

## DIMENSIONS OF CULINARY TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF INDIA

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**ABSTRACT. Purpose:** Delhi, Agra and Jaipur form the golden triangle of India. This tourist triangle is designed to up-sell in the market with lucrative offers. “Palace on Wheels” is a luxury train that runs on this route and is targeted for foreign clientele with its extravagance segment.

These three destinations have their significance due to the presence of historical monuments and UNESCO world heritage sites i.e., Qutub Minar, India Gate, Tajmahal, and many more. These places also offer an enormous variety of food and beverage with warm hospitality to relieve the tired tourists. The gourmet dishes of Golden Triangle are a must to try as it dates to the traditional cooking combined with a spicy aroma and soothing beverages.

The paper is structured to judge the culinary facet and warm hospitality of the Golden Triangle. The main objective is to find out the impact of traditional food in attracting travellers. It will also identify the food trail experiences in enhancing a niche segment of buyers for culinary tourism.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The research is exploratory and draws on food and beverage culinary experience delivery in the Golden Triangle. The exploratory research will judge the effectiveness of food tours and the warm hospitality extended to food tourists.

**Findings:** The research will examine how Culinary Tourism and Hospitality in the Golden Triangle of India can form a niche segment of food and beverage buyers. How it enhances the customer experience with hospitable conduct. The study will highlight the benefits of culinary tourism and hospitality.

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**Practical implications:** The paper recommends the concepts of food and beverage culinary tourism experience for creating a niche segment of buyers as well as attracting potential buyers with its approach. The research will synthesize the factors to improve customer interest in taking food and beverage tourism.

**Originality/value:** The research sought to address the advantages of curating food and beverage tourists in the golden triangle of India. It will also address how food and beverage tours can influence culinary tourism.

**Keywords:** Culinary tourism, hospitality, traditional food, secret recipes, niche segment.

**JEL Classification:** L83, Z31

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## Introduction

India, a melange of customs, history, and vivid geographies is a conscious journey by itself. Snow-capped Himalayan peaks to stretches of coastline, natural greenery to spiritual depths, and a kaleidoscope of cultural hues, all of these elements describe the amalgamation of culture with which India captures the hearts of every visitor. India's tourism sector is among the nation's biggest service industries. This sector's primary objectives are to grow and encourage tourism, sustain India's attractiveness as a tourist destination, and enhance and expand existing tourism items. The travel and tourism sector holds tactical significance in the Indian economy by making provision of several socio-economic benefits. Jobs, revenue, and foreign exchange, as well as the enhancement of other sectors i.e. agriculture, building, and arts and crafts.

The tourism industry in India is one of the country's most important service industries. The role of food in attracting tourists is becoming more apparent as India is promoted as a tourist destination. India's culinary tourism potential is immense. The Incredible Tiffin" project, launched by the Cuisine India Society in Delhi aims to raise global awareness of India's cuisine's richness and diversity. The Golden Triangle of India has only

been discussed on a mass scale in terms of heritage. Due to the wide variety of cuisines and dishes available, the Golden Triangle (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur) has a strong grip on culinary tourism. The idea of exploring the Golden Triangle as a culinary circuit could be beneficial to India's economy. Modern tourists are hungry to visit authentic destinations, and food is one of the best ways to learn about a place's culture and history.

## **Food Tourism**

The Incredible Tiffin campaign, launched in May 2012 aims to foster global awareness of the richness and diversity of India's cuisine (Duttgupta, 2013). Cuisine is an eternal part of tourism. The food cannot be neglected as whoever is travelling will be consuming the same. It provides an opportunity to promote our hidden culinary treasure as the cultural heritage of Delhi. Regional foods have tremendous health benefits and tourists are looking forward to trying new food. It gives scope for developing Culinary Tourism in Delhi, which will lead to economic development (Rathor & Parkash, 2019). According to UNWTO Report, Vol. 4 'Global Report on Food Tourism (2012) "Billions of tourists return to familiar destinations to enjoy tried and tested recipes or travel further in search of Nouvelle cuisine".

## **Literature Review**

Gastronomic tourism is a rapidly evolving field within the wider tourism, hospitality, marketing, regional development, and education fields. Gastronomic tourism is indeed very experiential, given its sensorial aspects and particularly concerning broader notions of taste (Kesimoglu, 2015). Three evolutionary phases of gastronomic tourism experiences have been documented (Richards, 2015). The first generation was based on the production of themed experiences for consumers. The second generation of gastronomic experiences was centred on co-creation, while in the third generation there is greater recognition of gastronomic experiences being situated in the development of communities and food (Richards, 2015; Pratt, Suntikul & Agyeiwaah, 2020). This implies a greater Integration of gastronomic tourism into local systems, sustainability, and regional development. Yet, there is much confusion for concepts such as food,

culinary and gastronomic tourism. As Hall (2020, p.285) suggests, “they are related but different”, with gastronomic and culinary tourism dealing more with high-end restaurants and haute-cuisine. Gastronomy focuses on elements of food, flavour, culture, history, and environment (Baldwin, 2018), while culinary examine the study of food preparation, execution, flavour development, and techniques. Where in both look at food land-derived techniques, culinary is more technical while gastronomy tends to be more philosophical in nature (Baldwin, 2018). Eating is a unique tourist activity that gratifies all the senses (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). The sensory appeal of local food has been topical in the tourism and hospitality literature (Kim & Given that local food has a diverse value, including local, ethnic, and national traditions, as well as history, customs, culture, and eating habits beyond gastronomic and dietary values (Choe & Kim, 2018; Hall et al., 2003), Tourism emphasize the experiential value and the holistic nature of food experiences and their ability to bond people through food (Boswijk, Thijssen, & Peelen, 2007). Beyond the experiential aspects, gastronomic tourism has socio-cultural implications on society, place, and identity (Kesimoglu, 2015). In particular, the nexus of religious requirements and gastronomic tourism experiences is an area of significant omission in the literature (Hall & Prayag, 2019). Eves, 2012). Gastronomic tourism has thus emerged as a significant component of consumers’ lived experiences, regardless of country of origin, shaping decision-making processes, dining choices, and holiday destinations (Dixit, 2020; Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018; Henderson, 2009; Robinson, Getz, & Dolinar, 2018). The modern traveller considers significantly diverse experiential attainments while visiting any destination.

Culinary tourism has a successful record of being a prominent product for tourists in various countries. According to Williams (2014) “The pursuit of memorable, authentic food & beverage experiences while travelling locally, regionally or globally.” The global food and beverage market is likely to grow to \$570 Billion by 2025. Food tourism is an important segment of contemporary tourism.

UNWTO ‘Global Report on Food Tourism (2012) emphasized that the destinations famous for food are revisited by billions of food tourists for enjoying tried and tested recipes. They prefer travelling to explore new dishes, spices, ingredients, which becomes a part of tourism experience”.

According to World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2012), Food tourism has gained increasing attention over the past years. With food so deeply connected to its origin, this focus allows destinations to market themselves as truly unique, appealing to those travellers who look to feel part of their destinations through flavours.

According to the World Food Travel Association (WFTA), food tourism is the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both far and near.

Reynolds (2004) asserts that food plays an essential role in travel experiences like other elements of tourism i.e., transportation, accommodation, activities, and attractions etc.

Food has been recognized as an effective promotional and positioning tool of a destination (Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Similarly, with increasing interest in local cuisine, more destinations are focusing on food as their core tourism product.

Tourists are attracted by local cuisine as they are inspired by the culture of the host, heritage and traditional practices of the local community. (Dixit, 2019) Eating is a unique tourist activity that gratifies all the senses. (Kivela, 2006)

Culinary tourism and experience catered with local food, cooking sessions, visit the local market, local farms and food exposition and food fests are eagerly purchased by buyers. (Dixit, 2019)

## **Materials and Methods**

The objective is to find out the impact of traditional food in attracting travellers. It will also identify the food trail experiences in enhancing a niche segment of buyers for culinary tourism.

The study aims to understand the significance of the Northern Golden Triangle of India, which includes Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur, as a gastronomic tourism circuit and how it can support the tourism industry.

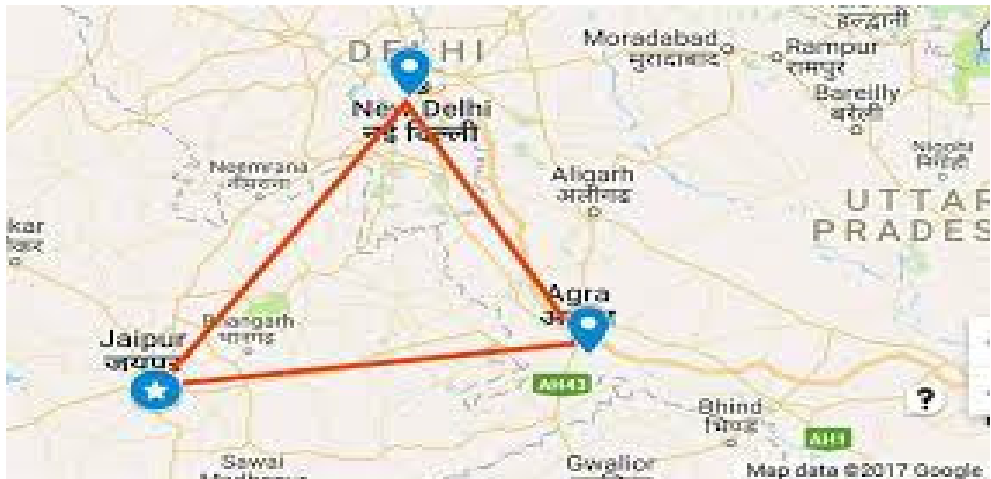
Exploratory research was carried out to judge the choices of customers. The study was also supported by a thorough review of government policies as well as data on visitor arrivals. Secondary data was obtained from chapters and research journals about food culture and food choices. Secondary information was also gathered from corporate and government studies, journals, books, and websites.

## Results and Discussion

### *Golden Triangle*

The Golden Triangle of India forms an important tourist circuit. There are two golden triangles in India, one is the Golden Triangle of North comprising of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur and the 2<sup>nd</sup> one is the Golden Triangle of South comprising of Bangalore, Mysore and Ooty in Karnataka. State-wise Chennai, Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram also form the golden triangle of Tamilnadu with heritage seeped cities and in Odisha, it consists of culturally rich cities Puri, Konark and Bhubaneshwar (Sengar, 2018).

The golden triangle of North covers the 3 important destinations to form the triangular shape on a map. These beautiful locations are frequently visited by domestic as well as international tourists, as the historical monuments located in these places are the epitome of our cultural heritage. These monuments i.e., the Taj Mahal in Agra are also recognized as UNESCO world heritage sites. North India Golden Triangle was rated as the world's 21st most popular tourist destination by a survey (Sengar, 2018).



**Image 1:** Golden Triangle representing Delhi, Agra and Jaipur (Clegg, 2018)

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### **Agra**

The Taj Mahal in Agra is a famous monument built by Shah Jahan is the most visited monument of India and is also known as the 7<sup>th</sup> wonder of the world. The Taj Mahal was visited by 5.6 million domestic visitors in the financial year 2019 and foreign tourist footfall of nearly 794 thousand in the fiscal year 2018. Tourists travelling to Agra are mesmerized by the range of foods available in Agra City (Statista, 2019).

- Petha is a visual illustration of the city's sweet tooth. Agra is a world-renowned destination known for "Agra Ke Pethe." It's a delicacy made of sugar syrup and white pumpkin.
- Dal moth is a tongue-teasing Agra savoury that can be eaten on its own or with petha. It is a dry food made with fried lentils (dal), nuts, and raisins that's spicy.
- Bedai is a breakfast dish. It's a spicy kachori with a puffy structure usually accompanied by a spicy aloo sabzi and Dahi. The dish's spicy and tangy flavour adds a joyful kick to the mornings. This breakfast combo is available everywhere in Agra, from restaurants to roadside stands.
- Kesar Jalebi – Jalebi with Rabri is one of the best desserts, and it is revered in every way on the streets. To balance out the nectarous Jalebi, it's served with Rabri, which is made by simmering milk until it thickens.
- Bhalla – Bhalla is a popular Agra street food that is served on a single plate. Bhalla is fried mashed potatoes with chickpea curry, chutney, dahi, and spices on the side.
- Milk Products – Agra is also known for its milk products. Thickened milk in Kulhad with malai on top is Agra's drink of choice. Lassi, Dahi, and Makhan are all prominent in this Uttar Pradesh area.

Agra is rich in historical landmarks, but it is a desirable destination due to the city's delicacies. It is a gourmet hotspot for its delectable Mughal-influenced food and sweets.

Food tourism in Agra consists of Breakfast, Dinner, Private Tour, Transport by private, air-conditioned car. All sightseeing with private local guides, Fuel surcharge, Bottles of mineral water during journeys with Personal care and attention.

## Delhi

Delhi is a hub of Culinary Tourism with a spectacular experience of an array of food items. Various food stalls located in Chandni Chowk are famous for different types of Parathas (Semi fried Indian bread), Lassi (Buttermilk) Kababs, Chole bhature, Falooda Ice cream, Samosa's Butter Chicken, Kachori, Chaat Jalebis, Kulfi and other savoury preparation. Delhi offers an amalgamation of Punjabi, Mughlai, Tibetan and Chinese cuisines.

The different types of food famous in the capital city – Delhi is

- Mughlai Cuisine - The Mughal influence can be seen in the food and eating habits of the Delhi region. Mughlai cuisines are best prepared in Delhi. Kebabs, one of the most well-known Mughlai cuisines are well-known among tourists.
- Butter Chicken – Butter Chicken is one of the country's most popular dishes. The butter, tomato, and chicken juices that were part of the sauce were mistakenly tossed with tandoori chicken pieces, resulting in the development of this amazing dish.
- Paranthas – Plain parathas to stuffed parathas with potatoes, cauliflower, eggs, radish etc. are all part of the traditional Indian breakfast. In Chandni Chowk, the Paranthas Wali Gali is packed with stalls selling the best parathas in the world.
- Street Food – The word "chaat" is used to describe street foods. Delhi offers a wide range of street foods, and Chandni Chowk is regarded as Delhi's "Street Food Capital." Chaats are very common in Old Delhi's narrow streets. Chhole Bhatura, Dahi Papdi Chaat, Gol Gappa, Aloo Tikkis, and Samosas are the top five favourite street foods in Delhi.

Delhi was the capital of the Mughal Emperor, that's why it is known as the birthplace of Mughal cuisine. Delhi cuisine has an aroma of spices that is balanced with exotic spices i.e Nutmeg, Mace and Saffron. Delhi offers a delectable taste of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. Paneer, Mushroom and Corn are the main dishes, Aura of Delhi is always energizing and is a source of unending excitement. It is said Delhi never sleeps and Delhiites are considered to be foodies.



## Jaipur

Jaipur is also known as a Pink City as it was painted pink to welcome Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. Heritage Walking Tour of Jaipur City offers the local experience of food and is inclusive of Bottled water, Lunch/ Dinner, Food tasting, Light refreshments and snacks with a Professional driver/guide and Transport by private vehicle. At times Cooking classes are also extended in Jaipur with all Transport & Meals. Tourists are taken for Private Market Tour & Vegetarian Cooking Class & Meal in a Local Jaipur Home. Some of the food tours also extend Private Interactive Online Cooking Classes with a Local Host in Jaipur.

Traditional, authentic food items which are a part of the Rajasthani Cuisine in Jaipur:

- Dal Baati Churma – While Dal, Baati, and Churma are three distinct dishes, they are often served together. This combination creates Rajasthan's most popular dish, This is known as Rajasthan's signature dish, is available in Jaipur for a very reasonable price.
- Pyaz Ki Kachori – Pyaaz Ki Kachori is a delicious combination of crispness, crunch, and spice. In Jaipur, this is the best breakfast choice.
- Gatte Ki Sabzi – Gatte ki sabzi is made up of Gattas (gram flour pieces) that are mixed into a typical yogurt curry. Cooked in pure ghee, this dish has a delicious flavour.
- Kalakand – "Kalakand is a traditional Rajasthani dessert made with reduced milk and sugar and topped with silver leaf."
- Mirchi Bada –, This chilli cutlet, is a spicy Rajasthani snack. made with green chillies filled with potatoes and a besan or gram flour coating on top. served with tamarind chutney.
- Ghewar –This popular Rajasthani sweet is associated with the Teej Festival. It's a cake-like confection made of all-purpose flour soaked in sugar syrup.
- Mawa Kachori This delicious dessert is Jaipur's most popular food. This Mawa Kachori exemplifies Rajasthan's opulence and royalty. It's a rounded pastry packed with Mawa along with lots of nuts that makes a fantastic holiday sweet dish.
- Chokhani Kheer – This traditional dessert is typically prepared from Milk to add sweetness to commemorate a happy occasion.

## **Observations**

In our exploratory study on North India Golden Triangle, it was discovered that the tourists have a positive perception of the city's cuisine. Delhi offers tasty and culturally diverse cuisine. The majority of tourists in Delhi are Food Neophiliacs or people who are open to trying new foods, dishes, or cuisines while on vacation. They have a favourable impression of Delhi's cuisine, and tourists can visit Delhi especially for culinary tourism. A country's cuisine can also serve as a platform for its ethnic or national identity on a larger scale. Dal Bati Churma from Jaipur and Agra's popular sweet Petha are excellent representations of Indian culture and history. Jaipur's Ghewar or Rajasthani thali can act as a medium to experience the culture of Jaipur and gain insights into the various culinary traditions and authentic food. Similarly, the Mughlai cuisine in Agra depicts the vast history of this city and acts as an additional attraction for tourists. The Golden Triangle of India (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur) has to date only been explored in terms of heritage on a mass scale. The three cities have a stronghold on culinary tourism due to their vast varieties of cuisines and dishes. All three cities have a strong potential to not only attract foreign tourists but also receive an increased domestic tourist footfall. The concept of the Golden Triangle being explored as a culinary circuit is new but can yield satisfactory economic benefits to India. Proper safety measures, which follow the COVID-19 protocol need to be implemented to enhance the promotion of food tourism through the Delhi-Agra-Jaipur circuit with accurate strategies for marketing this niche in place.

## **Conclusion**

Food holds a greater significance in the tourism industry. Culinary tourism is a rising niche undertaken by several foreign tourists who visit India as well as domestic tourists travelling within the country. The Golden Triangle is an ideal circuit to introduce India's culture and historical significance to tourists. Additionally, attaching the food element to this circuit can result in economic benefits for the country and also would place India as an ideal tourism destination in the global tourism market. Every year the golden triangle receives a huge number of international

as well as domestic tourists, so developing it as a culinary circuit along with the existing cultural and heritage tourism aspects can work wonders for not only the three cities but will also benefit the people employed throughout the journey. Modern tourists have a hunger for exploring authentic destinations and receive in-depth knowledge of the city's culture, and food is one of the best options to explore the culture, traditions, and history of a destination.

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