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## SUBMITTED VERSION (R1)

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## INFLUENCE OF GASTRONOMIC MOTIVATIONS, SATISFACTION AND EXPERIENCES ON LOYALTY TOWARDS A DESTINATION

### Abstract

- **Purpose:** The main objective of this research is to establish an integrated model of gastronomy tourism to help some of the main public and private stakeholders design strategies to improve tourists' gastronomic experience and satisfaction, taking gastronomic motivations as a starting point. Furthermore, the difference between destination satisfaction and gastronomic satisfaction has been established in order to determine the degree to which each one influences loyalty towards the destination.
- **Design/methodology:** After detailing the theoretical framework for the development of the hypotheses, the study was carried out using a quantitative methodology based on structural equation modelling. The final sample consisted of 710 tourists who visited Córdoba, Spain—a world heritage city of international renown.
- **Findings:** Results indicate that gastronomic motivations, gastronomic experience and destination satisfaction have a direct influence on loyalty towards a destination. Also, destination satisfaction is found to play a mediating role in the relationship between gastronomic experience and loyalty towards the destination. Differences between destination and gastronomic satisfaction has been evidenced. When it comes to fostering a tourist's loyalty towards a destination, gastronomic satisfaction alone is not enough; other elements inherent to the destination itself are necessary for full loyalty, whether attitudinal or behavioural.
- **Originality/value:** Correctly identifying tourist motivations can help managers of DMOs to develop tailored marketing and communication campaigns that boost return visits to the destination or recommendations to family and friends. DMOs need to be aware that they cannot overlook elements such as safety, hospitality or destination cleanliness at the expense of gastronomic satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Córdoba; Gastronomy; gastronomic experience; gastronomic satisfaction; loyalty.

## 1. Introduction

Gastronomy is one of the features of a destination that best conveys the culture and character of the local community. The consumption of food at the destination offers tourists an intellectual and sensory immersion into the local culture (Leong *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, gastronomy tourism can be understood as a type of cultural tourism in which the habits and customs of the local community are conceptually represented through its gastronomy (Berbel-Pineda *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, food is an essential element in the image and appeal of destinations (Chen and Huang, 2016). The dynamism of tourism is reflected in tourists' changing motivations, as they seek out new activities that meet their needs. In this respect, as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2012) points out, gastronomy tourism is shaping up as an expanding market that makes an enormous contribution to destination attractiveness and competitiveness.

Hall *et al.* (2003) define gastronomy tourism or food tourism as the type of tourism in which tasting local food is either a primary or secondary motivation for travel. Spanish gastronomy is known worldwide as the "Mediterranean diet", and in 2010 the particular characteristics of this cuisine were recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as Intangible Cultural Heritage. In addition to its cultural value, various studies have shown the benefits of this cuisine in protecting against cardiovascular diseases (Asbaghi *et al.*, 2020) and cognitive diseases (Paknahad *et al.*, 2020).

The study addresses important constructs previously used in the literature on gastronomy tourism; namely gastronomic motivations, gastronomic experience, gastronomic satisfaction, destination satisfaction and loyalty. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, no studies to date have proposed a common research framework that analyses the potential relationships among the whole set of constructs. In order to fill this gap, the present study aims to provide an integrated model of gastronomy tourism, incorporating gastronomic motivations, gastronomic experience, gastronomic satisfaction, destination satisfaction, and loyalty towards the destination. Additionally, based on previous research findings, this study seeks to identify the difference between the gastronomy- and destination-related satisfaction included in the model, and to understand the different ways in which they influence loyalty towards the destination.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Motivations and gastronomic experience

Tourists have many different reasons for visiting a destination. Schiffman and Kanuk (2009) define motivation as the forces that drive individual actions. Decades earlier, Dann (1977) introduced the concept of push motivations and pull motivations: the former are intrinsic to the individual and increase the desire to make a certain trip, while the latter attract the individual to a certain destination (Crompton, 1979). Therefore, among the different motivations prompting a tourist to travel to a certain destination, gastronomy is often one of the main pull factors (Kim and Eves, 2012; López-Guzmán *et al.*, 2017).

Several studies confirm the relationship between gastronomic motivations and experiences. For instance, Berbel-Pineda *et al.* (2019) confirmed this relationship in their study conducted in the city of Seville. Similarly, Agyeiwaah *et al.* (2019) provided evidence of this relationship in a study conducted with tourists in cooking schools in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Finally, other studies have also demonstrated the influence of motivations on gastronomic experiences, identifying them as a key element in the value chain for tourists (Mora *et al.*, 2021).

In light of the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Gastronomic motivations influence the gastronomic experience in a certain destination.

### 2.2 Gastronomic satisfaction and destination satisfaction

Williams and Soutar (2009) define satisfaction as the tourist's emotional state after an experience, measured as the gap between the expectations held prior to the trip and the reality experienced (Chen and Chen, 2010). In this regard, the gastronomic experience should be assessed from a double perspective: on the one hand, in relation to satisfaction with the tourist destination (Leong *et al.*, 2017; Berbel-Pineda *et al.*, 2019); and on the other, in relation to the gastronomy activity itself (Lacap, 2019).

Therefore, studies of gastronomy tourism are always related to either the analysis of the gastronomic experience (Kivela and Crotts, 2006) or the relationship between the gastronomic experience and destination satisfaction (overall satisfaction with the destination) (Babolian-Hendijani, 2016).

46 According to Kivela and Crotts (2006), the gastronomic experience is a key factor in the evaluation of  
47 a certain geographical destination, and may include cultural and culinary elements such as food  
48 preparation, cooking style or the general quality of the food (Roozbeh *et al.*, 2013). As Horng and Tsai  
49 (2012) point out, gastronomy is part of the total tourist experience, meaning bad gastronomic  
50 experiences can adversely affect the tourist's overall satisfaction with the destination (Agyeiwaah *et al.*,  
51 2019; Nield *et al.*, 2000). A tourist's culinary experience in a particular place can therefore contribute  
52 to satisfying their travel needs, with said satisfaction potentially leading to a return visit to the location  
53 (Esparza-Huamanchumo *et al.*, 2022). As such, cuisine has become a central motivation for choosing a  
54 tourist destination and plays a vital part in the complete tourist experience (Babolian-Hendijani, 2016).

55  
56 In addition, Lee and Chang (2012) find a direct positive relationship between gastronomic satisfaction  
57 and destination satisfaction, while Andersen and Hyldig (2015) point out that the different factors to  
58 take into account to achieve gastronomic satisfaction are determined by tourists' motivations and  
expectations. Furthermore, Agyeiwaah *et al.* (2019) find that tourists' motivations are directly related  
to gastronomic experience and gastronomic satisfaction.

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6 Based on the studies discussed above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

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8 H2: The gastronomic experience influences destination satisfaction

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10 H3: Gastronomic motivations influence gastronomic satisfaction in a certain destination.

### 11 12 2.3 Loyalty and behavioural intentions

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14 Tourists' loyalty, which can be considered a result of satisfaction (Mattila, 2001), generates economic  
15 benefits for the destination and local establishments, especially hotels, restaurants, and bars  
16 (Hernández-Rojas *et al.*, 2021; Sio *et al.*, 2021). Authors such as Chen and Chen (2010) consider loyalty  
17 towards the destination a key element in marketing, as it serves as an indicator of consumer behaviour.  
18 Other authors, however, define loyalty as the preference for visiting a certain destination (Chi and Qu,  
19 2008). Moreover, Chen and Tsai (2007) distinguish between attitudinal loyalty, linked to  
20 recommending the destination to others, and behavioural loyalty, which is directly related to making  
21 repeat visits to the destination. The relationship between loyalty and motivation is not conclusive, as  
22 previous studies show. For example, Chen and Huang (2019) analyse local food in China and find that  
23 tourists' degree of involvement with the local gastronomy is not related to loyalty to the destination.  
24 Nevertheless, other studies, such as those by Prayag and Ryan (2012) and Lee and Chang (2012), reach  
25 the opposite conclusion, i.e., tourists' participation in the gastronomy of the destination is a predictor  
26 of loyalty and satisfaction.

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29 Kim *et al.* (2010) and Folgado-Fernández *et al.* (2017) find that tourists' gastronomic experience  
30 influences their loyalty towards a destination, while Tse and Crotts (2005) report that culinary  
31 experimentation is influenced by repeated visits to the tourist destination. Zhang *et al.* (2014)  
32 demonstrate in their study that tourists' overall experience influences future loyalty towards the  
33 destination. Similarly, Alderighi *et al.* (2016) find that the probability of revisiting a destination  
34 increases if the gastronomic experience is positive and significant.

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37 Berbel-Pineda *et al.* (2019) point to gastronomy as a key component of satisfaction with the destination,  
38 and satisfaction is an antecedent or predictor of loyalty, whether in terms of recommendation or  
39 revisiting. It is worth noting that there are numerous studies that establish a relationship between  
40 gastronomic satisfaction and loyalty to the destination (Chen and Chen, 2010; Leong *et al.*, 2017; Chen  
41 and Huang, 2019) and between destination satisfaction and loyalty towards a destination (Esparza-  
42 Huamanchumo *et al.*, 2022). In this respect, destination image and perceived value are also essential  
43 antecedents of destination satisfaction, and the latter, in turn, is an antecedent of loyalty towards a  
44 destination (Sun *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, Ji *et al.* (2014) report that tourists satisfied with the  
45 gastronomy generate positive feedback in terms of revisiting the destination and recommending it.  
46 Finally, Mora *et al.* (2021) corroborate the findings of previous studies, confirming the importance of  
47 the gastronomic experience as a clear antecedent of loyalty. The influence is even greater when  
48 mediated by destination satisfaction, highlighting the partial mediating role of destination satisfaction  
49 between gastronomic experiences and loyalty towards the destination.

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52 Based on the aforementioned analyses of the relationships, the following hypotheses are proposed:

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54 H4: Gastronomic motivations influence loyalty to the gastronomic destination.

55 H5: The gastronomic experience influences loyalty to the gastronomic destination.

56 H6: Destination satisfaction influences loyalty to the gastronomic destination

57 H7: Gastronomic satisfaction influences loyalty to the gastronomic destination

58 Thus, the structural model proposed is presented in Figure 1.

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*[INSERT FIGURE 1]*

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Sample and questionnaire design

The proposed research objectives are addressed using a quantitative data collection instrument; specifically, a properly structured survey designed with reference to previous studies. The data collection took place in the months of March to September 2018 in the historic centre of the city of Córdoba, which was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1994 and hosts a large number of bars, restaurants, taverns and tourists. The target population was tourists visiting the city of Córdoba who had tasted the local cuisine at least once; tourists were asked if they met this requirement before proceeding with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is structured into three clearly differentiated parts. The first block consists of closed questions about the length of stay in the area, whether or not tourists have previously visited the destination, the type of accommodation and their familiarity with local dishes. The second block addresses aspects related to motivations, gastronomic experiences, gastronomic satisfaction, destination satisfaction and loyalty to the destination, with all these questions answered on a five-point Likert scale (1: I totally disagree; 5: I totally agree) except for gastronomic satisfaction, which is based on a five-point semantic scale (1: very low; 5: excellent). Finally, the third of the blocks refers to the socio-demographic profile.

As previously stated, the model is made up of five components. The questions or indicators for each component have been sourced from prior research and tailored to fit the specific research context. For instance, the gastronomic motivations section comprises 17 indicators drawn from past studies, such as those by Sims (2010), Kim, Eves, and Scarles (2013), Quan and Wang (2004), and Björk and Kauppinen-Raaisänen (2016). When it comes to satisfaction with food and travel destinations, there are eight indicators for gastronomic satisfaction and four indicators for destination satisfaction. These indicators were taken from multiple previous studies (Babolian-Hendijani, 2016; Björk and Kauppinen-Raaisänen, 2016). The gastronomic experience construct is made up of seven items, sourced from previous studies by Desmet and Schifferstein (2008), Quan and Wang (2014), and Taar (2014). The loyalty towards a destination construct is composed of six indicators taken from the study by Haven-Tang and Jones (2005).

A total of 726 questionnaires were collected, but after an initial screening process, only 710 were found to be valid. The preliminary reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Since the resulting value was 0.951, it was not necessary to remove any items. At the construct level, Cronbach's alpha values were 0.912 (Gastronomic motivations), 0.900 (Gastronomic Satisfaction), 0.871 (Gastronomic experience), 0.852 (Destination Satisfaction), and 0.849 (Loyalty towards a destination). These results demonstrate excellent scale reliability both at the global level and at the construct level.

#### 3.2 Statistical analysis

The programs IBM SPSS v.24 and SmartPLS v.3.2.8 were used to carry out the preliminary analysis of the data and to determine the sociodemographic profile, as well as to conduct the reliability and validity analysis of the measurement model and the structural model.

It should be noted that, although causality is still a challenge in the field of structural equation modelling (SEM) (Markus, 2010), the relationships tested in the current model have solid theoretical support that can be used to infer causal relationships. Furthermore, the use of partial least squares (PLS) for explanatory purposes is applicable whenever one or more of the constructs can be formulated as a



composite. Thus, the analysis focuses on the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the endogenous variable, and the statistical inference on the path coefficients (hypothesis test) and the effect size ( $f^2$ ) (Henseler, 2018).

### 3.3 Sociodemographic profile

Regarding the survey data, the majority of the tourists surveyed were female (61.5%) between the ages of 19 to 35 years old (54.4%). Additionally, 70% of those surveyed had a university education or higher, with 35.8% being students and 24.1% working in the private sector. The mean monthly income level ranged between €1500 and €2500. Among the surveyed tourists, the most common nationalities were British (15.1%), French (14.1%), Italian (10.8%), and American (8.9%).

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Factor analysis. Gastronomic Motivations scale

The tourists were asked to rate the 17 indicators that make up the gastronomic motivations scale (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Dimitrouski and Crespi-Vallbona, 2018; Quan and Wang, 2014; Taar, 2014). A factor analysis of the motivations scale has been carried out to identify the different dimensions of gastronomic motivations that are inherent to the tourists (push factors).

The suitability of the data for the factor analysis was tested using the KMO test of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The values of the two tests and the corresponding significance level confirmed said suitability (Table I). The number of factors was determined by selecting those with eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1991). The extraction method was based on Principal Components Analysis using Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.

The factor analysis identified four factors (cultural experience, expectation, health concern and interpersonal relationships) with eigenvalues greater than 1. The reliability coefficients of the factors (Cronbach's alpha) range from 0.70 to 0.83. The factor loadings of each indicator, the eigenvalues, the reliability coefficients, and the percentage of the variance explained by the factors shown in Table 1 all indicate the adequacy of the method.

The first factor identified has been named "cultural experience" as it pertains to the culinary or gastronomic aspects related to the culture of the destination. This factor is the most important, explaining 40% of the total variance of the motivations matrix. It also presents the highest reliability coefficient (0.832) and is formed by five indicators.

[INSERT TABLE 1]

The second factor identified has been labelled "expectation", which includes the aspects related to the tourists' sense of escaping their day-to-day lives and the excitement of a new gastronomic experience. This second factor consists of five additional indicators with a reliability coefficient of 0.807, which is more than acceptable. In this case, this second factor explains 8.219% of the total variance in the motivations. Finally, the least important factors are "health concerns" and "interpersonal relationships", with eigenvalues of 1.157 and 1.041, respectively. Health concerns takes into account aspects related to the well-being and healthiness of food consumed at the destination, and it consists of three indicators with a reliability coefficient of 0.706. The factor explains 6.803% of the variance in the motivations matrix. The fourth factor contains motivations strictly related to features that benefit the social relationships of tourists at the individual level. It consists of four indicators that explain 6.123% of the variance of the motivations.

### 4.2 Analysis of validity and reliability of the measurement model

The analysis of the individual validity and reliability is carried out in Mode A through the corresponding factor loadings, where values of 0.707 represent the lower acceptable limit (Ali *et al.*, 2018). Although

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3 loadings of less than 0.707 are accepted in the initial stages of scale development, they must never be  
4 less than 0.4 (Hair *et al.*, 2011).

5  
6 The reliability and validity (Table 2) of the construct or internal consistency are addressed through the  
7 Dillon-Goldstein ( $\rho_C$ ) and the Dijkstra-Henseler ( $\rho_A$ ) coefficients, which present internal  
8 consistency values above the threshold of 0.7 (Henseler, 2017). The Mode B composites, on the other  
9 hand, are evaluated through the weights (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001), all of which maintain  
10 their significant weight (see Table II) and have no associated multicollinearity problems (Roberts and  
11 Thatcher, 2009). To check for multicollinearity, various authors (Diamantopoulos and Sigauw, 2006)  
12 advise the use of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with VIF values higher than 3.3 assumed to be  
13 associated with problems of collinearity.  
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15  
16 Lastly, the global validation of the constructs, convergent validity and discriminant validity have also  
17 been tested. Convergent validity is tested through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values  
18 greater than 0.5 confirming convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In addition, the analysis  
19 of discriminant validity (Table III) is based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio, which is considered one  
20 of the best methods to detect a lack of discriminant validity (Henseler *et al.*, 2016). Values below 0.90  
21 confirm the discriminant validity of the model (Gold *et al.*, 2001).  
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[INSERT TABLE 2]

[INSERT TABLE 3]

#### 24 25 26 27 28 4.3 Structural model

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30 Table 4 presents the amount of variance explained, that is, the amount of variance that each of the  
31 antecedent variables explains in its corresponding endogenous construct. Thus, it can be seen that the  
32 motivations explain 31% of the variance in the gastronomic experience construct and 22.56% of the  
33 variance in the gastronomic satisfaction construct. The gastronomic experience explains 43.9% of  
34 satisfaction with the destination. It should also be noted that satisfaction with the destination explains  
35 40.64% of the variance in the loyalty construct. Based on the above, the predictive power of the model  
36 is evaluated through the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). The  $R^2$  for each endogenous construct  
37 indicates weak predictive power for the constructs gastronomic satisfaction and gastronomic  
38 experience, and a more substantial predictive power for the constructs destination satisfaction and  
39 loyalty (Chin, 1998) (Table 4).  
40

[INSERT TABLE 4]

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46 On the other hand, in relation to the effect size (Cohen, 1988), we find a large and significant effect of  
47 gastronomic motivation on gastronomic experience ( $f^2 = 0.448$ ; 0.000), while the effect on gastronomic  
48 satisfaction is moderate and significant ( $f^2 = 0.291$ ; 0.000). All these results are presented in Table 5.  
49

[INSERT TABLE 5]

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53 The bootstrapping technique was used with 10,000 resamples (Streukens and Leroi-Werelds, 2016) in  
54 order to compute the confidence intervals of the standardized regression coefficients, as well as the  
55 statistical significance through the t statistics (Henseler *et al.*, 2009). The results are shown in Table 6.  
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[INSERT TABLE 6]

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Figure 2 presents the diagram of the structural model with the coefficients, the explained variance and the hypotheses.

[INSERT FIGURE 2]

## 5 Discussion

The analysis of the latent variables included in the model has revealed the influence of motivations on the gastronomic experience, in line with the findings of previous studies (Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2019; Berbel-Pineda *et al.*, 2019; Mora *et al.*, 2021). In this sense, gastronomic motivation is one of the main drivers of the choice of destinations for some tourism segments, although each tourist obviously has multiple subjective, inherent reasons compelling them to seek out a gastronomic experience in the destination (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, the gastronomic experience includes attractions such as regional cuisine or diverse gastronomic events, which generates satisfaction in the visiting tourist. The gastronomic experience is thus found to be an antecedent of satisfaction with the destination (Leong *et al.*, 2017; Berbel-Pineda *et al.*, 2019), distinguishing it from mere gastronomic satisfaction (Lacap, 2019).

Similarly, the study by Nield *et al.* (2000) establishes that the gastronomic experience can generate dissatisfaction with the destination, in accordance with the results of the present study. In our case, the models that included gastronomic experience as an antecedent of gastronomic satisfaction showed worse goodness of fit than the final model of the current study. In this sense, the hypothesis that gastronomic experience influences gastronomic satisfaction, as established in previous studies (Lee and Chang, 2012; Babolian-Hendijani, 2019), could not be included.

The influence of motivations on gastronomic satisfaction has also been evidenced in the research, supporting the findings reported by Agyeiwaah *et al.* (2019). In this respect, an increase in motivation leads to a higher level of involvement in the culinary experience, which would increase satisfaction and loyalty (Lee and Chang, 2012; Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2019), thus confirming the fourth of the hypotheses raised (motivations influence loyalty to the destination).

The gastronomic experience contributes positively to tourist satisfaction with the destination, and thus indirectly influences the desire and intention to return to the destination (Sparks *et al.*, 2003). Previous studies (Tse and Crotts, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2010; Alderighi *et al.*, 2016; Folgado-Fernández *et al.*, 2017) find a positive causal relationship between the gastronomic experience and loyalty towards the destination, with the corresponding hypothesis also supported in the present study. The outcomes of this research align with previous studies by Mora *et al.* (2021) and Hernandez-Rojas *et al.* (2021), which identify destination satisfaction as a mediator between gastronomic experiences and loyalty towards the destination. Essentially, both destination satisfaction and gastronomic experiences play a significant role in predicting loyalty towards the destination. However, the findings of this study, which support those of Mora *et al.* (2021), suggest that the impact of gastronomic experiences on loyalty is greater when mediated through destination satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary to consider all the aspects and details that make the culinary experience in the destination unforgettable. This will result in satisfaction with the destination and, consequently, loyalty towards a particular destination (Esparza-Huamanchumo *et al.*, 2022).

As previously mentioned, the gastronomic experience is found to be an antecedent of destination satisfaction, measured as a mix of the overall satisfaction with the visit to Córdoba and with other features related to the gastronomy. There are some studies that differentiate between these two latent variables, and both types of satisfaction are in turn identified as antecedents of destination loyalty (Chen and Chen, 2010; Eves and Scarles, 2014; Ji *et al.*, 2014; Berbel-Pineda *et al.*, 2019; Leong *et al.*, 2019). In our case, destination satisfaction includes the two factors and a separate latent variable composed of



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2  
3 eight indicators that measure gastronomic satisfaction. For this reason, it is possible that our results only  
4 show that destination satisfaction is the only antecedent of loyalty, and gastronomic satisfaction is not  
5 a significant antecedent of loyalty.

## 6 6 Conclusions, theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations and future lines of 7 research

### 8 6.1 Conclusions

9  
10 The recent emergence of gastronomy tourism as an important niche market has occurred alongside a  
11 change in tourists' motivations. As a result of this change, tourists' needs and expectations regarding  
12 food consumption are becoming more sophisticated, and they now seek out authenticity, local culture  
13 and value in the gastronomy of the visited destinations. The primary aim of this study is to establish a  
14 model of gastronomy tourism that integrates the proposed (and tested) relationships. It is worth noting  
15 the role of motivations as a precursor to gastronomic satisfaction, gastronomic experience, and loyalty  
16 towards a destination. Thus, for certain market segments, gastronomic motivations are found to be one  
17 of the main drivers of tourists' choice of destination.

18  
19 However, the results have not confirmed the influence of gastronomic satisfaction on loyalty towards a  
20 destination. Although gastronomy is an important consideration for tourists when visiting a destination,  
21 it may not be the sole determining factor; other variables such as safety, cleanliness, and additional  
22 tourist offerings also impact tourists' loyalty. These auxiliary factors, beyond the culinary experience,  
23 contribute to overall destination satisfaction, which has a positive influence on loyalty towards a  
24 destination.

25  
26 Also noteworthy is the mediating effect of destination satisfaction on the relationship between  
27 gastronomic experience and loyalty towards a destination. While the relationship is not fully mediated,  
28 it underscores the importance of satisfaction with different aspects related to the destination, enhancing  
29 the potential effect that gastronomic experience may have on loyalty towards the destination—or in this  
30 case, gastronomic loyalty. This mediating role is supported by the effect sizes between variables, with  
31 the largest effect being that of destination satisfaction on loyalty, far surpassing the effects of  
32 gastronomic experience and gastronomic satisfaction. Therefore, our results show that loyalty to the  
33 destination is mainly determined by destination satisfaction, and to a lesser extent, by the gastronomic  
34 experience and motivations.

### 35 6.2 Theoretical contributions

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37 The study has made significant theoretical contributions in three areas. Firstly, it addresses a research  
38 gap by developing a model of gastronomy tourism that integrates gastronomic motivations, experiences,  
39 destination satisfaction, and ultimately loyalty towards a gastronomic destination. This model helps to  
40 understand the various relationships among the aforementioned variables.

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42 An important finding of this study is that gastronomic satisfaction and destination satisfaction are not  
43 the same concepts. Destination satisfaction, which encompasses factors such as public safety,  
44 cleanliness, and the availability of tourist information, has a more significant impact on loyalty than  
45 gastronomic satisfaction. This highlights the importance of various tourism-related factors beyond food  
46 quality alone, as they can influence a tourist's overall positive attitude in terms of their loyalty towards  
47 a city like Córdoba.

48  
49 Furthermore, while it is not the main focus of the study, we have found that destination satisfaction  
50 plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between gastronomic experience and loyalty  
51 towards the destination. This indicates that although a positive gastronomic experience may lead to  
52 increased loyalty, the loyalty is even stronger when accompanied by destination satisfaction resulting  
53 from the aforementioned factors.

### 6.3 Managerial implications

We find that gastronomic motivations, gastronomic experiences and destination satisfaction positively influence destination loyalty. In this respect, a proper understanding of gastronomic motivations will allow managers of DMOs and other stakeholders to generate new strategies focused on each of the dimensions of gastronomic motivation identified. Local public and/or private entities should make an effort to identify such motivations, as they will be crucial to the design and implementation of strategies that improve the tourist competitiveness of Córdoba as a destination, securing the loyalty of the gastronomic tourist without *overshadowing* other cultural features of the city.

The research findings emphasize a crucial factor for the DMO in Córdoba: to promote tourist loyalty it is necessary to develop strategies that not only identify gastronomic motivations but also consider the intangible elements that generate high levels of satisfaction in the city. Gastronomic satisfaction alone does not influence loyalty towards a destination, so it is important to take into account the overall city experience, including safety, cleanliness, complementary tourism offerings, the provision of information, and more. These factors are essential for creating a satisfying experience for tourists and helping build their loyalty.

For this reason, the DMO managers in Córdoba should also examine other pull factors that could make the city more competitive as a tourist destination, while reinforcing the important role played by gastronomy. In this sense, it would be interesting for public and/or private entities to further promote the value of gastronomy by including Córdoba in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, specifically within the field of gastronomy.

It is also crucial to consider the sustainability of the destination. Policies must be implemented to ensure minimal impact on the environment where tourism activities occur. This can help prevent a negative impact on the tourist's perception of the destination, and a consequent reduction in satisfaction. Additionally, it is essential to offer complementary tourist activities as they help encourage more overnight stays in the city and boost tourist spending, which benefits local commerce without causing price hikes for the local population. In line with this, DMO managers should be concerned about the need to monitor and control tourist overcrowding in order to mitigate the possible negative impacts of tourism, whether from an economic, social, or environmental point of view.

### 6.4 Limitations and future lines of research

Like all studies, this one has certain limitations that need to be considered. For instance, a larger sample size would increase the representativeness of the study. Moreover, the time frame only covers the period from March to September: it would be worth extending it to include both high and low seasons, to evaluate any noticeable variations.

As for future lines of research, several avenues could be explored. Firstly, the study could be expanded to include the gastronomic tourism offerings provided by public entities or business owners of establishments such as restaurants or taverns. Secondly, the results of this study could be compared with user-generated content shared on social media platforms, to see whether the experiential component is corroborated. Similarly, software or image recognition programs from specific social media platforms such as TripAdvisor, Instagram, or Flickr, among others, could be used to analyse photographs related to the destination (Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018; Xiao et al., 2022). Lastly, it would also be worthwhile exploring new variables that may further explain the concept of loyalty towards the destination, such as destination authenticity or destination image.

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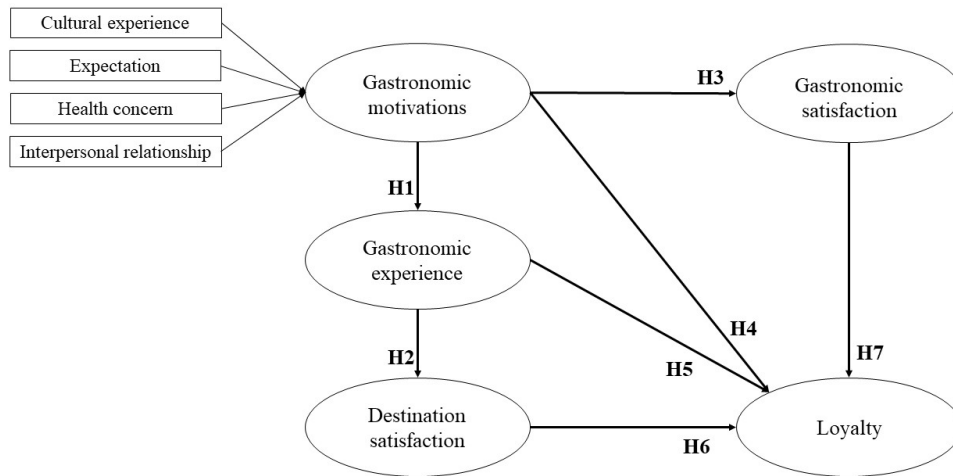
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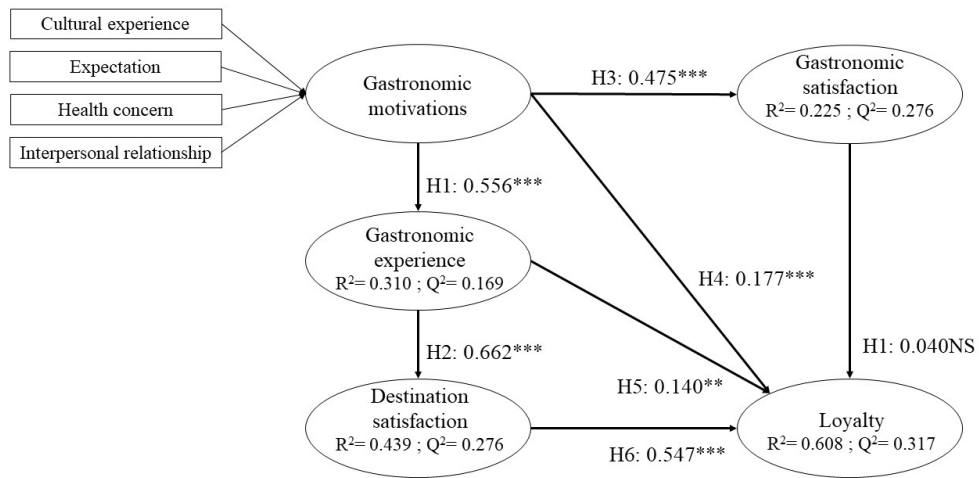
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Table 1. Factor Analysis. Gastronomic motivations scale

|                                                                                                                                           | Factors                                      |        |        |        | Factor Name                       | Cronbach |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------------------|----------|
|                                                                                                                                           | 1                                            | 2      | 3      | 4      |                                   |          |
| Local gastronomy increases my knowledge of different culinary preparations                                                                | 0.525                                        |        |        |        | <b>Cultural Experience</b>        | 0.832    |
| Local gastronomy allows me to discover other cultural elements of tourist destination                                                     | 0.785                                        |        |        |        |                                   |          |
| Local gastronomy allows me to know how the food of the destination really tastes like                                                     | 0.789                                        |        |        |        |                                   |          |
| Local gastronomy allows me to discover something new                                                                                      | 0.733                                        |        |        |        |                                   |          |
| Local gastronomy allows me to have a unique personal experience                                                                           | 0.554                                        |        |        |        |                                   |          |
| I travel in order to have an unforgettable gastronomic experience                                                                         |                                              | 0.655  |        |        | <b>Expectation</b>                | 0.807    |
| The possibility of enjoying local gastronomy in its place of origin excites me                                                            |                                              | 0.463  |        |        |                                   |          |
| Gastronomic experiences help me relax                                                                                                     |                                              | 0.805  |        |        |                                   |          |
| Gastronomic experiences allow me to enjoy a quiet environment away from the crowd                                                         |                                              | 0.744  |        |        |                                   |          |
| Gastronomic experiences make me to forget about the daily routine                                                                         |                                              | 0.680  |        |        |                                   |          |
| The local gastronomy contains a large quantity of fresh ingredients produced in the same destination than I visit                         |                                              |        | 0.635  |        | <b>Health Concern</b>             | 0,706    |
| Local gastronomy is healthy                                                                                                               |                                              |        | 0.807  |        |                                   |          |
| Local gastronomy is nutritious                                                                                                            |                                              |        | 0.698  |        |                                   |          |
| The local gastronomy allows me to spend a pleasant time with my friends and/or family                                                     |                                              |        |        | 0.489  | <b>Interpersonal Relationship</b> | 0.766    |
| Local gastronomy allows me to strengthen my social relationships                                                                          |                                              |        |        | 0.632  |                                   |          |
| Knowledge of local gastronomy allows me to talk to other people about gastronomic experiences                                             |                                              |        |        | 0.779  |                                   |          |
| The consumption of local gastronomy allows me to give advice about gastronomic experiences to other people who travel to that destination |                                              |        |        | 0.755  |                                   |          |
| <b>Eigenvalues</b>                                                                                                                        | 6.816                                        | 1.397  | 1.157  | 1.041  |                                   |          |
| <b>Variance explained (%)</b>                                                                                                             | 40.094                                       | 8.219  | 6.803  | 6.123  |                                   |          |
| <b>Variance explained accumulated (%)</b>                                                                                                 | 40.094                                       | 48.313 | 55.116 | 61.239 |                                   |          |
| <b>KMO</b>                                                                                                                                | 0.924                                        |        |        |        |                                   |          |
| <b>Bartlett Sphericity Test</b>                                                                                                           | Approx. Chi-Square= 4837.275<br>Sig. < 0.001 |        |        |        |                                   |          |

Table 2. Validity and reliability of the measurement model

| Latent variable/Items - Composite                                                                                 | Weights<br>(p.lim.) | Loads | Rho_C | Rho_A | AVE   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Gastronomic motivations -Mode B</b>                                                                            |                     |       |       | 1.000 |       |
| Cultural experience                                                                                               | 0.310(0.000)        |       |       |       |       |
| Expectation                                                                                                       | 0.289(0.000)        |       |       |       |       |
| Health concerns                                                                                                   | 0.366(0.000)        |       |       |       |       |
| Interpersonal relationship                                                                                        | 0.256(0.000)        |       |       |       |       |
| <b>Gastronomic satisfaction – Mode A*</b>                                                                         |                     |       | 0.920 | 0.904 | 0.589 |
| Quality of the food                                                                                               |                     | 0.833 |       |       |       |
| Variety of the food                                                                                               |                     | 0.775 |       |       |       |
| Prices                                                                                                            |                     | 0.666 |       |       |       |
| Facilities                                                                                                        |                     | 0.758 |       |       |       |
| Atmosphere and environment                                                                                        |                     | 0.784 |       |       |       |
| Innovation and new flavours in the dishes                                                                         |                     | 0.755 |       |       |       |
| Staff service and hospitality                                                                                     |                     | 0.773 |       |       |       |
| Traditional gastronomy                                                                                            |                     | 0.787 |       |       |       |
| <b>Gastronomic experience – Mode A</b>                                                                            |                     |       | 0.911 | 0.897 | 0.595 |
| The gastronomy of Córdoba allows me to have an authentic culinary experience                                      |                     | 0.809 |       |       |       |
| The gastronomy of Córdoba allows me to achieve a unique opportunity to better understand the culture of this city |                     | 0.756 |       |       |       |
| The gastronomy of Córdoba has a good smell                                                                        |                     | 0.862 |       |       |       |
| The gastronomy of Córdoba has a good visual aspect                                                                |                     | 0.796 |       |       |       |
| The gastronomy of Córdoba has a good flavour                                                                      |                     | 0.812 |       |       |       |
| The gastronomy of Córdoba has a different flavour to the same food from my place of residence                     |                     | 0.662 |       |       |       |
| The gastronomy of Córdoba is different from what I normally eat                                                   |                     | 0.683 |       |       |       |
| <b>Destination satisfaction – Mode A</b>                                                                          |                     |       | 0.894 | 0.851 | 0.679 |
| My choice to visit Córdoba has been successful                                                                    |                     | 0.784 |       |       |       |
| My level of satisfaction with the gastronomy of Córdoba has been important                                        |                     | 0.798 |       |       |       |
| My level of satisfaction with this culinary experience has been favorable                                         |                     | 0.858 |       |       |       |
| My general assessment of this gastronomic destination has been positive                                           |                     | 0.853 |       |       |       |
| <b>Loyalty – Mode A</b>                                                                                           |                     |       | 0.887 | 0.857 | 0.567 |
| I will recommend visiting the city, if someone asks me for advice                                                 |                     | 0.717 |       |       |       |
| I will encourage my family and friends to visit the city                                                          |                     | 0.752 |       |       |       |
| After my experience, I think I will come back again in the future                                                 |                     | 0.780 |       |       |       |
| I intend to buy the local gastronomy products that I tried during this trip                                       |                     | 0.687 |       |       |       |
| I will recommend the local gastronomic products of Córdoba                                                        |                     | 0.800 |       |       |       |
| I will encourage my friends and family to buy local products from Córdoba                                         |                     | 0.777 |       |       |       |

\*In this case, the scale is based of a 5-point Likert scale according to (very low=1; excellent=5)

Table 3. Discriminant validity. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio

|                                     | (1)   | (2)   | (3)   | (4) |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| <b>(1) Gastronomic experience</b>   |       |       |       |     |
| <b>(2) Loyalty</b>                  | 0.709 |       |       |     |
| <b>(3) Destination satisfaction</b> | 0.749 | 0.861 |       |     |
| <b>(4) Gastronomic satisfaction</b> | 0.722 | 0.597 | 0.642 |     |

Table 4. Effects on endogenous variables

|                                                                | R <sup>2</sup> | $\beta$ | Correlation | Explained Variance |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------|-------------|--------------------|
| <b>Gastronomic experience</b><br>H1: Gastronomic motivations   | 0.310          | 0.556   | 0.556       | <b>31.0%</b>       |
| <b>Destination satisfaction</b><br>H2: Gastronomic experience  | 0.439          | 0.662   | 0.662       | <b>43.9%</b>       |
| <b>Gastronomic satisfaction</b><br>H3: Gastronomic motivations | 0.225          | 0.475   | 0.475       | <b>22.56%</b>      |
| <b>Loyalty</b><br>H4: Gastronomic motivations                  | 0.609          | 0.177   | 0.520       | <b>9.21%</b>       |
| H5: Gastronomic experience                                     |                | 0.140   | 0.628       | <b>8.8%</b>        |
| H6: Destination satisfaction                                   |                | 0.547   | 0.743       | <b>40.64%</b>      |
| H7: Gastronomic satisfaction                                   |                | 0.040   | 0.538       | <b>2.15%</b>       |

Table 5. Effect size

| Endogeneous variable     | Exogenous variables      | Effect size(f <sup>2</sup> )(Sig.) | Effect                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gastronomic experience   | Gastronomic motivations  | 0.448(0.000)                       | Big and significant       |
| Destination satisfaction | Gastronomic experience   | 0.782(0.000)                       | Big and significant       |
| Gastronomic satisfaction | Gastronomic motivations  | 0.291(0.000)                       | Moderate and significant  |
| Loyalty                  | Gastronomic motivations  | 0.053(0.018)                       | Small and significant     |
|                          | Gastronomic experience   | 0.021(0.144)                       | Small and not significant |
|                          | Destination satisfaction | 0.398(0.000)                       | Big and significant       |
|                          | Gastronomic satisfaction | 0.002(0.705)                       | No effect                 |

Table 6. Hypothesis discussion

| Hypotheses/Path                                        | Path Coeff.<br>( $\beta$ ) | t value<br>(p.lim.) | Confidence Interval<br>(95%) |       | Result   |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|-------|----------|
|                                                        |                            |                     | 2.5%                         | 97.5% |          |
| H1: Gastronomic motivations → Gastronomic experience   | 0.556***                   | 15.748(0.000)       | 0.487                        | 0.627 | Accepted |
| H2: Gastronomic experience → Destination satisfaction  | 0.662***                   | 21.452(0.000)       | 0.597                        | 0.719 | Accepted |
| H3: Gastronomic motivations → Gastronomic satisfaction | 0.475***                   | 12.059(0.000)       | 0.400                        | 0.554 | Accepted |
| H4: Gastronomic motivations → Loyalty                  | 0.177***                   | 4.606(0.000)        | 0.105                        | 0.254 | Accepted |
| H5: Gastronomic experience → Loyalty                   | 0.140**                    | 3.049(0.002)        | 0.049                        | 0.229 | Accepted |
| H6: Destination satisfaction → Loyalty                 | 0.547***                   | 11.069(0.000)       | 0.445                        | 0.640 | Accepted |
| H7: Gastronomic satisfaction → Loyalty                 | 0.040 <sup>NS</sup>        | 0.960(0.337)        | -0.039                       | 0.126 | Rejected |



