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Determinants of gastronomic orientation in hotels and its influence on financial performance considering innovation barriers

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Abstract

This study examines how barriers to innovation influence gastronomic orientation and, in turn, the financial results of hotels in the context of sustainable tourism. Focusing on three- to five-star hotels in the province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Spain). The results show that internal barriers—such as a lack of qualified staff, high innovation costs, and resistance to change—negatively affect gastronomic orientation, while external barriers have no significant effect. In contrast, factors such as authenticity, destination branding, gastronomic themes, and the technology have a positive influence on gastronomic orientation. In turn, a strong gastronomic orientation significantly improves the financial performance of hotels. These findings contribute to the literature on tourism innovation by conceptualising gastronomic orientation as a measurable second-order construct that links innovation and sustainability. The study offers practical implications for hotel managers, restaurant, and destination planners who wish to develop gastronomy-focused tourism strategies that support long-term sustainable development.

Keywords Barriers, Financial performance, Gastronomic orientation, Hospitality innovation, Sustainable tourism

JEL Classification L83, O31, Q56, M21

1 Introduction

Gastronomic tourism, as defined by [1] and [2], involves visiting places linked to food production and consumption, and participating in culturally rich culinary experiences, such as festivals and local foods. For destinations to stand out, they must offer tangible and intangible gastronomic experiences that shape a unique “culinary landscape”, combining global and local elements [3], which attracts tourists searching for authenticity [4, 5]. As gastronomy becomes increasingly linked to cultural identity and travel satisfaction, destinations are integrating it into their promotional efforts [6, 7], leveraging their heritage to highlight its uniqueness and sustainability [8, 9]. Hotels play a key role in designing culinary experiences that promote sustainability and guest loyalty [10]. However, research on hotel food and beverage services remains limited compared to studies



on accommodation [11, 12]. Although food tourism is recognized as a growth industry [13, 14], studies have primarily focused on destination-level strategies, ignoring hotel-specific perspectives [15]. More recent research has focused on customer perceptions [16, 17], but according to [4], a micro-level approach that recognizes the strategic role of gastronomy in all tourism sectors is still needed [18].

Exploring the barriers to innovation affecting gastronomic orientation is essential for hotel competitiveness, but the specialised literature has not sufficiently addressed the specific obstacles or their impact [19, 22]. Identifying their benefits can help hotels optimise resources and promote sustainable strategies [20, 21].

Based on the resource-based view and innovation theory applied to hospitality, this study addresses these research gaps by examining how barriers to innovation influence gastronomic orientation and, in turn, the financial performance of hotels. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the main internal and external barriers that hinder gastronomic innovation in hotels?
- (2) What are the key elements that define a hotel's gastronomic orientation?
- (3) How does gastronomic orientation influence the financial performance of hotels within a framework of sustainable tourism development?

The study comprises a literature review, followed by the methodology, results, and an analysis of the implications, limitations, and future research.

2 Literature review

2.1 The gastronomic orientation

The origins of “gastronomy” can be traced back to its Greek roots and Brillat-Savarin's work “The Physiology of Taste” (1825), which links cuisine with travel and lays the foundations for gastronomic tourism focused on local food and the visitor experience [23–26].

From a hospitality perspective, gastronomy tourism offers hotels the opportunity to create distinctive culinary experiences, although their role in the broader gastronomic offering remains limited [27]. However, they can become key facilitators of unique gastronomic experiences [28]. Gastronomic tourism, categorized as gourmet, culinary or rural/urban [1, 29], has an increasing influence on destination choice, connecting visitors to local culture and generating significant social and economic benefits [30, 31].

2.2 The trend towards gastronomic innovation

Gastronomic innovation stems from the concept of “culinary art” as a balance between creativity, technique and research [32, 36]. This perspective is complemented by an objective view that highlight the quality of food through external, internal and delivery dimension, as well as the development of new methods throughout the gastronomic process [33–35].

In recent decades, haute cuisine has gained prominence, setting quality standards and influencing culinary trends, while reconfiguring the perception of restaurants as centers of innovation and creativity [37, 38]. As [39] point out, these spaces encourage originality, positioning haute cuisine as a motor of gastronomic progress.

2.3 Barriers in gastronomic orientation

Barriers to gastronomic innovation are classified as internal or external, depending on whether they involve actors within or outside the hotel organisation.

- *Internal barriers*: refer to obstacles that impede innovation within a company's own environment, affecting the food and beverage area as well as the sustainability and competitiveness of the hotel [40]. Leadership, strategic alignment and collaboration with the customer are key factors that can facilitate or hinder innovation, along with regulation, information networks, human capital diversity, process management and financial resources [41].

Other internal barriers include organisational culture, limited resources, lack of innovation knowledge and resistance to change [42]. Financial constraints remain a major obstacle, as they limit investment in technology, training and equipment [43], aggravated by restricted access to external finance and the perception that innovation carries high risks and slow returns [44, 45]. In addition, internal resistance to change, both from staff and management, as well as lack of leadership and innovation capacities, further block progress [46]. As [47] point out, the absence of structured training programs inhibits creativity and adaptation to new trends, while constant competition and imitation can discourage innovation. Therefore, it is essential for hotels to implement proactive strategies that encourage innovation and offer unique and competitive experiences [48].

- *External barriers*: are those obstacles that prevent companies from innovating due to external factors, such as dependence on resources or knowledge from other sources [49]. These barriers can manifest themselves through restrictive regulations that limit the flexibility and adaptation of organizations, as well as problems in collaboration with external partners. In addition, the incidence of economic and market factors, as well as intense competition, also act as impediments to the implementation of innovation [50]. In the restaurant industry, [42] describes these barriers as macroeconomic influences, such as supplier relationships and market demand, which impact the ability of tourism, related businesses to innovate effectively.

Another important external barrier is the lack of government support. [51] notes that inadequate policies and limited access to public resources obstruct innovation in the food industry, while [52] underline that an unfavorable regulatory environment impedes the experimentation necessary for sectoral growth. [53] argue that greater government engagement could help create a more positive context for innovation. In addition, [54] notes that the lack of accessible information and training in new technologies further limits firms' innovation efforts. [44] also highlight the absence of cooperation and strategic alliances between companies, which restricts knowledge sharing and creative development. Addressing these external challenges is crucial to encourage collaboration and adapt the gastronomy sector to market developments.

2.4 Gastronomic orientation

Gastronomy orientation is a strategic approach that aims to maximize the use of an organization's resources, such as knowledge, experience, competencies and networks, to achieve specific objectives in the gastronomy sector [21]. In the hotel sector, this orientation reflects how establishments integrate gastronomy into their value proposition,

aligning culinary identity with market differentiation and sustainability objectives [20]. From a resource-based perspective, gastronomy becomes a key strategic resource, capable of enhancing innovation and competitiveness when managed effectively.

Despite different definitions, scholars agree on essential aspects that shape its conceptualization and practical relevance. [55] and [56] highlight the role of food as a cultural symbol and driver of tourism, while [57] and [58] underline its impact on destination choice and satisfaction. Innovations such as fusion cuisine and a growing demand for authenticity further influence gastronomic segmentation and cultural identity [59, 60].

Furthermore, in recent years, new perspectives have highlighted the link between gastronomy, innovation and sustainability. For example, [10, 63] point out that hotels can improve their competitiveness by positioning gastronomy as a driver of circular practices and local value creation. Similarly, [61, 64] emphasise that the experiential and sustainable dimensions of food consumption are now fundamental to tourists' motivations and destination choice. These contributions highlight the growing relevance of gastronomy not only as a hedonistic or cultural experience, but also as a vector for sustainable development, an aspect that has hardly been integrated into studies on hotel management.

Based on this theoretical foundation, gastronomic orientation can be understood as a multidimensional construct composed of four interrelated factors: gastronomic segmentation, authenticity, technology and gastronomic marketing, especially in the food and beverage hotel context. These components are classified according to their sphere of influence, with psychosocial factors: such as consumer profiles, preferences and evaluations, explored by [61], while instrumental factors: focusing on tools such as marketing and technology, are addressed in studies by [62, 63] and [64]. Together, they determine the degree to which hotels strategically align their gastronomic offerings with innovation and sustainability objectives.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, these factors collectively define gastronomic orientation and are further analyzed in this study based on existing theoretical findings.

2.4.1 Factors in gastronomic orientation

2.4.1.1 Motivation: the basis for the development of gastronomic orientation In the gastronomic context, previous studies have explored the motivations related to the culinary field, which form the basis and are interrelated with the key factors that configure gastronomic orientation: segmentation, authenticity, marketing and technology. As shown

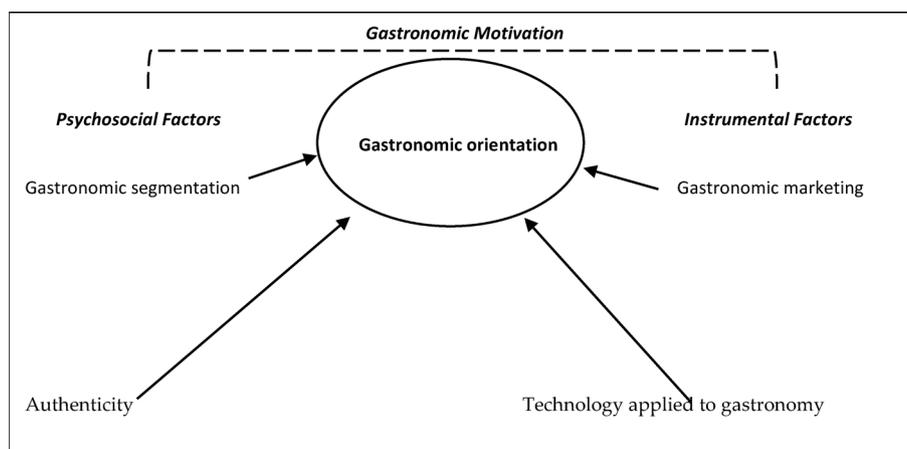


Fig. 1 Factors generating gastronomic orientation

in Table 1, various studies and classifications carried out by the aforementioned authors support the factors in gastronomic orientation.

Tourism professionals stress the importance of understanding tourists' motivations in order to effectively segment the market and develop personalized marketing strategies. Tourist motivations have changed and are now influenced by elements such as authenticity, flexibility of services and innovation, particularly through the use of new technologies in the gastronomy sector [57, 72]. Understanding these motivations enables hotels to segment their markets more effectively and design gastronomic offers consistent with sustainability principles.

2.4.1.2 Gastronomic segmentation Market segmentation is based on consumer motivations and is one of the most important long-term strategic marketing decisions that an organization or destination can make in the restaurant sector [72]. The increasing competition in the gastronomic sector requires a segmentation policy adapted to a diversified customer base, leading to the creation of this tool, which is essential to understand specific markets [73]. The diversity of the gastronomic offer becomes an effective attraction for tourists [35, 74, 75]. Classifying tourists according to their gastronomic preferences allows for more effective management of resources and the design of attractive products and services [11].

2.4.1.3 Authenticity Recent studies indicate that authenticity not only enhances satisfaction but also reinforces sustainable behaviour, as tourists increasingly seek genuine, locally sourced food experience [76, 77]. Tourism research in this area has indicated that

Table 1 Motivation and convergence of factors that make up gastronomic orientation

Authors	Classification of motivations:	Translation into factors of gastronomic orientation
[65]	Cultural immersion	Authenticity
	Emotions	Authenticity and marketing
	Sensory experiences	Segmentation and technology
	Social interactions	Authenticity
	Relaxation or escape	Segmentation
	Health	Segmentation and technology
[66, 67]	The delight in food, social interactions and cultural experiences	Authenticity
[68]	Status	Segmentation
	The experience in destination	Authenticity
	The gastronomic experience	Authenticity
	Loyalty	Marketing
[69]	Tasting local foods	Authenticity
	Sustainability	Segmentation and technology
[70]	Social and environmental sustainability	Segmentation and technology
	Concern for health	Segmentation and technology
	The cultural experience	Authenticity
	Prestige	Marketing and segmentation
	Sensory appeal	Segmentation, marketing and technology
	Interpersonal relationships	Authenticity
[71]	The culinary experience and novelty	Authenticity, marketing and segmentation
	Hedonism and leisure	Segmentation
	The connection between experience and work	Authenticity and technology

Source: own elaboration based on the authors cited in the table

authenticity, related to tradition and genuineness, is an essential motivation for some travelers [72]. In particular, local gastronomy has been concretized as an authentic element that is deeply connected to the culture and acts as a tourist attraction [78]. However, [79, 80] note that the wide variety of foods in such a globalized market can make it difficult to provide authentic culinary experiences.

2.4.1.4 Gastronomic marketing Gastronomic marketing has evolved to focus on preparation processes that add value, rather than simply marketing basic products [81]. The field has generated an intense debate on how to provide value in the market, taking into account culinary, authentic and ethical aspects in the process [82]. For example, the customer's memory and image of the destination can be influenced by the gastronomic experience [83]. The achievement of a positive culinary image is given by certain attributes such as the offer of traditional foods and the quality of ingredients [84]. Currently, gastronomic tourism has become one of the most dynamic sectors of global tourism and is effectively integrated into the marketing strategies of various destinations [85].

2.4.1.5 Technology applied to gastronomy Current scientific policies support new gastronomic practices, such as molecular and experimental cuisine, through the advancement of science and technology in this field [86]. This new paradigm requires collaboration between chefs and scientists, forming multidisciplinary groups in restaurants and research centres [87]. In addition, the use of digital technologies in food production and preparation is increasing [88, 89]. Innovation in the kitchen promotes experimentation and communication in the culinary field through the implementation of advanced management techniques [35, 90].

2.5 Synthesis and gaps in research

In summary, the literature identifies multiple factors that influence gastronomic orientation; however, few studies have integrated them into a coherent theoretical framework applicable to the hotel sector. Most previous research focuses on strategies at the destination level or in individual restaurants, leaving a gap in understanding how hotels implement gastronomy as an internal strategic capability that links barriers to innovation, sustainable practices, and financial outcomes.

Consequently, this study conceptualises gastronomic orientation as a second-order construct comprising four first-order dimensions—authenticity, segmentation, marketing, and technology—and examines how it mediates the relationship between barriers to innovation and financial performance. This approach not only advances the theoretical understanding of gastronomic innovation, but also responds to the growing need to align hotel strategies with the principles of sustainability, competitiveness, and cultural preservation.

3 Hypothesis development

3.1 Internal barriers and gastronomic orientation

The existence of internal barriers hinders gastronomy orientation, both at the business and hospitality sector, as well as in the providing of services. The greater the perceived risks in terms of costs and return on investment, problems in retaining staff, lack of

knowledge and resistance to change, the less gastronomic orientation a hotel will be able to develop.

Despite the fact that these internal barriers come from studies aimed at innovation [11, 21, 47, 54], they could have the same impact in the context of gastronomic orientation, considering the contributions of [59], where gastronomic innovation is not only a consequence of the orientation to touristic gastronomy, but is also a mechanism that influences the authenticity of local products.

Considering these aspects, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1 *Internal barriers to innovation decrease hotel's gastronomic orientation.*

3.1.1 External barriers and gastronomic orientation

There are multiple external barriers that concrete from studies directed towards innovation in gastronomy, such as: global competition, economic uncertainty, regulatory challenges, lack of knowledge, government policies and the availability of new technologies. They affect gastronomy orientation limiting the sector's capacity for adaptation and innovation, restricting access to resources, increasing costs, generating uncertainty and impeding the implementation of new strategies [47, 59, 91].

These external barriers, as established by [54] and [49], can be counteracted by well-designed strategies directed towards gastronomic orientation.

Based on the previous, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2 *External barriers to innovation decrease hotel's gastronomic orientation.*

3.2 Gastronomic orientation and financial performance

According to [92], gastronomic orientation is based on the relationship between the development of gastronomy as a science, its commercial diversification and its impact on the tourism industry, where the trends and preferences of tourists are key elements for its evolution. In this context, [55] highlight, that adopting a gastronomic orientation aligned with consumer expectations, not only strengthens the competitiveness of restaurants and tourist destinations, but also enriches the culinary experience, increasing demand and generating higher revenues in the sector.

The generation of a good gastronomic offer, composed of the creation of new dishes and a good elaborated cuisine, as well as the improvement in the processes, can produce a better financial result for the hotel [93–95].

Therefore, based on the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3 *Gastronomic orientation positively influences financial performance.*

As shown in Fig. 2, gastronomic orientation operates as a second-order reflective construct composed of four first-order dimensions.

4 Materials and methods

4.1 Area of research and sample

The province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife was selected for this study based on its important role in national and international tourism, as highlighted in the Study of the Economic Impact of Tourism in the Canary Islands (2021) conducted by [96]. The research

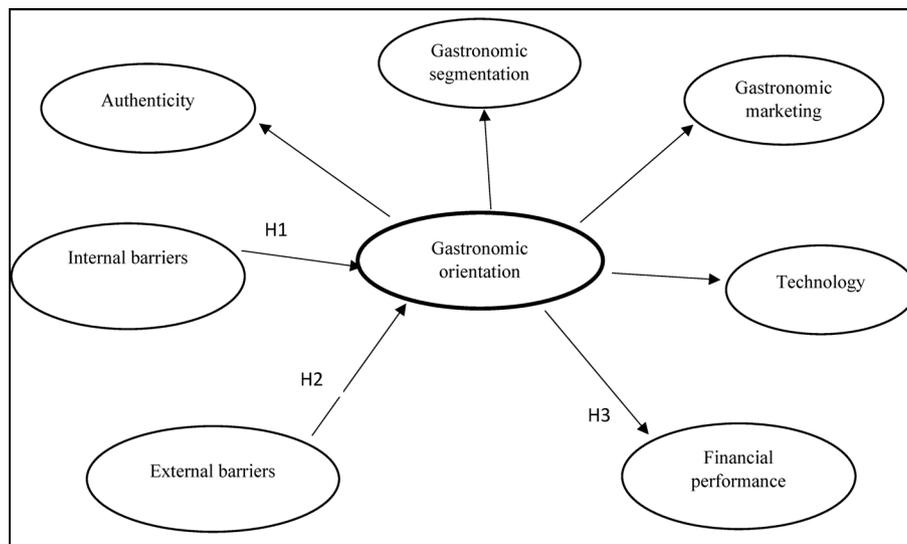


Fig. 2 Conceptual model and hypotheses, Source: prepared by the authors

focused specifically on the hotel sector, given the strong competitiveness of the region and its substantial economic contribution [97]. Notably, it was the EU region with the highest number of overnight stays in 2019, with a total of 96.1 million [98]. The sample was limited to 3 to 5-star hotels offering a varied food and beverage service, according to data from the Hotel and Extra-Hotel Association of Santa Cruz de Tenerife (ASHOTEL), taking [99] as a reference for the methodology used in terms of selection for this study.

After reviewing theoretical and empirical academic studies related to the topic to be addressed, a questionnaire on gastronomic orientation was designed and subsequently adapted to an online format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before its distribution, a pretest was carried out with the managers of three hotels of different categories (one per person and hotel) and, after the implementation of the suggested observations, the questionnaire was validated and sent out. Data collected before and during the pandemic were considered valid, as supported by Hospitality [100], which reported that global hotel occupancy rates in 2021 doubled compared to 2020. This increase, especially steady from the summer onwards, indicated that previously closed hotels had reopened and that tourism recovery in tourism was taking hold. Although data collection took place during the pandemic, which may have affected managers' perceptions of innovation and performance, this context also allowed us to observe how hotels adapted their food and beverage strategies in a context of uncertainty. We acknowledge the potential biases arising from this exceptional situation, particularly with regard to the representativeness of practices before and after the pandemic.

4.2 Respondent data

Of the 190 existing hotels, 131 hotels responded, with the sample distributed as follows 22 5-star, 86 4-star and 23 3-star hotels. This gives a real response rate of 68.94%, with a sampling error of 4.8%. Given the results obtained for the response rate, a high level of representativeness was achieved. The distribution of this figure is as follows: of the 131 hotels surveyed, 4-star hotels provided the highest number of replies with 65.65%, followed by 3-star hotels with 17.56% and 5-star hotels with 16.79%. Respondents were mainly food and beverage department managers (55.7%) and food and beverage staff

(27.5%), followed by hotel managers (13.7%) and assistant managers (3.1%). Managers and department heads were chosen because they possess both strategic and operational knowledge related to innovation and financial performance, which are essential for evaluating gastronomic orientation. However, the exclusion of employees and customers is recognised as a limitation, as their perspectives could provide additional insight into service and experience.

4.3 Data processing

The data were checked for missing values, outliers, and normality using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to characterise the sample, and composite indicators such as item averages were calculated. To verify the hypotheses, the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling) is used with the software SmartPLS version 4.0 [104]. First, the model measurement is evaluated and then the structural model is assessed [105].

4.4 Variables measurement

Three main constructs were analysed: internal and external barriers to innovation, gastronomic orientation and financial performance. Gastronomic orientation was modelled as a second-order reflective construct composed of four first-order dimensions (authenticity, segmentation, marketing and technology).

Internal and external barriers. This study analyzes the internal and external barriers that hinder gastronomic innovation. These barriers were adapted specifically for the gastronomic field, based on the work of [91] and [47], where a 16-item scale was used to measure them. For internal barriers, 11 of these dimensions were used: limited access to financing, high innovation costs, lack of qualified personnel, difficulties in cost control, long payback period, perceived risks, resistance to change and the possibility of rapid imitation by competitors. External barriers, composed of the remaining 5 dimensions, include: limited government support, lack of information on innovative methods, lack of strategic partners, economic turbulence, and lack of infrastructure and specific training in the gastronomic sector.

Gastronomic orientation. A study was carried out regarding the gastronomic orientation that hotels present, from which a total of 19 items were obtained, as a result of the theoretical studies on this subject previously cited, adding, in addition, those of [74, 101]. Based on these authors, the concept of gastronomic orientation can be extracted as an enhancer of innovation in the food and beverage area of hotels, through the agglutination that occurs as a result of gastronomic motivation, which is treated only at a theoretical level, but which nevertheless gives rise to four factors that make it concrete: gastronomic segmentation (7 items), authenticity (7 items), gastronomic marketing (3 items) and technology applied to gastronomy (2 items).

Financial performance. In the hotel context, this concept is translated as: a better profit margin, return on assets, higher hotel profitability and operating margin, as well as the generation of extra revenue per room. Issues related to financial performance have been used in other works applied to the hotel sector [102, 103].

The scales used for all of the above constructs were Likert scales ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 indicating low levels of disagreement and 7 indicating high levels of agreement.

5 Analysis and results

5.1 Internal and external barriers to gastronomic innovation

Table 5 (see Appendix), shows a total of 11 statements used to measure the internal barriers perceived by the groups of respondents in relation to gastronomic innovation in its implementation in the food and beverage area of the hotel. From the results obtained, it can be seen that the most representative ones are generated from the mean of the Likert scale used, 3.5. It can be seen that 8 of the 11 barriers identified exceed this mean and are therefore considered to be clear negative components that affect gastronomic innovation, such as: the lack of qualified personnel (mean = 4.35), the difficulty in controlling the costs derived from innovation (mean = 3.99), the lack of training of employees in gastronomic innovation (mean = 3.90) and the significant number of risks perceived by the hotel (mean = 3.86).

However, the least perceived internal barriers are those that are below the established average. For example, those related to food and beverage managers' resistance to change (mean = 3.31) and the difficulty of accessing sources of finance for gastronomic innovation (mean = 3.34). This shows that the main obstacles in this area come from the hotel staff, but not so much from the hotel management, and from the costs involved in its development, but not so much when it comes to obtaining external resources for its implementation.

Again in Table 5, a total of 5 statements are found in the measurement of external barriers to gastronomic innovation in the same hotel department. The results obtained are again set at 3.5 on the scale indicated above, and it can be seen that 100% of the results of the averages obtained exceed this value. Therefore, it can be stated that all of them have a significant impact on slowing down the development and implementation of gastronomic innovation.

Those with the greatest impact are: lack of information on how to innovate in gastronomy (mean = 4.41), lack of infrastructure support and specific external training for gastronomic development (mean = 4.30) and economic turbulence (mean = 4.24). In this case, the slightly lower perceived external barrier to innovation was insufficient government support for gastronomic innovation (mean = 3.97).

5.2 Gastronomic orientation

In relation to gastronomic orientation, a specific section was included in the questionnaire, (see Appendix, Table 6), where a total of 19 statements are presented, with the aim of measuring the gastronomic orientation perceived by the respondents, which in turn is related to gastronomic innovation in its implementation in the food and beverage area of the hotel. Taking into account the theoretical classification carried out previously, the table also shows the categorization of the variables into four broad groups related to the gastronomic orientation: gastronomic segmentation (GS), authenticity (A), gastronomic marketing (GM) and technology applied to gastronomy (T).

From the results obtained, relevance is established in those statements that exceed the mean of the Likert scale used, 3.5. It is noted that 15 of the 19 gastronomic orientation variables identified are considered to be clear facilitators of innovation, with the following standing out: offering themed menus to customers (mean = 5.51), the hotel's offer of national gastronomy (mean = 5.42), brand promotion through gastronomy (mean = 5.31) and the intention for customers to have a gastronomic experience (mean = 5.30).

The least perceived orientations are those related to: the hotel offering street food (food prepared in public places or on the street) (mean = 2.44), the hotel having a typical standard menu without supporting any type of gastronomy (mean = 2.95) or the hotel having a luxury pastry shop (mean = 3.12). These low orientations reveal that actions involving gastronomic specialization or the offer of services outside the establishment are of less relevance to hoteliers, especially when they require specific technology for their implementation.

With regard to the above categorization, we found: 7 variables corresponding to authenticity, 7 to gastronomic segmentation, 3 to gastronomic marketing and 2 to the use of technology applied to gastronomy. Authenticity stands out with two of the four top-rated statements, where menu theming (mean = 5.51) and consumer interest in the gastronomic experience (mean = 5.30) underline the importance of this component, driven in part by customer preferences.

Gastronomic segmentation occupies second place in relevance, highlighting the value that hoteliers attribute to national gastronomy (mean = 5.42), aligned with consumer preferences and reinforced in the areas of food and beverages. Although it has the same number of items as authenticity, only one presents a high mean, and four of its items are above 3.5 on the Likert scale, while two do not reach this score.

Finally, gastronomic marketing and applied technology are less significant factors. Gastronomic marketing includes 3 items, where one is positively rated (mean = 5.31), indicating hotel participation in promotional strategies and actions. However, technology is the least relevant factor, with only 2 items, one of which has the lowest mean (2.44), reflecting less involvement in this area within hotel gastronomic innovation.

It is also important to note that the means obtained for gastronomic orientation have slightly higher indexes compared to the barriers analyzed previously. In relation to their medians, they also, in general terms, significantly increase their reliability in terms of the trend of their arithmetic means (15 of the 19 indicators), as well as the modes obtained, again in comparison with the barriers to gastronomic innovation.

Taking these descriptive results into account, the following section focuses on testing the proposed relationships using structural equation modelling (SEM).

5.3 Measurement model

The model consists of first-order and second-order reflective dimensions (gastronomic orientation). In this first stage, the individual reliability of each item is assessed, the reliability of each construct used and the construct validity which is formed by convergent validity and discriminant validity [106].

Table 2 shows the factor loadings where it is observed that most of them are higher than 0.50. Those items that did not have a loading higher than 0.5 were eliminated from the analysis. With this rule, a total of 14 items were eliminated from each group of variables selected in this analysis. In relation to the composite reliability, it is confirmed that for each of the constructs the reliability is acceptable because it exceeds the threshold of 0.7. In this regard, the lowest value is 0.723 for the construct measuring internal barriers and the highest value is 0.883 for the construct assessing gastronomic orientation. With respect to convergent validity, it is observed in Table 3 that the variance extracted (AVE) of all the constructs is higher or very close to the threshold of 0.5. Only the gastronomic segmentation variable has an AVE value of 0.471, slightly close to 0.5, which we consider

Table 2 Barriers to gastronomic innovation in the food and beverage area. *Source* prepared by the authors based on data from respondents

Internal barriers to gastronomic innovation in my hotel's food and beverage department	Central tendency		
	Mean	Median	Mode
Difficulty in accessing sources of funding for innovation in gastronomy	3.34	3.00	3.00
Costs involved in innovation are too high	3.86	4.00	3.00
Lack of qualified personnel	4.35	4.00	3.00
Innovation costs are difficult to control	3.99	4.00	5.00
Payback period for investment in gastronomy is too long	3.53	3.00	3.00
Significant number of risks perceived by the hotel	3.86	4.00	3.00
Problems with staff retention	3.82	4.00	4.00
Lack of training of staff to innovate in gastronomy	3.90	4.00	3.00
Resistance to change by food and beverage staff	3.85	4.00	3.00
Resistance to change by food and beverage managers	3.31	3.00	3.00
High risk of gastronomic innovation being imitated by competitors	3.44	3.00	3.00
External barriers to gastronomic innovation in the food and beverage department of my hotel	Mean	Median	Mode
Insufficient government support for gastronomic innovation	3.97	4.00	3.00
Lack of information on how to innovate in gastronomy	4.41	5.00	5.00
Lack of external partners to support gastronomic innovation	4.08	4.00	5.00
Economic turbulence	4.24	5.00	5.00
Lack of infrastructure support and specific external training for gastronomy development	4.30	5.00	5.00

Bold indicate items with mean scores above the midpoint of the Likert scale

acceptable, since the composite reliability of the construct is adequate. This lower AVE value can be attributed to the multidimensional nature of gastronomic segmentation, which combines various elements that capture strategic and operational aspects. However, its composite reliability of over 0.70 confirms an acceptable level of convergent validity for exploratory research. Therefore, there is convergent validity. In relation to discriminant validity, Table 3 shows that the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlations of the different variables [106].

5.4 Structural model

A nonparametric bootstrapping test in SmartPLS 4.0 with 500 replicates was performed to obtain the explained variance (R^2), the f^2 effect as well as the Q^2 values. In addition, the standardized coefficients (β) were obtained with the observed t-values obtained to verify the contrast of the hypotheses posed [106].

The results indicate that internal barriers and external barriers explain 32.1% of the variability of gastronomic orientation. In turn, gastronomic orientation explains 31.1% of the variability of financial performance. All f^2 values are above the 0.02 threshold [107], except where the relationship is not significant. The Q^2 were obtained to test whether the models have predictive relevance. Table 4 shows that the Q^2 for the gastronomic orientation variable is 0.29 and for the financial performance variable it is 0.193. Consequently, in both cases the value of the Q^2 is greater than zero, suggesting that there is predictive relevance. Likewise, to assess the goodness of fit, the (GoF) indicator has been used, which is the result of the geometric mean of the AVE times the mean of the R^2 [105]. To consider a good fit the GoF value must exceed 0.36. In this case the GoF value is 0.423 exceeding the threshold of 0.36, which is a good fit.

Hypothesis 1 studies the relationship between internal barriers to innovation and the gastronomic orientation of the hotel. Table 4 and Fig. 3 show that innovation barriers

Table 3 Orientation of gastronomic innovation in the area of food and beverages. *Source* Prepared by the authors based on data from respondents

Gastronomic orientation in hotels		Central tendency		
		Mean	Median	Mode
A	We aim to provide a gastronomic experience for our guests	5.30	5.00	5.00
A	Local wines and products are available to our guests in our establishments	5.26	5.00	5.00
A	We offer our guests the opportunity to taste and enjoy our traditional and local dishes	5.21	5.00	5.00
A	We offer themed menus to our guests	5.51	6.00	7.00
A	The hotel participates in gastronomic events and/or fairs	3.56	3.00	3.00
A	The hotel's F&B department offers exotic cuisine	3.76	4.00	3.00
A	Neurusticity (traditional cuisine reconverted into original formats) is implemented in some of the hotel's restaurant services	4.08	4.00	5.00
Gastronomic orientation in hotels		Central tendency		
		Mean	Median	Mode
GM	We try to promote our brand through gastronomy	5.31	5.00	5.00
GM	The hotel promotes the gastronomy of the island	4.85	5.00	5.00
GM	Our clients choose the hotel partly because of the gastronomy we offer	4.64	5.00	5.00
T	The hotel offers street food (food prepared in public places or on the street) on an occasional or permanent basis	2.44	2.00	1.00
T	The hotel's F&B department has virtualised catering services for its clients	3.86	4.00	3.00
GS	We offer our guests national and international cuisine adapted to each segment of the hotel's clientele	3.21	5.00	5.00
GS	The hotel offers national gastronomy	5.42	6.00	6.00
GS	The hotel offers international gastronomy	5.27	5.00	5.00
GS	The hotel supports sports gastronomy	4.38	5.00	5.00
GS	The hotel has a typical standard menu without supporting any type of gastronomy	2.95	3.00	3.00
GS	The hotel has a luxury pastry department	3.12	2.00	1.00
GS	The hotel's F&B department offers a service that includes the use or specialisation in superfoods (those foods that are naturally rich in vitamins, phytonutrients and antioxidants)	3.74	4.00	3.00

A Authenticity, T Technology applied to gastronomy, GM Gastronomic marketing, GS Segmentation

have an impact on a lower gastronomic orientation of the hotel ($\beta = -0.478$, $p < 0.001$), so hypothesis 1 is accepted. On the other hand, hypothesis 1, which tries to demonstrate the impact of external barriers to innovation on the gastronomic orientation of the hotel, is not fulfilled. In this sense, the results show that there is a negative, although not significant relationship between external barriers to innovation and gastronomic orientation ($\beta = -0.126$, $p > 0.05$). Finally, hypothesis 3 analyzes the impact of gastronomic orientation on financial performance. The results indicate that the higher the gastronomic orientation, the higher the financial performance ($\beta = 0.558$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that hypothesis 3 is accepted.

6 Discussion

6.1 Innovation barriers and gastronomic orientation in hotels

This study addresses the main barriers to innovation in hotel gastronomy [12]. The main challenges are high economic risk, innovation costs, lack of infrastructure and lack of staff training, in line with the findings of [48]. However, the most significant obstacle is the lack of information on how to innovate in gastronomy, as also identified by [108]. In response, this study introduces the concept of gastronomic orientation as a new analytical framework for the hotel sector, structured around four main pillars: authenticity, market segmentation, gastronomic marketing and technology. Among these,

Table 4 Evaluation of the measurement model

Variables	Factor loading	t	Composite reliability	AVE
Internal barriers			0.852	0.496
IB1	0.515	4.967		
IB2	0.607	6.094		
IB3	0.728	15.065		
IB4	0.841	36.965		
IB5	0.716	13.421		
IB6	0.768	16.608		
External barriers			0.876	0.588
EB1	0.601	6.876		
EB2	0.760	11.590		
EB3	0.776	14.657		
EB4	0.848	29.332		
EB5	0.825	20.916		
Authenticity			0.833	0.505
A1	0.816	27.916		
A2	0.683	13.593		
A3	0.543	5.421		
A4	0.702	14.398		
A5	0.777	24.414		
Gastronomic segmentation			0.813	0.471
GS1	0.628	8.519		
GS2	0.536	6.547		
GS3	0.628	10.784		
GS4	0.824	28.090		
GS5	0.741	28.053		
Gastronomic marketing			0.748	0.505
GM1	0.813	18.177		
GM2	0.755	15.936		
GM3	0.532	5.939		
Technology			0.732	
T1	0.530	3.520		
T2	0.956	33.994		
Gastronomic orientation (Second-order)			0.883	0.662
Authenticity	0.920	72.281		
Gastronomic segmentation	0.892	51.591		
Gastronomic marketing	0.823	33.976		
Technology	0.562	9.100		
Financial performance			0.839	0.513
FP1	0.807	20.148		
FP2	0.653	13.045		
FP3	0.712	13.193		
FP4	0.620	7.800		
FP5	0.771	17.462		

authenticity emerges as the most influential factor, echoing [79], who highlight the value tourists place on genuine and culturally rich culinary experiences.

With respect to the hypotheses proposed, this study confirms that internal barriers have a direct negative impact on gastronomic orientation in hotels, meaning that the greater the internal challenges, the lower the orientation toward gastronomic innovation. This aligns with [11, 91] and [50], who identified obstacles such as limited training, resources, and resistance to change. These factors hinder strategic improvements and customer collaboration [21], affecting components of gastronomic orientation

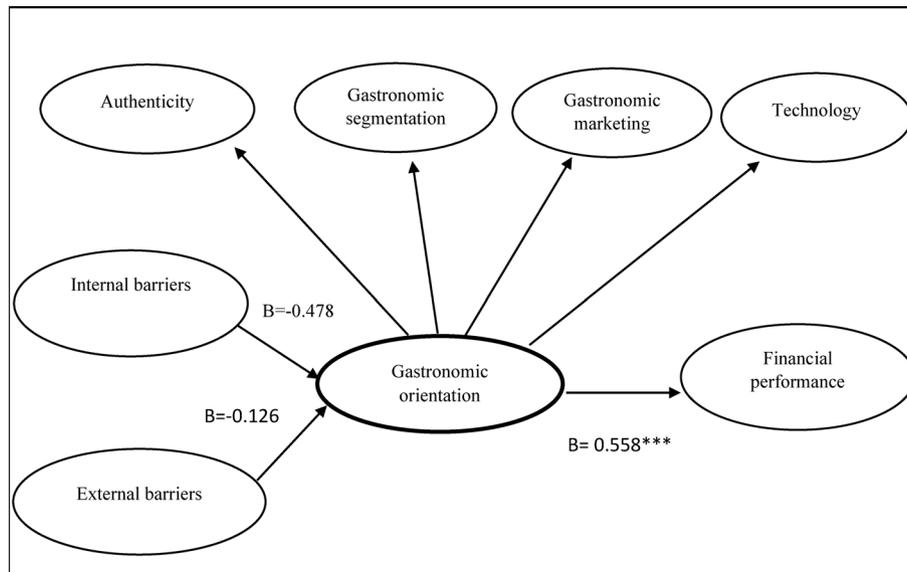


Fig. 3 Structural model. * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

(authenticity, segmentation, marketing, technology). Overcoming internal barriers is essential to strengthening gastronomic orientation.

6.2 Implications and other considerations

Consistent with [109], this study explains that internal and external knowledge access and transformation can directly and indirectly reduce internal barriers. While previous research pointed to the role of external barriers in limiting innovation [47, 49, 54, 91], this study concludes that external factors do not significantly affect gastronomic orientation. This suggests that strategic and adaptive measures, such as planning and collaborations [11, 21], can mitigate the influence of external constraints, allowing hotels to maintain or improve their gastronomic focus despite broader challenges.

In addition, research shows that a strong gastronomic orientation positively influences a hotel's financial performance. Analyses by [47] and [110] demonstrate that gastronomy innovation contributes to improved hotel profit margin, performance, profitability and extra income of the hotel. [55] support this claim when identifying gastronomic orientation as a key factor for the competitiveness of the hotel and tourism sectors, highlighting the role of culinary culture, local gastronomy, diversification, and the use of new technologies and techniques. These findings reinforce the idea that adopting gastronomic trends, as defined in this study, is crucial for driving both performance and revenues in the hospitality industry.

7 Conclusions and implications

7.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the conceptualisation of gastronomic orientation as a multi-dimensional construct comprising authenticity, market segmentation, gastronomic marketing and technology. It demonstrates its strong link with barriers to innovation and financial performance, showing that internal barriers—such as lack of training, risk aversion and limited market knowledge—have a greater negative influence than external ones. These findings challenge traditional approaches that emphasised

external constraints and highlight the need for internal strategic management and adaptive planning to foster innovation in hotel gastronomy. It proposes a more integrated management approach that balances internal factors (such as organizational culture and planning) with changing market demands.

7.2 Management implications

The results highlight the importance of staff training, collective knowledge and collaboration as key factors for innovation in hotel food and beverage departments. Managers should invest in employee development, strengthen organisational planning and embrace gastronomy as a strategic tool for competitiveness. By promoting authenticity and cultural value through innovative gastronomic practices, hotels can improve customer satisfaction, strengthen brand identity and enhance financial results.

7.3 Policy implications

Public institutions and destination management organisations play a crucial role in supporting innovation and promoting the gastronomic brand. Encouraging cooperation between hotels, local producers and educational institutions, as well as facilitating access to training and resources, can promote sustainable culinary development and strengthen the destination's identity through its gastronomy.

In summary, the study integrates gastronomic orientation, barriers to innovation and financial performance into a unified framework, reinforcing gastronomy as a strategic driver of sustainable competitiveness in the hotel sector.

7.4 Limitations and future research

This study is not free from limitations that need to be taken into account for future research. Firstly, there is a geographical limitation, since it covers such a specific area as the Canary Islands (province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife). On this basis, it will be necessary to compare the results obtained with other tourist destinations. Secondly, a sample will be created in which the information obtained will come from the management and department heads of the establishment, excluding all staff of the department, and at the same time from the perspective of the clients. It is suggested that future studies include both groups in the data collection method. Thirdly, it is necessary to highlight the period covered by this study, as it is the pre-pandemic phase and may be susceptible to small modifications related to the situation or changes that may have occurred in hotels after the pandemic. Therefore, it would be advisable to update the information obtained after a reasonable period of time. Following the same line of data collection, other variables that were not taken into account may have been omitted, with the capacity to promote or hinder gastronomic innovation in the specific area addressed in this study.

From a theoretical point of view, by introducing new definitions and classifications related to barriers in this specific area, there is a possibility that another equally relevant aspect has been overlooked. Therefore, a review from a theoretical perspective must also be carried out subsequently. The same applies to the gastronomic orientation, since it is a new concept and there is a lack of academic literature about it, which implies the possibility of not having contemplated all the implications and components that correspond to it, both in the results extracted for analysis and in the theoretical aspect, and it is proposed for future research.

Table 5 Square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) and correlation matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Internal barriers	0.750						
2. External barriers	0.636	0.769					
3. Authenticity	−0.503	−0.356	0.710				
4. Gastronomic segmentation	−0.487	−0.458	0.694	0.689			
5. Gastronomic marketing	−0.471	−0.300	0.700	0.621	0.710		
6. Technology	−0.439	−0.432	0.553	0.517	0.374	0.773	
7. Financial performance	−0.467	−0.435	0.406	0.535	0.577	0.363	0.716

Bold values on the diagonal correspond to the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct and are used to assess discriminant validity following the Fornell–Larcker criterion

Table 6 Results of the structural model

Hypothesis	Standardized coefficients β	t-value	R ²	f ²	Q ²
Internal barriers—>gastronomic orientation	−0.478 ***	5.959	0.321	0.200	0.290
External barriers—>gastronomic orientation	−0.126	1.516		0.014	
Gastronomic orientation—>financial performance	0.558***	7.337	0.311	0.452	0.193
GoF (Goodness-of-fit criterion)	$\sqrt{AVExR^2} = 0.423$				

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Beyond these limitations, the results contribute to the debate on sustainability by demonstrating that gastronomic orientation not only supports the economic performance of hotels but also promotes social and environmental value through the preservation of local culinary heritage, responsible use of resources, and cultural engagement with destinations. Therefore, this study contributes novelty by conceptualising gastronomic orientation as a second-order construct that links barriers to innovation, sustainability, and performance, addressing the research gaps identified in the literature.

Appendix

Detailed descriptive statistics for internal and external barriers (Table 5) and gastronomic orientation (Table 6).

Annex

Code	Factors
	Internal barriers
IB1	Innovation costs are difficult to control
IB2	Payback period for investment in gastronomy too long
IB3	Problems in retaining employees
IB4	Lack of training of employees to innovate in gastronomy
IB5	Resistance of food and beverage employees to change
IB6	Resistance of food and beverage managers to changes
	External barriers
EB1	Insufficient government support for gastronomic innovation
EB2	Lack of information on how to innovate in gastronomy
EB3	Lack of external partners for support in gastronomic innovation
EB4	Economic turbulence
EB5	Lack of infrastructure support and specific external training for gastronomic development
	Authenticity
A1	We pretend that our clients have a gastronomic experience
A2	The hotel participates in gastronomic events and/or fairs

Code	Factors
A3	The hotel's A&B department offers exotic cuisine
A4	Local wines and products are available to our guests in our establishments
A5	We offer our guests the possibility to taste and savor our traditional and local dishes Gastronomic segmentation
GS1	We offer our guests a national and international gastronomy adapted to each segment of guests who come to the hotel
GS2	The hotel offers international gastronomy
GS3	The hotel supports a sporty gastronomy
GS4	The hotel has a deluxe pastry service
GS5	The hotel's A&B department offers a service that includes the use or specialization in superfoods (foods naturally rich in vitamins, phytonutrients and antioxidants) Gastronomic marketing
GM1	We try to promote our brand through gastronomy
GM2	The hotel promotes the island's gastronomy
GM3	Our clients choose the hotel in part for the gastronomy we offer Technology
T1	The hotel occasionally or permanently enables streetfood (food prepared in public places, or at street level)
T2	The hotel's A&B department has virtualized food services for its clients Financial performance
FP1	Profit margin
FP2	Return on assets
FP3	Hotel profitability
FP4	Operating margin
FP5	Extra revenue per room

Supplementary Information

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Q1_Supplementary Material 1_Data availability statement
Q1_Supplementary Material 2_Questionnaire_Gastronomic_Orientation

Author contributions

CRedit authorship contribution statement Ana V. Berdejo-Fariña: Writing—review and editing, Writing—original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. Tomás F. Espino-Rodríguez: Writing—review and editing, Writing—original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

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