

RESEARCH

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## GASTRONOMIC DIVERSITY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CULTURAL IDENTITY

### DIVERSIDAD GASTRONÓMICA Y SU APOORTE A LA IDENTIDAD CULTURAL

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#### ABSTRACT

This article discusses gastronomy and its diversity as a motivation and contribution to the cultural identity, trying to show the reality of the destinations where it is the main tourist attraction in order to contribute to better understanding of the phenomenon involving the movement of visitors for gastronomic, touristic and cultural reasons. In addition to being a relatively recent phenomenon, gastronomy has become increasingly important in Ecuador, as well as in other countries, sparking a considerable number of visitors traveling motivated by culinary activities; also, Ecuador can be considered a destination with great potential for tourism because of its outstanding culture. The methodology that has been used in this article is: observation and surveys to owners of entertainment establishments (bars and discos) and the bartenders in charge of preparing cocktails.

**KEY WORDS:** Gastronomy – tourism – culture – identity - mixology - Ecuadorian liqueurs – entertainment

#### RESUMEN

El presente artículo, analiza la gastronomía y su diversidad como motivación y aporte a la identidad cultural, procurando mostrar la realidad de los destinos donde es la atracción turística principal con el objeto de contribuir a un mayor conocimiento sobre el fenómeno que involucra el desplazamiento de visitantes por motivos gastronómicos, turísticos y culturales. Más allá de ser un fenómeno relativamente reciente, la gastronomía ha ido adquiriendo importancia en el Ecuador, así como en otros países, dinamizando un número considerable de visitantes que viajan motivados por actividades culinarias, además Ecuador puede ser considerado un destino con gran potencial para hacer turismo debido a su relevante cultura. La

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metodología que se ha utilizado en el presente artículo son: observación y encuestas a los propietarios de los establecimientos de entretenimiento (bares y discotecas) y los bartenders encargados de preparar los cocteles.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Gastronomía – turismo – cultura – identidad – mixiología – licores ecuatorianos – entretenimiento

## **DIVERSIDADE GASTRONÔMICA E SEU APORTE À IDENTIDADE CULTURAL**

### **RESUME**

O presente artigo analisa a gastronomia e sua diversidade como motivação e aporte a identidade cultural, procurando mostrar a realidade dos destinos onde é a atração turística principal com o objetivo de contribuir a um maior conhecimento sobre o fenômeno que envolve o deslocamento dos visitantes por motivos gastronômicos, turísticos e culturais. Mas que ser um fenômeno relativamente recente, a gastronomia foi adquirindo importância no Equador, assim como em outros países, dinamizando um número considerável de visitantes que viajam motivados pelas atividades culinárias, ademais Equador pode ser considerado um destino com grande potencial para o turismo devido a sua relevante cultura. A metodologia que foi usada no presente artigo é: observação e encostas aos proprietários dos estabelecimentos de entretenimento (bares e discotecas) e os barmans encarregados de preparar os coquetéis.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** Gastronomia – Turismo – Cultura – Identidade – Mixiologia – Licores ecuatorianos – Entretenimento

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays tourism is increasingly prone to specialization and meets the new desires of tourists. Therefore, it is not surprising that a series of new products have appeared that go beyond mass sun and beach tourism, and they try to satisfy diverse niches of market.

Gastronomy is one of the new tourism products that has gained more dimension in recent times, and it has attracted the attention of social communication. This way, it can be interpreted that tourism is wide and is divided into diverse segments according to the expectations, desires and motivations that the tourist wishes to

develop; this way, there are different types of tourism waiting for the tourist, as examples, we can mention: cultural, community, nature, adventure, gastronomic tourism, etc.

One of the segments that has gained strength in the last years is gastronomic tourism at world and national levels. Ecuador has been characterized by the diverse gastronomy of each of its four regions characterized by its native cuisine inherited from its ancestors at the disposal of visitors, for its unique taste and preparation, becoming for many people a main reason to visit this country.

This way (Reinhardt, 2006) cited in Oliveira, 2011, mentions that feeding is essential for human survival. However, as man evolved, food has taken on a different role. Man begins to feed not only to quench "hunger", but for "pleasure."

The food differs in each culture, a fact that occurs due to several aspects like the climate, the soil, the agricultural products, etc. Man cooks according to what the environment in which he lives offers him. Thus, it is possible that, through the cuisine, cultures, religions, events, times, etc can be recognized.

With regard to food, much can be found in the Ecuadorian cuisine, left as an inheritance by previous generations. The country has an incredible typical gastronomy recognized not only nationally but also at an international level in such a way that gastronomy is one of the most outstanding for its variety, taste, texture, and decoration; this way, it becomes a reason of a destination to be visited by tourists.

### **1.1. Tourism**

Tourism is one of the most enriching acts that can be carried out by the human being, because it allows him to know new places, cultures and people in his leisure time. According to Flores Carrasco, 2016, tourism today has become a social phenomenon that has been deployed over the years from its emergence to the present time, as a result of the advancement of technology, communications and infrastructure in roads, airports and ports, which are important elements for better tourist development, thus making easier for the tourist to find all the comfort and security necessary to move from their place of origin to another site, motivated by knowing new places different from their usual environment . (Avila and Barrado, 2005) quoted in (Hernández Mogollón, Di-Clemente, & López-Guzmán, 2015) mentioned that tourism is increasingly characterized as an activity that provides travelers with an opportunity for personal and cultural enrichment.

Tourism preserves the natural and cultural environment; which revives ancient traditions; which actively contributes to keeping cultural shows; and facilitates intercultural communication and expectations of world peace. (Jafari, 2005)

Likewise (Buhalis, 2003; Malaver, 2011), quoted in Castillo Castillo & Castaño Molina, 2015, believes that tourism is an industry that is undergoing continuous

transformation. Tourism is constantly evolving and has important changes to be faced, with emergence of new models of tourism and ultimately new ways of doing business.

Nowadays, tourism is increasingly prone to specialization and meets the new desires of tourists. Therefore, new products have appeared that go beyond mass tourism such as sun and beach tourism, but they try to satisfy different market niches, thus creating a diversification of tourism.

## **1.2. Gastronomy**

Gastronomy, among others, is being affirmed as an important element of diversification and as a tool to define the brand and image of a territory, a country and a culture, according to (Hjalager, 2010) quoted in (Hernández Mogollón, Di-Clemente , & López-Guzmán, 2015).

When talking about gastronomy, it is not only the set of typical food or dishes of a locality, but it comprises a broader concept that includes drinks, food customs, traditions, processes, people and lifestyles, which are defined around it.

Gastronomy therefore represents an opportunity to stimulate and diversify tourism, boost local economic development, involve various professional sectors (producers, cooks, markets, etc.) and add new uses to the primary sector. (Falcon, 2014)

In recent years, tourism has begun to recognize the important power of attraction and communication of gastronomic products, to the point of turning them into true tourist attractions, according to (Folgado et al., 2011; Kivela and Crotts, 2006) cited in (Hernández Mogollón, Di-Clemente, & López-Guzmán, 2015).

According to Armesto and Gómez (2004) cited in (Vázquez De La Torre, Morales Fernández, & Pérez Naranjo, 2012), gastronomy as a tourist resource is not only appreciated for its own intrinsic value but also for its symbolic character , insofar as it acts as an identifier of peoples and territories.

It is important to mention that the peculiarities of the cuisine account for the development of routes, tourist packages, proposals and initiatives that put gastronomy and the products of the land at the center of the strategies of development and promotion of a certain territory or destination.

In the last decades, there have been changes in the tourist activity, with an interest in knowing the local and regional roots of the peoples, which has led to the creation of new tourist products, with gastronomy being one of them, according to (López-Guzmán and Sánchez, 2008) quoted in (Fernández Sánchez, Rodríguez Cotilla, Pozo Rodríguez, & Espinosa Manfugás, 2016).

This is how gastronomy is presented as a way to increase the tourist offer, either as a main product or as added value to cultural tourism considered as a rescue of the

knowledge of a people, hence the link with its and historic and cultural heritage and the exploitation of local resources, according to (Correa dos Santos and Oliveira, 2004) quoted in (Fernández Sánchez, Rodríguez Cotilla, Pozo Rodríguez, & Espinosa Manfugás, 2016).

Gastronomy, as mentioned by several stakeholders such as Hjalaguer and Richards (2000) cited in (Leal Londoño, 2011), can be a tourist product or sometimes a tourist resource; its conversion into a product will result from a transformation or revaluation of said resource. According to (López Guzman & Sánchez Cañizares, 2012), gastronomy is becoming one of the key factors of attraction both to define the competitiveness of tourist destinations and to promote them.

Gastronomy is increasingly being steadied as a key heritage for tourism development. Knowing and tasting the local cuisine is considered a cultural and sensorial experience.

To this end, Ortega et al. (2012), cited in Di Clemente, Hernández Mogollón, & López Guzmán, 2014, mentions that gastronomy represents a resource that offers a range of potential activities full of cultural and historical content to entertain the tourist and propose an innovative way to experience the territory through a multisensory contact.

In recent years, gastronomy is increasingly taking a leading role in the choice of the tourist destination and its consumption, which is reflected in the growth of a gastronomic offer based on indigenous quality products and in the consolidation of a market of its own for gastronomic tourism.

According to (Falcón, 2014), gastronomy allows the tourist development of the territory, either as a basic or as complementary resource, by expanding the possibilities of commercialization and extending it to other economic sectors.

### **1.3. Gastronomic tourism**

Gastronomic tourism can be understood as the visits to primary and secondary producers of food, gastronomic festivals, restaurants and specific places where the tasting of dishes and / or experimentation of the attributes of a region specialized in food production is the main reason for the trip, according to (Schlüter and Thiel, 2008) quoted in (Vázquez De La Torre, Morales Fernández, & Pérez Naranjo, 2012)

Gastronomic tourism attracted the attention of scholars from different parts of the world after the World Gastronomic Tourism Congress held by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in Cyprus in 2000. (Vázquez De La Torre, Morales Fernández, & Pérez Naranjo, 2012)

Gastronomic tourism is one of the emerging products with more development in recent years, since it is considered a means to recover the traditional food of each zone and it has acquired, at world level, greater importance during the last decades,

because it has become a key element for the positioning of regional foods. According to (Hjalager and Richards, 2002) cited in (Fernández Sánchez, Rodríguez Cotilla, Pozo Rodríguez, & Espinosa Manfugás, 2016), gastronomic tourists look for native and exotic foods, examples of these are the animal and plant products used by the native inhabitants of the tourist destinations, to create a different atmosphere that unites the need of the trip with unforgettable experiences through the connection between the tourist and the local culture, the environment and the food.

Gastronomic tourism is now becoming increasingly important in the world, regardless of whether it is a developed country or not.

In gastronomic tourism, food products and culinary specialties become a vehicle for cultural approach insofar as they are shaped as elements identifying peoples and territories, according to (Fabio, 1998) quoted in (Güemes Ricalde & Ramírez Cordero, 2012).

Consequently, gastronomic tourism can be defined as the visit to primary and secondary producers of food, gastronomic festivals, restaurants and specific places where the tasting of dishes and / or experimentation of the attributes of a region specialized in food production is the main reason for a trip, according to (Hall and Sharples 2003, p.10) cited in (Schlüter & Ellul, 2008).

According to Robison & Novelli (2005) cited in (Oliveira, 2011) niches tourism, also called tourism of special interest, arises as a logical consequence of the evolution of society in counterpoint to the "old" mass tourism; gastronomic tourism being clearly inserted in this typology. Schlüter (2006) quoted in Oliveira (2011) also supports this idea that gastronomic tourism can be seen as a form of tourism of special interest.

Henderson (2009) cited (Oliveira, 2011), points out that gastronomic tourism occurs in places where tourists can consume gastronomy, such as restaurants; and that the experience of gastronomic tourism can still occur in the context of conventional shops, gastronomic festivals, hotel schools and developments that seek to attract visitors with their gastronomy.

Oliveira (2008) quoted in Oliveira S., 2011, seeks to present a comprehensive definition, noting that: Gastronomic tourism is the movement of visitors, both tourists and hikers, whose main motive is gastronomy, and involving practices ranging from the mere movement from the place of residence towards a restaurant where you can taste a dish; moving to a particular destination to learn how to prepare certain foods; and to the realization of gastronomic routes with the intention of learning something more about a certain gastronomy; among others.

Gastronomic tourism, therefore, can be understood as a form of cultural tourism that allows people to know the habits, customs and way of life of the visited community through its gastronomic representations.

This way, (Ruschmann, 1997, p. 85) quoted in (Mascarenhas Tramontin & Gândara Gonçalves, 2010) states that gastronomic tourism is one in which the main motivation of the tourist is food. This modality of tourism is incapable of generating its own flow, but it can add value to the visit of a place, offering the tourist the possibility to live an experience that brings the tourist close to the visited population

Gastronomic tourism is a branch of cultural tourism in which the movement of visitors is due to reasons linked to the gastronomic practices of a particular locality. Gastronomic tourism can be managed from attractions such as regional cuisine, gastronomic events and the offer of different food and beverage establishments, as well as roads, routes and gastronomic circuits. According to (Gândara et al, 2008: 181) cited in (Mascarenhas Tramontin & Gândara Gonçalves, 2010)

Gastronomic tourism is understood as an integral part of cultural tourism, considering that its point of action occurs in the interaction with the natural space in what it does to the production of goods - and in social interaction - in what makes the provision of services and the preservation of gastronomic heritage.

According to (Mascarenhas, 2005) quoted in (Mascarenhas Tramontin & Gândara Gonçalves, 2010), gastronomic tourism is also capable of producing positive effects among which we can mention the following: it provides greater attractiveness for tourists and visitors, it complements the local tourist offer, attract new investments to the locality where it is developed, contribute to increased generation of jobs and tax collection, disseminate the local culture, increase the circulation of technical knowledge and contribute to the formation of a positive image for the locality and the region, rescuing or preserving the local culture through tourist activities; likewise, (Schlüter, 2003, p. 29) quoted in (Mascarenhas Tramontin & Gândara Gonçalves, 2010), thinks that it sometimes is a motivating agent for a tourist trip; in general, they resort to creating thematic and cultural routes making it possible to integrate, in a product, elements that individually do not arouse enough interest, or have certain difficulties of promotion or commercialization, making it possible that the final product has more value than the sum of its parts; thus increasing the economic and social benefits.

It should be noted that gastronomic tourism is not always a motivator of tourist flows on its own, but it contributes to generating new market niches that complement the main tourist offer, which can make up a specific demand such as the gastronomic routes.

#### **1.4. Culture**

Culture, together with religion and other sociodemographic characterizations, ie one of the main factors determining the acceptance of certain products within the food, as well as their appreciation in terms of tastes and flavors according to (Mak et al., 2012a) quoted In (Hernández Mogollón, Di-Clemente, & López-Guzmán, 2015). Thus, culture determines and shapes the culinary history of a people, defines it and, through it, expresses itself and becomes tangible, sensory and pleasant. It is this last connotation which, allows typical dishes and local foods to become true tourist

products and motivational factors of the trip. Today gastronomy moves increasingly broad categories of travelers according to (Acevin, 2012, Fox, 2007, Segittur, 2010) quoted in (Hernández Mogollón, Di-Clemente, & López-Guzmán, 2015)

We define cultural tourism as a journey in which tourists aim to know and understand the culture of "others" according to (Long, 1998) quoted in (Jiang, 2012) through various tourist activities.

According to Mannel (in Vinha 2004) cited in Oliveira S., 2007, food has always been a key element of the culture of each society and more and more visitors see gastronomy as the possibility to better know the culture of a place.

Cultural tourism allows the exchange of values and new experiences with the lifestyle of the other.

The use of culture in the economic system of tourism can be developed in several dimensions and guidelines from which gastronomy stands out. According to (Reinhardt, 2006) cited in Oliveira Martins, 2011, gastronomy is an example of a recent tourism - cultural product, motivated by the search for pleasure through food, but it can also be a good way to promote the search for the culinary roots as a way of understanding the local culture.

It is emphasized that food is a precious source of information, showing there a culture, a religion, a time, among many other factors. According to Schlüter (2003) and Louzada (2006) cited in Oliveira Martins, 2011, gastronomy as an element of the cultural heritage of a people is assuming great importance as a cultural tourism product.

The culture of each locality represents everything that man thinks, creates, believes, consolidates, transforms and experiences within space-time. Culture is dynamic; therefore, it admits transformations and effective and constant exchanges, and it is reconfigured in the coexistence with other cultures. (Ribeiro Cruz & Netto Simões, 2010).

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of this scientific text are:

- a. Analyze gastronomy and its relationship with tourism.
- b. Make easier for tourists to live a memorable experience through the gastronomic resources and the Ecuadorian culture.
- c. Promote the quality and service of tourist experiences within the cultural sphere, contributing new values to local resources and turning them into tourist attractions.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

We worked with a qualitative approach, based on records obtained through the technique of observation and surveys, the national gastronomic diversity was taken



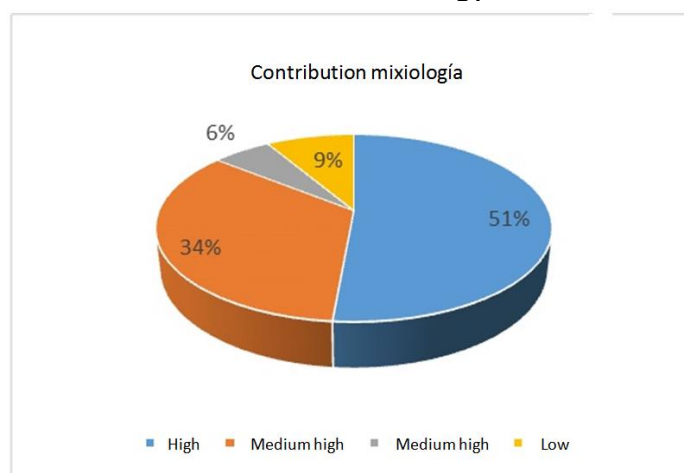
into account. The quantitative approach is presented at the time of the collection, tabulation and analysis of the data from the surveys, to verify the validity of research. For this piece of research, the modalities of field and bibliographical will be applied. In the field, research work will be carried out in the place where the problem is researched, ie in the entertainment establishments (bars and discos), which in turn allows direct contact with the individuals related to the object of study, who the main actors. The bibliographic modality because, by way of it, we will obtain research background and it will allow the collection and compilation of information related to the research topic.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

A sample of 35 people was handled, applying a survey, through which the expected results could be obtained as described below:

Question 8: At what level do you consider that the preparation of cocktails with the technique of molecular mixology contributes to the development of national gastronomic diversity and entertainment tourism?

**Graph 1:** Contribution of molecular Mixology to Gastronomic Diversity.

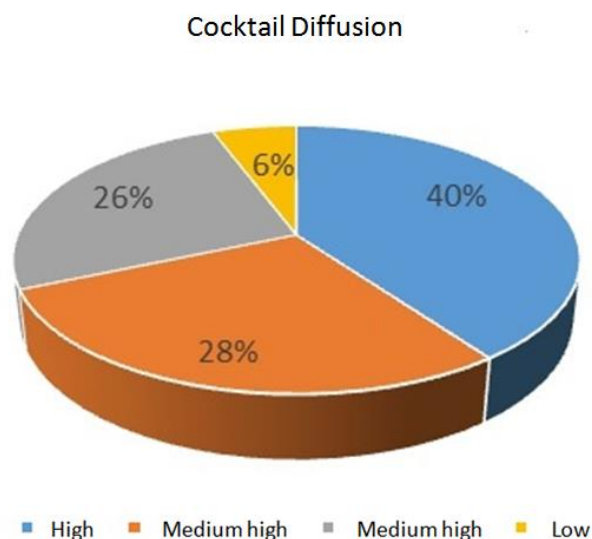


**Source:** SURVEY (2016)

According to question number 8, out of 100% of the individuals, 51% consider that the preparation of cocktails with the technique of molecular mixology contributes to national gastronomic diversity and entertainment tourism at a high level, 34% a high medium level high, 9% an average level and the remaining 3% concludes a low level.

Question 9: At what level do you consider that the promotion or dissemination of cocktails prepared with Ecuadorian liqueurs contributes to the national gastronomic diversity?

**Graph 2:** Dissemination of cocktails with Ecuadorian liqueurs.



**Source:** SURVEY (2016)

Likewise, in question number 9, 100% of the individuals, 40% of the population agrees that the dissemination of cocktails with Ecuadorian liqueurs contributes to the national gastronomic diversity at a high level, 28% in a high medium level, 26% medium and 6% low.

The results of this piece of research have been important to have wide knowledge about the national gastronomic diversity, according to (Flores Carrasco, 2016), gastronomy is considered a real potential, one of the main motivations of the traveler is his search for specific dishes as well as know the seasoning and cultures that complement, this is why respondents agree to embark on their journey for a gastronomic pleasure.

As can be seen in the results obtained from the survey, there are several gastronomic motivations that must be considered that, apart from the fact that there are tourists traveling alone, a large part of them travels in groups and the act of food is of great importance for personal interaction, that is why drinks are also included in gastronomy, as in the case of this piece of research in which molecular mixology is focused on cocktails representative of Ecuador as a contribution to the national gastronomic diversity.

Most people associate a good meal with friends to a moment of pleasure, relaxation and joy during which they enjoy the company of others by socializing. This way, many tourists will undoubtedly get a great pleasure from these meals and drinks in groups in restaurants, gastronomic fairs, festivities and other places. Likewise, (Montoya Sola, 2003) mentions that, with gastronomy and its incorporation to the tourist offer, we will not only be able to enrich the tourist destinations of interior, but we will keep alive a cultural legacy of centuries.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the research carried out, one can conclude that gastronomy is directly related to tourism, since tourists travel to know the gastronomy of a certain place, thus generating gastronomic tourism.

Tourists have a wide range of options to taste in terms of gastronomy, as Ecuador has a wide variety of products, climates and culture, which contributes to the development of tourism in the country.

Tourists can enjoy the trip in Ecuador because gastronomy is diverse, as well as being complemented by drinks, which, through molecular techniques, are a great option for the development of entertainment tourism in the country.

It is of great interest to improve the quality and service of the tourist experiences, because it arouses interest to the people who relate gastronomy with the culture, values, beliefs, customs and traditions of the place that is visited.

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