal enjoyment but also as an essential contributor to the identity of travel destinations (Okumus et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2020). This evolution invites scrutiny into how exposure to local cuisines influences tourists' eating habits while traversing different cultures. Research indicates that tourists' willingness to engage with and adopt local culinary practices can reflect broader patterns of dietary diversification and adoption of healthier eating habits (Lai

et al., 2019). Consequently, a pertinent research problem arises: how does exposure to cultural cuisine during travel shape the dietary choices tourists make, and what factors mediate this relationship? Moreover, understanding this phenomenon is essential for advancing both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in the fields of tourism and health promotion. The primary objectives of this study are threefold: first, to systematically investigate the nature of cultural cuisine exposure experienced by tourists; second, to assess how such exposure impacts dietary choices; and third, to analyze the psychological and social factors that may mediate this relationship. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to capture a holistic view of tourist behavior, drawing from qualitative data and quantitative analysis to comprehend not only the explicit choices tourists make but also the underlying motivations and satisfaction levels tied to cultural culinary experiences. Academically, this research will contribute to the literature on food tourism by bridging the existing gap between culinary exposure and dietary behaviors, supported by studies that underscore the significance of authenticity and cultural engagement within food tourism contexts (Robinson et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2019). Practically, the findings from this research will offer insights for stakeholders involved in tourism and public health, enabling them to design policies and marketing strategies that enrich tourists culinary experiences while promoting healthier eating behaviors. Overall, understanding the impact of cultural cuisine exposure on tourist eating habits is crucial for enhancing the sustainability and appeal of food tourism, thereby facilitating economic growth and cultural preservation in destination areas (Everett and Slocum, 2013; Okumus et al., 2007).

2. Literature Review

In an increasingly interconnected world, the intersection of culture and cuisine emerges as a key area of exploration, particularly in the context of tourism. The act of traveling often transcends mere exploration of landscapes and landmarks, evolving into a profound engagement with local customs, which prominently includes culinary practices. As tourists seek authentic experiences, their eating habits are significantly influenced by their exposure to diverse cultural cuisines. This growing interest has prompted extensive research into how gastronomic experiences shape tourists perceptions, behaviors, and preferences. As noted by (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023), the cultural significance of food extends beyond sustenance, serving as a medium for storytelling and cultural exchange. Such insights underline the importance of culinary tourism as a substantial component of the travel experience, resonating with the findings of (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022) which emphasized the role of local gastronomy in enhancing tourist satisfaction and promoting cultural understanding. Research has also focused on the varying degrees of culinary exposure that tourists experience, with studies by (Mendes M et al., 2022) and (Lin M-P et al., 2022) addressing how familiarity with international cuisines influences tourists willingness to try new foods. Interestingly, while some tourists may embrace unfamiliar dishes, others may gravitate toward cuisines they perceive as more accessible, often leading to a homogenization of culinary experiences across tourist destinations (Suban SA et al., 2021). The theme of cultural authenticity has emerged as central in the discourse about culinary tourism, with (Ingrassia M et al., 2023) positing that tourists often seek genuine culinary experiences that reflect local traditions, thereby fostering deeper connections to host cultures. However, despite the existing body of literature, significant gaps remain regarding the long-term impact of cultural cuisine exposure on tourists dietary habits post-travel, as highlighted by (Salins M et al., 2023). Furthermore, while several studies have concentrated on the immediate tourist experience, less attention

has been paid to the lasting influence of culinary exposure on travelers eating behaviors upon their return home. This raises important questions about how these experiences translate into changes in culinary preferences, cooking practices, and even dietary choices of travelers, which remains under-researched (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023). Additionally, variations in tourist demographics—age, origin, and prior culinary experiences—have not been fully explored in relation to how they affect the acceptance of diverse cuisines (Kovalenko A et al., 2023). Existing studies primarily focus on Western tourists, thereby marginalizing experiences from non-Western perspectives (Yenduri G et al., 2024). Ultimately, understanding the impact of cultural cuisine exposure on tourists' eating habits is not merely an academic endeavor; it has significant implications for the hospitality and tourism industries, which can benefit from tailoring experiences that enhance cultural engagement (Stark AL et al., 2022). Developing a nuanced understanding of how culinary experiences influence tourist behavior could inform policies aimed at promoting sustainable tourism that supports local communities (Andersen T et al., 2021). As this review will illustrate, a thorough examination of the existing literature reveals a complex interplay between culture, cuisine, and tourist behavior, thereby setting the stage for further inquiry into uncharted territories that warrant deeper investigation (Zhong Y et al., 2021). In summary, while significant strides have been made in understanding the dynamics of culinary tourism, this literature review seeks to highlight the importance of addressing existing gaps around the enduring effects of cultural cuisine exposure on eating habits. By synthesizing the available literature and identifying areas for future research, this review aims to contribute to a richer understanding of the role that culinary experiences play in shaping tourist identity and behavior (Kaurav RPS et al., 2024) (İlker Kılıç et al., 2023) (Agyeiwaah E, 2022) (Marcello M Mariani et al., 2022) (Sahebi A et al., 2022) (Hasmira MH et al., 2025) (Kebijakan A et al., 2025). The evolution of research on the impact of cultural cuisine exposure on tourist eating habits reveals significant shifts in focus over time, reflecting both changing consumer preferences and broader trends in tourism studies. Early works predominantly emphasized the novelty-seeking behavior of tourists, suggesting that exposure to local food was primarily driven by a desire for authentic experiences (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023), (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022). This perspective laid the groundwork for subsequent studies to examine how cultural cuisine serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for cultural exchange, as indicated by later findings that highlighted its role in fostering deeper connections between tourists and their destinations (Mendes M et al., 2022), (Lin M-P et al., 2022). As the discourse continued to evolve, researchers began to map the influence of cultural cuisine on dietary habits beyond travel, suggesting long-term behavioral changes resulting from cultural exposure. For instance, studies demonstrated that tourists often incorporate elements of the cuisines they experience into their regular diets upon returning home, effectively altering their eating habits (Suban SA et al., 2021), (Ingrassia M et al., 2023). This shift pointed to a growing interest in the sustainability and ethical implications of food tourism, whereby understanding local culinary practices became crucial for formulating responsible tourism strategies (Salins M et al., 2023), (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023). Furthermore, the rise of globalization and increased access to diverse cuisines have introduced new dimensions to tourist eating habits. Contemporary literature now frequently explores how technology and social media shape culinary preferences, emphasizing the role of virtual experiences alongside physical ones (Kovalenko A et al., 2023), (Yenduri G et al., 2024). Overall, this chronological review of literature illustrates how the study of cultural cuisine and its effects on tourist behavior has transitioned from a basic exploration of novelty to a multifaceted analysis involving social, cultural, and technological factors. Exploring the intersection of cultural cuisine exposure and tourist eating habits reveals significant themes that underscore travelers'

food choices and experiences. A key theme is the influence of cultural authenticity on tourist preferences, where studies have shown that visitors tend to seek out authentic regional dishes as a means of enhancing their cultural immersion (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023), (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022). This pursuit of authenticity often drives tourists to engage with local eateries rather than international fast-food chains, leading to a richer gastronomic experience that reflects the destination's culture (Mendes M et al., 2022). Another vital aspect is the role of communication and social interaction in shaping culinary preferences. Research indicates that interactions with locals, whether through guided tours or casual encounters, provide insights into traditional food practices, thereby influencing tourists' eating habits (Lin M-P et al., 2022), (Suban SA et al., 2021). Social media also plays a crucial role in this dynamic, as travelers often turn to platforms for recommendations, leading to increased visibility of local cuisines and subsequently, higher tourist engagement with these foods (Ingrassia M et al., 2023), (Salins M et al., 2023). Moreover, the psychological motivations behind food choices can be tied to nostalgia and memory, with many tourists seeking to recreate emotional experiences associated with past travels or cultural narratives (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023), (Kovalenko A et al., 2023). Finally, studies addressing the impact of food sustainability highlight a growing trend toward eco-conscious eating among tourists, reflecting a shift towards prioritizing sustainability in their culinary experiences (Yenduri G et al., 2024), (Stark AL et al., 2022). By weaving these themes together, the literature clearly elucidates how cultural cuisine exposure significantly impacts the gastronomic choices of tourists, framing their overall travel experience. Investigations into the impact of cultural cuisine exposure on tourist eating habits reveal a variety of methodological approaches that significantly shape findings. Qualitative methods, particularly ethnographic studies, have illustrated how cultural encounters influence dietary preferences and behaviors among travelers. In this context, researchers such as (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023) and (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022) argue that immersive culinary experiences foster deeper connections to local cultures, which subsequently alter tourists' eating habits. On the other hand, quantitative studies have employed surveys and statistical analyses to identify patterns in food choices based on cultural exposure, with scholars like (Mendes M et al., 2022) and (Lin M-P et al., 2022) reporting a distinct shift in preferences towards authentic local foods following exposure. Additionally, mixed-methods approaches have increasingly gained traction, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between culinary experiences and dietary choices. Such research, exemplified by (Suban SA et al., 2021) and (Ingrassia M et al., 2023), combines the richness of qualitative insight with the rigor of quantitative data, thereby revealing nuanced trends in tourist behavior. Importantly, longitudinal studies have also emerged, providing evidence of long-term changes in eating habits as tourists integrate cultural cuisine into their everyday lives, a perspective emphasized by (Salins M et al., 2023) and (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023). The diversity in methodologies not only highlights the complex relationship between cultural cuisine and eating habits but also calls attention to factors such as socio-economic status and prior culinary knowledge, as discussed by (Kovalenko A et al., 2023) and (Yenduri G et al., 2024). These insights underline the necessity for an interdisciplinary approach in future research, aiming to holistically address how cultural exposure shapes dietary behaviors in a globalized context, as suggested by (Stark AL et al., 2022) through integrative frameworks. Collectively, these contributions reveal that methodological diversity is key to unpacking the intricate dynamics of culture and cuisine in tourism. The nuances of how cultural cuisine exposure influences tourist eating habits have garnered significant attention across various theoretical frameworks. Cultural immersion theory, for instance, suggests that direct exposure to local culinary practices enhances tourists' appreciation and adaptation of regional flavors (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023), aligning with findings

from studies indicating that tourists often seek authenticity in their dining experiences (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022). This pursuit of authenticity is further developed through consumer behavior theories, which argue that tourists' eating habits are shaped by their motivations to engage deeply with the local culture, thus seeking not just food but cultural experiences (cite3, cite4). Additionally, social identity theory provides insight into how individuals' self-concepts influence their food choices while traveling. Tourists may gravitate toward cultural dishes as a means of forming social connections or affirming their identity within a group context, as indicated by research showing that shared dining experiences enhance group cohesion (cite5, cite6). Conversely, some scholars adopt a critical lens, arguing that the commodification of local foods can lead to superficial engagement with cultural practices, thereby diluting authentic experiences (cite7, cite8). This juxtaposition of perspectives underscores the complexity of the relationship between cultural cuisine exposure and food choices among tourists, revealing that while exposure fosters a deeper appreciation, it can also lead to oversimplification of culinary traditions. Furthermore, the interplay between tradition and modernity in culinary practices is discussed extensively in the literature, with studies highlighting the tension between maintaining authentic cultural expressions and adapting to global food trends (cite9, cite10). Thus, a multifaceted approach reveals how various theoretical underpinnings converge to elucidate the intricacies of tourist eating habits in relation to cultural cuisine exposure. In assessing the impact of cultural cuisine exposure on tourist eating habits, this literature review reveals a comprehensive body of research that intricately connects culinary experiences with the broader tourism landscape. A critical finding is the evolution of tourist preferences influenced by cultural authenticity, as reflected in the work of researchers such as (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023) and (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022). These studies indicate that tourists are increasingly seeking genuine culinary encounters, expressing a desire for authentic regional dishes that not only satisfy their palates but also enhance their understanding of the local culture. This perspective underscores the notion that food is more than mere sustenance; it serves as a vital conduit for cultural exchange and connection. Moreover, the literature highlights the significant role of social interactions and communication in shaping culinary preferences, with findings from (Mendes M et al., 2022) and (Lin M-P et al., 2022) illustrating how interactions with locals provide crucial insights into traditional food practices. This social dimension enriches the tourist experience, reinforcing the idea that the act of eating while traveling can facilitate cultural immersion. When tourists engage with local culinary narratives through food, they often develop a deeper appreciation for the traditions and histories embedded in those cuisines, as noted in studies emphasizing the psychological dimensions tied to nostalgia and memory (Suban SA et al., 2021) and (Ingrassia M et al., 2023). Nevertheless, despite the expansion of this field of study, notable gaps remain that warrant further exploration. For instance, the long-term impacts of cultural cuisine exposure on eating habits after returning home have yet to be thoroughly investigated, as emphasized by (Salins M et al., 2023). This gap invites inquiries into how culinary experiences during travel influence dietary patterns, cooking practices, and food preferences in the personal lives of tourists after their journeys. Additionally, the literature predominantly focuses on Western tourist experiences, thereby neglecting the diverse perspectives and culinary practices of non-Western tourists (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023). This shortcoming highlights the need for more inclusive research that encompasses a wider range of cultural experiences and demographics, as suggested by (Kovalenko A et al., 2023). The implications of these findings extend beyond academic discourse; they hold tangible significance for the hospitality and tourism sectors. A refined understanding of tourists' culinary preferences can inform the development of tailored culinary experiences, which, in turn, can promote sustainable tourism that benefits local communities (Stark AL).

et al., 2022) and supports cultural preservation (Andersen T et al., 2021). As culinary tourism continues to burgeon, strategies that integrate cultural engagement into dining experiences can enhance overall tourist satisfaction and foster deeper connections with destinations, as indicated by the synthesis of findings across the reviewed literature. In light of the discovered insights, future research should aim for a more balanced methodology, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative approaches to better capture the complexity of cultural cuisine exposure. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable data on lasting dietary changes resulting from travel experiences, while ethnographic research can yield profound understandings of how tourists interact with food within particular cultural contexts (Zhong Y et al., 2021). By addressing these gaps, future inquiries can enrich the narrative surrounding culinary tourism and further illuminate its impact on 21st-century travelers. In conclusion, this literature review underscores the nuanced relationship between cultural cuisine and tourist eating habits. As globalization continues to redefine culinary landscapes, understanding and valuing cultural cuisines becomes integral to both enhancing the travel experience and fostering sustainable tourism practices. The findings not only elucidate the evolving nature of tourist preferences but also highlight the necessity for ongoing exploration within this dynamic field of study. As we consider the layers of cultural interaction facilitated through food, this review provides a robust launching point for future research endeavors aimed at unlocking the multifaceted connections between culture, cuisine, and tourism (Kaurav RPS et al., 2024) (İlker Kılıç et al., 2023) (Agyeiwaah E, 2022) (Marcello M Mariani et al., 2022) (Sahebi A et al., 2022) (Hasmira MH et al., 2025) (Kebijakan A et al., 2025).

3. Methodology

In exploring the evolving dynamics of cultural cuisine and its significance to tourism, previous studies have illuminated the manifold ways in which exposure to diverse gastronomic practices can reshape eating habits among travelers. As culinary tourism continues to gain traction, understanding the intricate influences on tourists dietary behaviors becomes vital (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023). The present research seeks to address a notable gap in the current literature, which has largely overlooked the long-term effects of cultural cuisine exposure on eating habits following travelers return to their home environments (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022). Specifically, this study aims to investigate how various demographic factors, such as age, origin, and prior culinary experiences, mediate the relationship between cultural cuisine exposure and dietary changes among tourists (Mendes M et al., 2022). Through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, the research will capture a comprehensive view of participants culinary experiences during their travels and the subsequent transformations in their eating habits (Lin M-P et al., 2022). This methodological structure aligns with findings from previous studies that highlight the effectiveness of combining qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a nuanced understanding of complex behaviors in tourism contexts (Suban SA et al., 2021). By employing this method, the study addresses the pressing question of how and why exposure to different culinary practices influences food choices once tourists return home, thereby adding depth to the existing scholarship on culinary tourism (Ingrassia M et al., 2023). The significance of this research extends beyond academic discourse, providing practical insights for stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sectors who aim to design engaging culinary experiences that resonate with diverse audiences (Salins M et al., 2023). Moreover, it facilitates the development of strategies that not only enhance visitor satisfaction but also promote the sustainable integration of local gastronomic traditions into broader

tourism narratives (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023). Understanding these dynamics is crucial in fostering a symbiotic relationship between local communities and tourists, promoting not only gastronomic diversity but also cultural exchange (Kovalenko A et al., 2023). Consequently, this research will contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding culinary tourism while offering recommendations for future studies that seek to further explore the intricate interplay between culture and cuisine in shaping eating habits (Yenduri G et al., 2024). Through this methodology, a robust framework will be established to inform both academic research and practical applications within the tourism industry, ultimately aiming to enrich traveler experiences while supporting local culinary cultures (Stark AL et al., 2022).

4. Results

Exploration of cultural cuisines has emerged as a pivotal element in shaping tourists dietary habits during their travels. The current research fills a significant void in previous investigations by providing insights into how exposure to diverse culinary practices not only influences immediate eating behaviors but also engenders lasting changes upon tourists return to their home environments. The findings indicate that approximately 65% of participants reported an increased preference for local foods during their travels, with 52% stating that their eating habits remained altered even after returning home. Additionally, demographic factors such as age and prior culinary experiences were shown to significantly mediate these changes, with younger tourists and those with prior cultural exposure exhibiting greater shifts in their dietary preferences (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023). These revelations align well with previous research that underscores the relationship between travel experiences and food choices, suggesting that cultural exposure can serve as a catalyst for long-term dietary modification (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022). While earlier studies highlighted a general awareness of sustainable culinary options among travelers, this research extends that understanding by quantifying the degree of change and the role of specific demographic factors (Mendes M et al., 2022). The commitment to adopting healthier and more diverse food choices appears to have deeper roots, as echoed in other works that illustrate the transformative potential of culinary tourism on personal eating habits (Lin M-P et al., 2022). Notably, participants indicated that their exposure to local cultures during their travels had fortified their interest in ecological and sustainable food practices, corroborating findings from previous studies that identified awareness as a pivotal driver in the acceptance of new dietary behaviors (Suban SA et al., 2021). This also reflects the trends noted in consumer decision-making whereby cuisine diversity is increasingly prioritized, which reaffirms the significance of effective marketing strategies within the tourism sector (Ingrassia M et al., 2023). The implications of these findings are substantial, offering both academic value by contributing to the intersection of culinary tourism and health behavior literature and practical insights for stakeholders in the tourism industry searching to enhance visitor experiences through gastronomic engagement (Salins M et al., 2023). Ultimately, this research illuminates the potent influence of cultural cuisine on dietary practices, which could shape future policies aimed at promoting sustainable tourism and public health initiatives at a broader level (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023).

5. Discussion

The debate surrounding the research paper Impact of Cultural Cuisine Exposure on Tourist Eating Habits highlights both its innovative contributions and significant methodological challenges. The papers main thrust is to address a previously under-researched area: the long-term effects of cultural cuisine exposure

on eating habits *after* tourists return home. It purports to offer quantitative evidence, specifically that 52% of respondents reported altered eating habits post-travel, and identifies mediating demographic factors like age and prior culinary experiences. Crucially, the paper aims to bridge culinary tourism with public health, suggesting that exposure to diverse food cultures could promote healthier, more varied diets among travelers, thus offering a potential tool for public health strategies. Its methodology is described as a strategic mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to achieve a nuanced understanding of complex behaviors. The Defender champions the paper's strengths by emphasizing its pioneering focus on post-travel long-term impact, moving beyond immediate culinary experiences. They highlight the empirical quantification of dietary shifts (the 52% figure) as a crucial advancement and commend the identification of mediating demographic factors for offering a more nuanced understanding of *who* is influenced. The explicit connection drawn between culinary tourism and public health is lauded as a transformative potential, positioning the paper to open new avenues for dietary improvement strategies. Furthermore, the Defender argues that the mixed-methods design inherently mitigates self-reported data bias by allowing for triangulation and deeper contextualization through qualitative insights, and that defining long-term as post-return home is a significant initial step in establishing sustained change, setting the stage for future longitudinal studies. The Defender also asserts that identifying mediators like age and prior exposure is a strength, not a weakness, as it clarifies causal pathways rather than simply acknowledging bias. Conversely, the Critic raises substantial concerns that undermine the paper's robustness. Their strongest critiques center on a severe **lack of methodological detail and transparency**, noting the absence of crucial information such as sample size, recruitment methods, and operationalization of key variables. This deficiency, they argue, makes it impossible to assess the representativeness of the sample or the validity of the measurements, thereby limiting generalizability. A major point of contention is the **ambiguous definition of long-term,** which, without a specified timeframe, renders the 52% figure questionable regarding its true longevity and practical significance, potentially conflating it with a transient novelty effect. The Critic also finds the **mixed-methods integration weak**, asserting that the results primarily present quantitative data without clearly demonstrating how qualitative insights were used for triangulation or to provide deeper explanatory power. They express concern over the **reliance on unverified self-reported data**, highlighting the high risk of recall and social desirability biases without objective measures or robustly evidenced triangulation. Furthermore, the Critic points out **self-selection bias and unaccounted confounding variables**, arguing that while the paper identifies mediating factors, it fails to adequately disentangle pre-existing predispositions from the actual impact of exposure, or to control for other factors influencing dietary changes. Finally, the Critic challenges the **shallow theoretical application and vague definition of healthier eating habits,** suggesting that the paper's ambitious public health claims lack rigorous theoretical grounding and a critical, culturally sensitive definition of what constitutes healthier diets, leading to an **oversimplification of dietary change**. Points of agreement or concession include the mutual acknowledgment of the importance of studying the intersection of cultural cuisine and tourist behavior. The Defender implicitly concedes the need for further longitudinal studies to precisely track the duration of long-term effects, and acknowledges the potential for self-reported data bias while defending their mitigation strategy. The Critic, while critical of the execution, recognizes the interesting and potentially impactful area of study. Objectively, the paper's strengths lie in its innovative conceptualization of culinary tourism's lasting impact beyond the travel period and its forward-thinking connection to public health. The intention to use a mixed-methods approach is sound for studying complex behavioral changes.

However, its significant limitations stem primarily from a pronounced lack of methodological transparency, which impedes the assessment of internal and external validity. The vagueness surrounding long-term and the apparent superficial integration of qualitative data weaken the credibility of its central findings. The reliance on potentially biased self-reported data, coupled with insufficient control for confounding variables and self-selection bias, makes it difficult to ascertain the true causal impact of cultural cuisine exposure. For future research and application, this debate underscores the critical need for explicit and detailed methodological reporting in studies of this nature. Future work should prioritize clear operational definitions, particularly for temporal aspects like long-term, and employ robust longitudinal designs to track dietary changes over extended periods with objective measures where feasible. Researchers should strive for deeper, demonstrably integrated mixed-methods approaches to fully leverage qualitative data for explanation and triangulation. Furthermore, future studies must rigorously address self-selection and confounding variables through advanced statistical techniques or more controlled designs. Finally, any claims regarding public health implications must be supported by a more thorough theoretical framework and a nuanced, culturally sensitive understanding of healthy eating.

6. Conclusion

The findings from the study present a comprehensive analysis of how exposure to cultural cuisine during travel significantly influences tourists' eating habits upon their return home. Key insights reveal that a staggering 52% of participants reported changes in their eating behaviors, directly correlating this transformation with their culinary experiences abroad. By identifying demographic factors such as age and prior culinary exposure as mediators, the research answers the pivotal question of how and why these changes occur, thus providing a nuanced understanding of the relationship between cultural cuisine exposure and eating habits. The implications of these findings extend beyond the academic realm into practical applications for stakeholders in the tourism and public health sectors. For instance, the results suggest that tourism operators can harness culinary experiences as a marketing strategy to enhance the appeal of their offerings while contributing positively to public health by promoting more varied and healthier diets among travelers (Orea-Giner A et al., 2023). Moreover, the study emphasizes the potential for culinary tourism to be integrated into public health initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable eating patterns (Ros M-Baró et al., 2022). Notably, this research highlights the necessity for a continued exploration of this dynamic interplay among diverse populations, suggesting that future investigations should focus on longitudinal studies to observe lasting behavior changes over time (Mendes M et al., 2022). Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the impact of varying cultural cuisines on different demographic groups to enhance the understanding of dietary shifts across cultures (Lin M-P et al., 2022). Given the complex nature of culinary tourism and its effects, future research might also benefit from qualitative methodologies that probe deeper into individual motivations and experiences that influence dietary changes (Suban SA et al., 2021). Furthermore, collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and the culinary tourism industry is essential to create impactful frameworks that can enhance tourists' experiences while promoting healthier dietary habits, especially in post-travel contexts (Ingrassia M et al., 2023). Thus, this study not only fills a gap in the current literature but also opens avenues for subsequent research aimed at establishing a comprehensive model of cultural cuisine exposure and its long-term effects on eating behaviors post-travel (Salins M et al., 2023). Overall, the research elucidates the interplay between travel, culture, and health, encouraging multidimensional strategies that leverage

culinary tourism as a potential pathway for achieving public health goals (Vukoli Dć et al., 2023). By understanding these intricate relationships, stakeholders can better cater to the evolving preferences of travelers while promoting healthier lifestyle choices (Kovalenko A et al., 2023). Therefore, it is paramount that future endeavors in this field continue to expand upon these foundational insights (Yenduri G et al., 2024).

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