



THE INFLUENCE OF FOOD NAMES ON TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS, INTEREST AND FOOD CHOICES

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Abstract: Food is an important component of the tourist experience and often serves as a gateway to understanding a destination's culture, history, and traditions. Among the various factors that influence tourists' food choices, the name of a dish plays a significant role. A food name can create expectations about taste, ingredients, authenticity, cultural identity, and quality before the tourist has even tasted the dish. Attractive and meaningful names can increase curiosity and encourage tourists to try unfamiliar foods, while unclear or culturally unfamiliar names may sometimes reduce interest. This article examines the influence of food names on tourists' perceptions, interest, and choices. It also discusses how linguistic, cultural, emotional, and marketing factors contribute to tourists' attitudes toward traditional and local dishes.

Keywords: food tourism, food names, tourists, consumer behavior, destination marketing, cultural identity, culinary tourism.

Introduction

Tourism is not limited to visiting historical monuments, museums, or natural attractions. Food has become an essential part of the travel experience because it allows tourists to interact with local culture in a direct and memorable way. Traditional dishes can represent the history, lifestyle, geography, and cultural identity of a destination. For this reason, culinary tourism has become an important element of destination development and promotion.

When tourists encounter a local dish for the first time, the name is often one of the first pieces of information they receive. Before seeing or tasting the food, tourists may form an initial opinion based only on its name. A familiar, attractive, or culturally meaningful name can stimulate interest, whereas a difficult-to-pronounce or unfamiliar name may create uncertainty.

Therefore, food names should not be considered merely labels. They can function as communication and marketing tools that influence tourists' expectations and purchasing decisions.

1. The role of food names in creating tourist perceptions. A food name can immediately create a mental image of a dish. Tourists may associate certain words with particular ingredients, cooking methods, flavors, or cultural



traditions. For example, names containing words such as “traditional,” “homemade,” “spicy,” “grilled,” or “royal” can create specific expectations about the dish.

Cultural associations are particularly important in tourism. A traditional name can communicate authenticity and provide tourists with a sense that they are experiencing something genuinely connected to the destination. When a dish has a strong historical or cultural meaning, its original name may increase its perceived value.

At the same time, the meaning of a food name can differ between cultures. A word that sounds attractive in one language may have a neutral or even negative association in another. Consequently, restaurants and tourism organizations need to consider linguistic and cultural differences when presenting local foods to international visitors.

2. Food names and tourist curiosity. Curiosity is one of the factors that can encourage tourists to try unfamiliar dishes. An unusual or interesting food name can create questions in the tourist’s mind: What ingredients does it contain? Why is it called this? Is it a traditional dish? What does it taste like? For example, a unique local name may encourage a tourist to ask a guide or restaurant employee about the history of the dish. In this way, the name becomes the starting point for cultural communication.

However, curiosity does not always result in consumption. If tourists cannot understand the meaning of a name or do not receive sufficient information about the dish, uncertainty may overcome their curiosity. Therefore, combining the original name with a short and understandable description can be an effective approach.

3. The influence of food names on tourists’ choices. Tourists usually make food choices based on several factors, including appearance, price, ingredients, recommendations, previous experience, and perceived taste. The name of a dish can influence this decision by shaping expectations before consumption.

A descriptive name can reduce uncertainty. For instance, when a menu provides the traditional name together with information about the main ingredients and cooking method, tourists can make a more informed decision. This is particularly important when the dish is unfamiliar.

Emotional responses also influence food choice. Names that emphasize tradition, family, celebration, or local heritage may create positive emotions and increase the perceived attractiveness of a dish. In contrast, names that emphasize unfamiliar ingredients without explanation may discourage some tourists.

4. Food names as a tool of destination marketing. Food names can contribute to the branding of a tourist destination. Famous local dishes can



become symbols of a city, region, or country. When tourists remember a distinctive dish name, they may also remember the destination associated with it.

For tourism businesses, therefore, the presentation of traditional food should combine authenticity with accessibility. Preserving the original name is important because it maintains cultural identity. At the same time, translating or explaining the name can help international tourists understand the product.

Digital media has further increased the importance of food names. Tourists frequently search for local dishes online before and during their trips. Memorable names can make dishes easier to discuss, photograph, share, and recommend through social media.

5. The importance of cultural authenticity. One of the major motivations for culinary tourists is the desire to experience authentic local culture. Food names can strengthen this experience by preserving traditional terminology and connecting a dish with its cultural background.

For example, instead of replacing a traditional name completely with a generic English translation, tourism businesses can present the original name alongside an explanation in English. This approach allows tourists to learn the local term while also understanding what the dish represents.

Authenticity is especially valuable because tourists often seek experiences that are different from their everyday lives. A traditional food name can make the experience feel more distinctive and culturally meaningful.

6. Recommendations for tourism businesses. Restaurants, hotels, tour operators, and destination marketing organizations can use food names strategically. Several approaches may be effective:

1. Preserve traditional names to maintain cultural identity.
2. Provide clear descriptions of unfamiliar dishes in international languages.
3. Explain the cultural or historical background of important traditional foods.
4. Use attractive but accurate descriptions to create positive expectations.
5. Avoid misleading names that may cause tourists to expect ingredients or flavors that are not actually present.
6. Consider intercultural differences when translating food names.
7. Use storytelling to connect a dish with local history, traditions, and people.

These strategies can make local cuisine more accessible without sacrificing its cultural authenticity.

Conclusion. Food names have an important influence on tourists' perceptions, curiosity, and food choices. They can create expectations,



communicate cultural identity, stimulate interest, and contribute to the marketing of a destination. A well-presented food name can transform an unfamiliar dish into an attractive cultural experience.

For destinations with rich culinary traditions, food names should therefore be treated as more than simple menu labels. They can serve as instruments of cultural communication, tourism marketing, and destination branding. By combining traditional names with clear descriptions and meaningful cultural information, tourism businesses can encourage visitors to explore local cuisine while preserving its authenticity and identity.

Ultimately, a dish is not only something tourists eat; it can also be a story about a place, its people, and its traditions. The name of that dish is often the first part of the story that a tourist encounters.

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