

Do tourists' gastronomic experiences differ within the same geographical region? A comparative study of two Mediterranean destinations Turkey and Spain

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to discover the common and differentiating food factors that affect tourists' gastronomy satisfaction by comparing tourists' gastronomic experiences at two culinary destinations in the Mediterranean region.

Design/methodology/approach – A total of 396 usable questionnaires were collected using a convenience sampling method from Cordoba (Spain) and Hatay (Turkey). The data were analysed through descriptive and multivariate analysis methods, including frequency analysis, multiple independent samples *t*-tests, χ^2 analysis and multiple regression analyses.

Findings – The results indicate that both of the destinations primarily attract existential type gastronomic tourists; however, they also attract recreational and diversionary types of tourist, particularly in Cordoba. From the perspective of Mediterranean cuisine, food quality and traditional gastronomy were determined to be common crucial factors for tourists' food consumption satisfaction, which outweighs the effects of price, facilities and atmosphere. In addition, service and hospitality and innovation and new tastes in the dishes are the significant factors; however, factors vary according to the destination.

Originality/value – This study makes a significant contribution to the field food tourism by identifying common significant and insignificant and differentiating food factors that affect tourists' gastronomic satisfaction in culinary destinations within the same geographical region. The results have the potential to provide a broader perspective for destination marketers and culinary establishments.

Keywords Gastronomy, Food consumption in tourism, Gastronomic satisfaction, Mediterranean cuisine, Typology of gastronomy tourists

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Food has assumed a key role in tourists' decision making, satisfaction and behavioural intentions, and it has also been central in promotional destination strategies and for the organisations that make up the tourism industry such as tour operators, travel agents and airlines (Rimington and Yüksel, 1998, p. 40; Kivela and Crotts, 2006, pp. 369-370; Henderson, 2009, p. 317; Chang *et al.*, 2011, p. 307). Food can help destinations to develop a distinguishing gastronomic identity by branding their cuisine with a nationality (e.g. Chinese, French, Italian, Turkish, and Mexican) (Okumus *et al.*, 2007, p. 253; Henderson, 2009, p. 321)

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and can provide coherent alternatives for destinations that lack natural and historical resources. For example, a destination with shortages of sea, sun and sand, could be a leading tourism destination for its vineyards and wines (Kivela and Crotts, 2006, p. 359). In addition to these factors, the economic benefits that can be obtained from tourists' food consumption can substantially influence the economic condition and competitiveness of the tourism business and destinations (Henderson, 2009, p. 321; Mak *et al.*, 2012, p. 929; Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015, p. 2405). These wide-ranging effects of food explain why gastronomy has become the major focal point of tourism.

Within the hospitality and tourism context, gastronomy studies are seen as a new field of study (Kivela and Crotts, 2006, p. 355; Kim *et al.*, 2009, p. 423), particularly in the field of tourists' gastronomic experiences, studies are still in their infancy (Cohen and Avieli, 2004, p. 756; Correia *et al.*, 2008, p. 164; Henderson, 2009, p. 317; Kim *et al.*, 2009, p. 423; Kivela and Crotts, 2009, p. 162; Mak *et al.*, 2012, p. 928). The factors that affect tourists' gastronomy satisfaction are probably more complex than those that are associated with food consumption in home settings, and tourists are willing to take greater risks than in their ordinary life due to a different set of motivations (novel and strange dishes and/or beverages) in a new environment (Cohen and Avieli, 2004, p. 760; Mak, *et al.*, 2012, p. 929). Hence, understanding how tourists view the most important factors that shape their gastronomy experience is of paramount importance for the tourism industry and destination marketers (Rimington and Yüksel, 1998, p. 42; Harrington, 2005, p. 130; Correia *et al.*, 2008, p. 165; Chang *et al.*, 2011, p. 307). In the field studies that have been conducted on the factors that affect tourist food consumption, it seems that most of them have selected a single destination as a study sample (Rimington and Yüksel, 1998; Niell *et al.*, 2000; Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Correia *et al.*, 2008; Chang *et al.*, 2011; Sanchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán, 2012; Chi *et al.*, 2013; Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2014; Peštek and Činžarević, 2014). These studies address tourists' gastronomic experiences from a single-destination perspective and compare visitors' motivation and satisfaction. There is no doubt that these efforts have been significant; however, we wish to study common significant, insignificant and differentiating food factors by considering two gastronomic destinations that share similar cultural and gastronomic values (Chang *et al.*, 2010, p. 994). Phenomenological classifications of factors affecting gastronomic food satisfaction include many variables under different factors (Mak *et al.*, 2012, Kim *et al.*, 2009; Chang *et al.*, 2011); however, we aimed to discover which factors are the dominant and outweigh the others when the issue is gastronomy satisfaction in the destinations which share the similar cuisine, culture and history. Hence, broader perspective to the mutual and differentiating factors affecting gastronomy satisfaction could be enhanced.

Hatay/Turkey, and Cordoba/Spain, which are located in the Mediterranean region, share great similarities in terms of gastronomic, historical, cultural and religious backgrounds. Both of them are known for combined cuisines that include the flavours of Arabia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean, which feature food products such as olive oil, fish, cheese, stuffed vegetables and vegetarian appetisers. We believe that it would be helpful to explore the gastronomic characteristics and experiences of tourists who share the same culture (Chang *et al.*, 2010, p. 994). An increasing number of destination marketing organisations, regardless of their fame and status within the culinary culture, have begun to consider gastronomy tourism as part of an overall marketing strategy (Ignatov and Smith, 2006, p. 235). Hence, providing a broader perspective of a geographical region could be useful in the planning of the gastronomy tourism activities that are sponsored by private and public enterprises (Correia *et al.*, 2008, p. 165).

2. Theoretical background and literature review

2.1 Food consumption in tourism

The gastronomy and tourism literature can be divided into four broad perspectives: (a) food as a tourist product and/or attraction; (b) food consumption behaviour and/or

patterns; (c) tourists' dining experiences (service quality, satisfaction, and restaurant attributes) and (d) tourists' special interest in various food and beverages and related events and/or activities in destinations such as food tourism, wine tourism, and food events (Mak *et al.*, 2012, p. 176). Studies that are related to subject (c) above, which is the focus of this study, examine how tourists evaluate the food and gastronomy aspects in their overall destination experience and the factors that affect their satisfaction (Mak *et al.*, 2012, p. 176). When the entirety of the literature on tourist food experiences is taken into account, it can be stated that the theoretical framework of tourists' food consumption attitudes and behaviour is threefold: the tourist's characteristics, the food in the destination and the destination environment (Mak *et al.*, 2012, p. 930). Mak *et al.* (2012) developed a theoretical model that is called "the potential factors that affect food consumption in tourism" by adapting Randall and Sanjur's (1981) "a theoretical model for the study of food preferences". This theoretical background provides a clear and logical framework with its wide range of key factor categories such as tourist-related factors (e.g. demographic, motivational, physiological, and socio-cultural and gastronomic typology factors); food-related factors (e.g. sensory attributes, food content, cuisine type, price and quality) and destination-driven factors (gastronomic image and/or identity, service encounter, and service scape).

On the basis of Cohen's (1972) typology of tourist roles, which states that the tourist travels in a quest for novelty and strangeness, Hjalager (2003) and Cohen and Avieli (2004) have put forth a typology of gastronomy tourist roles. Tourist gastronomy typologies use Fischler's (1988) conceptualisation of "neophobic" and "neophylic", which are developed within the context of biology. While "food neophobia" is identified as the reluctance to experience novel foods and beverages, "food neophilic" describes a high inclination to search for new, strange, unfamiliar and even dangerous foods (Cohen and Avieli, 2004, p. 759). Varieties in the tourist typologies occur as a result a predominance of tourists' neophobic as opposed to neophylic tendencies. Gastronomy tourist typologies can be classified into four groups, which are "recreational tourists" (more conservative types who tend not to experiment with new and different tastes), "existential tourists" (who spend most of their time during their travels on culinary experiences, seeking new trends in gastronomy), "diversionary tourists" (who show little or no interest in putting much effort into their food and prefer to play it safe, sticking to familiar and formulaic menus and chain restaurants) and "experimental tourists" (whose lifestyle is centred around food; for them, eating is not about filling their stomachs but is rather about enhancing their knowledge of a particular local or regional cuisine of the destinations they visit) (Hjalager, 2003; Cohen and Avieli, 2004). According to Hjalager's (2003) and Cohen and Avieli's (2004) phenomenological model, recreational and diversionary gastronomy tourists generally refrain from experiencing strange and unknown foods and beverages, whereas existential and experimental gastronomy tourists seek to try strange and unknown foodstuffs and dishes with the high intention of obtaining gastronomic experiences (Kivela and Crotts, 2009, pp. 182-183; Cohen and Avieli, 2004, p. 773; Chang *et al.*, 2011, p. 308).

According to Fields (2002), motivations of food and beverage consumption can be categorised into four dimensions, which are "physical", "interpersonal", "cultural" and "status and prestige". Kim *et al.* (2009) found that food experiences can be divided into three categories, which are motivational factors, demographic-related factors and psychological factors with regard to food neophilia and food neophobia. Chang *et al.* (2011) developed a broader gastronomic motivation model that is comprised of "tourists' own food culture", "the contextual factor of the dining experience", "the variety and diversity of food", "perception of the destination", "service encounter" and "tour guide performance". Chang *et al.*'s (2011) model of gastronomic motivation underscores the importance of tourist perceptions of gastronomic availability, cuisine culture, food price and quality.

More generally, Quan and Wang (2004) distinguished gastronomic motivations as “peak touristic experience” and “supporting consumer experience”. In other words, this approach accentuates the concepts of the contrasts and extensions in interpreting food consumption in tourism. While a peak touristic experience is a novelty in contrast to daily experience, supporting the consumer experience extends the degree of familiarity.

2.2 Previous studies on the factors that affect gastronomy satisfaction and overall satisfaction

Nield *et al.* (2000) conducted a study on 341 domestic and international tourists visiting Romania and explored the satisfaction perception regarding dining experiences and the factors that affect overall satisfaction. The authors revealed that five of the nine factors were found to be significant in their affecting of the tourists’ overall satisfaction and “quality of the food” ($\beta = 0.248, p \leq 0.01$) and “value for the money” ($\beta = 0.211, p \leq 0.01$) were the leading factors. Kivela and Crotts (2006) investigated the influence of the gastronomy experience on tourists’ overall destination experience through data that were gathered from 1,105 international tourists who visited Hong Kong. The authors revealed that the tourists’ gastronomy motivation ranked number three by 20.8 per cent. When the gastronomy factors that affect a destination’s gastronomy image were investigated, “expectation of gastronomy” ($\beta = 0.520$), “gastronomy as the reason for travel” ($\beta = 0.194$) and “gastronomy experience at the destination” ($\beta = 0.158$) were the prominent factors. Furthermore, the perception of “culture and gastronomy” was the second most significant factor to affect the tourists’ overall experience quality ($\beta = 0.235$) after “expectation of gastronomy” ($\beta = 0.602$).

Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015) conducted a study that aimed to compare tourists’ gastronomy experiences in Cordoba and Ljubljana. The findings revealed that the tourists’ gastronomy motivations took second or third place. The tourists in both destinations were only partially willing to assume extra cost for local food and beverages. The authors revealed that while the perception of “traditional gastronomy”, “service and hospitality”, “quality of dishes”, “atmosphere establishments” and “innovative dishes” significantly differed for the Cordoba and Ljubljana samples ($p \leq 0.01; 0.05$), the perception of “prices” and “establishment” were not statistically different. Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) collected data from 158 tourists who attended the MATKA 2014 travel convention in Finland. The authors reported that the food experience motivation was the secondary or third motivation of the visitors regardless of age difference. According to the descriptive statistics, the most important contributors for visitors’ attendance were found to be “slow dining”, “restaurant atmosphere”, “authenticity of food”, “restaurant surroundings” and “new food experiences,” respectively.

Peštek and Činjurević (2014) conducted a study of 402 foreign tourists who visited the city of Sarajevo. Their findings reveal that the image of local cuisine, which included “food quality and price” ($\beta = 0.499$), “affective image of food” ($\beta = 0.270$) and “food uniqueness and cultural heritage” ($\beta = 0.128$), had a significant effect on tourist satisfaction. In addition, the authors compared the local cuisine perception of 402 Western and Eastern European tourists. “Food quality and price” and “affective image of food” were found to be significantly different ($p \leq 0.000$). In spite of these findings, Correia *et al.*’s (2008) research on 377 international tourists who visited Portugal revealed that the tourists’ overall satisfaction was statistically influenced by the elements of food ($\beta = 0.814, p \leq 0.01$) and atmosphere ($\beta = 0.585, p \leq 0.01$) but not price. Chi *et al.*’s (2013) study, which was based on an SEM analysis, revealed that food image, which was composed of “food distinctiveness and accessibility”, “food diversity and enjoyment” and “food quality and presentation”, had a significant impact on both food satisfaction ($\beta = 0.88, p \leq 0.05$) and culinary quality perception ($\beta = 0.47, p \leq 0.05$).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection instrument

This study employed an exploratory research design using a periodic sample from two gastronomic destinations. To collect the data, an 18-item self-administered questionnaire that included sections on tourists' demographic profiles, travel motivations, gastronomic attitudes and behaviours and gastronomic satisfaction that was developed by Sanchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán (2012) was applied. The respondents were asked to answer questions based on a five-point Likert type scale for the sections on travel motivations, gastronomic attitudes and behaviours and gastronomic satisfaction.

3.2 Population and sampling

The target population of this study was tourists who were travelling in Cordoba and Hatay at the time of the survey. The survey was administered on a continual basis over a one-month period for the Cordoba sample and over a three-month period for the Hatay sample. Through a convenience sampling method, 192 usable surveys were collected by using a one-on-one approach in Spring 2014[1] in Cordoba. Similar sampling and data collection methods were applied in Hatay, and 204 usable surveys were acquired in 2015. In Cordoba, Spain, the researchers collected data from Spanish-speaking national tourists (54.9 per cent) and non-Spanish speaking foreign tourists (46.1 per cent) from ten restaurant establishments. However, solely national tourists who were non-residents of Hatay City were included into the Hatay data set due to a lack of international tourists given the security threats that stemmed from the ongoing war and the ISIL terrorist organisation. In fact, similar research protocols have been applied by previous cross-cultural studies that combined national tourists with foreign tourists and compared tourists' gastronomic perceptions (Nield *et al.*, 2000; Chang *et al.*, 2010; Sanchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán, 2012; Peštek and Činjurević, 2014; Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015). Despite the above limitations, the perceptions of the national and foreign tourists of Cordoba were statistically compared through an "independent two sample *t*-test". As a result, no statistically significant differences were reported between the perceptions of the national and foreign tourists on reason for visit ($p \geq 0.05$, *t*-values for 11 items among: 0.22/-1.93), gastronomy image of destination ($p \geq 0.05$, *t*-value for one item: 1.21), the factors that affect gastronomy satisfaction ($p \geq 0.05$, *t*-values for seven items among: -0.21/1.40), overall gastronomy satisfaction ($p \geq 0.05$, *t*-value for one item: 1.21) and overall destination satisfaction ($p \geq 0.05$, *t*-value for 1 item: 0.14).

3.3 Research questions

The study's goals are formulated in the following questions:

- RQ1. What are the socio-demographic and gastronomic characteristics of the tourists who visit Cordoba and Hatay?
- RQ2. How can the motivations that led the tourists to choose the destinations be ranked?
- RQ3. What are tourists' attitudes towards the local gastronomy of Cordoba and Hatay?
- RQ4. What are the tourists' evaluations of the key factors that affect their gastronomy satisfaction?
- RQ5. What are the tourists' opinion of the importance of gastronomy for the destination's image and satisfaction?
- RQ6. What are the common significant and insignificant gastronomic factors that are related to the tourists' gastronomy satisfaction?

3.4 Validity of the instrument

Cross-cultural and cross-group studies that aim to compare different groups should be concerned with testing for measurement invariance (equivalence) and whether the items that are used in the instruments produce the same results for members of different groups (Little, 1997, p. 54; Cheung and Rensvold, 2002, p. 233). Measurement invariance refers to the extent to which the content of the item has been perceived and interpreted in the same direction across different groups (Byrne and Watkins, 2003, p. 156; Chen *et al.*, 2005, p. 472). To examine the measurement invariance, a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis as a part of SEM (MGCFA) was applied (Little, 1997, p. 54; Cheung and Rensvold, 2002, pp. 234-235). As a result of a four-step hierarchical analysis procedure, it was revealed that the key gastronomic factors have both configural invariance ($\chi^2 = 88.340$, $df = 26$, CFI = 0.935, GFI = 0.932, RMSEA = 0.10, IFI = 0.936, RMR = 0.04, SRMR = 0.07) and metric invariance ($\chi^2 = 89.950$, $df = 31$, CFI = 0.935, GFI = 0.930, RMSEA = 0.09, IFI = 0.935, RMR = 0.04, SRMR = 0.07). The statistics of configural and metric invariance show that the participants who belonged to the Hatay and Cordoba samples conceptualise the constructs similarly, and the compared groups have the same number of factors (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998, p. 78; Cheung and Rensvold, 2002, p. 234).

In addition to measurement invariance, the issue of “common method bias (CMB)” has been taken into consideration. CMB occurs when responses systematically vary because of the use of a common scaling approach on measures that are derived from a single data source (Fuller *et al.*, 2016, p. 3192). It can be asserted that the compared groups have a similar understanding of gastronomy because both destinations are famous gastronomic cities, the participants were familiar with the Likert-type of scaling format in both destinations and the data were collected by same data collection methods in both destinations. Hence, no procedural remedies were needed (Byrne and Watkins, 2003, pp. 155-156; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012, pp. 548-552). In addition to the procedural remedies, the measurement method was checked with regard to whether it requires statistical remediation. While there is no single best method for overcoming the issue of CMB because each technique has its own advantages and disadvantages, Harman’s one-factor test is considered to be an accepted technique to check for common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003, p. 889; Fuller *et al.*, 2016, p. 3193). According to Harman’s one-factor test, if only one factor accounts for the majority of the explained variance (50 per cent), it could be a sign of common method variance (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012, p. 560). As a result of exploratory factor analysis, when the data set is enforced to be composed of a single factor, the combined data set explains 43.35 per cent, the Hatay data set explains 47.25 per cent, and the Cordoba data set explains 34.46 per cent of the variances. A rotated factor analysis produced an explained variance of over 60 per cent for all three data sets. Hence, the CMB in the measurement tool is not significant.

4. Findings

Sociological and trip-related characteristics of the participants indicate that the two samples are similar except for income status and travel companions. Most of the visitors in both destinations were 39 years of age or under, and they are university graduates who were guided by the Internet or the advice of friends and/or family who have previously visited the region. However, the Cordoba tourists have a significantly higher monthly income, and, compared to the individuals who visited Hatay, they travel in smaller groups (Table I).

Table II shows the reasons why tourists visit Cordoba and Hatay. “Food and beverage” is the secondary motivation for Cordoba tourists, while this factor is the third for the Hatay tourists. The findings indicate that the only travel motivation factor without a significant difference between the samples was “the experience of cultural heritage”.

Variable	Cordoba/Spain		Hatay/Turkey	
<i>Gender</i>	<i>n</i> (190)	%	<i>n</i> (204)	%
Male	95	50.0	125	61.3
Female	95	50.0	79	38.7
<i>Age</i>	<i>n</i> (191)	%	<i>n</i> (204)	%
Under 30	71	37.2	115	56.4
30-39 years	37	19.4	63	30.9
40-49 years	30	15.7	16	7.8
50-60 years	32	16.7	7	3.4
Over 60	21	11.0	3	1.5
<i>Educational background</i>	<i>n</i> (183)	%	<i>n</i> (204)	%
Elementary/primary school	15	8.2	14	6.9
Secondary school or vocational education	47	25.7	37	18.1
Higher diploma/university degree	92	50.3	101	49.5
PhD/master	29	15.8	52	25.5
<i>Net monthly income</i>	<i>n</i> (143)	%	<i>n</i> (204)	%
< 500 euros	37	25.9	46	22.5
501-1,000 euros	24	16.8	77	37.7
1,001-1,500 euros	20	14.0	48	23.5
1,501 and more	62	43.4	33	16.2
<i>Travelling companions</i>	<i>n</i> (191)	%	<i>n</i> (204)	%
Alone	24	12.6	24	11.8
With my partner	68	35.6	27	13.2
With business colleagues	7	3.7	11	5.4
With my family	38	19.9	74	36.3
With friends	53	27.7	68	33.3
Others	1	0.5	–	–
<i>Information sources used (multiple answers available)</i>	<i>n</i> (332)	%	<i>n</i> (362)	%
Brochures	35	10.5	43	11.9
Media advertising	11	3.3	19	5.2
Guidebooks	42	12.7	21	5.8
The internet	94	28.3	89	24.6
From relatives and friends	59	17.8	97	26.8
Tourism office	29	8.7	28	7.7
Tourism fair	5	1.5	16	4.4
No need for information	35	10.5	48	13.3
Others	22	6.6	1	0.3
<i>Number of visit to destination</i>	<i>n</i> (191)	%	<i>n</i> (204)	%
First visit	102	53.4	95	46.6
2-3 times	59	30.9	75	36.7
Four times or more	30	15.7	34	16.7

Table I.
Socio and
tripo-gastronomic
profiles of the
participants

Table III presents the gastronomic attitudes and behaviours of the tourists in their respective destinations, and it highlights a statistically significant difference for each variable between the destinations ($p \leq 0.001$). The numbers show that approximately 74 per cent of the tourists to both destinations tend to eat outside of their hotel regularly or two to three times per week; however, the tourists who visited Hatay have a much stronger intention to try local dishes. When the level of willingness to pay extra for local dishes is taken into account, 22.2 per cent of the Cordoba tourists had no intention of incurring extra costs for this privilege; however, this figure falls to 10.3 per cent for the tourists visited Hatay. In addition, a significant number of the tourists who visited Hatay expressed a willingness to consume food and beverages even if these items were 50 per cent more expensive than the regular price.

Table IV provides the results of a comparison of the tourists' criteria for gastronomic experiences during their travels. These criteria are seen as the basic determinants in the

Table II. Comparison of the reasons for visiting Cordoba and Hatay

Reason	Cordoba		Hatay		t-test (p-value)
	Mean ^a	SD	Mean ^a	SD	
Cultural heritage	4.19 (1)	1.136	4.35 (1)	0.744	-1.640 (p: 0.102)
Eating and drinking	3.82 (2)	1.240	4.10 (3)	1.168	-2.391 (p: 0.017)
Fun and entertainment	3.44 (3)	1.416	4.02 (5)	0.965	-5.183 (p < 0.001)
Relaxing	3.40 (4)	1.576	4.21 (2)	1.067	-6.477 (p < 0.001)
See relatives and friends	3.07 (5)	1.408	3.67 (6)	1.228	-4.184 (p < 0.001)
Wellness	2.52 (6)	1.520	4.05 (4)	1.063	-11.821 (p < 0.001)
Education	2.33 (7)	1.211	3.08 (9)	1.443	-4.962 (p < 0.001)
Business or work	1.92 (8)	1.363	2.81 (11)	1.364	-6.267 (p < 0.001)
Sunbathing	1.84 (9)	1.200	3.26 (8)	1.402	-10.216 (p < 0.001)
Sports	1.75 (10)	1.280	3.41 (7)	1.287	-12.891 (p < 0.001)
Medical treatment	1.45 (11)	1.033	3.00 (10)	1.411	-12.302 (p < 0.001)

Note: ^aResponse categories: 1 – not at all important; 5 – very important

Variable	Cordoba/Spain		Hatay/Turkey		χ^2 ; (df); p-value
	n	%	n	%	
<i>Frequency of eating out of restaurants in the destination</i>	n (184)	%	n (204)	%	
Never eat outside the hotel	26	14.1	19	9.3	33.524; (3); p < 0.001
Once a week	22	12.0	35	17.2	
2-3 times a week	44	23.9	97	47.5	
Regularly	92	50.0	53	26.0	
<i>Has tried local food and drink</i>	n (191)	%	n (204)	%	
Yes	131	68.6	188	92.2	33.768; (1); p < 0.001
No	60	31.4	16	7.8	
<i>Pay extra for typical food or wine</i>	n (186)	%	n (204)	%	
No	42	22.6	21	10.3	28.618; (8); p < 0.001
Yes, 10%	22	11.8	29	14.2	
Yes, 20%	23	12.4	32	15.7	
Yes, 30%	34	18.3	26	12.7	
Yes, 40%	19	10.2	20	9.8	
Yes, 50%	15	8.1	40	19.6	
Yes, 60%	16	8.6	9	4.4	
Yes, 70%	7	3.8	19	9.3	
Yes, more than 70%	8	4.3	8	3.9	

Table III. Participants' attitudes towards local gastronomy

Variables	Cordoba		Hatay		t-test (p-value)
	Mean ^a	SD	Mean ^a	SD	
Traditional gastronomy	4.27	0.827	4.67 (1)	0.616	-5.026 (p < 0.001)
Service and hospitality	4.20	0.908	4.50 (3)	0.851	-3.401 (p: 0.001)
Quality of dishes	4.11	0.787	4.55 (2)	0.697	-5.767 (p < 0.001)
Atmosphere in the establishments	4.03	0.879	3.88 (6)	0.936	1.534 (p: 0.108)
Facilities	3.63	0.959	3.97 (5)	0.859	-3.671 (p < 0.001)
Prices	3.60	0.850	3.87 (7)	0.906	-3.110 (p: 0.002)
Innovation and new tastes in the dishes	2.98	1.313	4.46 (4)	0.808	-11.640 (p < 0.001)

Notes: ^aResponse categories: 1 – very bad; 5 – very good

Table IV. Comparison of the factors effecting gastronomy experience

participants' perceptions. The data reveal that the tourists in Hatay have a more positive mind-set than the Cordoba tourists. For the tourists who visited both destinations, "traditional flavours", "the quality of the food" and "service and hospitality" were established as the most important criteria. The biggest difference between the two samples appeared in "innovation and new flavours in the dishes". Whilst the tourists in Hatay specified that novelty in the food was paramount among their favourite elements, the tourists who were surveyed in Cordoba stated the opposite, revealing that this particular element was their lowest priority. In contrast, the criterion that was most commonly cited by both the Cordoba and the Hatay tourists was the "atmosphere in the establishments" ($p \geq 0.05$). Cordoba also had relatively higher prices as perceived by the participants.

According to the results in Table V, the Hatay tourists felt that the city's culinary image was quite important, and they were highly satisfied with their gastronomic experiences. However, the Cordoba tourists gave statistically significant lower scores to these variables. This more positive perception of the visitors in Hatay could be derived from the more homogenous structure (i.e. only domestic tourists) of the sample compared to Cordoba sample. This uniform sample is most likely due to the tourists' familiarity with the destination's cuisine, and thus they have a clearer perception of this gastronomy, which can be expected to lead to more satisfaction. However, there is no significant difference between the Cordoba and Hatay samples with regard to how the tourists appear to be quite satisfied and happy with their destination choice even though these two culturally rich destinations provide differing levels of gastronomic variety and experiences.

Table VI reveals the results of the multi-linear regression analysis with the stepwise analyse technique. As a result, four out of the seven variables significantly accounted for the models ($F_3; 200 = 64.199; p < 0.001; F_3; 114 = 19.390; p < 0.001$). The significant attributes for the Hatay tourists' gastronomy satisfaction are "quality of dishes", "innovation in the dishes" and "traditional gastronomy". These three variables explain 48.3 per cent of the total variance in the participants' food satisfaction. According to same regression procedure, three significant variables "quality of dishes", "service and hospitality" and "traditional gastronomy" have appeared as significant variables on the gastronomy satisfaction of the Cordoba tourists. These three variables account for 32 per cent of the total variance. The tourists who visited Cordoba and Hatay rate "facilities", "atmosphere" and "price" as insignificant variables in gastronomic satisfaction, whereas "quality of dishes" and "traditional gastronomy" are significant variables that are common to both cities that heavily influence the tourists' gastronomic satisfaction.

As a key finding, while "innovation and new tastes in the dishes" is a significant variable for the Hatay tourists, this criterion was insignificant for the gastronomic satisfaction of the Cordoba tourists. Similarly, "service and hospitality" attribute showed significant impact on the Cordoba tourists' gastronomy satisfaction; however, this variable was not found to be a significant catalyst for the Hatay tourists. When the small, local and historical structure of Hatay is taken into consideration, it could be regarded as expected that the tourists might show little or no enthusiasm about levels of either service or hospitality because they feel that the "tastes of the dishes" are of paramount importance.

Table V.
The contrast between gastronomy image, gastronomy satisfaction and travel satisfaction

Variables	Cordoba		Hatay		t-test (p-value)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
*Gastronomy is important for destination tourism image	4.01	0.891	4.45	0.757	-5.308 ($p < 0.001$)
Ω Gastronomy satisfaction	3.96	0.843	4.47	0.661	-6.628 ($p < 0.001$)
Ω Travel satisfaction	4.39	0.662	4.35	0.630	0.530 ($p: 0.597$)

Notes: *Response categories: 1 – strongly disagree; 5 – strongly agree; Ω response categories: 1 – not satisfied; 5 – very satisfied

Table VI. Stepwise regression analysis results for the criteria affecting participants' gastronomy satisfaction

Gastronomy experience criteria	Unstd. coefficients		Cordoba Std. coefficients			Unstd. coefficients		Hatay Std. coefficients		
	β	SE	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	β	SE	β	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	1.431	0.362		3.956	0.000	0.680	0.285		2.389	0.018
Quality of dishes	0.164	0.078	0.186	2.114	0.037	0.448	0.059	0.452	7.625	0.000
Prices										
Facilities										
Atmosphere										
Innovation and new tastes in the dishes						0.196	0.051	0.232	3.869	0.000
Service and Hospitality	0.194	0.068	0.238	2.870	0.005					
Traditional gastronomy	0.282	0.075	0.329	3.749	0.000	0.187	0.069	0.174	2.718	0.007
ANOVA	$F_{3, 114}: 19.390; p < 0.001$					$F_{3, 200}: 64.199; p < 0.001$				
Tolerance Min.	0.754					0.621				
VIF Max.	1.327					1.609				
Condition Index Max.	16.029					22.496				
<i>R</i>	0.581					0.700				
Adjusted R^2	0.320					0.483				
D-W	2.035					2.236				
Dependent variable	Gastronomy satisfaction									

5. Theoretical and practical implications

Consequently, this study mainly examined the common and differentiating food factors that affect tourists' gastronomy satisfaction in addition to overall gastronomic experiences in two culinary destinations. The findings can be handled with the theoretical framework of Mak *et al.*'s (2012) "tourist food consumption", "gastronomy tourist typologies" of Hjalager (2003) and Cohen and Avieli (2004), and "gastronomic motivations" of Quan and Wang (2004), Kim *et al.* (2009) and Chang *et al.* (2011). From this perspective, theoretical implications of the study are threefold: tourist motivations, tourist gastronomic typologies and the attributional factors that affect tourists' gastronomy satisfaction.

In both Cordoba and Hatay, the visitors' food and beverage motivation were positioned in the second or third place, while the primary motivation was to experience the historical and cultural heritage of the destinations. These findings coincide with the findings of Rimmington and Yüksel (1998), Kivela and Crotts (2006), Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) and Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015) that the gastronomic motivation generally do not take place near the top priorities. Eating in the context of travel is not solely a means of satisfying hunger, but it is also a path to experiencing a set of cultural (ethnic influences), historical (monuments, museums, architecture) and environmental (geography and climate) values (Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000, p. 282; Kivela and Crotts, 2005, p. 43; Kivela and Crotts, 2006, p. 357; Okumus *et al.*, 2007, p. 253; Correia *et al.*, 2008, p. 164). According to Quan and Wang's (2004) gastronomic motivation taxonomy, it could be said that the tourists' motivation is close to peak gastronomic motivation with reference to high involvement in food at both destinations. The tourists at both of the destinations highly tend to experience local foods and have a strong intention of incurring extra costs for local foods and wines. When these findings are taken into account within the context of Fischler's (1988) conceptualisation of "neophobic" and "neophylic" and Hjalager's (2003) and Cohen and Avieli's (2004) phenomenological model of "gastronomy tourist typologies", it could be said that the destinations mostly attract the existential type of gastronomic tourist; however, there are few recreational and diversionary types of tourists (neophobic tourists) particularly in Cordoba. The amount of visitors who did not try local products, and the ratio

of the visitors who did not want to pay extra for local products were much higher in Cordoba. Furthermore, the Cordoba tourists had a statistically lower perception of the importance of gastronomy on the destination image compared to Hatay tourists.

As a result of the regression analysis, it has been understood that “quality of dishes” and “traditional gastronomy” are the key attributional factors which together outweigh the effect of the other variables on tourists’ gastronomic satisfaction irrespective of the sample differences. Furthermore, it has been understood that some significant attributes could differ by the characteristics of the destinations. As is clearly seen from the Table VI, the factors of “service and hospitality” and “innovation and new tastes in the dishes” were found to be distinguishing factors between the visitors to Cordoba and Hatay. Not all regions are equally suited to the promotion of food image (Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000, p. 282), and there are large differences between cultures, social classes and individuals in terms of the extent to which they encourage neophylic or neophobic tendencies (Cohen and Avieli, 2004, p. 759). These similarities and discrepancies can be explained by the theoretical framework of Mak *et al.* (2012) which reveals the factors that affect consumption in tourism under the broad categories “tourist”, “food in destinations” and “destination environment”. Under the category of “tourist”, it has been shown that tourists from Cordoba and Hatay have similar socio-demographic and economic statuses and travelling motivations. The only varying variable is “food related personality traits” because it appears that there is a higher number of existential types of gastronomic tourists in Hatay. Under the category of “food in the destinations”, sensory attributes, food and/or cuisine type, food availability and quality are the significant factors that affect tourists’ gastronomic satisfaction, whereas price was an insignificant common factor for both destinations. Finally, from the perspective of “destination environment”, the significance of gastronomic image and the marketing communication on the food consumption in both destinations is apparent, and the factors of “service encounter” and “service scape” revealed insignificant effects in both cuisine destinations. Thus, the results of the study share great similarities with the studies of Kivela and Crofts (2006), Chi *et al.* (2013) and Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015).

This research provides contributions for destination marketers and food and beverage companies as well. Local cuisine is an important tourist attraction, and it is an essential element in the way people experience a destination (Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015, p. 2405). Gastronomy, whether or not it is a primary motivation, is an indispensable factor in vacation experiences, and culinary activities provide opportunities to create happy memories (Chi *et al.*, 2013, p. 100; Kivela and Crofts, 2006, p. 356; Sanchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán, 2012, p. 229-230). In the context of Hatay and Cordoba, the tourist profiles reveal that the tourists who visited both destinations clearly use their friends and families’ advice and the internet as information sources. In addition, over half of the tourists at both of the destinations have past experiences, and gastronomic motivation ranks within the top three factors. Therefore, to ensure the future of gastronomic tourism at the subject destinations, providing a satisfactory gastronomic experience is of pivotal importance. The number of tourists who tried local gastronomic products appears to be relatively low in Cordoba. Marketers should generate ways to promote local flavours, for example, through food festivals, fairs or promotional campaigns that reflect local foods and augment the experience of leisure, escape from routine and the feeling of recreation and enjoyment (Chang *et al.*, 2011, p. 315; Kim *et al.*, 2013, p. 489).

From the perspective of Mediterranean cuisine, “food quality” and “traditional gastronomy” were found to be common crucial factors that outweigh the effect of “price”, “facilities” and “atmosphere” for the tourists’ food consumption satisfaction. In addition, “service and hospitality” and “innovation and new tastes in the dishes” were the significant factors; however, they vary by destinations. Hence, destination marketers and culinary establishments should be aware of the contextual factors that affect gastronomic satisfaction

during the development of their plans for gastronomy tourism (Chang *et al.*, 2011, p. 315). They should encourage cooks and chefs to develop kitchen skills to provide better tastes, smells, and the appearance of local foods by maintaining their traditions because traditional gastronomy is the source of unique regional identity (Kim *et al.*, 2013, p. 489).

6. Limitations and suggestions for future research

The results of this research on the gastronomic profiles and gastronomic attitudes of tourists who visited Hatay and Cordoba have a number of significant limitations. The convenience sampling method that was applied restricts the generalisation of the findings to other populations in terms of the data that were gathered and the resulting constraints. Although deliberate efforts were made to prove measurement invariance and common method bias, it would be better if the compared profiles were more similar in terms of the samples being composed of either national or foreign tourists. Future research should examine gastronomic experience and the factors that affect gastronomy satisfaction in other Mediterranean destinations through different scales to enhance the generalisability of the results.

Note

1. The questionnaires in Cordoba were distributed by the research team using a convenience sampling method in Spring 2014, a season marked by a high tourist influx into Cordoba, and the data set was shared with the corresponding author of the present study. Similarly, the data set on Hatay was shared with Sandra Sanchez-Cañizares and Ana M. Castillo-Canalejo.

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