How Does Culinary Importance and A Priori Expectations Impact Expectation Fulfillment and Destination Loyalty?/Welche Auswirkung hat die Erfüllung kulinarischer und A-priori-Erwartungen auf die Loyalität zu einer Tourismusdestination?

14

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Zusammenfassung

Laut World Tourism Organization, hat kulinarischer Tourismus nicht nur ein erhöhtes Interesse zu verzeichnen, sondern hat sich auch zu einem der dynamischsten und innovativsten Tourismussegmente entwickelt (UNWTO 2012). Frühere Studien argumentieren, dass kulinarischer Tourismus eine entscheidende Bedeutung für das Urlaubserlebnis einer Tourismusdestination einnimmt (Quan und Wang 2004). Allerdings bleibt die Frage offen, wie wichtig kulinarischer Tourismus für den Tourismus allgemein ist und welche Beziehung kulinarische und andere Tourismus-Erwartungen auf die Loyalität einer Tourismusdestination ausüben. Für diese Studie wurden 1173 Fragebögen in drei internationalen Tourismusdestinationen gesammelt: Italien, Südafrika und Malaysia. Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigten, dass es von enormer Bedeutung ist die Erwartungen der Besucher vor dem Aufenthalt sowie die Wichtigkeit des Attributes zu verstehen, sodass die Wahrscheinlichkeit erhöht wird, negative Erlebnisse der Touristen zu vermeiden. Außerdem hat die Erfüllung von Erwartungen im Bereich

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von kulinarischen Attributen eine enorme Auswirkung auf die Wichtigkeit und den A-priori-Erwartungen von kulinarischen Aspekten auf die Intention zu dieser Destination zurückzukommen.

Schlüsselwörter
Destination Loyalty · Culinary Importance · A Priori Expectations

Inhaltsverzeichnis

14.1   Introduction

The growth and interest in culinary tourism over the past decade cannot be denied. According to the World Tourism Organization, culinary tourism has not only gained increasing attention; it has become one of the most vibrant and innovative segments in tourism (UNWTO 2012). It has also been noted that interest in culinary tourism research has seen significant growth over the past few years (Kim et al. 2009) but numerous research questions remain (Ottenbacher and Harrington 2013). While about a third of tourist spending is devoted to food and beverages, earlier researchers have indicated food-related tourism is likely to represent a continuum for food tourists (Boyne et al. 2003) or food tourist categories (Beer et al. 2012). Depending on your conceptualization of what is and what is not food tourism, the percentage of bona fide 'food tourists' may only represent 6–8 % of the population with about one-third of the population being described as 'interested purchasers' (Okumus et al. 2007).

While earlier research speaks to the critical component culinary aspects of a destination play in the holiday experience (Quan and Wang 2004), it remains a question as to its importance to tourism as a whole and if it serves as an important pull factor for visitors that place high importance on culinary attributes in the tourism destination and the relationships between culinary expectations and other tourism expectations on destination loyalty.

An understanding of these relationships will provide tourism organizations and destinations information on the potential for differentiation based on culinary tourism attributes the ability to enhance destination loyalty, and create more effective methods of communicating attributes that reach key target markets. The importance of culinary or

food tourism should not be understated nor limited to marketing concerns. As Hall and Mitchell (2000) indicated food is more than eating and relates to cultural identity, production methods, dining patterns, and other issues. Further, Mak et al. (2012) indicated growth in a homogenized 'global palate' or 'global cuisine' may create threats to the connection between food and place. A greater understanding of culinary tourism provides an opportunity to minimize these global threats to authentic cultural experience.

14.2   Background

While the importance of food on trips and holidays is well supported, studies on consumption of food and beverages at a destination are still at a relatively early stage with a need to establish basic tenets on motivational factors, demographic factors and physiological factors (Kim et al. 2009). The current study looked at the impact of culinary importance and culinary expectations on the destination selection process and the potential interacting effects on whether or not culinary expectations were unmet, met or exceeded. Further, the study looked at the role of culinary tourism elements, hospitality services and other tourism activities on destination loyalty. While destination loyalty has been looked at using satisfaction as one key indicator, earlier researchers have argued that measuring customers' satisfaction only assesses one-part of a multi-faceted experience of travelers. Further, it has been argued that examining only one component of a multi-faceted tourist experience probably does not accurately represent tourists' perceptions that lead to overall satisfaction with the destination (Gursoy et al. 2014). Therefore, the current study addressed these concerns in relation to culinary tourism by assessing several key components and relationships to destination loyalty.

Tourism destinations with a strong culinary heritage are likely to attract visitors that place a higher importance on culinary aspects of the destination. As such, it seems likely that these higher culinary importance visitors are likely to have higher a priori expectations, and have higher fulfillment of expectations. Hypothesis 1a predicts direct differences between high and low culinary importance tourists on a priori expectations and their fulfillment. H1b predicts that culinary importance and a priori expectations with have both mediating and moderating relationships with expectation fulfillment. Because the decision to visit a destination is likely to be based on the importance of destination attributes and the reputation or expectation to their quality, it seems likely that the level of culinary importance and a priori culinary expectations will influence (moderate) the relationship with whether or not expectations will be met or exceeded. This relationship is depicted in Fig. 14.1. Additionally, it seems likely that a priori culinary expectations are likely to mediate the relationship between culinary importance and expectation fulfillment. Mediation has been said to exist when an antecedent variable induces an outcome through an intervening or mediating variable (Baron and Kenny 1986). This mediation is hypothesized to exist for a priori expectations based on basic tenets of expectancy-disconfirmation theory.
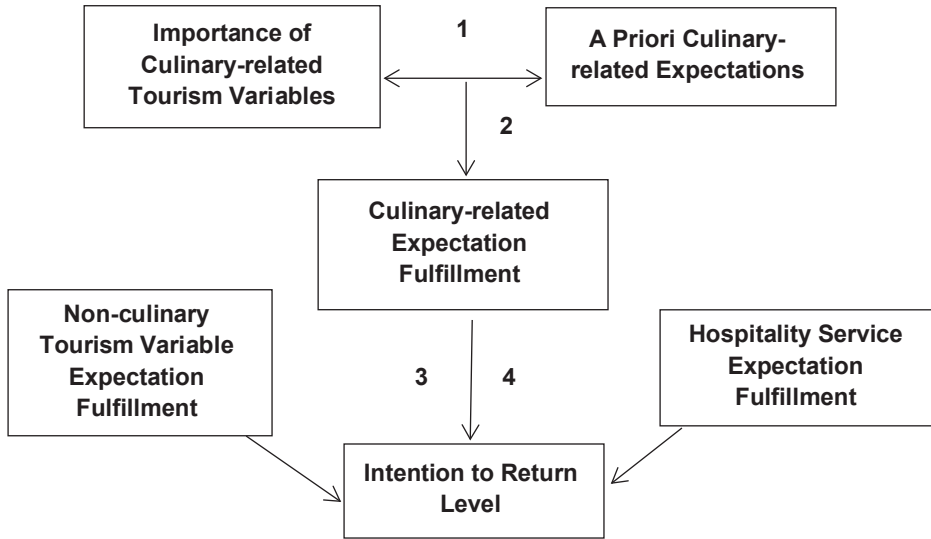
Fig. 14.1 Hypothesized Model of Culinary, Hospitality and other Tourism Relationships (Author's own 2015)

Hypothesis 2 predicts meditating effects by culinary expectation fulfillment and intervening between the relationship of a priori culinary expectations and return intentions. Thus, the study hypothesizes that culinary expectation fulfillment will serve as an intervening variable between a priori culinary expectations and intentions to return to a destination.

In addition to culinary aspects, destinations hold a unique bundle of resources used to attract visitors to the destination. These include a variety of general tourist attractions, activities and services. Because visitors are by nature non-residents of the locale, hospitality services provide an important infrastructure to support tourism. Based on expectancy-discrimination theory, it is hypothesized that expectation fulfillment will positively impact destination loyalty. Similarly, it is hypothesized that expectation fulfillment of other key tourism activities will positively impact intentions to return.

Finally, it seems likely that the level of each tourism category will influence (moderate) the relationship among the other tourism categories to impact overall level of destination loyalty. In other words, a combination of other tourism elements, hospitality service elements and culinary tourism expectation fulfillment is hypothesized to have interacting effects.

14.3 Methods

Data for this study was collected using a survey instrument at three international destinations in Italy, South Africa, and Malaysia. The survey included sections on the importance of culinary attributes, expectations of various tourism activities, fulfillment level of these activities, likelihood of a return visit and related questions.

The three locations were selected because 1) each represents a location with unique culinary reputation, 2) multiple geographic locations provided greater external validity, and 3) the locations held unique bundles of culinary and other tourism activities. A total of 1173 participants were surveyed for this study across the three locations. The majority of participants were from the South Tyrol (61.4 %) followed by South Africa (21.5 %) and Malaysia (17.1 %).

The level of culinary importance was based on the mean response for culinary aspects in the region using a five-point scale (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important). Specific culinary aspects varied slightly but included 1) traditional dishes of the region, 2) fine dining, 3) regional wines, 4) authentic food products that can be purchased, and 5) authentic food products on restaurant menus and wine lists. The level of a priori culinary expectations assessed participants' perceptions of regional culinary aspects prior to their visit. The scale used a five-point scale ranging from very low expectations to very high expectations. Level of a priori culinary expectations was calculated as the mean response to all culinary aspects.

Expectation fulfillment assessed the mean level of expectation fulfillment for culinary aspects, hospitality services and other tourism attributes. Respondents were asked "How well were your expectations met for the following aspects?" The five-point scale ranged from not met at all, met expectations and exceeded expectations. Intention to return provides an indication of destination loyalty based on how likely visitors are to return to the region. This item used a five-point scale ranging from very low to very high.

14.4   Culinary Specific Result

Hypotheses 1a and 1b received support shown in Table 14.1 Steps 1, 2 and 3 provided support for direct effects of culinary importance and a priori culinary expectations on expectation fulfillment (H1a). Both were significant, positive predictors of culinary expectation fulfillment in the three destinations of this study. Step 3 provided support for Hypothesis 1b with the two-way interaction term providing a significant predictor of culinary expectation fulfillment ($R^2 = 0.13$, ß = –0.42, p < 0.05).

The second part of H1b was also supported. First, the correlations among culinary importance level, a priori culinary expectations and culinary expectation fulfillment demonstrated the hypothesized meditating variables were related. Second, hierarchical multiple regression analyses show culinary importance level was significantly related to culinary expectation fulfillment ($R^2 = 0.08$, ß = 0.29, p < 0.001). Third, it was shown that a priori culinary expectations were related to culinary expectation fulfillment when culinary expectation fulfillment was regressed on both culinary importance level and a priori culinary expectations variables. In sum, these results provided support for the mediation Hypothesis 1b with evidence of a complete mediation by a priori culinary expectation on the relationship between culinary importance level and culinary expectation fulfillment.

Table 14.1 Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis: Culinary Expectation Fulfillment (DV)

Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
	Culinary Fulfillment	Culinary Fulfillment	Culinary Fulfillment
Culinary Import	0.29***	0.12**	0.34**
A Priori Culinary Expect		0.26***	0.50***
Culinary Import × A Priori Culinary Expect			**−0.42***
R^2	0.08	0.12	0.13
ΔR^2		0.04	0.01
ΔF	101.89***	48.20***	4.18*
F (df)		77.24***	53.04
		(2, 1095)	(3, 1094)
A Priori Culinary Expect	**0.34***	**0.26***	**0.50***
Culinary Import Priori Culinary Expect		**0.12**	**0.34**
R^2	0.12	0.12	0.13
ΔR^2		0.00	0.01
ΔF	143.68***	9.67***	4.18*
F (df)		77.24***	53.04
		(2, 1095)	(3, 1094)

To test Hypothesis 2, a second set of hierarchical multiple regression analyses (Table 14.2) considered mediating effects of culinary expectation fulfillment on the relationship between a priori culinary expectations and intentions to return. As indicated in Step 1, a priori culinary expectation was significantly related to intention to return supporting the second requirement for meditation but with little variance explained ($R^2 = 0.02$, ß = 0.15, p < 0.001). When intention to return was regressed on both a priori expectation and expectation fulfillment, a priori culinary expectation was reduced to a non-significant level and culinary expectation fulfillment was significant (ß = 0.28, p < 0.001) and the model explained 9 % of variance in return intentions ($R^2 = 0.09$, p < 0.001). When regression was performed in reverse order of entry, complete mediation was supported as hypothesized. Results indicated that culinary expectation fulfillment explained a significant amount of variance in intention to return ($R^2 = 0.09$, ß = 0.29, p < 0.001). With culinary expectation fulfillment held constant, the variance in intent to return explained by a priori culinary expectations was at a non-significant level ($\Delta R^2 = 0.00$, ß = 0.06). In sum, these results provided support for mediation with evidence of complete mediation by culinary expectation fulfillment on the relationship between a priori culinary expectations and intentions to return to the destination.

Table 14.2 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis: Intention to Return (DV)

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
	Intention to Return	Intention to Return
A Priori Culinary Expect	**0.15*****	0.06
Culinary Fulfillment		**0.28*****
R^2	0.02	0.09
ΔR^2		0.07
ΔF	24.87***	79.63***
F (df)		53.15***
		(2, 1086)
Culinary Fulfillment	**0.29*****	**0.28*****
A Priori Culinary Expect		0.06
R^2	0.09	0.09
ΔR^2		0.00
ΔF	102.70***	3.38***
F (df)		53.15***
		(2, 1086)

14.5   Expectation Fulfillment Results

Moderated regression was performed to assess direct and interacting effects of expectation fulfillment for the three tourism categories on intention to return (Table 14.3). In this test, culinary, hospitality and other tourism expectation fulfillment levels were entered first, followed by the two-way interaction terms and three-way interaction. In Steps 1, culinary expectation fulfillment (ß = 0.10, $p < 0.05$), hospitality expectation fulfillment (ß = 0.20, $p < 0.001$) and other tourism expectation fulfillment (ß = 0.12, $p < 0.001$) had significant, positive effects with intent to return (F = 50.61, $R^2 = 0.12$, $p < 0.001$). The model in Step 1 accounted for 12 % of the variance in intent to return. The model with the interaction terms accounted for 15 % of the variance in intent to return ($\Delta R^2 = 0.03$) and the change in F was significant ($p < 0.001$). With the full model (Step 2), all two-way and the three way interaction terms were significant with intent to return: Culinary × hospitality   (ß = 4.97, $p < 0.001$),   Culinary × other   (ß = 3.80, $p < 0.001$), Hospitality × other (ß = 2.47, $p < 0.05$), and three-way (ß = –5.59, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, based on these regression tests, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported.

Table 14.3 Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis: Intent to Return

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
	Intent to Return	Intent to Return
Expectation Fulfillment		
Culinary	**0.10***	**−2.59***
Hospitality	**0.20***	**−1.83**
Other tourism	**0.12***	**−1.20***
Interactions		
Culinary × Hospitality		**4.97***
Culinary × Other		**3.80***
Hospitality × Other		**2.47***
3-Way interaction		**−5.59***
R^2	0.19	0.20
ΔR^2		0.01
ΔF		1.41
F (df)	76.81***	16.51***
	(1,338)	(5,334)

All Betas are standardized

*** $p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

14.6   Discussion and Conclusions

The growth and interest in culinary tourism over the past decade cannot be denied; yet, a clear understanding of key relationships among culinary importance, a priori expectations of culinary aspects, post visit culinary fulfillment and behavioral intentions are not clearly defined. Thus, the importance of this study is multi-faceted. First, an understanding of these relationships will provide tourism organizations and destinations information on the potential for differentiation based on culinary tourism attributes the ability to enhance destination loyalty, and create more effective methods of communicating attributes that reach key target markets. The importance of culinary or food tourism should not be understated nor limited to marketing concerns. As Hall and Mitchell (2000) indicated, "food means more than eating … [it] relates to issues of identity, culture, production, consumption and increasingly issues of sustainability" (p. 29).

First, the current study tested relationships of the importance of culinary attributes, the impact of a priori expectations and their interaction on culinary-related expectation fulfillment. This relationship followed a time honored belief that pre-visit expectations impact expectation fulfilment based on the idea of expectation-disconfirmation theory (i. e. Oliver 1980; Pizam and Ellis 1999). In addition to the direct effects of a priori expectations impacting expectation fulfillment, the importance of the attributes (in

this case culinary related) also significantly impacted expectation fulfillment along with moderating effects based on level of importance and level of a priori expectations. An implication of this finding is the value of assessing visitor or potential visitor pre-visit expectations and attribute importance levels to determine relationships and for practitioners to ensure the likelihood that a negative disconfirmation gap is minimized.

Second, the fulfillment of expectations in the area of culinary attributes served as an important intervening variable between the importance and a priori expectations of culinary on intentions to return. In other words, while a priori expectations for culinary attributes and their importance for consumers selecting a destination promoting or known for culinary tourism are impactful, the key to return intentions or other loyalty behaviors by culinary tourists appears to be transmitted via expectation fulfillment perceptions rather than directly from culinary importance or destination a priori reputation that creates culinary tourism expectations.

Finally, to ensure culinary tourists' returning for second helpings of a destination, promoters need to realize that tourists with culinary importance (metaphorically) 'shall not live on bread alone'. This study demonstrated the need for a bundle of quality attributes on not only culinary but also hospitality and other tourism aspects. Specifically, these three categories of experiences impacted destination loyalty directly but also the level of all three destination attribute categories interacted to impact intention to return by visitors.

Future research is needed to further sort out implications and relationships. For instance, future research is needed to determine other customer loyalty behaviors such as recommendations to friends & family, social media sharing, and other types of positive word-of-mouth to create a composite measure for customer loyalty behaviors associated with the culinary tourist or tourism experiences. Additionally, future research is needed to sort out culinary attribute categories and the impact on overall satisfaction, customer loyalty, value perceptions or spending. One method would be to assess culinary attribute categories based on Kano's model of quality attribute-satisfaction (Kano et al. 1984) or other hierarchical models (Bechan 2006).

While this study combined three locations known for unique culinary experiences, the categorization of culinary attributes by type may be more useful contrasting different locations. For instance, culinary-driven visitors at different locations are likely to have very different expectations and the resulting culinary attributes may be excitement factors at one location (unanticipated, 'wow' factors) and be basic factors at another ('must-be' culinary factors).

This study had several limitations; first, while the choice of three, distinctly different geographic locations was intended to make the findings more generalizable than from one location, it remains a question whether or not these findings are transferable to other locations or experiences. Second, the study used survey results from one time period. A stronger design could be designed to include actual pre-visit expectations, actual expectation fulfillment during or after a visit, and post-visit outcomes via web-based survey communication before, during and after the experience.

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