

Food Documentaries as a Tool for Cultural Promotion of Lahore: A Tourist Perspective

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24312/ucp-jmc.03.01.503>

Abstract

This research examines the role of food in promoting cultural heritage, with a particular focus on how street food and food documentaries contribute to the cultural promotion of Lahore, Pakistan. The research explores how street food serves as a medium for image-building at both national and international levels, emphasizing the ways in which visual storytelling particularly through documentaries enhances cultural visibility and tourist engagement. A qualitative research design was employed, with thematic analysis conducted on in-depth interviews from three foreign and three local tourists from Pakistan. In addition, two popular YouTube documentaries “100 Hours in Lahore, Pakistan!” and “Ultimate 16-Hour Pakistani Food Tour in Lahore, Pakistan!” were analysed to understand how Lahore’s street food culture is represented to a global audience. The Fits-Like-A-Glove choice theory and the Uses and gratification theory served as the conceptual foundation for the research. Interview protocol was designed as tool for data collection for desired study. The findings of the study revealed that cuisine is closely related to cultural heritage, gastronomy plays a significant role in promoting a city's or country's culture. The analysis of the documentaries

demonstrated how visually rich depictions of street food its preparation, local context, and sensory appeal significantly amplify cultural messaging, offering an immersive pre-travel experience to potential tourists. Tourists often seek to taste the essence of a culture through its cuisine, shaped by regional variations and historical influences. Tourists look to taste the essence of a culture through its cuisine due to regional variations in climate and other variables. Street food also has significant economic importance since it promotes the preservation of the region's culinary and cultural legacy, which boosts tourism revenues and strengthened links with the territory. The cuisine of Lahore is a fusion of Punjabi cuisine, Mughal cuisine, and street-style culinary traditions emerges as both a sensory and symbolic experience for tourists. Documentaries serve as cultural artifacts that reinforce these connections, making food a unifying force and an effective tool for cultural promotion.

Keywords: Street Food, Visual Storytelling, Food Documentaries, Cultural Heritage.

1. Introduction

Food is something that not only feeds human appetites but also reflects a region's culture, way of life, organic productivity, environment, and preferences. Every region has its own distinct cuisine. People from diverse cultures are increasingly interacting more due to technological advancements. Nevertheless, they started to incorporate a lot of cultural norms and beliefs. Eating is essential. Every human being needs food to survive. Therefore, adopting values has an impact in adopting food. Since knowledge has advanced, people are now beginning to appreciate other regional cuisines, and demand for regional foods is rising dramatically (Stajcic, 2013). Lahore is one of the top food centers in the nation, serving a wide range of food to both native consumers and foreign tourists. That not only results in economic growth but also integrates several food cultures in one location. It is not much simpler to integrate culture and provide the greatest food for its region of origin (Ali, 2020).

According to a study, since it reflects historical roots, street food has social and cultural implications. Additionally, it is stated that despite the

advent of modern fast food consumption, street food is still consumed globally and traditionally (Sezgin, 2020). It is feasible to research why people travel by dividing the forces of attraction that the various tourist destinations exert on the traveler from the push factors that generate a desire to take a vacation. In the sense that society is built around food, eating is an experience that each of us has every day. You must "eat" like it in order to be one of those establishments. The meals we have had there and the people we have shared them with are what come to mind when we think of a location (Urry, 2017).

Ma et al. (2019) claims that every day, around 2.5 billion individuals consume street food worldwide. Street food production and sales have assimilated into daily life, particularly in the culture of Far Eastern cuisine. In a book named as "Street Food. Culture, Economy, Health and Governance" Part IV, (Chapters 11 and 12) examines the cultural aspect of street food trade and consumption. They are represented in society through both visual and written performances and figurative purposes. Food sold on the street occupies a special place that is straddled by history and present, urban and rural, real and virtual, and real and imagined. Societal identities and meaningful social understandings of property rights are established in this setting. Street Food According to Karim and Halim, are a culinary wonder, a fusion of Malay, Chinese, Indian, Mumak, and Nyanja cuisines. Traditional street meals continue to exist practically unchanged, despite the growing impact of western culinary tastes and flavors. Vendors who possess the knowledge of this not only gastronomic but cultural tradition guard and preserve them.

Recent studies highlight how food documentaries serve as a medium for constructing and communicating national and cultural identities. By blending visual storytelling with narratives of heritage and authenticity, documentaries such as Street Food (Fried et al., 2019) and Ugly Delicious (Capotosto et al., 2018) present cuisine as a cultural symbol shaped by tradition, migration, and globalization. These films do more than showcase food—they narrate histories, celebrate diversity, and invite audiences to engage with cultures through gastronomy. The way that food films are framed visually makes them useful for showcasing a city's food legacy to viewers around the world. This is especially true of Lahore's vibrant street food scene.

This paper examines how documentaries with a food subject can effectively promote interpersonal relationships, culinary culture, and sociocultural identities. According to Suna and Alvarez (2021), these videos serve as cultural texts that showcase regional cuisines, bring back endangered culinary traditions, and use food narratives to reflect geopolitical realities. They are more than just entertainment. These visual media enrich cultural awareness and promote regional culinary heritage by presenting food as a cultural asset. The notion that documentaries on street cuisine in Lahore can be effective cultural tools that promote both local and global appreciation is supported by this (Latip et al., 2024).

Current research emphasizes how important regional food is to maintaining cultural identity and advancing sustainable growth. Traditional culinary traditions can support regional development and cultivate cultural values (Chukwurah et al., 2025). This study investigates how street food can be used as a potent instrument for national and worldwide image-building. It draws attention to the importance of visual storytelling in raising cultural awareness and encouraging more visitor interaction, especially in culinary documentaries. These documentaries enhance national identities, draw attention from around the world, and promote culinary heritage by highlighting regional foods and their cultural relevance. This is in line with the expanding understanding that food is a cultural icon that influences stories and perceptions internationally.

2. Objectives

The research aims:

- To explore the cultural Promotion of Pakistan through documentaries based on street food of Lahore.
- To explore the tourist perspective about depiction of street food of Lahore in documentaries.
- To explore the role of food documentaries in image building of Lahore at both national and international level.

3. Research Question

RQ1: How Lahori cuisine depicted in food documentaries helps in cultural promotion of Pakistan at national and international level?

4. Literature Review

According to Callao and Ruisánchez (2018) explores in his research that food not only satisfied human appetites but also reflects a region's culture, lifestyle, organic productivity, environment, and preferences. Every country has a unique culinary heritage, and the adoption of values influences the types of food consumed. With the passage of time, people are increasingly appreciating other regional cuisines, and the demand for such foods is rising dramatically. Given food's importance to both our health and cultural identity, it is crucial to focus on understanding its cultural and social significance. The research highlights Lahore as one of Pakistan's key food hubs, offering a diverse range of cuisines to both domestic and international visitors. This not only supports the economy but also fosters the integration of various gastronomic cultures in one place.

Street food is constantly growing in its popularity, easily available for quick consumption, and offers entrepreneurial opportunities with modest startup costs. It is affordable, practical, and often made using fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Consumptions decisions are only understandable in the context of their culture. (Rachwal-Mueller, 2024) Culture acts as a 'prism' through which people view products and define their own and others' behaviors. Culture is considered as the collective memory of society, encompassing the accumulated meanings, rituals, norms, and traditions shared by its members. These elements collectively shape culture, which in turn defines individuals, communities, social organizations, and political and economic systems.

Pervez et al. (2017) claims in his research Lahore is a special place. The colorful history of the Old City of Lahore is still very much alive today, just as it was during the reigns of Akbar and Ramjet Singh. Lahore's street culture is extremely diverse in all respects. The Old City of Lahore's cuisine,

entertainment, and professional expertise have distinctive tastes and standards that have developed over the years.

The majority of studies have determined that street food is clean, hygienic, and of acceptable quality. Young consumers had worse food safety knowledge and safe food preparation practice scores than adults, Sert and Kapusuz discovered that 75 percent of participants liked street food on occasion and 18.9% on a regular basis. While street food intake preference scores were low in participants who consumed it 1–3 times a year, they were high in participants who eat it daily in the current study (Sahin et al., 2016).

Malik (2006) stated in his research The people of Lahore are often food enthusiasts. They adore all cuisines, both traditional and trendy. Generally speaking, there are stores, carts, and even mid-shift arrangements for a variety of food items all across the city, but especially in the Old City. These things are nearly impossible to count. While Shahi Mohallah and Luxurni Chowk are also found in older areas of Lahore, Gawalmandi is known for its Food Street. The effects of visual storytelling techniques through documentary films in *A Bite of China*, focusing on the techniques which influence audience engagement with Chinese food culture. According to the study, certain aspects of the story, such as conflict, are crucial in increasing the audience's level of media satisfaction. By using compelling storytelling techniques, the documentary fosters a deeper understanding of Chinese culinary traditions and their cultural significance. This underscores the potential of food documentaries as tools for cultural promotion, suggesting that similar approaches could be applied to documentaries on Lahore's street food, enhancing its cultural visibility both nationally and internationally.

5. Theoretical Framework

The Fits-Like-A-Glove (FLAG) theory provides useful insights into how individual choices, particularly in the context of food and travel, are influenced by historical and social factors. According to Shakeel (2023), this model implies that choices are not made in a vacuum but rather are intricately linked to individual's prior experiences and the socio-cultural environment at the time. Tourists, much like locals, are motivated by their habitual choices and preferences when deciding what to eat, influenced by both their personal

needs and the social norms of their home environment. Moors (2021) further asserts that tourists' decisions are often destination-driven rather than activity-driven, meaning that they may not consciously plan for specific activities but instead engage in those that align closely with their usual behaviors or preferences once they arrive. This theoretical framework helps explain why tourists may select activities or food options that mirror their everyday routines, reflecting a connection between past experiences and current choices.

6. Methodology

This research employed thematic analysis, a qualitative technique used to identify and interpret patterns within data. Thematic analysis is a versatile method that can be used independently or in combination with other qualitative approaches, such as grounded theory or discourse analysis, allowing for a deeper understanding of how tourists engage with and perceive Lahore's street food culture (Khuram, 2024).

In order to ensure a wide range of perspectives on the function of food documentaries in promoting culture, the study focused on both local tourists visiting Lahore from other parts of Pakistan and foreign tourists living overseas. A sample of three local and three foreign tourists was selected to achieve a balanced representation of views, which is typical for qualitative studies focusing on in-depth insights rather than large sample sizes. Participants were chosen based on specific criteria, including demographic factors such as age, nationality, language, and prior experience with Lahore's street food, enabling a focused exploration of how various groups perceive the cultural significance of these culinary practices.

6.1 Research Design

In order to get complete understanding into tourists' opinions and perceptions of Lahore's street food culture and its portrayal in visual media, a qualitative technique was selected. A detailed examination of the cultural connotations, emotional reactions, and behavioural incentives related to culinary tourism was made possible by this method.

6.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Purposive sampling was used to select the sample for data collection. Total Six participants were selected: three tourists were from Pakistan i.e. Peshawar and Islamabad and three foreign tourists were from the USA, Germany, and the UK. Participants were chosen based on their interaction with visual content about food and their past exposure to street food in Lahore. A balanced representation of viewpoints from various cultural and geographic backgrounds was ensured by this diverse sample.

6.3 Data Collection Methods

6.3.1 In-Depth Interviews

An interview protocol guide was designed to guide in-depth discussions with participants. Their experiences with street food in Lahore, their views on cultural identity, and how food documentaries influenced their travel and food choices were the main topics of the questions.

Table 6.1 *Inclusion criteria of Respondents*

Respondent No.	Gender	Age	Residence
R1	Female	45	UK
R2	Female	35	USA
R3	Male	30	Germany
R4	Female	25	Pakistan (Islamabad)
R5	Male	46	Pakistan (Peshawar)
R6	Male	31	Pakistan (Peshawar)

6.3.2 Documentary Analysis

The two popular YouTube documentaries titled as "Ultimate 16-Hour Pakistani Food Tour in Lahore, Pakistan!" and "100 Hours in Lahore, Pakistan!" were utilized for qualitative content analysis. The comprehensive representation of Lahore's food landscape and its broad popularity among viewers globally led to the selection of these documentaries.

These YouTube-based travel documentaries were selected for their high viewership, immersive content, and detailed visual portrayal of Lahore's street food scene. A qualitative content analysis was conducted, focusing on visual representation, narrative structure, depiction of culinary practices, and the ways in which food is framed as an element of cultural identity. Key segments featuring food preparation, vendor interactions, cultural commentary, and audience engagement were thematically analysed.

6.4 Data Analysis

Using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis, the following steps were applied:

- i. **Familiarization:** In order to gain a complete understanding, the documentaries and transcripts were reviewed several times.
- ii. **Generating Initial Codes:** Important terms and patterns were manually coded with an emphasis on sensory, emotional, and cultural aspects.
- iii. **Searching for Themes:** In order to more effectively achieve the goals of the research, codes were categorized into more general topics.
- iv. **Reviewing Themes:** The themes were improved to ensure consistency and relevance throughout the dataset.
- v. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Themes were named and described with clarity, and each was supported up by examples and quotes that served as examples.
- vi. **Producing the Report:** The final themes were combined to create an organized narrative that answered the research question.

6.4.1 Initial Codes

Following codes were generated from the initial analysis:

- Food's sensory appeal (taste, aroma, atmosphere)
- Cultural traditions and nostalgia
- Visual appeal in documentaries about food
- Social connections and hospitality
- Concerns about the hygiene of street food
- Food as a driving force behind travelling
- Instagram and YouTube's impact on food choices
- Building a national image through food media
- Food identity and regional pride

6.4.2 Themes Developed

The codes were merged into more general themes that clarify how food, culture, and media influence are related:

1. **Food as a Cultural Bridge** - Food as a means for cultural expression and experience
2. **Visual Storytelling as a Tool for Engagement** - The ability of visual media to influence how people perceive food
3. **Street Food as a Tourist Attraction** - A major motivation for travel and adventure is street food
4. **Food Diversity and Identity** - Lahore's food is characterized by its own fusion of traditions
5. **Food Documentaries as Cultural Artifacts** - Documentary stories as means of preserving and advancing culture

6.5 Ethical Considerations

Respondents were informed about the purpose and background of the study before conducting the interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained during the whole research process.

7. Findings & Results

Following are the results obtained from both interviews and documentary analysis:

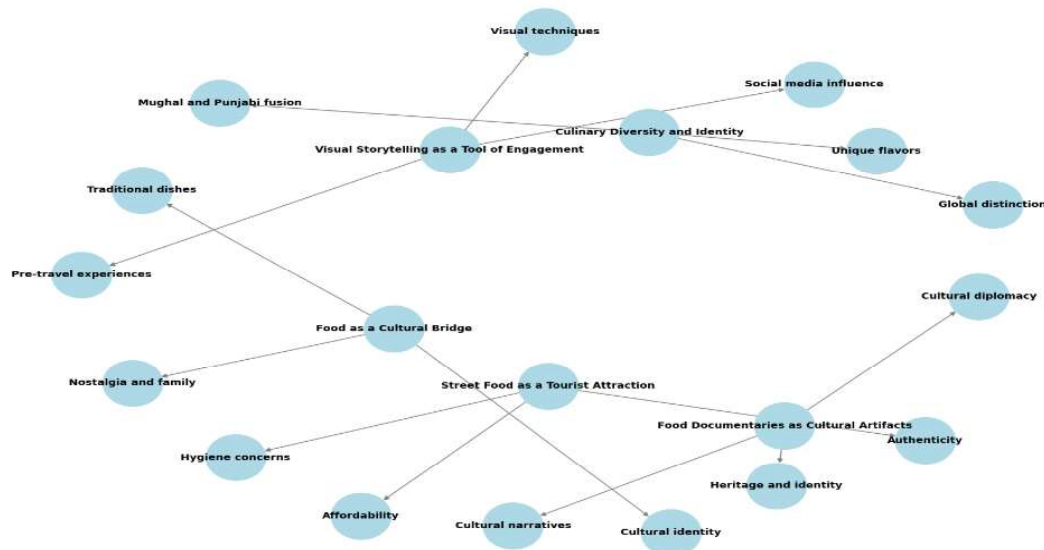


Figure 7.1 Themes Generated

The five main themes found using the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) are graphically represented by the thematic map. To show the layered and linked structure of the findings, each subject is shown as a central node with sub-themes spreading out from it. This framework facilitates the conceptualization of the interplay between many facets of cuisine, culture, and media within the framework of culinary tourism in Lahore.

7.1 Food as a Cultural Bridge

In Lahore, food serves as more than just nutrition; it is a vibrant expression of cultural history. According to the interviews, Tourists regard food as a means of learning about local customs, values, and hospitality. Nihari, Halwa Puri, and Murgh Choley are examples of traditional foods that have become embedded in family memories and societal customs. These dinners, which represent friendliness and warmth, are frequently the first cultural encounters for tourists. This theme also illustrates how food may strengthen bonds

between people. Tourists characterized dining experiences as bringing back fond memories of their families and homes. Sharing meals turns into a way for travelers to experience cultural interaction and become assimilated into the way of life. Thus, food serves as a cultural bridge that cuts over both language and region. The basic regular tastes come out in dhaba street meals. Food needs to be cooked properly in a clean setting that exhibits excellent taste and setting (Batoool, 2025).

Food acts as a soft power tool in cultural tourism, a conveniently accessible and emotionally powerful medium for promoting intercultural understanding and national identity.

When a visitor from the UK visited someone in Lahore, they were served traditional dishes like Nihari, Paye, and Murgh Cholley, which helped them feel at home and a part of the community. Similarly, according to an Islamabadi local visitor, Food is the "prior element to welcome tourists," who emphasized its significance in hospitality and cultural representation.

Another participant talked on the ways that food ties them to family customs, saying that some foods bring back memories of feasts and festivities at home.

7.2 Street Food as a Tourist Attraction

The portrayal of street food in Lahore is one of both culture and cuisine. Tourists like its diversity, authenticity, and affordability. In addition to being places to dine, food areas like Gawalmandi and Anarkali Bazaar have become cultural hubs where history, community, and cuisine all come together.

The appeal of street cuisine is still strong despite hygienic concerns. The pure, unprocessed experience of dining open air, chatting with residents, and seeing traditional cooking techniques is highly valued by tourists. The richness of smells, sounds, and sights enhances their appeal. One of the most basic forms of cultural diplomacy is street food. It democratizes heritage access by enabling visitors to interact with culture outside of official institutions in ordinary contexts.

One German traveler gave the Taka Tak at Lakshmi Chowk high marks, stating that they went especially since they saw it in a documentary.

The street cuisine in Lahore is unrivaled in taste and atmosphere, according to a Peshawar local tourist who said they always book excursions there especially to savor it. One participant emphasized the distinctive ambiance of Lahore's food streets, citing the interplay of music, lighting, and alfresco dining as a crucial component of the experience.

Majority of them had a similar opinion that Food is nostalgic and helps us stay connected to our families. Traditional Food dishes are linked to fond family memories and A country's symbolic identity is its food (Zocchi, 2021).

7.3 Visual Storytelling as a Tool for Engagement

Tourist behaviour has been significantly influenced by visual storytelling, particularly in food documentaries and on social media. Sites like YouTube and Instagram were regularly mentioned by participants as informational and inspirational resources. In order to produce immersive experiences, the documentaries "100 Hours in Lahore" and "Ultimate 16-Hour Pakistani Food Tour" employed cinematic methods like close-ups, slow-motion views, and ambient music.

These visual cues arouse emotions and sensory reactions in addition to showcasing food. After seeing particular foods prepared and presented on TV, tourists said they were drawn to them. Travel and culinary choices are frequently influenced by the visual narrative's ability to evoke feelings of desire and anticipation.

Food becomes more than just a product; it becomes an aspirational cultural show thanks to visual media. In this way, documentaries are positioned as strategic tools for cultural branding and destination marketing. According to several participants, YouTube and Instagram videos—particularly those featuring close-ups and slow-motion images of foods like BBQ, Halwa Puri, and Taka Tak—have affected them.

A documentary that emphasized the preparation and presentation of Dahi Bhallay at Anarkali Bazaar inspired one visitor to taste it. Another individual commented that they were more excited to try the cuisine in person because of its visual appeal on television, particularly its brilliant colours and sizzling sounds.

According to one respondent, food documentaries especially those that highlight regional cuisine are essential for informing viewers about Lahore's street food options and culinary customs. For prospective food tourists, these videos offer visual narratives that emphasise the flavours, textures, and cooking techniques of food, making it more enticing and persuasive. Interviewees also shared that food documentaries create awareness about where to find specific dishes, with people from both local and international backgrounds being influenced by social media promotions to try new foods upon visiting Lahore (Bashir, 2024).

7.4 Food Diversity and Identity

This theme directly aligns with the research focus. All participants acknowledged that food documentaries especially on YouTube played a significant role in shaping their expectations. Documentaries provided a visual roadmap for exploring Lahore, highlighting not just taste but also authenticity and cultural depth. Close-up shots of spicy grilled meat or rhythmic street cooking sounds in the documentaries were cited by interviewees as motivating factors to visit specific places. One respondent stated that a particular video showing 'Dahi Bhallay at Anarkali' convinced her to try it herself.

Tourists characterized Lahore's food as a fusion of Punjabi and Mughal customs, with dishes such as Muhammadi Nihari, Daas Kulcha, and Naan Khataiyan showcasing unique regional characteristics. The perfume of spices and the "sounds of taka takk" are sensory indicators of Lahore's culinary character, according to one participant. According to another respondent, Lahore cuisine "touches all five senses," making it a culturally holistic experience.

7.5 Food Documentaries as Cultural Artifacts

The interviewees observe that each nation seeks to advertise its food while globally attracting tourism for gastronomic experiences. Local people in Lahore popularize Lahori cuisine by seeking ways to innovate traditional dishes. Central Asian salads join beef barbecue as exquisite dishes whereas Afghan Kababs stand out because of their olive addition. The typical visitor to Pakistan looks for both Lahori regional cuisine and suitable dining

locations and lodging facilities when visiting the country. According to this interview participant Pakistani heritage should motivate vacationers more than food does. Lahore serves as a destination for local residents who want food items not available in other Pakistani cities such as Islamabad and Peshawar because it harmoniously combines contemporary elements with local traditions. Outside residents from Lahore decide to visit because of their interest in Pakistani food. The interviewee came to reside in Lahore because of its Peshawar-originated Lahori cuisine (Ahmed, 2024).

Participants referred to food films as "branding tools" that tell the cultural stories of foods in addition to promoting them. Documentaries, according to one responder, helped them comprehend the social and historical background of foods, such as the connection between Halwa Puri and weekend customs.

Another traveller said the documentaries act as "visual roadmaps," directing them to particular restaurants and elucidating the cultural value of the food they're consuming.

7.6 Reason Why Food Attracts Tourists

Majority of the interviewees had similar opinion regarding food attractions. Tourists prefer to seek out cultural encounters where they can fully immerse themselves in the cuisine and way of life of the locals, according to all of the respondents. Cuisine greatly affects how you feel; if you serve nice food to your visitors, they will be quite appreciative because of a good taste. tourists want to seek out cultural experiences where they can immerse themselves in the local food and way of life. As visitors and tourists look for new foods that introduce them to different tastes, textures, and traditions, we can learn about regional customs and culture through the cuisine that we eat. Tourists desire organic cuisine from the area (Hasan, 2024).

7.7 Other Tourist Attractions

The best attraction in Lahore, according to the interviewees preferences, is food, as there are many different restaurants there. Other than food there are several bazars such as the rang mehal bazar through Shah Alam market and merely exploring the vivid variety of wholesome market, with excellent music

and a different style of providing food. These items, including handicrafts and human labour, draw tourists. The havelis, which are also popular tourist destinations, are seen when you pass through the Bhatii gate (Hussain, 2024).

The interviewees also revealed that If you travel to Italy, Turkey, or France, you can locate any gorgeous historical location in the restaurant's background. People always go out of their way to go there. The views from restaurant rooftops, the Badshahi Mosque, and all other locations within the Walled City are quite eye capturing. People always go out of their way to go there (Hussain, 2024).

7.8 Variety of Cuisines

Interviewees revealed that during their travel to Lahore, they primarily require local cuisine. One will like eating Arabic cuisine if he/she visit Arab similarly You may get Italian food to eat in Italy. Hence tourists prefer the regional food of Lahore to that of other countries. They admitted to enjoying both local street food and Lahori cuisine. Both tasting and eating them are worthwhile. One of the participant revealed that she prefers local cuisine as long as it is healthy (Ibrar, 2024).

7.9 Lahori Cuisine Distinguishes Lahore Culture from World

The interviewees had mixed opinions and perceptions about the motives which distinguishes Lahore's culture from world. They argue that It's just the manner in which the food is prepared, such as the noises of the cooking tools (for instance, if you walk along a food street, you'll hear the sounds of taka takk), and in particular, the taste and smell. The cuisine of Lahore appeals to all five senses, which helps one realise that it is a component of Lahori culture and has a distinct spice scent. Lahore has a unique style that lets it stand out and be good (Riaz, 2022).

There are numerous aspects that make Lahore one of the loveliest cities, and cuisine is just one of them. It's just the way the food is made. Lahore was referred to as the Mughal gardens. It's still active. The habit of going out on the streets is still prevalent. People are still compelled to go outside and eat in the streets. Lahore is well known for having a wide array of cuisines (Riaz, 2022).

7.10 Lahori Cuisine Worth Recommending to Tourists

Majority of the interviewees said that it was worthwhile to suggest street food of Lahore if it is properly packaged with regard to safety concerns. hygiene should be first priority. Foreign interviewees were of the view that street food is worth recommending particularly for UK residents who are unaware of mouth-watering street food culture of Lahore specially dahi bhallay (Ali, 2022).

8. Discussion

This study examined the role that food documentaries have in promoting Lahore's culture, namely from the perspectives of street food and visitor interaction. A complex interaction between food, media, identity, and tourism is revealed by the results of theme analysis of interviews and documentary material. For local companies, media producers, tourism authorities, and cultural policymakers, these findings have important implications.

According to the study, food is a powerful cultural symbol that goes over linguistic and geographical barriers. Local and foreign tourists alike view cuisine as a means of discovering a destination's values, customs, and friendliness. The sentimental and sentimental associations with traditional foods like Halwa Puri, Nihari, and Murgh Cholley support the notion that eating is an experience rather than merely a meal.

In international tourist marketing and cultural exchange programs, food can be strategically used to promote understanding and goodwill among participants. Lahore's food culture, along with its historical and architectural legacy, ought to be a central part of its tourism identity.

Tourist behavior is significantly impacted by visual media, especially YouTube and Instagram. Short-form and documentary videos provide as immersive pre-trip experiences that influence expectations and direct gastronomic inquiry. The incorporation of cinematic elements including close-ups, background noise, and narrative storytelling improves the food's sensory appeal.

Tourist agencies and neighborhood companies should spend money on excellent visual content that highlights Lahore's gastronomic scene. Giving

local chefs and sellers narrative and digital media skills can broaden their audience and democratize cultural promotion.

9. Conclusion

The thematic analysis combining interviews and documentary content revealed that visual media plays a substantial role in shaping culinary tourism. Food documentaries serve as cultural texts that not only portray Lahore's vibrant cuisine but also promote emotional and sensory engagement. Tourists are inspired not just by taste but by stories, images, and cultural meanings.

These documentaries through close-up shots, atmospheric sounds, and engaging hosts act as persuasive tools that visually frame Lahore as a must-visit culinary destination. The results validate the research hypothesis that street food and its representation through media contribute significantly to cultural promotion, identity formation, and tourism engagement.

The results from the interview protocol highlights the significant socioeconomic value of street food in Lahore, not only as a culinary tradition but also as a catalyst for tourism and community engagement. Street food plays a vital role in preserving the region's cultural heritage while simultaneously fostering economic growth by attracting both local and international tourists. However, the success of Lahore's street food industry is contingent upon addressing ongoing hygiene concerns. If these issues are effectively managed by local vendors and city authorities, there is a substantial potential for increased revenue generation and tourism growth in the city.

The research further reveals that cuisine is deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, with gastronomy serving as a powerful medium for promoting a city's or country's identity. Tourists, both local and foreign, seek to experience the essence of a culture through its food, with regional variations shaped by factors such as climate and local customs. Lahore's cuisine, which blends Punjabi, Mughal, and street food traditions, is a testament to the city's rich culinary history and its ability to offer diverse, delectable experiences. Food is a universal connector, bringing people together under shared cultural values, and traditional foods often evoke nostalgic family memories.

The study also emphasises how influential food documentaries and visual storytelling are in influencing culinary tourism and food perceptions. Participants underlined that by demonstrating the preparation, texture, and presentation of regional cuisine, food documentaries particularly those posted on social media sites like YouTube have a big influence on their dietary decisions. These documentaries employ visual strategies including close-ups, slow-motion shots and captivating storytelling to enthrall viewers and encourage them to learn more about Lahore's culinary heritage. In addition to drawing foodies, this visual narrative informs them of the cultural value of Lahore's street cuisine so solidifying its role in promoting culture and advancing tourism.

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