

Innovations

Gastronomic Tourism's Influence on Baguio Tourists' Travel Choices and Cultural Experience

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Abstract: *This study investigates how gastronomy tourism in Baguio City, Philippines, influences tourist motives, protects cultural heritage, and promotes tourism growth. In-depth interviews and field observations were used to collect data from 21 participants, including local food producers, restaurant owners, tourism officers, and tourists, using a descriptive qualitative study approach. Baguio's culinary identity is firmly anchored in its traditional Cordilleran meals, centuries-old cooking methods, and fresh mountain products, according to thematic analysis. Authentic culinary experiences are the main attraction for tourists, and local food has a big impact on their choice of destination. The sustainability of gourmet tourism is threatened, meanwhile, by obstacles including poor marketing, worries about environmental sustainability, and problems with resource management. The study identifies areas where stakeholders may work together to promote regional cuisine, implement sustainable practices, and improve infrastructure. These programs have the potential to protect the city's culinary legacy, enhance its allure as a food-focused travel destination, and support environmentally friendly travel that supports the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. In the end, this study emphasizes how important food is in establishing cultural identity and improving tourist experiences, offering useful information to players in the tourism industry and politicians who want to create a framework for sustainable gastronomy tourism in Baguio City.*

Keywords: Food tourism, Culinary Heritage, Visitor Motivation, Cultural Preservation, tourism industry

Introduction:

One of the biggest and fastest-growing sectors in the world today, tourism has a major role in raising living standards, creating jobs, and boosting the economy

(Chen & Huang, 2016; Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019). Gastronomic tourism, one of its many subcategories, has become an essential element, stressing the discovery and enjoyment of regional cuisines as the main driving force behind travel. This type of tourism is essential for maintaining and advancing cultural heritage in addition to generating economic advantages by assisting regional companies and farmers (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2003; Ashok, 2019). Gastronomic tourism provides an excellent framework for investigating sustainable development in the tourist industry in the context of Baguio City, which is well-known for its rich cultural legacy, temperate climate, and distinctive regional cuisine. Aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), this study investigates how gastronomic tourism can foster economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability in Baguio City (United Nations, 2015).

Known as the "Summer Capital of the Philippines," Baguio City draws a wide range of visitors looking for both rich cultural experiences and scenic beauty. In addition to increasing the city's allure as a culinary destination, its focus on regional produce—such as strawberries and native Cordilleran cuisine—also helps local farmers and food producers, which promotes sustainable business practices (Delgado & Reyes, 2022; Franco, 2023). However, there are drawbacks to the tourist industry's explosive expansion, such as issues with environmental sustainability and the requirement for efficient marketing techniques to promote genuine gastronomic experiences (Bernardo, 2024). This study intends to offer practical insights that are in line with the SDGs by investigating the expectations and motivations of visitors as well as the potential and difficulties in Baguio's gourmet tourism industry. These insights will help stakeholders implement sustainable practices that balance economic benefits with the preservation of cultural and environmental resources, ensuring that Baguio City remains a premier destination for both local and international visitors seeking meaningful and responsible travel experiences.

In the context of Baguio City, tourism has become one of the most important and quickly expanding sectors of the contemporary economy, boosting employment possibilities, raising locals' standards of living, and boosting the local economy. The Philippines is one of several countries that see tourism as an important force behind industrial expansion, cultural cohesion, and economic development. In particular, gourmet tourism has emerged as a key component in boosting the allure of travel locations. The value of culinary customs has increased, and some tourists now cite famous eateries or regional food as the main reason they go. Genuine regional cuisine frequently influences tourists' decisions about where to go, underscoring the

significance of culinary culture in preserving cultural history and influencing perceptions of a destination.

For Baguio City, renowned for its rich culinary traditions, gastronomic tourism serves as a compelling factor in attracting visitors. Food culture is not only a significant draw but also a defining aspect of the city's identity as a tourist destination. Culinary tourism fosters cultural appreciation and enhances the overall tourist experience, aligning with findings that underscore food as both an attraction and a key element of destination branding.

But there are drawbacks to the expansion of tourism, especially in well-known places like Baguio City. The rise in garbage production on weekends and holidays, when tourism is at its highest, is one significant problem. For instance, trash output, including plastic bottles, single-use coffee cups, and food packaging materials, can increase dramatically during periods of high visitor inflow, as shown in Bandung City (Diawati, 2018). Similar problems with garbage management arise in Baguio City, especially during the city's major festivals and busiest travel times. Uncontrolled trash buildup can lead to health issues, environmental damage, and a reduction in the overall visitor experience.

This study aims to explore the connections between gastronomic experiences and their impact on cultural promotion, destination branding, and the enhancement of local cuisine. By understanding these relationships, the research seeks to provide insights into improving Baguio City's standing as a gastronomic destination while addressing challenges related to sustainable tourism practices.

Several important groups will greatly benefit from the study's findings. In order to better comprehend how gastronomy shapes a traveler's destination selections, students will first get insights into how gastronomic tourism impacts travel preferences. Second, this research can serve as a foundation for incorporating gastronomy-related information into the curricula of educational institutions, especially those that provide degrees in hospitality and tourist management. By doing this, they may better prepare students with pertinent information and abilities about gourmet tourism in locations such as Baguio City. Last but not least, this study will be a useful tool for future researchers as it offers relevant data and information that may direct more research in the area of culinary and tourist studies.

Gabriel et al. (n.d.) state that little historical record exists on the culinary arts' early development. The origins of gastronomy may be traced back more than 5,000 years, to the time when people first used fire to cook. This significant event

influenced early culinary practices by making it possible to consume prepared meals. This development emphasizes how eating and travel are related. According to Mulcahy (2015), the original driving force for travel was frequently the desire to find novel or commercially important items, including spices, which were highly valued in European marketplaces (Katz & Weaver, 2003:416). Realizing that food is a potent vehicle of cultural exchange that promotes communication and understanding across many ethnic and geographic borders is a significant outcome of these culinary-driven travels.

In the specific context of Baguio City, known for its fresh produce and unique regional cuisine, these insights highlight the significance of gastronomy as both an attraction and a unifying element among different cultures. By appreciating local dishes and culinary traditions, visitors engage more deeply with the city's heritage, thus reinforcing the idea that food not only shapes travel choices but also enriches cultural experiences.

Review of Related Literatures:

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), created by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1980, serves as the foundation for this investigation. According to the TRA, a person's intention to carry out a behavior is greatly impacted by their attitude, which is shaped by two primary factors: the subjective norm, or the perceived social pressure to engage in or refrain from the behavior, and attitude, or how favorably or unfavorably a person evaluates the behavior. People's intention—or motivation—to engage in an action improves when they have a positive opinion of it and feel that their significant others expect them to do so (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The significant relationship between attitude, subjective norms, behavioral intention, and actual behavior has been confirmed by a number of research, including those conducted by Mimiaga and Safren (2009). However, some findings also indicate a limitation of this theory, noting that behavioral intention does not always translate into real-world actions.

Based on this theoretical framework, the current study investigates how travelers' decisions to visit a certain location are influenced by gastronomy tourism. These decisions resemble real-world behavior as they capture the fundamental motivations of travelers, such as their desire to sample local cuisine. With a focus on the destination's culinary image and visitors' perceptions of local cuisine, this study more precisely examines how the importance put on consuming local cuisine influences future behavioral intentions. This emphasis sheds light on how food experiences influence travel choices and the behaviors that follow.

Promoting the Culture:

Gastronomic tourism encompasses activities where visitors learn about, appreciate, and consume foods and beverages emblematic of a place's local cuisine, history, or culture. It goes beyond merely sampling a dish and judging its taste. Rather, it involves understanding what distinguishes it from other dishes and uncovering its historical context. In this sense, food can become the core of a province's tourism appeal, enriching visitors' experiences not only with flavor but also with storytelling.

In a study on the advancement of culinary tourism in Batangas, Bautista et al. (2018) invited patrons of family-owned restaurants to share their insights. The findings showed that verbal interpretation was the primary mode through which respondents grasped the significance of traditional dishes. Consequently, traditional restaurants emerged as the most favored option among diners. Establishments that incorporate traditional design elements and dining practices offer a clearer perspective of Batangascuisine, leading to their popularity and success.

Moreover, the authors argue that countries may reduce financial losses to imports by sourcing locally produced ingredients for international tourists. When tourists opt for locally grown foods, they spend less on imports, keeping more resources within the local economy. Additionally, the study highlights that Filipino cuisine remains the preferred choice for most participants, underscoring a valuable opportunity for advancing culinary tourism by emphasizing the unique character of local flavors and traditions.

Improving the Destination:

Gastronomic tourism flourishes in areas with a robust presence of locally produced goods and services supported by a network of interrelated businesses and service providers. In a study by De Castro et al. (2018), tourists expressed a consensus on various factors that contribute to the potential appeal of such offerings. Residents of Baguio City significantly bolster the local economy by endorsing and supporting local enterprises, particularly those focusing on gastronomic tourism. Establishing and maintaining local restaurants not only promotes social awareness but also creates numerous job opportunities, thereby elevating the social standing of community members. To strengthen the culinary sector, the provincial government of Baguio may coordinate closely with relevant local government units.

According to the same authors, women over the age of 21 tend to visit Baguio City twice a year, often for gatherings with family and friends. These tourists identified several elements that make the region attractive for culinary tourism, including the unique cooking methods of Igorots, the quality of service, the residents' hospitality, and the inviting ambiance of Baguio City. They also

highlighted how preserving the City's cultural cuisine adds to the product's appeal, leading to a recommendation for marketing Baguio's authentic local dishes. Furthermore, there is a notable difference in perceptions regarding the preservation of culinary heritage, the role of authenticity in enhancing a destination, and destination marketing strategies when responses are grouped by nationality.

Promoting Local Cuisine:

Ashok (2019), as cited in Ignatov and Smith (2006), highlights that gastronomy significantly enhances visitor satisfaction and represents an essential component of a destination's cultural and environmental heritage. Ashok further points out that growing enthusiasm for culinary experiences can be observed in the proliferation of food, wine, and travel publications, as well as in the surge of cooking shows and dedicated food networks on television in numerous countries (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2003).

Telfer and Hashimoto additionally note that food and beverages form a crucial part of a destination's culture, uniqueness, and identity, which helps explain the increasing appeal of both food and wine tourism. Culinary tourism encompasses a broad range of activities designed for tourists and locals alike, such as food festivals, harvest events, brewery tastings, farmers' markets, cooking classes, chocolate tastings, cellar door visits, farm stays, cheese factory tours (Deneault, 2002, as cited in Mason & O'Mahony, 2007), and visits to wine or cheese museums, as well as traditional restaurants (Bessiere, 1998). These activities showcase local flavors and traditions, thereby reinforcing the importance of cuisine in shaping memorable travel experiences.

Attributes of the Tourist Experience:

A destination's appeal can be attributed to multiple factors, each of which can significantly influence a visitor's experience. A destination with a favorable image—encompassing its natural scenery, shopping opportunities, cultural interactions, infrastructure, safety, and available activities—strongly affects travelers' decision-making processes. In a study by Salonga and Borbon (2021), 384 domestic and international tourists from two cities and 20 municipalities in Bukidnon participated. The findings revealed that visitors are often motivated to travel to specific places to sample the local cuisine, drawn particularly to the authentic and regional dishes of Bukidnon. Beyond its scenic beauty and adventure activities, the province boasts a wide variety of traditional foods and delicacies that pique tourist interest.

Results from the study suggest that tourists indeed seek these local dishes when visiting, and, in doing so, develop unique personal experiences. Many expect

Bukidnon's authentic cuisine and specialty dishes to be a highlight of their trip, underscoring the idea that local fare frequently serves as a compelling tourist attraction.

Salonga and Borbon further emphasize the integral connection between travel and culture; experiencing a destination goes beyond admiring landscapes. Understanding local customs and traditions can enhance overall enjoyment, sparking curiosity about the region's cultural identity. Additionally, how tourists perceive culinary destinations—based on their direct experiences—proves instrumental in shaping their level of satisfaction. Thus, it appears that those who traveled to Bukidnon were greatly pleased with their gastronomic adventures, as many found delight in embarking on a journey that combined scenic exploration with the opportunity to savor authentic local flavors.

Gastronomic Tourism and Tourist Motivation:

According to Ullah, Khan, and Saeed (2022), an increasing number of travelers now factor in gastronomic tourism when deciding where to go. Approximately 15% of tourists list “gastronomy” as one of their primary reasons for traveling, which has led to the emergence of “Gastronomic Tourism” as a distinct tourism category. While much of the research on this topic has been conducted internationally, particularly notable gaps remain, including in countries like Pakistan. In their study surveying 307 travelers to the northern regions of that country, the authors found that travelers' satisfaction with a destination can be influenced by culinary experiences, and that motivation related to gastronomy can shape visitors' vacation choices. Moreover, individuals who enjoy a destination's cuisine often develop a deeper interest in gourmet experiences and show strong loyalty to that location.

Tourist motivation involves the various factors that prompt someone to visit a particular place. For those drawn to gourmet tourism, these factors might include learning about the history and culture behind a region's cuisine, sampling unique local dishes, and participating in food-related activities. A separate survey revealed that the primary motivations for “foodies” are tasting the local cuisine and uncovering its cultural aspects, with opportunities to engage in food-focused activities—such as learning to cook traditional meals—also highly valued. Beyond enhancing personal experiences, gastronomic tourism offers benefits to local economies and communities. By spotlighting regional food and beverages, this approach can support small enterprises and farmers, while also preserving and promoting the culinary heritage of a destination. Consequently, it can boost economic growth and help maintain traditional cooking practices.

In the context of Baguio City, renowned for its unique mountain produce and regional dishes, gastronomic tourism could similarly play a pivotal role. Visitors often seek to explore the local culture through its well-loved delicacies—such as fresh strawberries, local vegetables, and indigenous Cordilleran recipes. By focusing on these authentic tastes, Baguio can continue to cultivate a loyal visitor base that values both the city's natural beauty and the cultural stories behind its cuisine.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach to thoroughly explore the intricate dynamics of gastronomic tourism in Baguio City. This design is particularly effective for capturing the rich, detailed nuances of participants' experiences, perceptions, and motivations within their natural environments. Unlike quantitative methods that rely on numerical data, the qualitative approach emphasizes textual and thematic interpretation, allowing for a deeper understanding of human experiences. By utilizing semi-structured interviews and observational techniques, the research was able to gather comprehensive narratives that reveal not only what participants think and feel about Baguio's culinary offerings but also why they hold these perspectives. The flexibility of this approach enabled the researcher to adapt questions and probes based on emerging themes, ensuring that the study remained responsive to participants' unique insights. This adaptability enhances the validity and reliability of the findings by capturing authentic and context-specific information. Ultimately, the descriptive qualitative design aligns with the study's objectives to elucidate the multifaceted role of local cuisine in attracting and satisfying tourists, providing meaningful insights for sustainable tourism strategies in Baguio City.

Research Locale and Population:

The study was conducted in Baguio City, a prominent tourist destination in the Philippines renowned for its vibrant cultural heritage, cool climate, and distinctive local delicacies. Baguio City's rich culinary landscape makes it an ideal setting for investigating the dynamics of gastronomic tourism and its influence on visitor experiences. The population of interest encompassed key stakeholders within Baguio's tourism sector, specifically including 2 local food producers, 6 restaurant operators, 1 tourism officer, and 12 visitors. These participants were selected through a purposive sampling method to ensure that they possessed direct experience or comprehensive knowledge of the city's gastronomic culture and tourism practices. Inclusion criteria for the study required participants to be actively

engaged in Baguio City's gastronomic tourism either as providers of local cuisine, facilitators of tourism activities, or as consumers with substantial exposure to the city's culinary offerings. Conversely, exclusion criteria eliminated individuals who did not have a direct involvement or significant experience with Baguio's local cuisine or tourism sector, such as those from unrelated industries or with minimal interaction with gastronomic tourism. This selective approach ensured the collection of rich, relevant data that aligned with the research objectives, providing a nuanced understanding of how gastronomic tourism shapes visitor experiences and sustains local culture in Baguio City.

Research Instruments:

In this study, the primary data collection methods consisted of in-depth interviews and, where applicable, observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the participants' perspectives, motivations, and experiences with gastronomic tourism in Baguio City. An interview guide was crafted based on the research questions, offering flexibility to probe deeper into emerging topics. Additionally, the researcher observed local food establishments, markets, and relevant events or festivals, compiling field notes on ambiance, customer interactions, and cultural practices related to food.

Data Analysis:

After data collection, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and any field notes or observations were systematically organized. The transcribed data then underwent a thematic analysis process. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the content by reviewing transcripts and notes multiple times, ensuring an overall understanding of the data. Next, initial coding was performed by identifying meaningful segments or keywords, which were then grouped into broader themes that captured the primary issues or ideas emerging from the data. These themes were subsequently refined to ensure they accurately represented both the content and the study objectives. Finally, conclusions were drawn by linking the findings back to the research questions and existing literature. This analytic process provided a comprehensive view of how gastronomic tourism is perceived, promoted, and experienced in Baguio City. Furthermore, the combination of qualitative methods contributed to a deeper understanding of the interplay between local food culture and the motivations of tourists visiting the city.

Results and Discussion:

This chapter presents the findings drawn from in-depth interviews and, if applicable, field observations. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which yielded several themes reflecting the participants' views on gastronomic

tourism in Baguio City. A total of **21** participants were involved in this study, comprising **2 local food producers, 6 restaurant operators, 1 tourism officer, and 12 visitors**. Their varied backgrounds provided a holistic perspective on local cuisine, cultural heritage, and tourist experiences within the city. The following themes emerged from the analysis: **(1) Appreciation and Awareness of Local Cuisine, (2) Cultural Significance of Traditional Dishes, (3) Motivations and Expectations of Tourists, and (4) Challenges and Opportunities for Gastronomic Tourism.**

Appreciation and Awareness of Local Cuisine:

The findings under this theme highlight how local ingredients and traditional preparations shape the distinctive gastronomic identity of Baguio City. As shown in Table 1, food producers consistently underscored the importance of fresh produce grown in the city's highland climate. One producer emphasized, "Our strawberries and vegetables thrive in the highland climate; they taste distinctively fresh, which tourists appreciate." Such remarks underscore the appeal of homegrown produce and reflect the pride local stakeholders take in promoting Baguio's agricultural bounty.

In parallel, restaurant operators play a key role in preserving and showcasing indigenous flavors. One operator affirmed, "We use our grandma's recipe for pinikpikan," a statement that highlights the commitment to safeguarding traditional Cordilleran cooking methods. This dedication ensures that local cuisine remains culturally authentic, while also allowing visitors to taste dishes that carry generations of culinary heritage.

The tourism officer further noted the city government's ongoing efforts to promote local dishes, making them more accessible and recognizable to both domestic and international travelers. Meanwhile, visitors praised the distinctive flavors they encountered, suggesting that Baguio-grown produce and time-honored recipes significantly contribute to a memorable tourist experience.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis on Appreciation and Awareness of Local Cuisine

Key Finding	Description
Local Produce	Food producers emphasized that Baguio-grown produce, especially strawberries, is a prime draw. One producer noted, “Our strawberries and vegetables thrive in the highland climate; they taste distinctively fresh, which tourists appreciate.”
Traditional Recipes	Several restaurant operators mentioned preserving traditional Cordilleran cooking techniques to honor their heritage. One operator remarked, “We use our grandma’s recipe for pinikpikan.”

These insights confirm earlier research suggesting that destinations offering fresh, authentic products attract a growing segment of food-oriented travelers. By highlighting high-quality local produce and culinary traditions, Baguio City cultivates a robust food identity that enhances its overall attractiveness. Such a strategy fosters cultural continuity, supports local economies, and enriches the visitor experience—all key aspects of successful gastronomic tourism.

Since 2022, there are researchers which consistently reinforces the importance of local produce and authentic culinary practices in shaping satisfying tourist experiences and sustainable gastronomic tourism. For instance, Delgado and Reyes (2022) report that destinations emphasizing farm-to-table initiatives have seen a marked increase in visitor loyalty, corroborating the appeal of fresh, highland-grown produce highlighted in this study. Similarly, Franco (2023) finds that preserving indigenous cooking techniques fosters cultural continuity, which resonates deeply with travelers seeking genuine food encounters. Meanwhile, Bernardo (2024) underscores the role of government-backed promotion in both boosting economic prospects and elevating communal pride, echoing the collective efforts of Baguio City stakeholders in maintaining culinary heritage. Taken together, these findings parallel the present study’s emphasis on local ingredients, time-honored recipes, and multi-sector collaboration as key factors in advancing gastronomic tourism, underscoring the broader trend of cultural authenticity and sustainability as pillars of a competitive travel destination.

Cultural Significance of Traditional Dishes:

The theme of Cultural Significance of Traditional Dishes emerged prominently across all participant interviews, underscoring the deep-rooted connection between Baguio City’s culinary practices and its indigenous heritage. This theme

encompasses the cultural rituals, historical narratives, and communal practices associated with local specialties, highlighting how traditional dishes serve as vessels for preserving and conveying the region's rich cultural tapestry.

As detailed in Table 2, Cultural Heritage was a key finding, with participants emphasizing that dishes such as pinikpikan and etag (salt-cured meat) maintain a direct link to Cordilleran customs. One local visitor poignantly remarked, "Each traditional dish feels like tasting a piece of history," illustrating how these foods encapsulate and communicate the historical and cultural essence of the region. This sentiment was echoed by restaurant operators who frequently highlighted the importance of using traditional recipes to honor their heritage. For instance, one operator stated, "We use our grandma's recipe for pinikpikan," demonstrating a commitment to preserving culinary techniques passed down through generations.

Table 2. Key Findings on Cultural Significance of Traditional Dishes

Key Finding	Description
Cultural Heritage	Participants noted that dishes like pinikpikan or etag (salt-cured meat) maintain a direct link to Cordilleran customs. One local visitor remarked, "Each traditional dish feels like tasting a piece of history."
Community Bonding	Festivals such as Panagbenga (Flower Festival) were cited as prime occasions where food unites visitors and residents.

Furthermore, Community Bonding was another significant finding, particularly in the context of festivals such as Panagbenga (Flower Festival). Participants noted that these events provide prime occasions where food acts as a unifying force, bringing together visitors and residents alike. The communal sharing of traditional dishes during such festivals fosters a sense of belonging and collective identity, reinforcing the social fabric of the community. This was exemplified by the tourism officer's observation that these culinary gatherings offer opportunities to showcase indigenous knowledge and practices to a broader audience.

These findings corroborate recent studies (Delgado & Reyes, 2022; Franco, 2023; Bernardo, 2024) which indicate that food and culture are intrinsically linked in shaping a destination's identity. Delgado and Reyes (2022) emphasize that culinary traditions are essential for fostering visitor loyalty and enhancing the authenticity of the tourist experience. Similarly, Franco (2023) highlights that preserving indigenous cooking techniques not only maintains cultural continuity but also

enriches the cultural narrative presented to tourists. Bernardo (2024) underscores the role of government and community collaboration in promoting and sustaining culinary heritage, aligning with the efforts observed in Baguio City's tourism sector.

By spotlighting traditional recipes and culinary practices, Baguio City effectively preserves and celebrates its indigenous heritage, aligning with broader discussions on how gastronomic tourism fosters cultural continuity. The preservation of traditional dishes ensures that cultural knowledge is not only maintained but also dynamically integrated into the tourism experience, offering visitors a meaningful and immersive encounter with the local culture. Moreover, the communal aspects of food-related events reinforce social bonds and enhance the overall cultural appeal of the destination.

Lastly, the cultural significance of traditional dishes in Baguio City plays a pivotal role in defining the city's gastronomic identity and enhancing its attractiveness as a tourist destination. By maintaining and promoting indigenous culinary practices, Baguio not only preserves its cultural heritage but also provides tourists with authentic and enriching experiences that contribute to their overall satisfaction and the city's sustainable tourism development.

Motivations and Expectations of Tourists:

The theme of Motivations and Expectations of Tourists emerged prominently from the interviews with the 12 visitors to Baguio City. While respondents cited various reasons for their visit, a unifying factor was the desire for an authentic culinary experience. Many travelers were attracted to Baguio's cool climate and natural attractions, yet it was the opportunity to indulge in local delicacies that significantly influenced their decision to visit. This dual attraction underscores the integral role that gastronomic tourism plays in enhancing the overall appeal of Baguio City.

As illustrated in Table 3, two primary motivations were identified: Novelty Seeking and Culinary Exploration. Novelty Seeking was a common motivation, with several visitors expressing a desire to experience something different from their usual urban fare. One traveler articulated this sentiment by stating, "We came for the strawberries, but stayed for the Cordilleran dishes," highlighting their pursuit of unique culinary experiences that differentiate Baguio from other destinations. This aligns with global trends in gastronomic tourism, where travelers increasingly seek out novel and distinctive food experiences that offer a break from their typical dietary routines.

Table 3. Key Findings on Tourist Motivations

Key Finding	Description
Novelty Seeking	Several visitors mentioned seeking “something different” from their usual urban fare. One traveler stated, “We came for the strawberries, but stayed for the Cordilleran dishes,” highlighting their desire for unique culinary experiences.
Culinary Exploration	A couple of visitors were enthusiastic about learning to cook local dishes themselves. One participant shared, “I took a short cooking demo to understand the local spices and techniques—it gave me deeper appreciation for Baguio culture.”

Culinary Exploration was another significant motivation, as evidenced by participants’ enthusiasm for learning to cook local dishes. One visitor shared, “I took a short cooking demo to understand the local spices and techniques—it gave me deeper appreciation for Baguio culture,” illustrating how hands-on culinary activities can enrich tourists’ understanding and appreciation of the local culture. This finding resonates with Ullah, Khan, and Saeed (2022), who emphasized that food-related motivations substantially influence trip satisfaction and foster loyalty among tourists. Engaging in culinary exploration not only enhances the visitor experience but also deepens their connection to the destination, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

These narratives mirror the broader literature on gastronomic tourism, which highlights the importance of authentic and immersive food experiences in shaping tourist behavior and satisfaction (Ashok, 2019; Telfer & Hashimoto, 2003). The emphasis on seeking novelty and engaging in culinary activities suggests that tourists are not merely passive consumers of local cuisine but active participants in the gastronomic culture of the destination. This active engagement fosters a more meaningful and memorable travel experience, contributing to the overall attractiveness of Baguio City as a premier gastronomic destination.

Furthermore, the motivations identified in this study have practical implications for tourism stakeholders in Baguio. By catering to the desires for unique and interactive culinary experiences, local businesses and the tourism sector can enhance visitor satisfaction and differentiate Baguio’s offerings in a competitive tourism market. Initiatives such as cooking classes, food festivals, and farm-to-table

experiences can capitalize on these motivations, promoting sustained interest and engagement from both domestic and international tourists.

Nonetheless, the motivations of Novelty Seeking and Culinary Exploration play a crucial role in attracting and satisfying tourists in Baguio City. These findings underscore the importance of authentic culinary experiences in driving gastronomic tourism and highlight opportunities for local stakeholders to further develop and promote Baguio's unique food culture. By aligning tourism strategies with these motivations, Baguio City can strengthen its position as a sought-after destination for food enthusiasts and culturally curious travelers alike.

Challenges and Opportunities for Gastronomic Tourism:

The theme of Challenges and Opportunities for Gastronomic Tourism highlights the dual aspects that influence the sustained growth of Baguio City's culinary sector. While participants acknowledged Baguio's burgeoning reputation for unique and high-quality foods, they also identified several challenges that could impede its long-term development. These challenges include limited marketing efforts, seasonal fluctuations in produce availability, and environmental concerns such as waste management. Addressing these obstacles is essential for maximizing Baguio City's gastronomic tourism potential.

As illustrated in Table 4, two primary challenges were identified: Promotion and Branding and Resource Management. The tourism officer revealed plans to develop more cohesive marketing campaigns aimed at enhancing Baguio City's culinary appeal. However, restaurant operators expressed that the current support from these campaigns could be more robust to effectively promote their unique offerings. One restaurant operator stated, "We need more structured campaigns to highlight our authentic Cordilleran cuisine," emphasizing the necessity for stronger and more targeted marketing efforts. This sentiment underscores a gap between governmental initiatives and the needs of local businesses, suggesting that existing marketing strategies may not fully capture the distinctive culinary attributes that make Baguio City unique.

Resource Management emerged as another significant challenge, with local food producers highlighting that Baguio's highland setting, while ideal for cultivating certain crops, is susceptible to unpredictable weather patterns and inconsistent infrastructure. These factors can adversely affect crop yields, leading to variability in menu offerings and potentially disappointing tourists who seek consistent culinary experiences. One food producer noted, "Unpredictable weather makes it hard to maintain a steady supply of our best produce," pointing to the

direct impact of environmental factors on the quality and availability of local ingredients. This challenge is compounded by infrastructural issues, where inconsistent facilities can hinder the efficient distribution and preservation of fresh produce, ultimately affecting restaurant offerings and tourist satisfaction.

Table 4. Key Findings on Challenges and Opportunities for Gastronomic Tourism

Key Finding	Description
Promotion and Branding	The tourism officer revealed plans to develop more cohesive marketing campaigns to enhance Baguio City's culinary appeal. However, restaurant operators expressed that the current support from these campaigns could be more robust to effectively promote their unique offerings.
Resource Management	Local food producers highlighted that while Baguio's highland setting is ideal for cultivating certain crops, unpredictable weather patterns and inconsistent infrastructure pose significant challenges. These factors can adversely affect crop yields and, consequently, the variety and availability of menu offerings in local restaurants.

Addressing these challenges requires strategic collaborations between local producers, government units, and restaurant operators. Strengthening branding efforts through coordinated marketing campaigns can ensure that Baguio City's culinary identity is effectively communicated to a broader audience. As Delgado and Reyes (2022) emphasize, strategic marketing is crucial for enhancing destination attractiveness and visitor engagement. Furthermore, improving resource management by adopting resilient agricultural practices and upgrading infrastructure can mitigate the risks posed by environmental unpredictability. Franco (2023) highlights that robust infrastructure and reliable agricultural practices are pivotal for sustaining high-quality food production, which is essential for maintaining the integrity of gastronomic tourism.

Environmental concerns, particularly waste management, were also highlighted as pressing issues. Increased tourist arrivals inevitably lead to higher waste generation, which can strain local resources and negatively impact the environment. Sustainable practices, such as responsible waste disposal and the use of eco-friendly packaging, are essential to minimize the environmental footprint of gastronomic tourism. One restaurant operator mentioned, "We are looking into biodegradable packaging to reduce our waste," indicating a proactive approach

towards sustainability. Bernardo (2024) underscores that integrating sustainability into tourism strategies not only protects the local environment but also appeals to eco-conscious travelers, thereby enhancing the destination's long-term viability.

Despite these challenges, significant opportunities exist to bolster Baguio City's gastronomic tourism. Collaborative efforts can enhance branding and marketing initiatives, ensuring a unified and compelling culinary narrative. Additionally, embracing sustainable practices can address environmental concerns while promoting responsible tourism. By focusing on these opportunities, Baguio City can strengthen its culinary infrastructure, preserve its cultural heritage, and attract a diverse array of tourists seeking authentic and sustainable food experiences.

These findings are consistent with recent research that highlights the interplay between effective marketing, resource management, and sustainability in advancing gastronomic tourism. Delgado and Reyes (2022) found that destinations with well-coordinated marketing strategies and robust resource management frameworks are better positioned to attract and retain food-oriented travelers. Similarly, Franco (2023) and Bernardo (2024) emphasize the critical role of sustainability in ensuring the long-term success of culinary tourism initiatives. By addressing the identified challenges through strategic collaborations and sustainable practices, Baguio City can harness its unique culinary strengths to foster economic growth, cultural preservation, and enhanced visitor satisfaction.

Finally, while Baguio City faces several challenges in sustaining and expanding its gastronomic tourism sector, there are ample opportunities to overcome these obstacles through collaborative efforts and sustainable practices. By enhancing marketing strategies, improving resource management, and adopting eco-friendly initiatives, Baguio can solidify its position as a premier gastronomic destination. These measures will not only support the local economy and preserve cultural heritage but also ensure that tourists continue to enjoy enriching and memorable culinary experiences in Baguio City.

Summary of the Findings:

To sum up, the findings of this descriptive qualitative study highlight the diverse ways that gourmet tourism shapes tourist experiences and preserves Baguio City's local culture. According to information obtained from two local food producers, six restaurant owners, one tourism official, and twelve tourists, Baguio's allure as a travel destination is greatly increased by the local cuisine, which is distinguished by fresh produce and traditional recipes. Furthermore, preserving

and promoting cultural history through traditional cuisine serves to inform tourists about the region's rich culinary traditions while also strengthening ties within the community. The study emphasizes how the need for new and genuine experiences is strongly linked to tourist motivation, and how food-centered experiences are essential for drawing in and keeping tourists. But the study also points out obstacles including insufficient marketing initiatives and environmental stresses that can prevent the city's culinary tourism industry from expanding steadily. There are lots of chances for cooperation and sustainable growth in spite of these challenges. Baguio City can further establish itself as a top culinary destination by tackling these issues with smart marketing, strong stakeholder alliances, and a persistent focus on authenticity. This strategy will help the city maintain its cultural legacy while providing tourists with enjoyable and unforgettable experiences, which will promote both cultural continuity and economic prosperity.

Conclusions:

This study emphasizes how important gastronomy tourism is to improving tourist experiences and maintaining Baguio City's cultural heritage. It was clear from the opinions of two local food producers, six restaurant owners, one tourism official, and twelve tourists that Baguio's appeal as a travel destination is greatly increased by the local cuisine, which is distinguished by fresh produce and traditional recipes. In addition to strengthening ties within the community, preserving and promoting cultural heritage via real cuisine teaches tourists about the region's diverse culinary customs.

Furthermore, travelers' quest for new and genuine culinary experiences is a major motivator, placing culinary adventures at the top of their list of priorities. Notwithstanding these advantages, the study found obstacles that would prevent gourmet tourism from expanding, such as insufficient marketing initiatives and worries about environmental sustainability. Nonetheless, the existence of chances for tactical cooperation and environmentally friendly methods offers Baguio City a bright future in enhancing its standing as a top culinary destination. Through gourmet tourism, Baguio City may accomplish both cultural preservation and long-term economic prosperity by utilizing its distinctive culinary assets and tackling current issues.

Recommendations:

It is advised that stakeholders put in place a multipronged plan centered on strategic promotion, sustainable practices, and strong collaborations in order to fully realize the potential of gourmet tourism in Baguio City. First and foremost, create and implement extensive marketing campaigns that showcase Baguio's distinctive

culinary offers in particular. To reach a wider audience, use digital channels and partnerships with food influencers. Second, to guarantee a unified strategy for marketing and overseeing culinary resources, build solid alliances between regional food producers, eateries, and governmental organizations. Thirdly, to lessen the negative effects on the environment, the tourist industry should embrace sustainable waste management techniques, such as using eco-friendly packaging and setting up effective recycling systems.

In order to engage visitors and promote stronger cultural ties, plan frequent culinary festivals and events that highlight regional cuisine and offer hands-on activities like cooking courses and food tours. Lastly, make investments in infrastructure upgrades to facilitate steady produce supply and improve guests' overall eating experiences. These suggestions are intended to be achievable via concerted efforts, sustainable through encouraging cultural preservation and environmental stewardship, and quantifiable through monitoring visitor satisfaction, economic indicators, and environmental effect measurements. Baguio City can guarantee the long-term prosperity and sustainability of its culinary tourist industry by putting these principles into practice.

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