

# EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF GASTRONOMIC IDENTITY ON TOURISM EXPERIENCES AND DESTINATION IMAGE IN CHINA'S UNESCO CITIES OF GASTRONOMY

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## ABSTRACT

China has a long history and a rich culinary tradition. According to the 2024 UNESCO list, out of ten global Cities of Gastronomy, six are located in China. Food plays a crucial role in both cultural and economic contexts; it is seen as an essential resource for tourism destinations with significant potential for sustainable development (Horng & Tsai, 2012). Additionally, food and gastronomy effectively mirror the regional culture and characteristics of a destination, thereby contributing to its unique identity (Lin et al., 2011; Boyne & Hall, 2004). The primary aim of this study is to investigate the components of gastronomic identity—gastronomic culture, quality, and culinary activities—to identify which is most influential in its formation. Further, the research will assess the impact of gastronomic identity on the dimensions of gastronomic experiences. The study will also explore how these experiences shape content-generation behaviors and, consequently, affect the perceived image of the destination and its visitors. This study will utilize empirical research methods to examine the potential relationships between various variables related to gastronomic tourism. The findings are expected to enrich the theoretical framework for future research in this field. Additionally, the results will offer practical insights for tourism businesses and gastronomic destinations, potentially enhancing their attractiveness to tourists.

**Keywords:** City of Gastronomy, Gastronomic Identity, Cultural Gastronomy, Gastronomic Experience

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