Interest in food, food quality, satisfaction and outcomes in a border context:

Gender, country of residence and born mediation.

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Abstract

This study examines the impact on satisfaction and visit outcomes of two higher-order constructs: interest in food and food quality at the US-Mexico border destination. We analyze gender cross moderation, country of residence, and country of birth as first explorations on food tourism marketing under the framework of the same objective and taking advantage of a consistent proportion of visitors born in the visited country. Four hypotheses were examined through Squares SEM techniques, following a simple and random statistical design using a comprehensive inventory from specialized websites. The study used 1346 questionnaires – completed face to face by national, local, and US visitors in three major gastronomic regions along the coast of Baja California, Mexico. The results suggest that the analyzed segments show little difference on the weight dimension with a similar incidence between country of residence and birth. There was also a gender impact and a crossing of segments between interest in food and food quality.

Keywords: Food tourism; border destination; interest in food; food quality; gender moderation; country of residence and birth.

1. Introduction

A visitor who is satisfied with the culinary experience is considered, in food tourism literature, very likely to return and above all promote the establishments and the visited destination among friends and family (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Ha and Jang, 2010; Muhammad, Ching-Hong, Norazirah and Raza, 2019; Muskat, Hörtnagl, Prayag and Wagner, 2019). On the other hand, the gastronomic experience could also turn into a nightmare encouraging a reluctant attitude toward local food and the visited tourist context (Ji, Wong, Eves and Scarles, 2016; Ting, de Run, Cheah and Chuah, 2016). It is probable that this ambivalent situation motivates the generation of knowledge and practices which will allow restaurant industry professionals to achieve an attractive and satisfactory gastronomy for the different segments of the tourist flow.

However, although food destination literature is showing a growing interest, there are still some gray areas surrounding the involvement of local food as a tourist attraction, and it requires some reconsideration over the explicative models recently proposed (Choe and Kim, 2018; Levitt, Meng, Zhang and DiPietro, 2017; Ko, Kang, Kang and Lee, 2018; Muhammad *et al.,* 2019). In this sense, the initial objective of this work was to take the two research models elaborated by Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2017) and Wei and Huang (2013) in different contexts to reformulate their nomological approach and connect them to the visitors' satisfaction and outcomes. Indeed, these two models were proposed only as multidimensional constructs of the interest in food and food quality concepts; they have not been addressed afterward as a whole and were not explored as possible candidates for higher-order modeling either.

From another perspective, this study also addresses the cross-segmentation incidence among visitor gender, country of residence, and country of birth on the causal relationships of the research model. Even though we recently obtained various segmentation studies of the target population in food tourism literature (Björk and

Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Cheng and Huang, 2018; Choe and Kim, 2018; Kim, Eve and Scarles, 2009; Levitt, Zhang, DiPietro, and Meng, 2019; Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015; Tsai and Wang, 2017), this research takes advantage of a border context with a consistent proportion of visitors born in the visited country to analyze, for the first time, the possible impacts on consumption behaviors. Beyond the accumulated knowledge on gender incidence in food tourism and hospitality literature (Cheng and Huang, 2018; Kim *et al.,* 2009; Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015), the national or ethnic differences (Choe and Kim, 2018; Fam, Syed Annuar, Tan, Lai, and Ingko, 2019; Peštek, Činjarević, 2014), and the spaces of high migratory transit allow approaching the differences produced by the emotional and cultural charge of visiting the country of birth (Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2015, 2018, 2019).

The Baja California coast, in addition to being the most crossed border in the world, is also a favorite tourist destination for both Mexican nationals and Americans seeking to live a foreign experience a few miles from their homes (Berdell and Ghoshal, 2015; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2015). In these tourist contexts marked by a diversified demand, an experience lived as satisfactory becomes a fact to be considered both in theoretical reflection and in the different actions aimed at increasing tourism consumption in general and in the gastronomic offer in particular. In the theoretical field, the robustness of the proposed research model and the high order constructs approach tend to enhance the exploration and fine-tuning of the dimensions involved so that predictions of satisfaction and intentions can be more efficient, as they are key for developing the local gastronomic activity. In practice, restaurateurs, travel agents, and DMOs will have new references at hand to stimulate the gastronomic tourism activity.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1 Menu selection, local food content and experience as food quality

Food quality defines one of the most important elements f the tourist experience.

Tourism marketing literature is emphatic in underlining its impact on satisfaction which

conditions the intention to repeat and recommend the visit (Björk and Kauppinen-

Räisänen , 2017; Jalilvand, Salimipour, Elyasi and Mohammadi, 2017; Muhammad et

al., 2019; Muskat et al., 2019; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2019). A consensual

characterization of food quality in food tourism literature has not yet been achieved,

regardless of the importance of stimulating tourist consumption, perhaps due to its

contextual and cultural dimensions that seem to be reflected in different studies (Choe

and Kim, 2018; Suntikul et al, 2019). This diversity has been concretely translated by

different conceptual approaches. In the case of Updhyay and Sharma (2014), food

quality was represented by the taste and quality of food factor elaborated with the items

food preparation, hygiene, spices and condiments used, taste and palatability of food;

while for Mohamed et al, (2019) and Suhartanto, Chen, Mohi and Sosianika (2018) it is

a construct of three and seven items, respectively. Food quality was also conceptualized

as the first-order construct of destination food image in Toudert and Bringas (2019) and

even as a mediator between perceived value and intentional behavior in Lee Jin and Lee

(2014). Recently, Ho, Liu, Yuan and Liao (2020) proposed perceived food souvenir

quality as a semantically close variant, represented as second order hierarchic construct

structured by the first-order constructs. For all these cited authors, the literature review

of the perceived food quality suggests questions of importance both for reflection and

for the nomological proposal of its modeling. Firstly, some of the food quality

indicators seem to reflect close and/or intertwined meanings (as in the case of taste and

flavor) that usually generate technical and epistemic complications with structural

equation modeling (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006; Ho *et al.,* 2020). Aside from these drawbacks, there is also low feasibility for the multidimensional complexity exploration of food quality without opting for a higher-order formative modeling, which allows considering not only its intrinsic components but also the trade-off that usually occurs among them (Ho *et al.,* 2020; Steenkamp, 1989).

Having observed the limitations listed in the previous paragraph and because of its thematic and epistemic robustness, three of the four components of food quality, for this study, were chosen from Wei and Huang (2013). Chang, Kwak and Mattila, (2006) and Wei and Huang (2013) used menu selection to define the range of possibilities when choosing food in a varied gastronomic offer. However, visiting diners should have some knowledge of the local food (although relative) when choosing a meal rationally and satisfactorily (Levitt *et al.,* 2017; Rousta and Jamshidi, 2020). This type of experience which defines an important dimension of food quality is enhanced by the level of innovation and creativity provided by a local cuisine, such as unique dishes, authentic or fused with other legendary gastronomies such as Mediterranean or Asian (López-Guzmán, Uribe Lotero, Pérez Gálvez and Ríos Rivera, 2017; Suntikul *et al.,*2019). However, visitors experience local food not only "as an obligation" because nutrition is needed, but also to enjoy the local offer at a price perceived as fair (López-Guzmán *et al.,* 2017; Muhammad, *et al.,* 2019). Theoughout the destinations on the northern Mexican border, we can observe this situation where North American tourists enjoy the advantages of a favorable convertibility that becomes a motivating factor including a gastronomic accessibility mainly to the haute cuisine of the Baja California coast (Berdell and Ghoshal, 2015; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2019).

2.2 Interest in food as food motivation and experience as choice

In the tourist context, interest in food is a complex and multidimensional concept that expresses an anticipated predisposition (similar to attitude) to know and/or experience the gastronomy of a visited destination (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Getz et al., 2014). In this sense, it is a motivational wish for foodies in search of their next gastronomic experience, as well as for other visitors about to choose a specific destination among so many tourist options (López-Guzmán et al., 2017). Interest in food is considered one of the catalytic factors of the tourist flow because initially, it can influence the decision to travel (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; López-Guzmán et al., 2017); during the stay, it impacts on quality perception of the offer and experience at the destination (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Getz et al., 2014; Ron and Timothy, 2013); and finally, it impacts on satisfaction and future intentions once they return home (López-Guzmán et al., 2017; Huang and Hsu, 2009, Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2019).

Interest in food, as a marketing concept, was rarely used in food tourism and hospitality literature. We have found it mainly in the work of López-Guzmán *et al.* (2017) as a segmentation variable to differentiate three types of attitudes *vis-a-vis* local food, and in Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2017) to represent two dimensions defined by food as travel motive and food experience as destination choice. In this latest study, interest in food was only addressed as a conceptual synthesis of the two constructs previously mentioned.

Food motivation translates the importance of local gastronomy, and some of its characteristics are placed forward as main or secondary reasons when taking the decision to travel (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Chen and Huang, 2018; López -Guzmán *et al.,* 2017). In one way or another, food motivation seems to reflect, as Pearce (2013) mentions, a level of desire shown by tourists to consume local food by

necessity or choice, and according to Everett (2016), it is perceived mainly through its flavors, tastes, and events during the gastronomic experience lived in the destination. However, from a more holistic perspective, the originality of the gastronomic proposal has been considered as another motivating factor to undertake a journey focused on food (Del Chiappa, Seijas Giménez and Zapata-Aguirre, 2017; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2019).

While food motivation is presented as the act of choosing the gastronomy of interest, food experience as choice is within the logic of choosing a destination that satisfies this culinary desire (Berbel-Pineda, Palacios-Florencio, Ramírez-Hurtado and Santos-Roldán, 2019; Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). Indeed, more and more tourists are traveling motivated mainly by the prestige of the venue, the curiosity to experience the local food, or returning to enjoy it (Rousta and Jamshidi, 2020; Suntikul *et al.,* 2019; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2019). Over time, the set of cultural dimensions, usually related to the gastronomic experience, was grouped into the category of symbolic as opposed to the mandatory dimensions located mainly in the "physical" support of motivation (Choe and Kim, 2018; Suntikul *et al.,* 2019).

In regard to the interest in gastronomy, López-Guzman et al (2017) show the case of visitors to Guayaquil, Ecuador where they found that at a greater interest in quality corresponds a growing positive perception of food quality; this finding was initially observed by López-Guzmán and Sánchez Cañizares (2012) in the city of Córdova, Spain. Similarly, Russian tourists visiting the Finnish region of south Savo had a favorable perception of food due to a sustained interest in the prior knowledge about the quality in the preparation contexts of the local food (Mynttinen, Logrén, Särkkä-Tirkkonen, Rautiainen, 2015). This type of incidence seems to be verified in different gastronomic contexts, and it is also observed regarding the ties between

interest in food and satisfaction. Chang *et al.* (2006) found that patients in Korean hospitals had higher patient satisfaction when they could choose among different food options from a selective menu program. Indeed, as confirmed by López-Guzmán *et al.* (2017), a greater food interest is supported by the knowledge of food, and its preparation context significantly influences the satisfaction of diners.

Considering the theoretical discussion developed previously, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Interest in food has a positive impact on food quality.

H2: Interest in food has a positive impact on satisfaction.

2.3 Food quality, satisfaction and outcomes

Perceived food quality defines one of the transcendent factors of the tourist experience with a proven incidence on the satisfaction which conditions the decision to return and/or recommend the visited establishment (Ha and Jang, 2010; Muhammad *et al.,* 2019; Muskat *et al.,* 2019). In fact, when the expectation for local food has been met, tourists demonstrate their satisfaction, and their attitude becomes positive toward the destination (Muhammad *et al.,* 2019). From another perspective, a low predisposition to experience food in the destination and/or an unsatisfactory quality can be reflected in neophobic attitudes towards local gastronomy and even in rejection behaviors for the visited destination (Ji *et al.,* 2016; Ting *et al.,* 2016).

In practical terms, the continuous quest for a better quality of the gastronomic offer has become an important challenge for restaurants and DMOs who seek to maintain high levels of visitor satisfaction (Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015; Tsai and Wang, 2017). These efforts are generally rewarded by positive externalities for consumption due to the strengthening of loyalty and the use of word-of-

mouth (WOM) to recommend the visited destination and local cuisine to family and

friends (Ji et al. , 2016; Muskat et al., 2019; Muhammad et al., 2019).

Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H3: Food quality has a positive impact on satisfaction.

H4: Satisfaction has a positive impact on intentional behavior.

2.4 Gender, country of birth and residence

The practice of eating, especially in a tourist context, constitutes a multidimensional

event composed by nutritional, cultural, and sensory aspects –among others- that

influence the creation and recreation of different gastronomic experiences in the

destination visited (Choe and Kim, 2018; Ko et al., 2018; Suntikul et al., 2019;

Updhyay and Sharma, 2014). These supposed differences in behavior toward local food

have been a stimulus for reflection and for profiling food tourists which allow working

on a satisfactory gastronomic product (Chen and Huang, 2018; Levitt et al., 2019). In

this sense, food tourists and other visitors become segmentation subjects under different

demographic, psychological, and sociological logics aimed at detecting and then

instrumentalizing consumption behaviors within the framework of a winning tourist

proposal (Getz et al., 2014; Levitt et al., 2019; Suhartanto et al., 2018).

Food tourism segmentation has been scrutinized from different angles including

sociodemographic characteristics (Chen and Huang, 2018; González, Curtis, Kim and

Washburn and Shirsat, 2019; Kim, Eves and Scarles, 2009), ethnic or national origin of

tourists (Choe and Kim 2018; Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015), types of

visitors (Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago,

2019), and behaviors and attitudes of diners, among others (Björk and Kauppinen-

Räisänen, 2016; Levitt *et al.,* 2019; López-Guzmán, *et al.,* 2017; Tsai and Wang, 2017).

Regarding gender differences, Kim *et al.* (2009) found that women more than men are willing to try local food, and according to Chen and Huang (2018), they incorporate this experience as an important travel benchmark. On the contrary, Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015) found no gender differences in the gastronomic motivation as a cause for traveling to two analyzed tourist destinations.

In their analysis on nationality groups, Choe and Kim (2008) found differences in the evaluation of ethnic food due mainly to their cultural backgrounds. These discrepancies were also observed in some dimensions of local cuisine image when comparing tourists from west and east European countries without finding differences in overall satisfaction with the gastronomic experience (Peštek, Činjarević, 2014). In even more distant cultural contexts, Fam *et al.* (2019) observed that food familiarity was not important when choosing their food in the case of Chinese and European diners. Gender and nationality in a border tourism context opens an interesting research perspective induced by the impact of migration in the structuring of visitor flows (Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2018).

3. Data and research methodology

3.1 Sampling and data collection

The survey was conducted from July 08 to September 25, 2016 in three areas of the coastal region of the state of Baja California following a random statistical design which allowed the implementation of 1,346 complete questionnaires with a 95% confidence level and a $\pm$ 5% error in the universe of diners. The three areas chosen to apply the survey (Tijuana, Puerto Nuevo and Valle de Guadalupe) are regional benchmarks for a new innovative cuisine that finds its brand in the fusion of local ingredients and authentic flavors (Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2018, 2019). In a very

short time, this new gastronomic offer managed to attract increasing flows of national and international visitors, taking advantage of the physical and ethnic closeness to people living in US border cities.

The establishments, where the survey was to be applied, were selected to form a comprehensive inventory using the information from specialized websites (Tripadvisor, Foursquare and Yelp). These establishments were later classified into three groups composed of the more prestigious and/or higher priced restaurants, the typical and/or country food restaurants, and the economical restaurants and taco stands. Then, these establishments were randomly selected and a quota of questionnaires was assigned, considering the level of representativeness of each group in the local and regional offer. The questionnaires were applied face-to-face, exclusively to tourists and excursionists over 15 years of age once they finished their food consumption. During the interviews, we performed zonal recounts of diners at different days and times. The instrument has 31 main questions and the ramifications were distributed into six sections.

For the validation of the conceptual model, we chose the use of PLS modeling with hierarchical component models (HCMs) and a type II reflective-formative composition with the repeated indicator approach (Riel; Henseler, Kemény and Sasovova, 2017). Since the study objectives do not contemplate inferential goals, the number of questionnaires involved is far greater than the number of cases required to apply PLS modeling. In fact, in this study with 1346 cases, the sample calculation with G * Power software calibrated for social sciences (medium effect size: 0.15, power: 0.8 and significance level: 0.05) yielded a minimum sample size of 85. (Marcoulides and Saunders, 2006).

3.2 Measuring variables and scales

The research model shown in Figure 1 consists of 20 manifest variables structured around two higher-order models and two latent variables (see table 2). Of the total of the manifest variables used, 16 items were linked to the second order constructs interest in food and food quality. Food quality as a first order construct was linked to the three dimensions: menu selection, food content quality, and food experience, and they were found significant by Wei and Huang (2013) when used as latent variables conceptually linked to international conference food quality. Interest in food was related to two first order constructs: food motivation and food experience as choice, which were used by Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, (2017) as antecedents of destination food experience in a model seeking to explain the experience and satisfaction of the visitor. In this research model, we used the two latent variables satisfaction and intentional behavior where each one was characterized by two items, addressed by several authors (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2017; Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo; 2015; Seo, Yun and Kim, 2017; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2019; Tsai and Wang; 2017).

A one to ten scale was chosen considering the cultural context of the interviewees and especially the administrative interest to use the data from the survey in a framework compatible with other sources. Regardless of the fact that it is more common to opt for a five or seven point likert scale in studies with similar themes, we consider that when choosing one scale over another, the fundamental aspects of the study context should be taken into consideration especially in marketing research (Wittink and Bayer, 1994; Hedlund, 2014).
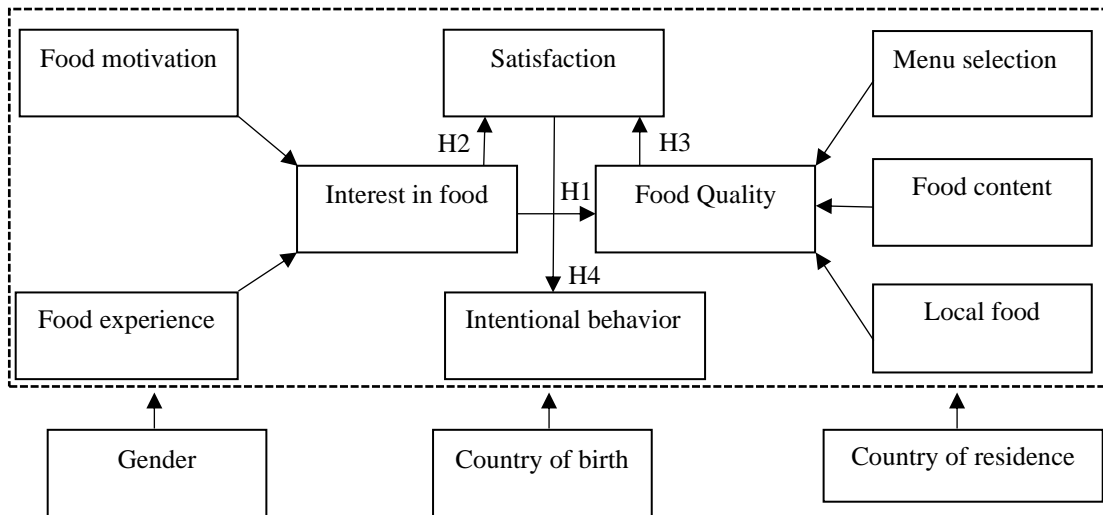
Figure 1: The proposed conceptual model and hypotheses

4. Results

The surveyed diners were mostly men, mainly married, and above 25 years of age. They were employees or business owners (56.54%); these categories usually exhibit moderate to high income, especially for US visitors, which provides them a purchasing power in Baja California destinations (Berdell and Ghoshal, 2015; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2019). Roughly about a third of the diners are tourists who stayed at least one night in the destinations visited while excursionists constituted the majority of visitors; an approximate 27% ratio represents first-timers, those visiting the analyzed destinations for the first time. The main reason for visiting is divided between those who visited for leisure, recreation, and vacation, and those who did it for the enjoyment of gastronomy and wine; both managed to gather just over 80% of the diners interviewed.

Table 1. Summary statistics for overall sample.

Country of birth	%	Occupation	%
Mexico	73.68	Directive or executive	12.48
USA	23.57	Employee	26.37
Other	2.74	Business owner	30.17
Country of residence		Self-employed	4.18
México	60.20	Student	5.68
USA	38.23	Retired	4.26
Other	1.56	Other	16.86
Gender		**Visitor type**	
Male	55.07	Tourists	37.66
Female	44.92	Excursionists	62.33
Age ranking (years)		**Visit frequency**	
15-24	10.57	First time	27.68
25-34	31.09	2 to 6 times a year	39.66
35-44	24.54	1 to 3 times a month	18.76
45-54	17.99	1 to 2 times a week	13.88
Over 55	17.78	Other	13.9
Marital status		**Main purpose of the visit**	
Married	52.26	Leisure, recreation and vacation	44.84
Single	37.55	Gastronomy and wine	35.81
Divorced/Widower	4.38	Visiting relatives and/or friends	10.53
Other	5.81	Other	8.79

4.1 Assessing measurement model

The measurement model assessment shows acceptable values higher than 0.6 of the loadings of the reflective construct items shown in table 2 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρA) indicator presents values higher than the recommended 0.7, where the composite reliability indicators (CR) and cronbach´s alpha (Cα) follow the same path (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015b). Regarding the formative constructs interest in food and food quality which are the product of the second estimation stage, we found that the weights and signs were appropriate, and the obtained values of variance inflation factors (VIF) exclude the multicollinearity incidence (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015; Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006).

Table 2: Reliability of the involved items.

Constructs/Items	Loadings/ Weights	t-value	VIF***	(ρA)	(CR)	(Cα)
Interest in food				0.792	0.786	0.781
Food motivation**	0.237	21.960	2.767	0.702	0.711	0.698
V2: Importance of the food taste*	0.708	21.072				
V3: Importance of the food originality*	0.767	24.19				
Food experience as choice**	0.204	24.830	2.767	0.797	0.751	0.744
V4: Importance of the place's prestige*	0.765	27.172				
V5: Importance of the chef's prestige*	0.727	13.666				
V6: importance to know the local food*	0.688	22.565				
Food quality				0.90	0.907	0.906
Menu selection**	0.399	37.606	2.643	0.806	0.803	0.826
V17: Food portion sizes*	0.722	27.243				
V11: knowledge of local dishes*	0.826	42.81				
V22: A wide variety of dishes*	0.816	35.922				
Food content quality**	0.213	19.331	2.741	0.786	0.786	0.786
V12: Freshness of ingredients*	0.702	24.606				
V13: Organic ingredients' quality*	0.787	29.084				
V14: The use of local products*	0.685	24.619				
V23: Hygiene in food processing*	0.694	22.314				
Local food experience**	0.235	23.516	2.877	0.806	0.803	0.804
V15: Food value for money*	0.722	29.262				
V16: Food innovation and creativity*	0.757	34.344				
V19: Prices*	0.681	24.392				
V20: Fusion of different cuisines*	0.712	30.742				
Satisfaction				0.845	0.845	0.845
V7: Gastronomic experience	0.845	34.201				
V8: Dining satisfaction	0.865	40.019				
Intentional behavior				0.902	0.845	0.893
V9: Willingness to recommend to family and friends	0.946	62.361				
V10: Willingness to return	0.853	25.361				

*First stage indicator loadings. **Second stage indicator weights. *** Variance inflation factor. (ρA): Dijkstra-Henseler's rho. (CR): Composite reliability. (Cα): Cronbach's alpha.

The average variance extracted values (AVE) are greater than 0.5, testifying to a conclusive convergent validity with the exhibition of more than 50% of the variance related indicators (Fornell and Larcker, 1987). Meanwhile, the evaluation of the discriminant validity was conducted using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations

(HTMT) indicator which showed values lower than one, indicating a clear distinction between the factors involved (Henseler *et al.,* 2015).

Table 3. Convergent and discriminant validity (AVE and HTMT).

	AVE*	Food motivation	Food quality	Intentional behavior
Interest in food	0.626	-	-	-
Food quality	0.671	0.6191		-
Intentional behavior	0.811	0.193	0.323	-
Satisfaction	0.732	0.424	0.641	0.77

* Variance inflation factor.

4.2 Assessing the structural model

The analyzed overall model is characterized by a geodesic discrepancy d_G and unweighted least squares discrepancy d_{ULS} of the goodness of model fit below the discrepancies of the current model at a 95% level (Dijistra and Henseler, 2015a). The discrepancies in question were addressed by the approximate model fit criterion measured with the standardized root square residual (SRMR) which has a value of 0.013 (HI95: 0.006, HI99: 0.009), located below the cut-off value of 0.08, indicating an acceptable fit of the research model (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

The evaluation of the variance explained by the fluctuation of exogenous variables (R^2) showed acceptable values higher than 0.19 (Chin, 1998). Indeed, the constructs food quality ($R^2 = 0.203$), satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.261$), and intentional behavior ($R2 = 0.603$) were found with a weak prediction power for the first two and moderate in the case of the latter.

The four hypotheses of the model were validated using bootstrap with a 5000 resampling (Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin and Lauro, 2005), finding all of them significant (P <0.001). Similarly, the total effects were also significant, while the impact of a specific predictor construct on an endogenous construct evaluated with the effect of size (f^2) was found moderate for H1 and H3, weak for H2, and strong for H4 according

to Cohen (1988). The evaluation of indirect effects was significant (P <0.001) for the impact of food motivation and food quality on intentional behavior.

Table 4. Significance of the structural model relationships

Model relationships	β	t-test	Total effects	t-test	Indirect effects	t-test	Cohen's f^2
H1: Interest in food -> Food quality	0.344	11.382***	0.344	11.382***			0.163
H2: Interest in food -> Satisfaction	0.133	3.795***	0.242	6.78***	0.11	5.892***	0.109
H3: Food quality -> Satisfaction	0.319	7.786***	0.319	7.786***			0.153
H4: Satisfaction -> Intentional behavior	0.777	28.057***	0.77	28.057***			0.752
Food motivation -> Intentional behavior			0.188	6.833***	0.188	6.833***	
Food quality -> Intentional behavior			0.248	7.085***	0.248	7.085***	

***Significant at P< 0.001.

4.3 Multi-group analysis

The evaluation of diners' gender moderated effect and country of origin was conducted using the non-parametric significance test based on bootstrapping results of the PLS-MGA method developed in Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics (2009) and Sarstedt, Henseler and Ringle (2011).

The incidence of the analyzed segments in the causal relationships of the research model exhibited a single significant difference involving the gender impact in the relationship of interest in food on perceived food quality (see table 5). The crossing of categories highlights a significant difference between men residing in Mexico and women residing in the United States for the relationship between interest in food and food quality. This significant difference was also observed between men/women born in Mexico and women born in the US.

Table 5. Multi-group analysis. Test results.

Relationships	Gender: Females (β1) Vs. Males (β2)		Country of residence: Mexico (β3) Vs. USA (β4)		Country of birth: Mexico (β5) Vs. USA (β6)	
	β1-β2	P-Value	β3-β4	P-Value	β5-β6	P-Value
H1	**0.129**	0.015	0.065	0.851	0.076	0.847
H2	0.021	0.382	0.086	0.128	0.116	0.103
H3	0.073	0.823	0.046	0.707	0.076	0.775
H4	0.049	0.174	0.015	0.395	0.03	0.348

Country of residence: β1: Males-USA, β2: Males-Mexico, β3: Females-Mexico, β4: Females-USA

Relationships	β2-β1	P-Value	β2-β4	P-Value	β3-β1	P-Value	β3-β4	P-Value
H1	0.071	0.822	**0.207**	0.99	0.08	0.172	0.056	0.724
H2	0.123	0.096	0.057	0.283	0.087	0.195	0.021	0.418
H3	0.022	0.571	0.029	0.385	0.085	0.76	0.035	0.615
H4	0.045	0.747	0.016	0.601	0.047	0.253	0.076	0.129

Country of birth: β1: Mexico-Males, β2: Mexico-Females, β3: USA-Males, β4: USA-Females

Relationships	β1-β3	P-Value	β1-β4	P-Value	B2-β3	P-Value	B2-β4	P-Value
H1	0.04	0.667	**0.284**	0.996	0.077	0.199	**0.167**	0.941
H2	0.093	0.201	0.166	0.083	0.1	0.196	0.173	0.084
H3	0.034	0.595	0.05	0.666	0.126	0.818	0.141	0.876
H4	0.013	0.474	0.028	0.676	0.07	0.248	0.03	0.353

Significant at the 5% probability of error level when the pValue < 0.05 or > 0.95.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In view of the growing importance local food is gaining as a tourist attraction (Peštek & Činjarević, 2014; Sanchez-Cañizares & Castillo-Canalejo, 2015; Seo and Yun, 2015; Tsai & Wang, 2017), there are still few studies seeking to elucidate its impact on the different facets of the travel experience and even less in following and/or delving into the existing explanatory models (Choe & Kim, 2018; Levitt et al., 2017; Ko et al., 2018; Muhammad et al., 2019). The first objective of this work was to structure interest in food and food quality as higher-order models that had been previously addressed as simple constructs, and then evaluate their impacts on satisfaction and visitor intentions. The second objective was to explore the cross moderation of gender, nationality, and country of birth in the proposed research model.

The causal relationship of food quality and interest in food significantly influenced satisfaction which in turn affects future intentions of visitors in a robust manner (Kim *et al.,* 2017; López-Guzmán *et al.,* 2017; Muhammad, *et al.,* 2019; Suhartanto *et al.,* 2018). The second order constructs used also had an indirect and significant impact on the intentional behavior of visitors, thus corroborating previous works elaborated with other nomological proposals (Berbel-Pineda, 2019; Muskat, *et al.,* 2019; Levitt *et al.,* 2019). In the same way, the incidence of interest in food on perceived food quality resulted positive and significant in this study; similar findings were reached by authors such as Mynttinen *et al.* (2015) and López-Guzmán *et al.* (2017) and López-Guzmán and Sánchez Cañizares (2012). Indeed, a greater interest in local gastronomy seems to generate a significant perception of food quality, a construct traditionally connected to satisfaction and outcomes (Muhammad, et al., 2019; Suhartanto et al., 2018; Updhyay & Sharma, 2014). This affirmation coincides with Suhartanto et al. (2018), in the sense that diners seem to care more for quality than for motivation when deciding their loyalty and the use of Word-of-mouth (WOM).

Considering the analyzed segments and their impact on the dimension food quality and interest in food, no gender differences were found except in the menu selection on food quality with a more relevant weight in female visitors. Kim *et al.* (2009) and Cheng and Huang (2018) also observed that women showed more interest than men to enjoy the local cuisine in the destinations visited. However, Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015) argued that this type of gender impact is not generalized, given that both men and women showed, for example, the same gastronomic motivation to travel.

From the visitors' country of residence segmentation perspective, some significant differences were found only in the dimensions of food content quality and

menu selection of food quality; these differences favor US residents in the first and Mexican nationals in the second. Furthermore, the same outcome also occurs in the segmentation by country of birth, that is, the background of having been born in the visited country does not seem to show more differences than living in another country. In other words, contrary to what was found by Choe and Kim (2018), the differences found in the present study do not seem to be entirely the product of cultural backgrounds. In this sense, assimilation as a social practice is often involved throughout the Mexico-US border space (Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2015, 2018).

Regarding the impact of the segmentations by gender, country of residence, and birth on the causal relationships of the research model, a single gender difference was found in the incidence of interest in food on perceived food quality (H1) with 1.44 times greater impact on women (β_2/β_1). However, the crossing of categories between gender and country of residence yielded a single significant difference in H1 between men residing in Mexico and women residing in the United States, with a 1.9 times higher incidence in women than in men (β_4/β_2). This low incidence in the research model was also observed by Suhartanto *et al.* (2018) in the case of locals and visitors, stating that both are motivated by similar culinary experiences. The same explanation can be considered plausible in the border context when considering the geographical and ethnic proximity of visitors (Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2015, 2018). As for country of birth, the differences observed between men/women born in Mexico and women born in the US had an impact of 2.13 and 1.45 times higher in women born in the US than in men/women born in Mexico respectively (β_4/β_2 and β_4/β_3). This finding suggests that being born in the visited country generates a lower incidence of interest in food on perceived food quality compared to women born in the US. Considering the greater interest in local food which characterizes women (Kim *et al.,* 2009; Cheng and Huang,

2018), it seems to indicate that a higher identification and knowledge of the gastronomic offer at the visited destination reduces the impact of the interest in food on the perceived food quality.

5.1 Theoretical and managerial implications

The first-time approach on interest in food and food quality as a second order model constitutes a logical consequence of its previous instrumentation in the form of validated and efficient constructs (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Wei and Huang; 2013). In this sense, the results obtained from this study were very satisfactory, verifying that both interest in food and food quality are actually higher-order constructs that can express the complexity of these two concepts, as argued in close thematic and nomological contexts by Ho *et al.* (2020) and Steenkamp (1989). These findings and the other arguments provided, contribute to justify a conceptual update of these two constructs.

From another perspective, the segmentation by gender, country of birth and residence reveals significant differences structured around the American female diner and their vis-à-vis. Indeed, the unique incidence of American women in the causal relationships of the analyzed conceptual model contributes to the understanding of gender differences in the framework of an affiliation to a gastronomy visited as a tourist.

Individually or as a whole, the findings of this work show a potential to stimulate, in practice, the local gastronomic offer and its power to attract tourists. In effect, to achieve higher outcomes, restaurateurs and other food distributors should strengthen the gastronomic experience by taking advantage of regional high-quality products bearing the Baja California seal. The incorporation of a wide variety of wines, local cheese, sea products, and organic produce in an authentic cuisine opens the

destination to diverse influences as it stimulates the interest and gastronomic motivation of visitors. A very important task for DMOs is the strengthening of factors that motivate the gastronomic offer by taking advantage of the local food quality to reinforce the destination brand image, aiming toward a greater tourist satisfaction and above all harvesting the direct and indirect impacts of visitors' future intentions (Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015; Tsai and Wang, 2017). In this sense, products like Puerto Nuevo lobster, gourmet cuisine, and wines from Valle de Guadalupe, for example, can gradually become structural products of the tourist experience in Baja California. The search for a greater incidence of interest in food on perceived food quality, which mainly determines satisfaction and future visits, goes through preserving the impact levels found in American women, and above all, it increases this incidence in Mexican men and women. This can also be done with more integrated tourism products by awarding coupons and vouchers that allow access to unprecedented gastronomic experiences for the visitor born in Mexico. The same strategy can also be implemented to stimulate the interest of American men by emphasizing gastronomic experiences specially designed for couples and / or to celebrate special events.

5.2 Limitations and recommendations

Because the study is located on the northern border of Mexico, it could suggest that the results are contextual, and therefore, possible variations are suggested with other border or non-border destinations. In fact, the Mexican American border has a consistent flow of tourists who have family backgrounds in either side of the border, contrary to other regions where these types of visitors are scarce and do not justify the implementation of specific marketing strategies to stimulate their tourism consumption. In this sense, it is advisable to replicate this study in regions where there is a significant diaspora abroad and where the visited destination needs to improve the experience for this tourist

segment. From another perspective, it is also significant to continue exploring the gender differences associated with issues of local and regional affiliation in the destination visited aiming to structure a specific gastronomic offer.

In practical terms, restaurateurs as well as food distributors must pay special attention to maintain the perception of food content quality at a high level for women and men. This opportunity can also be used to increase the same incidence in men born in Mexico through gastronomic options focused on inclusive experiences to be enjoyed as a couple or as a family. This same recommendation will be more successful if the nutritional content is designed taking into consideration the American visitor since its selective aspects are more oriented to the local diner. As recommended by Suntikul *et al.* (2019) and Velvet (2016), DMOs will make an important contribution by focusing a part of the promotion plans - at least - on local food and its specific qualities.

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