

1 Blending foodscapes and urban touristscapes: International tourism and 2 city marketing in Indian cities

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5

6 Abstract

7 **Purpose:** Gateway cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata are central in the tourist experience to
8 India, yet the official government authorities and destination marketing organizations tend to
9 underestimate the potential of these destinations to prospective and returning international tourists. In
10 particular, there is little empirical research on urban tourism, food tourism and city marketing in the
11 aforementioned cities. This study explores the scope for the promotion of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata
12 as food urban destinations.

13 **Design/methodology/approach:** For the purposes of this study, a case study methodology using
14 content analysis was developed to ascertain the nexus between food and tourism in the three observed
15 cities. Materials were gathered for the year 2019, with a focus on brochures, tourist guides, websites,
16 and social media accounts for Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata. A two-coding approach through NVivo
17 was designed to analyse and report the findings.

18 **Findings:** The findings of the study suggest that the cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata fall short in
19 positioning themselves as food urban destinations. Moreover, the study reports a dissonance between
20 the imagery of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata portrayed to international tourists through induced images
21 and the food-related experiences available in the cities. This divide reflects a pattern in destination
22 marketing in India observed in previous research.

23 **Research implications/limitations:** The exploratory nature of this study calls for more research in the
24 trends and future directions of food tourism and urban marketing in Indian cities. Moreover, this study
25 calls for further research on the perceptions of urban food experience in Indian cities among
26 international and domestic tourists.

27 **Practical implications:** A series of practical implications can be drawn. First, urban and national
28 destination marketing organizations need to join efforts in developing urban marketing campaigns that
29 place food as a key element of the urban experience. Second, cities worldwide are rebranding

30 themselves as food destinations and Indian cities should reconsider local and regional culinary
31 traditions as mean to reposition themselves to food travellers' similar niche segments.

32 **Social implications:** The quest for authenticity is central in the expectations of incoming tourists.
33 Moreover, the richness and variety of local and regional food in the cities analysed in this study can
34 enhance urban visitor experience, with obvious economic and socio-cultural benefits for the local
35 businesses and residents.

36 **Originality/value:** This study is the first of its kind to provide preliminary evidence on the nexus
37 between food and tourism in Indian cities. Building from the literature, it developed a conceptual
38 framework for the analysis of food tourism and urban branding and shed light on a currently
39 overlooked aspect of incoming tourism to India.

40 **Keywords:** City Marketing; Foodscapes; India; Place Branding; Urban Tourism

41

42 Introduction

43 Tourism represents nowadays a very important feature of the Indian economy. According to the World
44 Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2018) the total contribution of the tourism industry in India
45 accounted to GDP is 9.2% of the country's GDP. International tourism to India has significantly
46 increased over the last decade, with more than 14 million arrivals and approximately USD\$ 22.5 billion
47 of receipts in 2016 (UNTWO, 2017). Apart from nearby Bangladesh, the major inbound markets for
48 India are from the United Kingdom, Russia and Germany, who accounted for nearly 20% of the total
49 arrivals (Government of India, 2016). The role of the Indian Government to promote incoming tourism
50 over the last decades has predominantly focused on built heritage, cultural awareness and traditions,
51 with marketing campaigns such as *Incredible India* (2002), *Atithi Devo Bhava* (2009), *Clean India*
52 (2013), and *Swadesh Darshan* (2015) attracting more and more foreign visitors to States and Union
53 Territories (Rout, Mishra, & Pradhan, 2016).

54 Indian cities have grown exponentially both in terms of population and relevance to the national
55 economy (Inbakaran, 2003; Shiji, 2017). Urban tourism represents an important feature for domestic
56 tourism in India, with cities providing visitors and users with a wide range of cultural facilities,
57 entertainment, sporting events and festivals (Shiji, 2017). With regards to international tourism, Indian
58 cities have the potential to contribute significantly to the growth of tourism (Shiji, 2017), with major
59 cities acting as gateways to the country. In 2017, the number of foreign tourism arrivals (FTAs) at major
60 airports was 10,035,803, with Delhi Airport registering the highest share (28.4%) of FTAs followed by
61 Mumbai Airport (15.7%) and Kolkata (4.6%) (ITS, 2018).

62 The rise of food tourism and its relevance as a niche segment in urban tourism experience is recent
63 (McKercher, Okumus & Okumus, 2008). From a supply perspective, the importance of local food has
64 increased among restaurants and chefs (Roy, Hall & Ballantine, 2017). Cities acknowledge the potential
65 of dining experiences for niche segments in urban destinations, including bidding for mega-events
66 (Vanolo, 2015), promotion of creative tourism (Richards, 2012) and regional culinary traditions
67 (Okumus & Cetin, 2018). Food as intangible heritage and cultural attraction represents a key component
68 for international travel (Kim & Eves, 2012). Given the vast and diverse culinary traditions, there is
69 potential in promoting India and Indian cities through food to international tourism markets. However,
70 none of the aforementioned marketing campaigns promotes Indian culinary traditions, particularly in
71 key urban tourism destinations. Not surprisingly, the current literature acknowledges a dissonance
72 between the imagery of India among international tourists and the country itself (Bandyopadhyay &
73 Morais, 2005), with the *Incredible India* campaign conveying quite an orientalist portrayal that contrasts
74 the varied heterogeneous experience international tourists have when they visit the country (Kerrigan,
75 Shivanandan, & Hade, 2012).

76 The following paper consists of five sections. The first section illustrates the literature, with a focus on
77 city branding, foodscapes and the conceptual framework of the study. It then presents the methodology
78 and the approach to the analysis of data, along with a brief introduction to the contexts of New Delhi,
79 Mumbai and Kolkata. The third section provides the findings from data collection and coding, while
80 the fourth section discusses the results of the study with the existing body of knowledge. The final
81 section provides a summary of the study, recommendations for the promotion of food experiences as
82 feature for urban tourism in India and identifies areas for further research.

83

84 Literature

85 Brand and city branding

86 A brand can be defined as a recognizable mark, or “identifier,” of a given product or service (Aaker,
87 2009) and constitutes a key feature in contemporary consumer behaviour (Tsai, Chang, & Ho, 2015).
88 Usually, brands are the symbolic representation of firms and reflect the core values and philosophy of
89 organizations against competitors (Anholt, 2006; Keller & Richey, 2006). According to Hankinson
90 (2007), the concept of brand can also be applied to places and, in turn, evoke emotions, raise awareness
91 and influence behaviours (Gertner, Berger, & Gertner, 2007). South of Houston, or SoHo, located in
92 Manhattan is a prominent example of successful place branding and redefinition of a run-down
93 industrial area into one of most visited neighbourhoods in New York City (Lees, Slater, & Wily, 2008).
94 With regards to local food, the use of brands can reduce the effort of prospective consumers to search
95 for and evaluate different products (Pearson, Henryks, & Jones, 2011) and redefine the image of cities
96 as places for leisure, recreation and tourism (Getz, Robinson, Anderson, & Vujicic, 2014; Vanolo,
97 2015). Examples include, Lisbon, Portugal, with *Pasteis de Belem* and Philadelphia, United States, with
98 *Philly Cheese Steak*.

99 City branding represents one of the key features of contemporary global urban economy (Amore, 2019).
100 The relationship between place and branding is a much-researched feature in urban tourism and it is a
101 topic of interest for both academics and politicians (Page, Stone, Bryson, & Crosby, 2015). Cities can
102 use branding as a way to unite tourism relevant stakeholders around new competitive urban identities
103 (Mansilla & Milano, 2019) and communicate their message to target audiences (Gilboa, Jaffe, Vianelli,
104 Pastore, & Herstein, 2015). Kavaratzis (2009) notes that city branding is a tool that reflects the
105 perception of a place, its identity, and its opportunities, while Balakrishnan (2009) states that city
106 branding can provide cities with a source of economic value as well as political and cultural significance.
107 Lucarelli and Berg (2011, p. 21) describe city branding as “the purposeful symbolic embodiment of all

108 information connected to a city in order to create associations around it". Zhang and Zhao (2009) further
109 emphasize that city branding can be seen as an instrument to make a city's competitive advantage
110 known, and to promote the history of the city, the quality of the place, its lifestyle and culture.
111 Nowadays, more cities are striving for branding and marketing themselves to attract investors, tourists,
112 residents, and workforce (Kavaratzis, 2005; Hospers, 2010; Zenker & Martin, 2011).

113 The literature on urban marketing mainly focuses on the complexity of managing city brands and the
114 need to satisfy several segments, such as tourists (Bickford-Smith, 2009), sports fans (Chaplin & Costa,
115 2005), fashionistas (Martínez, 2007), and current and future residents (Greenberg, 2000). Furthermore,
116 certain studies have identified different types of city branding: innovative and creative cities that are
117 antithesis of stressful cities (Marceau, 2008), and cultural cities which focus on culture and festivals
118 (Evans, 2003). Overall, cities primarily focus on building a unique attitude and brand image, providing
119 memorable experiences, and developing positive word-of-mouth branding (Sahin & Baloglu 2014).

120 The phenomenology of urban tourism experience is rather complex, with organic imageries, individual
121 experiences, learning, social interactions and intersubjective knowledge mediating the official
122 representation of places (Selby 2004). The importance of the latter in the marketing and repositioning
123 of cities is a long-research aspect in urban tourism and destination management literature (Pearce,
124 2015), but there is mounting concern as to whether city marketing and tourism actually fulfils its
125 purpose (Heeley, 2015). Official representations can enhance the many cultural features of cities as in
126 the case of Singapore (Henderson, 2016) or exacerbate the divide between hosts and guests'
127 perspectives as in the case of Macau (Kong, DuCros, & Ong, 2016).

128

129 Destination image and food tourism

130 Like brand image, destination image has been dominated in tourism research arena (Chen & Tsai, 2007;
131 Chi & Qu, 2008). Destination image describes the summation of impression, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas
132 individuals have of attributes and/or activities available at a destination (Crompton, 1979; Nelson,
133 2016). The destination image plays a key role in the decision-making process, particularly in the case
134 of first-time visitors who lack of experience with the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner
135 & Ritchie, 2003; Özdemir, 2010). Nelson (2016) suggests two types of image formation. The "organic"
136 images are formed from different popular media articles (e.g., television, newspapers, magazines, and
137 other public media), they are aimed to a general, or non-visiting, audience, but they can generate interest
138 in a destination. In contrast, the "induced" images are a product of the destination stakeholders'
139 marketing efforts and their primary objective is to promote a distinctive destination image (Nelson,

140 2016). However, in the modern environment, organic images are becoming increasingly pervasive and
141 influential (Tussyadiah, 2010).

142 Food and gastronomy have become a vital part of the destination image and a significant pull factor in
143 tourists' decision-making process (Horng & Tsai, 2010; Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012; Naruetharadhol
144 & Gebsoombut, 2020; Seaman, Björk, & Kauppinen-Räsänen 2014). Not surprisingly, food has become
145 a powerful tool in destination marketing and branding. As Hashimoto and Telfer (2006) and Henderson
146 (2009) indicate, destinations can market local food consumption and experience to differentiate
147 themselves from their competitors. Furthermore, tourist's decisions and consumer behaviour can be
148 influenced towards consumption of local food in a destination (Okumus, Kock, Scantlebury, &
149 Okumus, 2013). This is observed, for instance, among international tourists coming to South Korea,
150 with both cognitive and affective images of food places influencing their preferences for food
151 destinations in the country (Seo, Yun, & Kim, 2017). Similarly, international tourists are likely to look
152 for food tourism experiences that reflect their recreational habits back home, as in the case of Slow
153 Food members seeking for similar cooking and food related activities while on holiday (Lee, Scott, &
154 Packer, 2015).

155 Identifying and promoting traditional foods and culinary experiences to a specific destination can be an
156 influential marketing strategy (Horng, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2012; Okumus et al., 2013; Sims, 2009).
157 National destination marketing organizations (DMOs) across the world acknowledge the potentialities
158 of food tourism and destination marketing. For example, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore,
159 Taiwan and Vietnam (Henderson, 2009; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Jalis, Che, & Markwell, 2014; Lin,
160 Pearson, & Cai, 2011) highlight their culinary resources to position themselves alongside more
161 established international culinary destinations such as France, Italy and Spain. Similarly, the Australian
162 Tourist Commission, the Canadian Tourism Commission, and the Hong Kong Tourism Board
163 implement destination marketing initiatives to promote cuisine and dining experiences (Tsang, Chan,
164 & Ho, 2011). Conversely, DMOs in developing countries are still in the beginning stage with food,
165 gastronomy and place branding, as observed in a recent study of twenty Egyptian DMO websites
166 (Mohamed, Hewedi, Lehto, & Maayouf, 2019).

167 At the regional level, local cuisines are recognized as a critical tool in destination marketing,
168 differentiation, and branding (Okumus et al., 2013; Choe, Kim, & Cho, 2017). As Kowalczyk (2020)
169 observes, food and gastronomy have important economic and social implications for cities. Not
170 surprisingly, there are several local destinations that use local foods and produce as a territorial
171 marketing tool and organize events and festivals to highlight their cuisines, as in the cases of Östersund,
172 Sweden (Schmudde, 2019), Alba, Italy, and Napa Valley, United States (Okumus & Cetin, 2018). The
173 city of Turin, Italy, considers food and eno-gastronomic experiences as key in the rebranding of the city

174 as tourist destination (Vanolo, 2015). Similarly, the city of George Town in Penang, Malaysia, pursued
175 a destination strategy to reposition itself as a creative city under the branding theme of *City of*
176 *Gastronomy* to raise awareness among international tourists (Khoo & Badarulzaman, 2014). Other cities
177 have the potentiality to reposition themselves as food tourism destinations but have not fully embraced
178 this marketing strategy option. This is the case of Istanbul, Turkey, with the local DMOs falling short
179 in focusing their marketing efforts towards local food and culinary resources (Okumus & Cetin, 2018).

180 Food is seldom the key reason for visiting a destination and often considered as part of the overall
181 destination experience (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Lau & Li, 2019). However, Henderson (2009)
182 argues that destinations should not only include food but also position local cuisine as a key aspect of
183 destination image and advertising theme. Further, Okumus, Xiang and Hutchinson (2018) suggest that
184 the use of local cuisines in destination marketing can highlight specific culinary aspects. For instance,
185 Frochot (2003) notes that French tourism regional brochures tend to emphasize on local cuisines and
186 raw foods. Similarly, Horng and Tsai (2010) indicate that Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea,
187 Taiwan and Thailand actively promote local food and culinary tourism opportunities via their official
188 tourism website. On the other hand, Okumus, Okumus and McKercher (2007) conclude that the
189 information provided on local Turkish cuisine in brochures and websites “tended to list different types
190 of food and was far from promoting the destination” (Okumus et al., 2007, p. 258).

191 Food neophilia is one of the most important motivators for visiting destinations (Chang, Kivela, & Mak,
192 2010). For example, Bell and Valentine (1997) suggest that the development of “new cuisines” and the
193 globalization of national cuisines around the world are push factors among food enthusiasts in choosing
194 a place to visit. On the one hand, food neophilia represents an important factor in destinations
195 experience (Mak, Lumbers, & Chang, 2013; Dimitrovski & Crespi-Vallbona, 2017; Pu, Teah & Phau,
196 2019). On the other hand, food neophobia has also been seen as the avoidance to try new local
197 food/cuisine at destinations (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2011; Verneau, Caracciolo, Coppola, & Lombardi,
198 2014).

199

200 Foodscapes and urban tourism: A synthesis

201 The consumption of food and drinks is a key component of leisure experience and can be central in
202 travel decision-making (Andersson, Mossberg, & Therkelsen, 2017; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Lee et al.,
203 2015). According to the UNWTO (2012, p.7), gastronomic – or food – tourism “applies to tourists and
204 visitors who plan their trips partially or totally in order to taste the cuisine of the place or to carry out
205 activities related to gastronomy”. It refers to travelling to taste local and international foods, join food
206 festivals and experience local and international cuisines or tasting the dishes of a particular chef (Hall

207 & Sharples, 2003). It is also referred to culinary, gastronomy and gourmet tourism (Okumus et al.,
208 2007). Food tourism or culinary tourism requires local or specialized knowledge that represents local
209 culture (Ignatov & Smith, 2006; Smith & Xiao, 2008). Boniface (2003) further stresses food as culture
210 of past and present and an inevitable part of food tourism. Thus, for tourists, experiencing local culture
211 and food represents an appealing part of the travel experience (Seo et al., 2017).

212 Food at destination level reflects a sense of place (Sims, 2009; Jolliffe, 2016). The reinforcement of
213 food and dining experiences through official marketing and their blending with cultural, political and
214 historical landscapes constitute a foodscape (Adema, 2007; Hall & Gössling, 2016). The notion of
215 foodscape emphasizes how “cultural understandings of food and the food system are mediated through
216 social mores and cultural institutions like the mass media” (Johnston & Bauman, 2015, p. 3). From a
217 regional development perspective, food and tourism are interrelated factors that contribute to the social,
218 environmental, and social wellbeing of destinations (Hall & Gössling, 2016). Focusing on India,
219 research suggests that tourists tend to associate Indian destinations with attributes such as local cuisine
220 and food outlets, with important implications for place branding and positioning (Kaur, Chauhan, &
221 Medury, 2016).

222

223 Conceptual framework

224 Figure 1 below illustrates the conceptual framework developed for this study. It conceives foodscapes
225 and tourism landscapes as reflection of both organic and induced images that contribute to the promotion of
226 food tourism in urban contexts (Nelson, 2016). Adapting from Hall & Sharples (2003), food and dining
227 experiences are categorized as either a primary or secondary element in the promotion of urban tourism.
228 Food as a primary element in urban tourism promotion can be found in the current tourism strategy for
229 the city of Copenhagen, Denmark, which identifies gastronomy as one of five core brand stories
230 (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2019). Similarly, the city of Milan, Italy, promotes food as a primary
231 attraction, with a dedicated section in the tourism information portal (YesMilano, 2020). Conversely,
232 the city of Paris, France, acknowledges dining and food experience as secondary purpose of travel,
233 predominantly through organic images (ParisInfo.com, 2020).

234

>>FIGURE 1 GOES HERE<<

235 Organic images are the resulting accumulation of imageries from non-commercial sources, such as
236 education, literature and media (Selby, 2004). Conversely, induced images are formed through
237 promotional materials including brochures, booklets, guidebooks, and websites that market destinations
238 and influence potential tourist’s travel buying decisions (Okumus et al., 2018). Induced images are

239 particularly effective in the promotion of culinary tourism; research suggests that promotional materials
240 effectively influence the consumer behaviour of prospective food tourists (Horng & Tsai, 2010;
241 Okumus et al., 2013). However, the image of destinations is far from being cohesive. Rather, the gap
242 between perceived (organic) and projected (induced) images can result in discrepancies, as showed in
243 a recent study on Catalonia, Spain (Marine-Roig & Ferrer-Rosell, 2018).

244 The purpose of visit is a key factor in tourist decision-making and consumer behaviour. In the case of
245 food tourism, the primary motive is that of visiting a specific food establishment or include culinary
246 experiences at the heart of the journey (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Arguably, the consumption of food is
247 a central element of the tourist consumer behaviour, yet its relevance tends to decrease depending on
248 the importance attributed to food as a travel motivation (Hall & Sharples, 2003). The continuum from
249 high to low interest in food tourism enables the identification of niche tourism markets, including
250 gastronomic tourism (Hall & Mitchell, 2007), food events tourism (Hall, Mitchell, & Sharples, 2003)
251 and culinary tourism (Smith, 2007). Hence, gastronomic, food events, and culinary experiences have
252 become central features for regional development (Smith, 2007).

253 The conceptual framework developed for this study has three main analytical implications. First, it
254 enables the study of food tourism as an emerging sphere in contemporary urban branding. Second, it
255 acknowledges how organic and induced images are part of the current shift towards co-marketing in
256 urban destinations (Vanolo, 2017). Finally, it enables comparative analysis between different urban
257 destinations with regards to food tourism place branding. The conceptual framework and its application
258 to the study are further discussed in the methodology section.

259

260 Methodology

261 Organic and induced images effectively influence international tourists in the decision-making process
262 and behaviour at the destination (Okumus et al, 2007; Seo et al, 2017). For this study, data were drawn
263 from popular media sources, as media sources continue to play an important role in destination image
264 formation (Karim & Chi, 2010). Following previous research of the kind (Lin et al., 2011; Okumus &
265 Cetin, 2018; Okumus et al., 2007), a case study methodology using content analysis was developed for
266 this study. According to Neumann (2003, p. 219) “content analysis is a technique for gathering and
267 analyzing the content of text”. This method is non-reactive and minimizes the influence of the
268 researchers (Neumann, 2003). Content analysis enables the sorting and articulation of data under pre-
269 defined themes and codes (Krippendorff, 2004).

270 For the purpose of the study, the authors gathered information from official urban marketing and
271 tourism marketing portals, including *Incredible India* and the tourism information websites for Delhi,
272 Mumbai and Kolkata. Additionally, the authors retrieved information from the official social media
273 accounts of the tourism authorities of the three cities. The material gathered referred to the year 2019
274 only, as the analysis was limited to the existing visibility and exposure of food tourism and foodscapes
275 in the official tourism information. The analysis focused on the narrative provided rather than on the
276 frequency in relation to the wider urban tourism promotion.

277

278 Analysis

279 A qualitative software (NVivo 12 Pro) was used for the gathering and analysis of data. The use of
280 NVivo eases the process of coding, while providing the researchers with a degree of flexibility in the
281 design and implementation of the analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). NVivo enabled the creation of a
282 two-round coding system (see Table 1) to organize analyzed data into conceptual groups and subgroups
283 (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In particular, the first round of coding enabled the categorization of data
284 under the four key dimensions of the conceptual framework. The second round of coding, instead,
285 underpins the existing literature sections on food tourism and place marketing. Similarly, the nodes for
286 the second round of coding are based on the existing body of knowledge on food tourism marketing.

287

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288

289 Context

290 The researchers opted to analyse closely the destination image of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata as
291 culinary tourism destinations for mainly two reasons: first, they are the key gateway cities for
292 international tourists coming to India (ITS, 2018). Second, they are the main economic and regional
293 capitals of three provinces with diverse cultural, linguistic and culinary traditions (Hindi, Marathi, and
294 Bengali) (Gupta, Khanna, & Gupta, 2019; Mahapatra, 2018).

295 The culinary tradition of Delhi is characterised by strong Mughal influences, who ruled the city and
296 most of the Indian subcontinent from the 16th until the 19th Century. Street food delicacies are also
297 famous amongst the local as well as foreign tourists in Delhi (Gupta et al., 2019). Mumbai is instead
298 renowned for its street-food. CNN Travel ranked Mumbai's street food in the world's best food (Shea,
299 2018), with the city offering visitors local culinary specialities along with heritage, arts and India's

300 entertainment industry capital Bollywood. Kolkata, finally, is a cosmopolitan and heaven for foodies
301 especially for people with sweet tooth. The rich culinary city, Kolkata is also famous for its exotic
302 Bengali cuisine for its taste, fragrance and use of spices. The Lonely Planet website promoted Kolkata
303 as gourmand's paradise and home to one of the most evolved culinary traditions in South Asia
304 (Mahapatra, 2018).

305

306 Findings

307 Figure 2 provides an overview of the findings of this study. The cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata
308 regard food tourism as secondary purpose in their place branding initiatives. Relatively little emphasis
309 is given to urban tourism foodscapes, with sporadic mention of culinary and gastronomic tours rooted
310 in organic images from non-official tourism websites and blogs. Only the promotion of urban tourism
311 in Kolkata blends induced and organic images of food and gastronomy, although as mere background
312 information of the city as the cultural capital of India.

313

>>FIGURE 2 GOES HERE<<

314

315 Delhi

316 The DMO of India's capital city – Delhi Tourism – acknowledges food as an attraction for prospective
317 tourists and provides induced images and information about food events like the Mango Festival on
318 social media accounts. The Delhi Tourism website recommends food tours as an opportunity to taste
319 the local cuisine, yet the range of the information provided is limited to only two web pages. Digital
320 brochures are available to download, with pictures of food enhancing the organic image of Delhi as
321 home to traditional Mughal-inspired cuisine and street food in the old part of the city. The brochures,
322 however, simply report a list of recommended restaurants, with no information on dedicated food tours
323 and itineraries in the city.

324 In the case of Delhi, information of tours and food-related activities are provided through non-official
325 sources, including local bloggers, food travellers and niche local tour operators. The blending of urban
326 identities with food experience is particularly strong with the association of traditional dishes (e.g. butter
327 chicken) and street food in Old Delhi. The local tour – Delhi Food Walks – targets international tourists
328 with themed food trails focusing on traditional meals, street food and community kitchen in the

329 ambience of the capital city. The emphasis is predominantly based on local recipes, but there is also
330 mention to other regional cuisines as corollary of the Delhi's visitor experience.

331 Overall, the data collected suggests that the food-urban tourism nexus in Delhi is emerging yet still at
332 the early stage. Officially, the focus of Delhi Tourism is on culture and heritage in the district and the
333 inner metropolitan city area. The induced image of Delhi, in fact, frames food as a secondary attraction
334 to the tourist experience. This is particularly evident when we look at the coverage of cultural and
335 heritage festivals on Delhi Tourism social media accounts. However, the organic image of Delhi as a
336 food destination and the increasing awareness among both consumers and businesses suggests a
337 potential for the city to be branded as an experiencing food destination for international tourists.

338

339 Mumbai

340 Focusing on Mumbai, it can be noted that the DMO for the city and the wider region - Maharashtra
341 Tourism – is only operational on social media. Compared to Delhi and Kolkata, however, the accounts
342 activity is more limited, with sporadic posts about food-related events in the city. The information of
343 food on the official tourism portal – *Incredible India* – is scant, with only two web pages mentioning
344 food as a tourist attraction. Unlike Delhi Tourism, there is no evidence of food as part of a strategy to
345 enhance the induced image of the city as food destination. On the contrary, the little emphasis on official
346 media underpins the organic image of Mumbai as cosmopolitan metropole and commercial capital of
347 India.

348 Just as for Delhi, much of the information on food-related attractions and places to go is available on
349 blogs and local tour operator websites. Here Mumbai is depicted as home to a diverse range of cuisines
350 and ideal destination for street food. Guidebooks and travel magazines like the Lonely Planet highlight
351 the rising popularity and organic image of Mumbai as food destination. On the one hand, these sources
352 tend to promote local street food as a characteristic of Mumbai's urban life and provide a list of
353 recommended places where to go during the journey. On the other hand, the information regarding
354 regional food is descriptive, with little to no reference about places to go or food trails in the city. In the
355 case of Mumbai, other regional cuisines from India have a higher visibility than in the cases of Delhi
356 and Kolkata.

357 Overall, Mumbai is still at a pioneering stage when it comes to blending foodscapes and urban
358 touristscaples. Despite evidence of increasing interest and appeal among international tourists, the DMO
359 responsible for the marketing of Mumbai overlooks food as a tourist attraction. Similarly, the
360 information retrieved from blogs and local tour operators is limited and almost exclusively depict street

361 food as key to the urban experience of Mumbai. Other forms of food and regional cuisines are
362 acknowledged, but information is limited to origins and ingredients, with scant information about
363 restaurants and venues where to eat.

364

365 Kolkata

366 Like Mumbai, the promotion of tourism in Kolkata is administered through the State-dedicated
367 authority, West Bengal Tourism. The latter organizes food fairs and festivals to promote international
368 tourism to international tourist and showcase the variety of local and regional cuisine. The social media
369 account also promotes food and food festivals in the attempt to enhance the induced image of Kolkata
370 and surroundings as a traditional culinary destination. However, the analysed materials show how food
371 is not promoted as a main attraction or reason to visit Kolkata. The sources retrieved, instead, consider
372 food as a secondary purpose of travel and tend to overemphasize on the history and food preparation
373 aspects of traditional Bengali cuisine.

374 Focusing on non-official web content, the blogs and guides for Kolkata provide a wide range of
375 information regarding food, food preparation and dishes people can have while visiting the city. These
376 often come with information such as street address and phone number. However, the material retrieved
377 has no information about guided tours and food trails in the city. With the exception of few accounts of
378 food experiences published in newspapers and magazines, the binomial food-urban tourism in the case
379 of Kolkata is not a much emphasized as observed in the case of Delhi and – to a lesser extent – Mumbai.

380 The case of Kolkata somehow reflects - for worse - the shortcomings observed in Delhi and Mumbai.
381 On the one hand, the emphasis on natural and cultural heritage on the official DMO website and
382 brochures underpins what seen in Delhi, while the marginal presence of induced food urban tourism
383 image parallels the evidence from Mumbai. Surprisingly, the variety and richness of Bengali cuisine
384 portrayed in both official and non-official sources do not correspond to urban branding initiatives to
385 promote the city as a food tourism destination. Instead, arts and heritage are key in tourist promotion,
386 with food relegated to an ancillary aspect of the visitor experience in Kolkata and the West Bengal
387 region.

388

389 Discussion

390 Previous studies in food tourism marketing looked at specific local and regional cuisines and how they
391 are promoted through national and urban destination marketing campaigns (Horng & Tsai, 2010;
392 Okumus et al., 2007, 2013). This study is an extension of this stream of research and provides evidence
393 from a country – India – home to a heterogeneous and established cuisine. This is one of the few studies,
394 along with the work of Mohamed et al. (2019) that provides evidence of food tourism marketing in a
395 developing country. Moreover, it focuses on food tourism marketing in main Indian urban tourism
396 destinations, thus addressing a relevant research gap on urban place branding in the so-called Urban
397 Global South. Finally, the evidence collected suggests that Indian urban tourism destinations embody
398 the social, historical and political features of what constitutes a foodscape (Adema, 2007; Hall &
399 Gössling, 2016). This is particularly evident in the cases of Delhi and Kolkata, which offer local cuisine
400 experiences and attractions (e.g. Delhi Food Walks and Bengali Cuisine).

401 The findings of this study confirm the findings of Sims (2009) on the role of food in enhancing the
402 perception of cultural heritage at the destination level. Similarly, this study validates the research by
403 Mohamed et al. (2019) on the limited use of food as cultural attraction in web marketing. This research,
404 in particular, agrees food tourism and foodscapes in Indian urban destinations is still at the pioneering
405 stage. Despite the established culinary traditions in Delhi and Kolkata, the destination marketing
406 initiatives overlook the potentialities of promoting the two cities as food destinations. Arguably, there
407 are shortcomings in the urban destination governance that marginalize local cuisine as a tourist
408 attraction, an aspect that can also be seen in previous research (e.g. Everett & Slocum, 2013).

409 The findings from this study suggest that place branding initiatives Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata
410 acknowledge local food and regional cuisine as a low-key resource in brochures, destination portal and
411 social media channels. These findings contrast with previous research in local food and destination
412 marketing (Okumus et al., 2007; Okumus et al., 2018). The use local food and regional cuisine in
413 destination marketing is still at the early stage in a developing country such as India, but it is important
414 to recast the relevance of foodscapes in order to overcome the commodification of local food traditions
415 to the globalizing force of the tourist gaze (Bandyopadhyay & Morais, 2005; Okumus & Cetin, 2018).
416 Although local food and regional cuisine were utilized in the promotional materials of Delhi and
417 Kolkata, this study argues that there is potential for food to be a dedicated urban marketing segment for
418 Indian cities.

419 The research findings further reveal that Delhi appears to have a better edge over Mumbai and Kolkata
420 in their DMOs for the presentations of local food and local cuisine. Even though limited information
421 was received from Kolkata's DMOs, the content of the printed official and non-official sources is not

422 concise with a strong focus on promoting their local food and cuisine to promote the city. These findings
423 are in contrast of Okumus et al.'s (2013) study that identified, concise printed sources were critical for
424 local food and cuisine promotion in the Dominican Republic. Moreover, the information provided for
425 each city's local food and cuisine is far from promoting the destination as a food tourism heaven.

426 This research highlighted the limited exposure of food trails and food tourism attractions on the DMOs
427 websites and social media in the observed cities. Understandably, local foods are often well known by
428 local residents and repeat visitors. However, their awareness in the context of international level can be
429 limited (Okumus & Cetin, 2018). Therefore, DMOs should highlight local food and cuisine and
430 periodically update it. Such attempts can help create awareness of local food and cuisine and, in turn,
431 shape the urban tourism foodscapes of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

432

433 Conclusions and recommendations

434 This study is the first of its kind to provide preliminary evidence on the nexus between food and tourism
435 in Indian cities with different culinary traditions. Building from the literature, it developed a conceptual
436 framework for the analysis of food tourism and urban branding and shed light on a currently overlooked
437 aspect of incoming tourism to India. The findings from this study suggest that place branding initiatives
438 Delhi, and Kolkata acknowledge local food and regional cuisine as a low-key resource in brochures,
439 destination portal and social media channels.

440 Based on the results of this study, a series of policy recommendations are hereby suggested to blend
441 early initiatives of food tourism in the observed in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata and help framing the
442 induced image of these three cities as food tourism destinations. First, local authorities and businesses
443 – including local tour operators – should work together in the co-creation of a complementary urban
444 tourism narrative to that currently in place. Cities like Milan and Copenhagen have been successful in
445 rebranding themselves as experiencing urban food destinations by stressing on traditional gastronomy
446 as well as new narratives blending tourismscapes and foodscapes. There is an opportunity to promote
447 the cosmopolitan nature and wide dining experience of street food in Mumbai along with intangible
448 heritage and food traditions in Delhi and Kolkata. For example, the DMOs should consider interacting
449 with international tourists reviews on social media platforms like TripAdvisor, Facebook and Instagram
450 to enhance the visibility of food trails and experiences in the three cities. The quest for authenticity is
451 central in the expectations of incoming tourists. Moreover, the richness and variety of local and regional
452 food in the cities analysed in this study can enhance urban visitor experience, with obvious economic
453 and socio-cultural benefits for the local businesses and residents.

454 From a web marketing perspective, this study suggests that the DMOs promoting Mumbai and Kolkata
455 should integrate local food and regional cuisine elements into their overall marketing strategy. In
456 addition, the aforementioned DMOs need to introduce both general as well as detailed information
457 about local food trails and regional cuisine traditions to prospective international tourists seeking
458 themed culinary excursions. To this end, partnership development between the DMOs and industry is
459 crucial to market local food and regional cuisine activities in the two cities.

460 The exploratory nature of this study comes with limitations. First, the period of analysis is limited to
461 the year 2019, meaning that any previous initiative of urban marketing and food tourism in Delhi,
462 Mumbai and Kolkata were beyond the scope of the study. Hence, the authors recommend for a
463 longitudinal study to ascertain the strategies and initiatives in the promotion of food as a cultural
464 attraction in the observed cities. Second, further research is needed to study the influence of past food
465 experiences and anticipations with Indian cuisine among international tourists coming to Delhi,
466 Mumbai and Kolkata. Third, the emphasis of this study on incoming tourism marketing calls for more
467 research on domestic tourism marketing initiatives promoting to Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata urban
468 food destinations. Finally, there is need for more research on the role of food in urban branding from a
469 demand perspective, with evidence from prospective and returning tourists to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata
470 and other major Indian cities.

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