1   Analysis of the impact of traditional gastronomy on loyalty to a

2   World Heritage destination

3

4   **Abstract**

5   The traditional gastronomy of a territory reflects the history and customs of
6   populations that have inhabited it over time and left the imprint of their respective
7   cultures. This research focuses on traditional gastronomy in World Heritage cities. It
8   delves into the concept of visitors' loyalty to cities listed as World Heritage sites, with
9   the aim of providing results that can help improve the management of the tourist
10   destination in question. To do so, a questionnaire was given to a sample of 154 visitors
11   to Córdoba, a World Heritage city. Structural equation modelling is then used to test,
12   and ultimately confirm, five proposed hypotheses. The analysis includes traditional
13   gastronomy as a factor that affects satisfaction with the destination, satisfaction with the
14   restaurant and visitors' loyalty to the city. Results show that traditional gastronomy in
15   World Heritage cities has a very significant influence on satisfaction with the
16   destination and satisfaction with the restaurant itself. Consequently, this finding
17   highlights the importance of supporting traditional gastronomy in those destinations that
18   have it and promoting it abroad. In addition, a number of areas for improvement have
19   been identified: enhancing the local population's awareness of their own gastronomy;
20   the professionalization of gastronomy in restaurants' front and back of house; and
21   highlighting the cultural legacy of traditional gastronomy and improving the
22   information provided about it. Therefore, this study is important for the tourism
23   management of heritage cities to make them stand out from other similar destinations.
24
25   **Keywords:** traditional, gastronomy, management, loyalty, satisfaction,
26
27   **1.   Introduction**

28   In recent years, tourists' attitudes have been changing, and gastronomic tourism
29   has undergone rapid development, with emerging trends such as fusion and molecular
30   cuisine (Vega and Ubbink, 2008). However, many tourists prefer to try local food
31   during their holidays, and this is often one of their key motivations for travelling to a
32   destination (Türker and Süzer, 2022). Thus, tourists' strong interest in food in a heritage
33   tourism setting calls for a deeper understanding of this concept (Almansouri et al.,
34   2022). Thus, gastronomic tourism has become a relevant topic in academic terms, as
35   well as from a business point of view and destination management (Dixit, 2019).
36   The gastronomic culture of a territory cannot be considered as an isolated feature
37   (Ellis et al., 2018; De Alburquerque et al., 2019); rather it is the product of the different
38   cultures and civilizations that have populated a territory. Even in migratory movements,
39   it can be seen how gastronomy is taken from one region to another and adapted to the
40   new territory (Nyamnjoh, 2018). Only catastrophes where a civilization was completely
41   wiped out resulted in the loss of a cuisine transmitted from generation to generation.
42   Over time, the sum of the different cultures in a single territory gives rise to a wider
43   cuisine (Guerrero et al., 2009). For World Heritage cities, this culinary heritage can be a
44   differentiating factor in the choice of a destination (Dixit, 2019).
45   Although the fundamental motivations for visiting such a city are the features for
46   which it is listed as a World Heritage Site, there are a number of additional factors
47   (Bonetti et al., 2014) that can also play an important part in the choice: transport, the

political situation, the country's food security, gender (Remoalda et al., 2014), and traditional gastronomy. This study focuses on the importance of traditional gastronomy in World Heritage city destinations.

The traditional gastronomy of a region is recognized as an important feature of World Heritage cities (Bessière, 1998; Pearson and Pearson, 2017; Meneguel et al., 2022); however, there are very few studies of how it influences visitors' satisfaction with restaurants in the city or the destination itself, or their intention to recommend the city or make a repeat visit. This study contributes to the literature by reporting evidence on these issues. The main objective of this article is to demonstrate how traditional gastronomy contributes to satisfaction with a World Heritage city destination, as well as whether traditional gastronomy affects the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists with the chosen destination. In this sense, traditional gastronomy helps us to understand the intangible heritage, gastronomic culture and local consumption of a destination (Björk and Kauppinnen-Räisaänen, 2016). Other studies support that when specialties are consumed at their point of origin, visitors express complicity with the destination (Bessiére, 2001). And from the study of Fusté-Forné et al (2020) can determine the potential offered by specific spaces, such as food markets for the practice of gastronomic tourism

Thus, this article is to add to the research on gastronomy as a fundamental element in the choice to visit a heritage destination. This study identifies different items that account for the impact of traditional gastronomy on World Heritage cities, can help improve the management of tourism in cities that have a unique heritage, and provides useful information for both managers of World Heritage cities and professionals working in the field of gastronomy and heritage. The research delves into aspects such as satisfaction with restaurants and the destination itself, along with the variables relating to traditional gastronomy in cities with a strong heritage component. The related scientific literature (e.g., Ashworth and Page, 2011) addresses traditional gastronomy in heritage cities from two perspectives: studies on the direct impact of traditional cuisine on destination loyalty, which are very scarce, with this article making a contribution in this regard; and studies on satisfaction with restaurants and loyalty, a topic that has been more extensively studied in academia. Another element that makes this research novel is the application of structural equation modelling (SEM) to explore the relationship between traditional gastronomy and a heritage destination. Given all of the above, this article represents a contribution to the limited knowledge on the subject. Following this introduction, the rest of this article is structured as follows: The second section describes the theoretical framework on the impact of traditional gastronomy on destinations, satisfaction with the restaurants that offer such cuisine, satisfaction with the destination and visitors' subsequent loyalty to the destination. The third section presents a conceptual model with the five hypotheses to be tested. The fourth section outlines the methodology used and the results of the research. The fifth section discusses the results, while the final section sets out the conclusions and lists the references used.

2. Theoretical background

Below is a review of studies is carried out as a result of the relationships that arise in the proposed model. Thus, the following sections are proposed: the impact of traditional gastronomy on destination loyalty, la satisfaction with restaurants serving

96   traditional gastronomy, Tourist Satisfaction with a World Heritage destination and
97   finally, satisfaction with the destination and satisfaction with traditional restaurants.

98
99   2.1. The impact of traditional gastronomy on destination loyalty

100   The importance of traditional gastronomy as a significant factor in destination
101   choice has been studied for countries such as Albania (Brokaj, 2014), Korea (Kim et al.,
102   2008) and Spain (Antón et al., 2019) among others. Academic research has shown how,
103   from the visitor's point of view, traditional gastronomy is an important element of
104   intangible heritage. For example, the study by Vázquez-Medina and Medina (2020)
105   focusing on Mexican cuisine shows how UNESCO's designation of this cuisine as
106   intangible human heritage has made it a resource for gastronomic tourism, where the
107   State has commodified traditional culinary knowledge as a tool for the promotion of
108   tourism. Likewise, other studies focusing on this country, specifically the work carried
109   out with traditional cooks in the state of Coahuila, confirm the importance of traditional
110   cuisine for the identity and sustainable development of the region (Cortes et al., 2020).
111
112   Therefore, tasting traditional dishes increases tourists' knowledge about local cuisine
113   while also giving them a sensory pleasure (Chang et al., 2011; Henderson, 2009) that
114   generates feelings and emotions (Kivela and Crotts, 2006), thus reinforcing their
115   involvement in the local culture of the destination (Hernández-Rojas et al., 2020).
116   In the same vein, studies on the general image and aesthetics of gastronomy
117   reveal the importance of traditional cuisine in destination choice and confirm that
118   visitors positively associate traditional local cuisines with the identity of a place
119   (Hudson et al., 2019; Wang and López, 2020). Thus, the identity of the territory in
120   traditional gastronomy and tourists' interaction with the suppliers of local cuisine are
121   positively associated with their behavioral intentions in terms of revisiting a destination,
122   reflecting the impact of traditional cuisine (Hultman et al., 2017; Kumar and Kaushik,
123   2020).
124   The abovementioned studies indicate several consequences of the impact of
125   traditional cuisine: first, the local cuisine itself benefits from the support of tourists'
126   visits; secondly, it preserves ancestral customs and traditions; and thirdly, along with
127   the tangible heritage of cities, it can be a way to attract tourists, with the cuisine being
128   one of their main motivations for visiting.
129
130   2.2. Satisfaction with restaurants serving traditional gastronomy

131   The popularity of and interest in traditional cuisine has been gradually increasing
132   in recent years (Ting et al., 2017). As a result, traditional restaurants, mainly located in
133   the historic centers of cities, have been thriving. Different academic studies focus on
134   studying visitors' relationships with local gastronomy in order to improve the
135   management of destinations (Kumar et al., 2020; Kunasegaran et al., 2019). In this
136   sense, authors highlight how destination management includes a focus on traditional
137   restaurants (Hernández-Rojas and Huete Alcocer, 2021). This study shows how a visit
138   to a traditional restaurant affects the likelihood of recommending and repeating a visit to
139   a World Heritage city.
140   There are academics research's regarding satisfaction in restaurants related to
141   factors such as: price (Han and Ryu, 2009), the quality of the restaurant
142   (Almohaimmeed, 2017), the benefit itself (Gupta et al., 2007), the impact of the
143   restaurant's human resources (Alhelalat et al., 2017). Or factors such as atmosphere,

144   service and food (Hernández-Rojas and Huete-Alcocer, 2021), where according to
145   academic studies, the taste and quality of the typical food offered by these restaurants
146   were the attributes most valued by the satisfaction of visitors (Carvache-Franco et al.,
147   2021). In this context, there are fewer studies that speak of satisfaction in traditional
148   restaurants in world heritage cities, as an aspect that enhances the effect of traditional
149   food together with material heritage, together with the fact that it is a factor of
150   attraction. The present study represents a contribution to the literature in this regard.
151   Some studies (e.g., Wijaya, 2019) describe how the traditional food of a region
152   showcases cultural food habits relating to how people prepare the ingredients, cooking
153   methods and the culture of eating behavior. This traditional food can be tasted in
154   traditional restaurants, which play a key role in preserving and continuing the cultural
155   legacy (Mykletun and Gyimóthy, 2010; Omar and Omar, 2018).
156

157   2.3. Tourist Satisfaction with a World Heritage destination

158   Academic studies show how tourist satisfaction with a UNESCO World
159   Heritage destination influences loyalty to that destination (Maghsoodi et al., 2016).
160   Satisfaction is one of the most widely researched antecedents of loyalty and in recent
161   years this concept has been the subject of extensive academic discussion in the field of
162   tourism research.
163   According to Ashworth and Page (2011) satisfaction with a destination does not
164   depend only on the experience with tourist services, but is also influenced by many
165   endogenous factors such as safety, hospitality, the friendliness of the local inhabitants,
166   the cleanliness of the destination, the transport infrastructure and the level of visitor
167   management, as well as factors that cannot be controlled but are characteristic of a
168   destination, such as the climate. Alegre and Garau (2011) point to a need to distinguish
169   between the factors that lead to general satisfaction and to dissatisfaction, while some
170   factors can work both ways; the same climate could be a factor that increases tourists'
171   general satisfaction with the destination or that increases general dissatisfaction. Other
172   authors (e.g., Dmitrović et al., 2009) have designed a conceptual model of tourism
173   satisfaction at the destination level, showing that costs and risks (causing disutility),
174   which may also include weather conditions, negatively affect customer satisfaction
175   (Dmitrović et al., 2009).

176   Cities with a strong material heritage component can base gastronomy as a
177   differentiating element, since the nexus of the gastronomic experience and the visit can
178   be unforgettable (Haven-Tang and Jones, 2005) and in particular the traditional
179   gastronomy according to studies by Hendijani (2016). Although following Hernández-
180   Rojas; Huete Alcocer (2021) must take care of the gastronomic satisfaction of the
181   tourist because if it is not satisfactory it can generate the opposite effect to loyalty.

182   In recent years, other factors such as gastronomy have also been highlighted
183   (Huete-Alcocer and Hernández-Rojas, 2022), especially traditional gastronomy, but no
184   study to date has shown the extent to which it can influence a heritage destination. In
185   general, studies on gastronomy in a destination confirm that it is a factor that can be
186   modified in terms of its management by public administrations and private managers
187   (Robinson and Getz, 2016).
188

189

190 2.4 Loyalty to the destination: satisfaction with the destination and satisfaction with
191 traditional restaurants

192   The use of causal models to explore the relationship between tourist satisfaction
193 and behavioral intentions to visit a destination is an ongoing focus of loyalty research
194 (Prayag et al., 2017). There are many academic studies that jointly analyze satisfaction
195 with the destination and tourists' recommendation and repetition intentions (Chen and
196 Tsai, 2007; Granapala, 2015; Folgado-Fernández et al, 2017; Ryglová et al.,2018). They
197 show how a greater degree of satisfaction with a destination increases the intention to
198 return in both the long and short term (Assaker and Hallak, 2013). That is, if the
199 experience with the destination is positive, the intention to return to it increases over
200 time (Assaker et al., 2011). Therefore, most of the related research agrees that loyalty to
201 the destination is positively influenced by tourists' satisfaction with their own
202 experiences (Chi and Qu, 2008; Moon and Han, 2019).

203   However, there are very few studies on how loyalty to a destination is influenced
204 by traditional restaurants. Some examine this relationship from the perspective of
205 emotions (Hernández-Rojas and Huete-Alcocer, 2021), while others show that tourists
206 who feel more nostalgia for traditional restaurants perceive their gastronomic
207 experience to be of greater value, which tends to generate greater loyalty intentions
208 (Chen et al., 2020).

209   Finally, with regard to loyalty and its relationship with gastronomy, there have
210 been few scientific attempts to measure it. That said, academia has shown an interest in
211 loyalty with respect to gastronomic tourism (Allan, 2016; Folgado-Fernández et al.,
212 2017; Di-Clemente et al., 2019), albeit not specifically focusing on the direct
213 relationship with traditional cuisine.
214
215 2.5 Hypothesis development
216
217   Traditional gastronomy is created and developed in homes (Alalwan et al, 2017).
218 However, with the arrival of visitors and tourists to a territory, the cuisine reaches a
219 larger public. The gastronomic knowledge passed from generation to generation in
220 family cuisine initially serves the family itself. With the arrival of visitors, traditional
221 restaurants based on local gastronomy begin to open and serve the general public
222 (Presenza and Del Chiappa, 2013). There are factors that modify these traditional dishes
223 over time—forms of food consumption, culinary presentation, or any type of change to
224 adapt to new trends—but without abandoning the culinary roots from which they
225 emerged.
226   Studies such as that by Almansouri et al. (2022) posit that food in places with a
227 heritage component is influenced by social and cultural factors, reflecting an
228 increasingly dynamic authenticity over time. Despite the evolution that traditional
229 cuisine is undergoing, there is a need to protect the authenticity and heritage of the
230 typical recipes and cuisine of a place. Therefore, there is no better place to offer such
231 cuisine than in restaurants located in the historic center of a city listed as a World
232 Heritage site, as is the case under study in this research, where a conceptual model is
233 proposed that seeks to demonstrate the effect that traditional gastronomy has on tourist
234 satisfaction with the destination in general and on satisfaction with restaurants that offer
235 this type of local food. At the same time, it is aimed at clarifying the direct influence
236 that the local cuisine has on tourists' loyalty to the destination, both attitudinal and

237 behavioral, increasing their intention to recommend or return to the city. That is, to find
238 out if traditional cuisine creates loyalty to a world heritage city.
239   The conceptual model proposed and depicted in Figure 1 provides a novel
240 contribution to the literature by highlighting the role of local cuisine in tourists'
241 satisfaction with both local restaurants and the city as a destination, and their
242 subsequent loyalty to the destination. From this model, five hypotheses are proposed,
243 where they are supported in the literature by the indicated authors and are later tested in
244 this study to shed light on the relevance of traditional cuisine.
245
246 **Figure 1. Conceptual model**
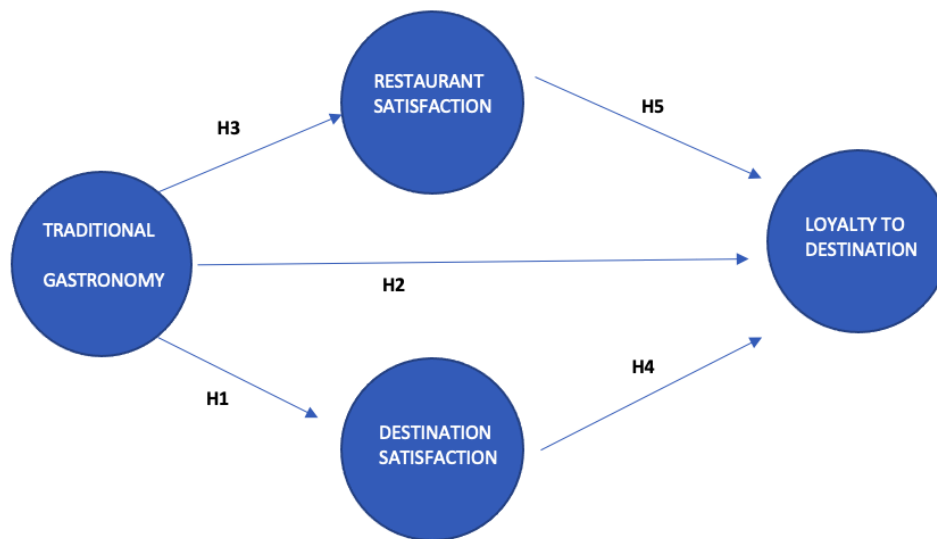
247

248   The hypothesis approach is justified as follows:
249
250   *H1: Traditional gastronomy positively and significantly influences tourists'*
251 *satisfaction with a World Heritage destination.* This hypothesis arose prior to the
252 studies that analyze how in rural and urban environments the boom of gastronomic
253 tourism that has boosted the satisfaction of the tourist and both for the local gastronomy
254 and the products of the food markets being this reflection of the local identity
255 (Hjalagerand-Richards, 2002; Leal, 2015; Fusté-Forné et al 2020).
256   *H2: Traditional gastronomy positively and significantly influences tourists'*
257 *loyalty to a World Heritage destination.* This hypothesis is contrasted with the study
258 they did Bèssiere and Tibère (2013).
259   *H3: Traditional gastronomy positively and significantly influences tourists'*
260 *satisfaction with traditional restaurants.* Some studies (e.g. Hall, 2016; Gyimóthy and
261 Mykletun, 2009; Scarpato, 2002; kala, 2020) have taken into account in their work the
262 relationship of these constructs.
263   *H4: Tourists' satisfaction with a World Heritage destination positively and*
264 *significantly influences their loyalty to it.* Investigators as Gyimóthy and Mykletun
265 (2009), and Scarpato (2002) have clarified this relationship.
266   *H5: Tourists' satisfaction with traditional restaurants positively and*
267 *significantly influences their loyalty to a World Heritage destination.* In this sense,

268 some authors studied these relevant aspects in cities as destinations (e.g., Nguyen and
269 Cheung, 2016; Haghighi, et al. 2012).
270
271 **3 Methodology**
272
273 3.1. Data collection and coding procedure
274
275 This research applies a quantitative approach to test the hypotheses raised. The data
276 used comes from a sample of 154 tourists who had only enjoyed traditional cuisine in
277 eight restaurants located in the historic center of Córdoba (Spain), a World Heritage
278 city. These restaurants only offer traditional cuisine from Córdoba; some of them
279 present their dishes including a more innovative presentation of them.
280 The information was collected through a questionnaire with 24 questions to be
281 answered on a 5-point Likert scale. These questions were based on a review of the
282 literature in such a way that the questionnaire was designed to measure the four
283 constructs of this research: the traditional cuisine of this city, satisfaction with
284 restaurants that offer this type of food, especially in the historic center, satisfaction with
285 the destination in general, and tourists' loyalty to this destination, especially due to the
286 restaurants. All this was collected in a first block. Subsequently, in a second, a series of
287 questions on sociodemographic characteristics were also included, making it possible to
288 define the profile of the tourist interviewed. The most representative respondent were
289 women (85% of respondents were women, 35% were between 40-59 years old), with
290 higher education, specifically a university degree (5.6%). Almost half of the tourists
291 interviewed (49.4%) came from other provinces in Andalusia. This may be due to the
292 fact that the survey was conducted in November 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic,
293 meaning that most of the visitors to the city were domestic tourists, and lived relatively
294 nearby.
295 Thus, with the information collected, it was possible to measure a conceptual model
296 of a reflexive nature that consists of four constructs and contrast a total of five
297 hypotheses. A reflexive model has been used since it allows us to observe if the latent
298 variable is the cause of the observed measurements (Jarvis, MacKenzie and Podsakoff,
299 2003). For this, a partial least squares methodology (PLS-SEM) was used, which
300 implies, as a first step, evaluating and confirming the validity and reliability of the
301 measurement model, to subsequently examine the structural model that allows revealing
302 the relationships between the conceptual constructions (Hair et al., 2011). For this,
303 SPSS Statistics and SmartPLS 3 software were used.
304
305 **4. Results and discussion**
306
307 The results of the model, as well as the steps taken in the research to validate the
308 proposed model are shown in the subsections to two following. Likewise, the Path
309 coefficient values are shown where the most significant relationships found between the
310 proposed constructs are indicated. To finish this section we show the discussion with
311 respect to other studies in the proposed hypotheses.
312
313 4.1. Evaluation of the measurement model: validity and reliability
314
315 First, the individual reliability of the indicators was assessed (Table 1). For this
316 purpose, the factor loadings of the items used in the questionnaire were calculated, and

those that were greater than or equal to 0.707 were deemed acceptable (Carmines and Zeller, 1979).

Table 1. Measurement model results

Factor	Items	Loading
Traditional gastronomy	TC1: Córdoba is a city known for its gastronomy	.703
	TC2: Córdoba is a city known for its tangible heritage	.802
	TC3 The local cuisine in Córdoba has a good reputation	.846
	TC4: The cuisine has tradition and roots in the local population	.748
Restaurant satisfaction	RS1: The restaurant is known outside of Córdoba	.688
	RS2: Location in the historic center	.811
	RS3: Organization in the restaurant	.809
	RS4: Power of attraction	.824
	RS5: Involvement with tourists and/or visitors	.744
	RS6: Opinion about the food tasted	.758
	RS7: The service provided by the restaurant	.816
	RS8: The atmosphere in the restaurant	.839
Destination satisfaction	DS1: The city is nice	.792
	DS2: The city is fun	.802
	DS3: It has been worth coming to this city	.720
	DS4: This city is a good place to visit	.801
	DS5: The restaurants are good value for money	.738
	DS6: There are useful tourist information centers	.695
	DS7: The city has a pleasant climate	.738
	DS8: I feel safe in this city	.770
Loyalty to destination	LY1: I will make a repeat visit to this city for the restaurants alone	.782
	LY2: I will recommend family and friends come to this city for the restaurants alone	.804
	LY3: I will visit this city again	.794
	LY4: I will recommend family and friends come and discover this city	.833

Next, the composite reliability was assessed to check whether each indicator satisfactorily measures the construct to which it is assigned. This analysis was performed by calculating Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach, 1951); values over 0.7 indicate acceptable reliability and values greater than 0.8 confirm a very good level of reliability (Nunnally, 1978). As Table 2 shows, all constructs satisfy the requirement of reliability. In addition, the convergent validity of the model was confirmed, allowing the measurement of the magnitude of the correlation between the four constructs; to do so, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated, the value of which should be equal to or greater than 0.5 according to the criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981).

331 Lastly, another measure of consistency reliability (CR) was calculated; specifically, the
332 rho_A value suggested by Dijkstra and Henseler (2015).
333
334 **Table 2. Construct reliability and validity**

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Destination satisfaction	.894	.896	.915	.574
Loyalty to destination	.817	.820	.879	.645
Restaurant satisfaction	.912	.915	.929	.620
Traditional cuisine	.780	.791	.858	.603

335
336　　Subsequently, the discriminant validity of the measurement model was checked,
337 the results of which are shown in Table 3. This measure indicates the extent to which a
338 given construct is different from the others. For reflective models, as is the case with
339 this research, discriminant validity compares the square root of the AVE, located on the
340 diagonal of the matrix, with the correlation between constructs (Purwanto and
341 Sudargini, 2021).
342
343 **Table 3. Discriminant validity**

	Destination satisfaction	Loyalty to destination	Restaurant satisfaction	Traditional cuisine
Destination satisfaction	.758			
Loyalty to destination	.707	.803		
Restaurant satisfaction	.703	.713	.788	
Traditional cuisine	.865	.739	.773	.777

344
345 4.2. Evaluation of the structural model

346　　After the evaluation of the measurement model, the structural model was analyzed
347 in order to test the hypotheses proposed in this research (Table 4). To do so, the values
348 of the path coefficients (β) were assessed using the non-parametric resampling
349 technique, PLS bootstrapping (Hair et al., 2011), indicating the significance of the
350 relationships between constructs. The results, which are shown in Table 4, support the
351 five hypotheses.
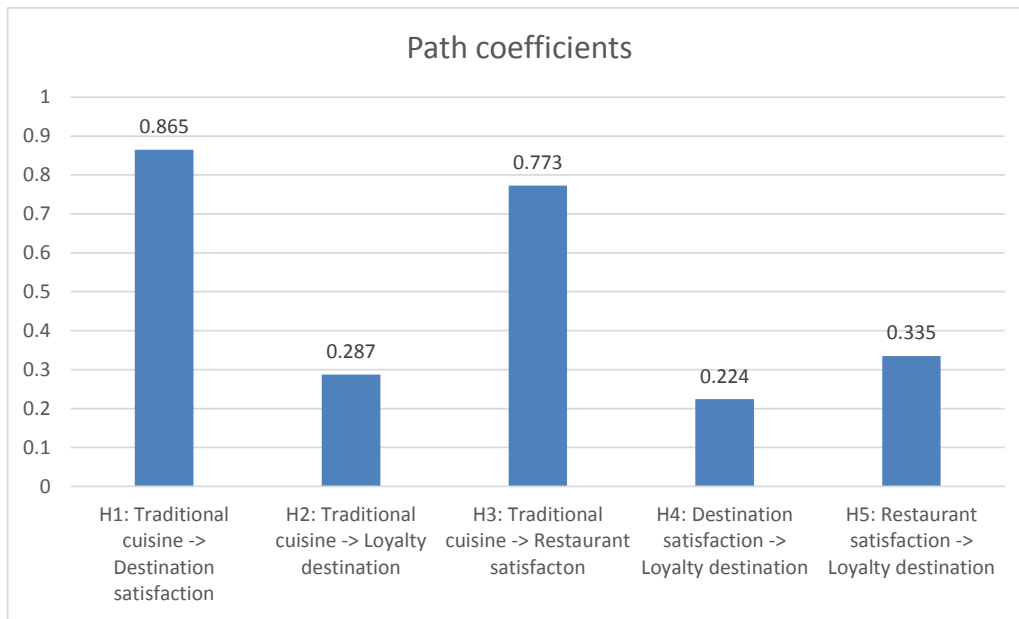352
353 **Table 4. Structural model results**

	Path coefficients	S. E.	Bootstrap-t value	Supported
H1: Traditional cuisine -> Destination satisfaction	.865	.030	28.793	YES
H2: Traditional cuisine -> Loyalty to destination	.287	.142	2.014	YES
H3: Traditional cuisine -> Restaurant satisfaction	.773	.046	16.696	YES
H4: Destination satisfaction -> Loyalty to destination	.224	.140	1.696	YES
H5: Restaurant satisfaction -> Loyalty to destination	.335	.105	3.191	YES

Figure 2 clearly shows that, of the five hypotheses proposed in the model, the strongest relationship is found for H1, regarding the influence that traditional cuisine exerts on tourists' satisfaction with a destination listed as a World Heritage city. This underscores the relevance of the intangible human heritage recognized by UNESCO, a finding reported by other authors in the case of traditional Mexican cuisine (Vázquez-Medina and Medina, 2020).

Figure 2. Path coefficient values (β)

Finally, the predictive power of the model was verified through R^2. According to Falk and Miller (1992), the value of R^2—indicating the variance in the endogenous variables explained by the model—should be greater than or equal to 0.1. The other measure calculated was Q^2 (Stone, 1974); values greater than zero indicate the predictive relevance of the model. Table 5 shows the good results for the predictive relevance of the proposed model of traditional cuisine.

Table 5. Predictive relevance of the model

	R^2	Q^2 predictive relevance
Destination satisfaction	.749	.751
Loyalty to destination	.609	.543
Restaurant satisfaction	.597	.591

The standardized mean square error (SRMR) was also calculated to test the global fit of the model. The resulting value was 0.077, which indicates a good fit according to Henseler et al. (2015), as it is below the threshold of 0.08.

383   4.3. Discussion

384   The results show that, of the five hypotheses proposed, the strongest relationship is
385   found for H1, demonstrating the relevant role played by traditional cuisine in
386   satisfaction with the destination (H1: β = .865; p < 0.001). The strength of the
387   relationship is much higher than that found for satisfaction with the restaurant (H3: β =
388   .773; p < 0.001), while the effect of traditional cuisine on loyalty to the destination is
389   weak (H2: β = .287; p < 0.05). The results for the fourth hypothesis (H4: β = .224; p <
390   0.05) show how satisfaction with the destination influences loyalty, but to a lesser
391   extent than the effect of satisfaction with the restaurant on tourists' intention to return to
392   the destination or recommend it to family and friends (H5: β = .335; p < 0.001).
393   The hypothesis with the strongest relationship of the model (H1)—a relationship
394   that has not been widely studied and thus represents a novel aspect of the article—
395   demonstrates the importance of traditional cuisine with roots in the territory and how it
396   affects tourists' satisfaction. There are very few studies that have constructed SEM
397   models to demonstrate this relationship. With respect to the relationship between
398   traditional cuisine and loyalty to the destination, the results align with those reported by
399   Hernández-Rojas et al. (2021), while results regarding the relationship between
400   traditional cuisine and satisfaction with the restaurant align with those reported by Chi
401   et al. (2013).
402   The relationship found between satisfaction with the destination and loyalty to it
403   (H4) is consistent with the findings of authors such as Folgado-Fernández et al. (2019).
404   Regarding the relationship between restaurant satisfaction and loyalty (H5), the results
405   coincide with the study by Kim et al. (2010). It should be noted that the relationship
406   between satisfaction and loyalty to the destination has been widely studied in the
407   literature (Pizam and Ellis, 1999; Kim and Cha, 2002); however, there are fewer studies
408   that specifically focus on satisfaction with restaurants in this regard.
409   All this indicates that protecting, preserving and promoting traditional cuisine
410   (Vázquez-Medina and Medina, 2020) in traditional restaurants such as those located in
411   the historic center of Córdoba, or in other popular World Heritage cities, can influence
412   tourists' satisfaction and their subsequent loyalty to the destination, as reflected in their
413   intention to return to the city and recommend it. In this regard, other studies confirm
414   that good local food (Chang et al., 2011) or good service (Sulek and Hensley, 2004;
415   Ryu et al., 2012) can increase visitor satisfaction.
416
417   **5.   Conclusion**

418   This study has focused on studying the connections between visitors to a World
419   Heritage city and traditional gastronomy. A better understanding of the relationship
420   between traditional gastronomy and satisfaction with the restaurant and the destination
421   sheds light on how visitors to cities with a strong heritage component choose these
422   destinations. The analysis has shown that satisfaction with traditional restaurants has a
423   more important effect on loyalty than satisfaction with the destination itself, thus
424   making the traditional gastronomy of a World Heritage city a fundamental factor for
425   attracting tourists and encouraging repeat visits. Likewise, the importance of traditional
426   gastronomy for satisfaction with traditional restaurants has been demonstrated.
427   Therefore, local gastronomy, with its traditional dishes and restaurants, must be
428   protected and preserved as a hallmark of a territory, especially in cities with tangible
429   World Heritage listings. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has now been largely
430   controlled by the development of vaccines, it had an enormous impact on gastronomy

431 and the restaurant industry—and by extension on loyalty to heritage cities—because it
432 limited physical meetings, creating a need to rethink traditional gastronomic
433 experiences (Dedeoğlu et al., 2022). Areas of potential improvement identified include
434 raising public awareness of traditional gastronomy, since the current popularity of
435 international cuisines means we run the risk of blurring the lines with traditional local
436 cuisine. In addition, the brands or image of traditional restaurants should be promoted
437 abroad. As for satisfaction with the destination, other possible improvements include
438 information on traditional gastronomy in tourist offices and signage indicating places
439 where traditional gastronomy is verified as authentic. Likewise, as another of the
440 practical implication given the effect demonstrated in variables such as satisfaction or
441 repetition, which traditional gastronomy has in cities with a strong heritage component,
442 it is necessary to take care of and maintain the professional level of the gastronomic
443 experience, being this responsibility both in traditional restaurants as managers of the
444 tourist destination (public administrations).

445 As in any study, there are limitations. It would have been interesting (study that can
446 be considered a future) employ a longitudinal approach to examine how these
447 relationships change over time. The effect of traditional gastronomy on satisfaction with
448 the destination and restaurants, and subsequently tourists' recommendations, opens up
449 more lines of potential future research. One such avenue of research would be the
450 analysis of the role played by local residents in traditional cuisine and their degree of
451 involvement in securing tourists' loyalty to a destination.

452 While structural equation modeling was used in this study, qualitative research
453 using focus groups or in-depth interviews could help gain a deeper understanding of
454 visitors' evaluation of dining experiences. Doing so can shed light on gastronomic
455 experiences in traditional cuisine and what is called the soul or spirituality of cuisine, as
456 has been explored in a number of studies (e.g., Sharpley and Jepson, 2011; Bastenegar
457 and Hassani, 2019).

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Analysis of the impact of traditional cuisine on loyalty to a
World Heritage destination

4

Abstract

The traditional gastronomy of a territory reflects the history and customs of populations that have inhabited it over time and left the imprint of their respective cultures. This research focuses on traditional gastronomy in World Heritage cities. It delves into the concept of visitors' loyalty to cities listed as World Heritage sites, with the aim of providing results that can help improve the management of the tourist destination in question. To do so, a questionnaire was given to a sample of 154 visitors to Córdoba, a World Heritage city. Structural equation modelling is then used to test, and ultimately confirm, five proposed hypotheses. The analysis includes traditional gastronomy as a factor that affects satisfaction with the destination, satisfaction with the restaurant and visitors' loyalty to the city. Results show that traditional gastronomy in World Heritage cities has a very significant influence on satisfaction with the destination and satisfaction with the restaurant itself. Consequently, this finding highlights the importance of supporting traditional gastronomy in those destinations that have it and promoting it abroad. In addition, a number of areas for improvement have been identified: enhancing the local population's awareness of their own gastronomy; the professionalization of gastronomy in restaurants' front and back of house; and highlighting the cultural legacy of traditional gastronomy and improving the information provided about it. Therefore, this study is important for the tourism management of heritage cities to make them stand out from other similar destinations.

Keywords: traditional, cuisine, management, loyalty, satisfaction,

1.   Introduction

In recent years, tourists' attitudes have been changing, and gastronomic tourism has undergone rapid development, with emerging trends such as fusion and molecular cuisine (Vega and Ubbink, 2008). However, many tourists prefer to try local food during their holidays, and this is often one of their key motivations for travelling to a destination. (Türker and Süzer, 2022). Thus, tourists' strong interest in food in a heritage tourism setting calls for a deeper understanding of this concept (Almansouri et al., 2022). The gastronomic culture of a territory cannot be considered as an isolated feature (Ellis et al., 2018; De Alburquerque et al., 2019); rather it is the product of the different cultures and civilizations that have populated a territory. Even in migratory movements, it can be seen how gastronomy is taken from one region to another and adapted to the new territory (Nyamnjoh, 2018). Only catastrophes where a civilization was completely wiped out resulted in the loss of a cuisine transmitted from generation to generation. Over time, the sum of the different cultures in a single territory gives rise to a wider cuisine (Guerrero et al., 2009). For World Heritage cities, this culinary heritage can be a differentiating factor in the choice of a destination.

Although the fundamental motivations for visiting such a city are the features for which it is listed as a World Heritage Site, there are a number of additional factors (Bonetti et al., 2014) that can also play an important part in the choice: transport, the

47 political situation, the country's food security, gender (Remoalda et al., 2014), and
48 traditional gastronomy. This study focuses on the importance of traditional gastronomy
49 in World Heritage city destinations.
50   The traditional gastronomy of a region is recognized as an important feature of
51 World Heritage cities (Bessière, 1998; Pearson and Pearson, 2017; Meneguel et al.,
52 2022); however, there are very few studies of how it influences visitors' satisfaction with
53 restaurants in the city or the destination itself, or their intention to recommend the city or
54 make a repeat visit. This study contributes to the literature by reporting evidence on these
55 issues.
56   Thus, the objective of this article is to add to the research on gastronomy as a
57 fundamental element in the choice to visit a heritage destination. This study identifies
58 different items that account for the impact of traditional gastronomy on World Heritage
59 cities, can help improve the management of tourism in cities that have a unique heritage,
60 and provides useful information for both managers of World Heritage cities and
61 professionals working in the field of gastronomy and heritage. The research delves into
62 aspects such as satisfaction with restaurants and the destination itself, along with the
63 variables relating to traditional gastronomy in cities with a strong heritage component.
64 The related scientific literature (e.g., Ashworth and Page, 2011) addresses traditional
65 gastronomy in heritage cities from two perspectives: studies on the direct impact of
66 traditional cuisine on destination loyalty, which are very scarce, with this article making
67 a contribution in this regard; and studies on satisfaction with restaurants and loyalty, a
68 topic that has been more extensively studied in academia. Another element that makes
69 this research novel is the application of structural equation modelling (SEM) to explore
70 the relationship between traditional gastronomy and a heritage destination. Given all of
71 the above, this article represents a contribution to the limited knowledge on the subject.
72 Following this introduction, the rest of this article is structured as follows: The second
73 section describes the theoretical framework on the impact of traditional cuisine on
74 destinations, satisfaction with the restaurants that offer such cuisine, satisfaction with the
75 destination and visitors' subsequent loyalty to the destination. The third section presents
76 a conceptual model with the five hypotheses to be tested. The fourth section outlines the
77 methodology used and the results of the research. The fifth section discusses the results,
78 while the final section sets out the conclusions and lists the references used.
79

80 **2. Theoretical background**

81
82 2.1. The impact of traditional cuisine on destination loyalty

83   The importance of traditional cuisine as a significant factor in destination choice
84 has been studied for countries such as Albania (Brokaj, 2014), Korea (Kim et al., 2008)
85 and Spain (Antón et al., 2019) among others. Academic research has shown how, from
86 the visitor's point of view, traditional gastronomy is an important element of intangible
87 heritage. For example, the study by Vázquez-Medina and Medina (2020) focusing on
88 Mexican cuisine shows how UNESCO's designation of this cuisine as intangible human
89 heritage has made it a resource for gastronomic tourism, where the State has commodified
90 traditional culinary knowledge as a tool for the promotion of tourism. Likewise, other
91 studies focusing on this country, specifically the work carried out with traditional cooks
92 in the state of Coahuila, confirm the importance of traditional cuisine for the identity and
93 sustainable development of the region (Cortes et al., 2020).
94

95   Therefore, tasting traditional dishes increases tourists' knowledge about local cuisine
96   while also giving them a sensory pleasure (Chang et al., 2011; Henderson, 2009) that
97   generates feelings and emotions (Kivela and Crotts, 2006), thus reinforcing their
98   involvement in the local culture of the destination (Hernández-Rojas et al., 2020).
99   In the same vein, studies on the general image and aesthetics of gastronomy reveal
100 the importance of traditional cuisine in destination choice and confirm that visitors
101 positively associate traditional local cuisines with the identity of a place (Hudson et al.,
102 2019; Wang and López, 2020). Thus, the identity of the territory in traditional gastronomy
103 and tourists' interaction with the suppliers of local cuisine are positively associated with
104 their behavioral intentions in terms of revisiting a destination, reflecting the impact of
105 traditional cuisine (Hultman et al., 2017; Kumar and Kaushik, 2020).
106   The abovementioned studies indicate several consequences of the impact of
107 traditional cuisine: first, the local cuisine itself benefits from the support of tourists' visits;
108 secondly, it preserves ancestral customs and traditions; and thirdly, along with the
109 tangible heritage of cities, it can be a way to attract tourists, with the cuisine being one of
110 their main motivations for visiting.
111
112 2.2. Satisfaction with restaurants serving traditional cuisine

113   The popularity of and interest in traditional cuisine has been gradually increasing
114 in recent years (Ting et al., 2017). As a result, traditional restaurants, mainly located in
115 the historic centers of cities, have been thriving. Different academic studies focus on
116 studying visitors' relationships with local gastronomy in order to improve the
117 management of destinations (Kumar et al., 2020; Kunasegaran et al., 2019). In this sense,
118 authors highlight how destination management includes a focus on traditional restaurants
119 (Hernández-Rojas and Huete Alcocer, 2021). This study shows how a visit to a traditional
120 restaurant affects the likelihood of recommending and repeating a visit to a World
121 Heritage city.
122   There is extensive academic research on satisfaction with restaurants related to
123 prices (Han and Ryu, 2009), restaurant quality (Almohaimmeed, 2017), satisfaction are
124 food quality, appropriate cost, and attentive service (Gupta et al., 2007) and restaurant
125 staff (Alhelalat et al., 2017). Other studies focus on the importance of traditional
126 restaurants (Hernández-Rojas and Huete-Alcocer, 2021), where the taste and quality of
127 the traditional food offered by these restaurants are found to be the attributes that most
128 influenced visitor satisfaction (Carvache-Franco et al., 2021). In this context, there are
129 fewer studies that address satisfaction with traditional restaurants, and a notable lack of
130 scientific studies focused on satisfaction with restaurants serving traditional cuisine in
131 World Heritage cities as a factor of attraction. The present study represents a contribution
132 to the literature in this regard.
133   Some studies (e.g., Wijaya, 2019) describe how the traditional food of a region
134 showcases cultural food habits relating to how people prepare the ingredients, cooking
135 methods and the culture of eating behavior. This traditional food can be tasted in
136 traditional restaurants, which play a key role in preserving and continuing the cultural
137 legacy (Mykletun and Gyimóthy, 2010; Omar and Omar, 2018).
138

139 2.3. Satisfaction with the tourist destination

140   Academic studies show how tourist satisfaction with a UNESCO World Heritage
141 destination influences loyalty to that destination (Maghsoodi et al., 2016). Satisfaction is

142　one of the most widely researched antecedents of loyalty and in recent years this concept
143　has been the subject of extensive academic discussion in the field of tourism research.

144　　　　According to Ashworth and Page (2011) satisfaction with a destination does not
145　depend only on the experience with tourist services, but is also influenced by many
146　endogenous factors such as safety, hospitality, the friendliness of the local inhabitants,
147　the cleanliness of the destination, the transport infrastructure and the level of visitor
148　management, as well as factors that cannot be controlled but are characteristic of a
149　destination, such as the climate. Alegre and Garau (2011) point to a need to distinguish
150　between the factors that lead to general satisfaction and to dissatisfaction, while some
151　factors can work both ways; the same climate could be a factor that increases tourists'
152　general satisfaction with the destination or that increases general dissatisfaction. Other
153　authors (e.g., Dmitrović et al., 2009) have designed a conceptual model of tourism
154　satisfaction at the destination level, showing that costs and risks (causing disutility),
155　which may also include weather conditions, negatively affect customer satisfaction
156　(Dmitrović et al., 2009).

157　　　　In recent years, other factors such as gastronomy have also been highlighted
158　(Huete-Alcocer and Hernández-Rojas, 2022), especially traditional gastronomy, but no
159　study to date has shown the extent to which it can influence a heritage destination. In
160　general, studies on gastronomy in a destination confirm that it is a factor that can be
161　modified in terms of its management by public administrations and private managers
162　(Robinson and Getz, 2016).
163

164　2.4 Loyalty to the destination: satisfaction with the destination and satisfaction with
165　traditional restaurants

166　　　　The use of causal models to explore the relationship between tourist satisfaction
167　and behavioral intentions to visit a destination is an ongoing focus of loyalty research
168　(Prayag et al., 2017). There are many academic studies that jointly analyze satisfaction
169　with the destination and tourists' recommendation and repetition intentions. They show
170　how a greater degree of satisfaction with a destination increases the intention to return in
171　both the long and short term (Assaker and Hallak, 2013). That is, if the experience with
172　the destination is positive, the intention to return to it increases over time (Assaker et al.,
173　2011). Therefore, most of the related research agrees that loyalty to the destination is
174　positively influenced by tourists' satisfaction with their own experiences.

175　　　　However, there are very few studies on how loyalty to a destination is influenced
176　by traditional restaurants. Some examine this relationship from the perspective of
177　emotions (Hernández-Rojas and Huete-Alcocer, 2021), while others show that tourists
178　who feel more nostalgia for traditional restaurants perceive their gastronomic experience
179　to be of greater value, which tends to generate greater loyalty intentions (Chen et al.,
180　2020).

181　　　　Finally, with regard to loyalty and its relationship with gastronomy, there have
182　been few scientific attempts to measure it. That said, academia has shown an interest in
183　loyalty with respect to gastronomic tourism (Allan, 2016; Folgado-Fernández et al., 2017;
184　Di-Clemente et al., 2019), albeit not specifically focusing on the direct relationship with
185　traditional cuisine.
186
187
188
189

190   2.5 Hypothesis development

191

192   Traditional or local cuisine is created and developed in homes. However, with the
193   arrival of visitors and tourists to a territory, the cuisine reaches a larger public. The
194   gastronomic knowledge passed from generation to generation in family cuisine initially
195   serves the family itself. With the arrival of visitors, traditional restaurants based on local
196   gastronomy begin to open and serve the general public. There are factors that modify
197   these traditional dishes over time—forms of food consumption, culinary presentation, or
198   any type of change to adapt to new trends—but without abandoning the culinary roots
199   from which they emerged.
200   Studies such as that by Almansouri et al. (2022) posit that food in places with a
201   heritage component is influenced by social and cultural factors, reflecting an increasingly
202   dynamic authenticity over time. Despite the evolution that traditional cuisine is
203   undergoing, there is a need to protect the authenticity and heritage of the typical recipes
204   and cuisine of a place. Therefore, there is no better place to offer such cuisine than in
205   restaurants located in the historic center of a city listed as a World Heritage site, as is the
206   case under study in this research.
207   Thus, this study proposes a conceptual model that seeks to demonstrate the effect
208   that traditional cuisine has on satisfaction with the destination and on satisfaction with
209   restaurants that offer this type of local food. At the same time, it is aimed at clarifying
210   the direct influence that the local cuisine has on tourists' loyalty to the destination, both
211   attitudinal and behavioral, increasing their intention to recommend or return to the city.
212   The conceptual model proposed and depicted in Figure 1 provides a novel contribution
213   to the literature by highlighting the role of local cuisine in tourists' satisfaction with both
214   local restaurants and the city as a destination, and their subsequent loyalty to the
215   destination. Based on this model, five hypotheses are proposed, which are then tested to
216   shed light on the relevance of traditional cuisine.

217

218   **Figure 1. Conceptual model**
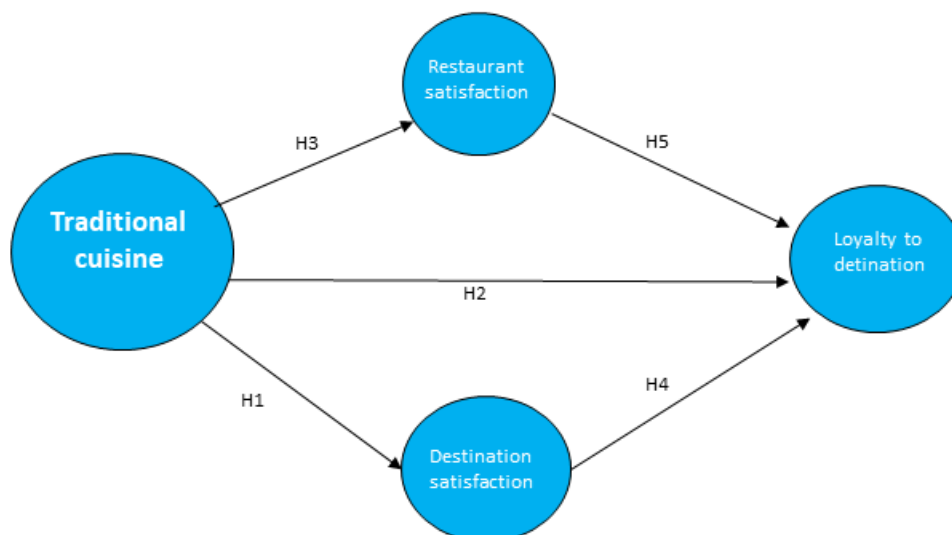
219

220

221   *H1: Traditional cuisine positively and significantly influences tourists'*
222   *satisfaction with a World Heritage destination.*
223
224   *H2: Traditional cuisine positively and significantly influences tourists' loyalty to*
225   *a World Heritage destination.*
226
227   *H3: Traditional cuisine positively and significantly influences tourists'*
228   *satisfaction with traditional restaurants.*
229
230   *H4: Tourists' satisfaction with a World Heritage destination positively and*
231   *significantly influences their loyalty to it.*
232
233   *H5: Tourists' satisfaction with traditional restaurants positively and*
234   *significantly influences their loyalty to a World Heritage destination.*
235

3 Methodology

3.1. Data collection and coding procedure

This research applies a quantitative approach to test the hypotheses raised. The data used come from a sample of 154 tourists who had enjoyed traditional cuisine in restaurants in the historic center of Córdoba (Spain), a World Heritage city.
The information was collected through a questionnaire with 24 questions to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was designed to measure the four constructs in this research: the traditional cuisine of this city, satisfaction with restaurants that offer this type of food, especially in the historic center, satisfaction with the destination in general, and tourists' loyalty to this destination, especially due to the restaurants. A series of questions on sociodemographic characteristics were also included, making it possible to define the profile of the tourist interviewed. The typical respondent was a middle-aged woman (85% of respondents were women, 35% were between 40-59 years old), with higher education, specifically a university degree (5.6%). Almost half of the tourists interviewed (49.4%) came from other provinces in Andalusia. This may be due to the fact that the survey was conducted in November 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that most of the visitors to the city were domestic tourists, and lived relatively nearby.
The proposed theoretical model is of a reflective nature and consists of four constructs. The method used to analyze the model was partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM), which involves evaluating and confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement model, before examining the structural model to reveal the relationships between the theoretical constructs (Hair et al., 2011). To do so, SmartPLS 3 and SPSS Statistics software were used.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Evaluation of the measurement model: validity and reliabity

First, the individual reliability of the indicators was assessed (Table 1). For this purpose, the factor loadings of the items used in the questionnaire were calculated, and

269 those that were greater than or equal to 0.707 were deemed acceptable (Carmines and
270 Zeller, 1979).
271
272 **Table 1. Measurement model results**

Factor	Items	Loading
Traditional cuisine	TC1: Córdoba is a city known for its gastronomy	.703
	TC2: Córdoba is a city known for its tangible heritage	.802
	TC3 The local cuisine in Córdoba has a good reputation	.846
	TC4: The cuisine has tradition and roots in the local population	.748
Restaurant satisfaction	RS1: The restaurant is known outside of Córdoba	.688
	RS2: Location in the historic center	.811
	RS3: Organization in the restaurant	.809
	RS4: Power of attraction	.824
	RS5: Involvement with tourists and/or visitors	.744
	RS6: Opinion about the food tasted	.758
	RS7: The service provided by the restaurant	.816
	RS8: The atmosphere in the restaurant	.839
Destination satisfaction	DS1: The city is nice	.792
	DS2: The city is fun	.802
	DS3: It has been worth coming to this city	.720
	DS4: This city is a good place to visit	.801
	DS5: The restaurants are good value for money	.738
	DS6: There are useful tourist information centers	.695
	DS7: The city has a pleasant climate	.738
	DS8: I feel safe in this city	.770
Loyalty to destination	LY1: I will make a repeat visit to this city for the restaurants alone	.782
	LY2: I will recommend family and friends come to this city for the restaurants alone	.804
	LY3: I will visit this city again	.794
	LY4: I will recommend family and friends come and discover this city	.833

273
274   Next, the composite reliability was assessed to check whether each indicator
275 satisfactorily measures the construct to which it is assigned. This analysis was performed
276 by calculating Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach, 1951); values over 0.7 indicate acceptable
277 reliability and values greater than 0.8 confirm a very good level of reliability (Nunnally,
278 1978). As Table 2 shows, all constructs satisfy the requirement of reliability. In addition,
279 the convergent validity of the model was confirmed, allowing the measurement of the
280 magnitude of the correlation between the four constructs; to do so, the Average Variance
281 Extracted (AVE) was calculated, the value of which should be equal to or greater than
282 0.5 according to the criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Lastly, another measure of

7

283 consistency reliability (CR) was calculated; specifically, the rho_A value suggested by
284 Dijkstra and Henseler (2015).
285
286 **Table 2. Construct reliability and validity**

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Destination satisfaction	.894	.896	.915	.574
Loyalty to destination	.817	.820	.879	.645
Restaurant satisfaction	.912	.915	.929	.620
Traditional cuisine	.780	.791	.858	.603

287
288 Subsequently, the discriminant validity of the measurement model was checked,
289 the results of which are shown in Table 3. This measure indicates the extent to which a
290 given construct is different from the others. For reflective models, as is the case with this
291 research, discriminant validity compares the square root of the AVE, located on the
292 diagonal of the matrix, with the correlation between constructs (Purwanto and Sudargini,
293 2021).
294
295 **Table 3. Discriminant validity**

	Destination satisfaction	Loyalty to destination	Restaurant satisfaction	Traditional cuisine
Destination satisfaction	.758			
Loyalty to destination	.707	.803		
Restaurant satisfaction	.703	.713	.788	
Traditional cuisine	.865	.739	.773	.777

296
297 4.2. Evaluation of the structural model

298 After the evaluation of the measurement model, the structural model was analyzed in
299 order to test the hypotheses proposed in this research (Table 4). To do so, the values of
300 the path coefficients (β) were assessed using the non-parametric resampling technique,
301 PLS bootstrapping (Hair et al., 2011), indicating the significance of the relationships
302 between constructs. The results, which are shown in Table 4, support the five hypotheses.
303
304 **Table 4. Structural model results**

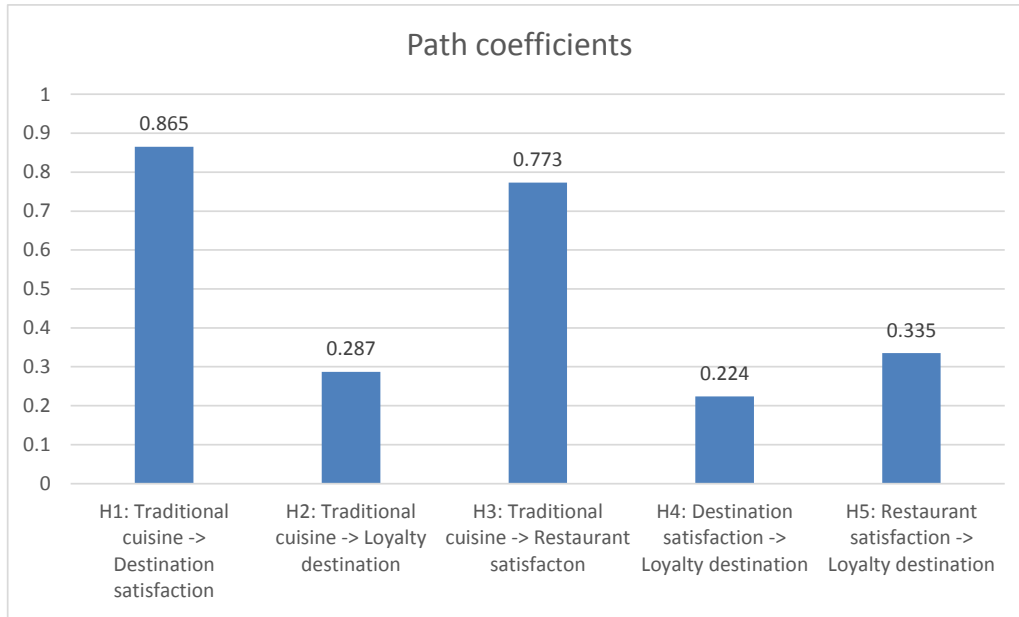|	Path coefficients	S. E.	Bootstrap-t value	Supported
H1: Traditional cuisine -> Destination satisfaction	.865	.030	28.793	YES
H2: Traditional cuisine -> Loyalty to destination	.287	.142	2.014	YES
H3: Traditional cuisine -> Restaurant satisfaction	.773	.046	16.696	YES
H4: Destination satisfaction -> Loyalty to destination	.224	.140	1.696	YES
H5: Restaurant satisfaction -> Loyalty to destination	.335	.105	3.191	YES

305 Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (distribution t(4999) of Student) t(0.05; 4999) = 1,645 ; t(0.01; 4999) =
306 2,327; t(0.001; 4999) = 3,092

307   Figure 2 clearly shows that, of the five hypotheses proposed in the model, the
308 strongest relationship is found for H1, regarding the influence that traditional cuisine
309 exerts on tourists' satisfaction with a destination listed as a World Heritage city. This
310 underscores the relevance of the intangible human heritage recognized by UNESCO, a
311 finding reported by other authors in the case of traditional Mexican cuisine (Vázquez-
312 Medina and Medina, 2020).
313
314 **Figure 2. Path coefficient values (β)**
315

316
317
318   Finally, the predictive power of the model was verified through R^2. According to
319 Falk and Miller (1992), the value of R^2—indicating the variance in the endogenous
320 variables explained by the model—should be greater than or equal to 0.1. The other
321 measure calculated was Q^2 (Stone, 1974); values greater than zero indicate the predictive
322 relevance of the model. Table 5 shows the good results for the predictive relevance of the
323 proposed model of traditional cuisine.
324
325 **Table 5. Predictive relevance of the model**
326

	R^2	Q^2 predictive relevance
Destination satisfaction	.749	.751
Loyalty to destination	.609	.543
Restaurant satisfaction	.597	.591

327
328   The standardized mean square error (SRMR) was also calculated to test the global fit
329 of the model. The resulting value was 0.077, which indicates a good fit according to
330 Henseler et al. (2015), as it is below the threshold of 0.08.
331
332
333
334

335   4.3. Discussion

336   The results show that, of the five hypotheses proposed, the strongest relationship is
337   found for H1, demonstrating the relevant role played by traditional cuisine in satisfaction
338   with the destination (H1: β = .865; p < 0.001). The strength of the relationship is much
339   higher than that found for satisfaction with the restaurant (H3: β = .773; p < 0.001), while
340   the effect of traditional cuisine on loyalty to the destination is weak (H2: β = .287; p <
341   0.05). The results for the fourth hypothesis (H4: β = .224; p < 0.05) show how satisfaction
342   with the destination influences loyalty, but to a lesser extent than the effect of satisfaction
343   with the restaurant on tourists' intention to return to the destination or recommend it to
344   family and friends (H5: β = .335; p < 0.001).

345   The hypothesis with the strongest relationship of the model (H1)—a relationship that
346   has not been widely studied and thus represents a novel aspect of the article—
347   demonstrates the importance of traditional cuisine with roots in the territory and how it
348   affects tourists' satisfaction. There are very few studies that have constructed SEM
349   models to demonstrate this relationship. With respect to the relationship between
350   traditional cuisine and loyalty to the destination, the results align with those reported by
351   Hernández-Rojas et al. (2021), while results regarding the relationship between
352   traditional cuisine and satisfaction with the restaurant alight with those reported by Chi
353   et al. (2013).

354   The relationship found between satisfaction with the destination and loyalty to it (H4)
355   is consistent with the findings of authors such as Folgado-Fernández et al. (2019).
356   Regarding the relationship between restaurant satisfaction and loyalty (H5), the results
357   coincide with the study by Kim et al. (2010). It should be noted that the relationship
358   between satisfaction and loyalty to the destination has been widely studied in the literature
359   (Pizam and Ellis, 1999; Kim and Cha, 2002); however, there are fewer studies that
360   specifically focus on satisfaction with restaurants in this regard.

361   All this indicates that protecting, preserving and promoting traditional cuisine
362   (Vázquez-Medina and Medina, 2020) in traditional restaurants such as those located in
363   the historic center of Córdoba, or in other popular World Heritage cities, can influence
364   tourists' satisfaction and their subsequent loyalty to the destination, as reflected in their
365   intention to return to the city and recommend it. In this regard, other studies confirm that
366   good local food (Chang et al., 2011) or good service (Sulek and Hensley, 2004; Ryu et
367   al., 2012) can increase visitor satisfaction.

368
369   **5.   Conclusion**

370   This study has focused on studying the connections between visitors to a World
371   Heritage city and traditional local cuisines. A better understanding of the relationship
372   between traditional gastronomy and satisfaction with the restaurant and the destination
373   sheds light on how visitors to cities with a strong heritage component choose these
374   destinations. The analysis has shown that satisfaction with traditional restaurants has a
375   more important effect on loyalty than satisfaction with the destination itself, thus making
376   the traditional gastronomy of a World Heritage city a fundamental factor for attracting
377   tourists and encouraging repeat visits. Likewise, the importance of traditional gastronomy
378   for satisfaction with traditional restaurants has been demonstrated.

379   Therefore, local gastronomy, with its traditional dishes and restaurants, must be
380   protected and preserved as a hallmark of a territory, especially in cities with tangible
381   World Heritage listings. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has now been largely
382   controlled by the development of vaccines, it had an enormous impact on gastronomy and

383 the restaurant industry—and by extension on loyalty to heritage cities—because it limited
384 physical meetings, creating a need to rethink traditional gastronomic experiences
385 (Dedeoğlu et al., 2022). Areas of potential improvement identified include raising public
386 awareness of traditional gastronomy, since the current popularity of international cuisines
387 means we run the risk of blurring the lines with traditional local cuisine. In addition, the
388 brands or image of traditional restaurants should be promoted abroad. As for satisfaction
389 with the destination, other possible improvements include information on traditional
390 gastronomy in tourist offices and signage indicating places where traditional gastronomy
391 is verified as authentic.
392   Implementation of interactive service platforms in destinations, such as mobile apps,
393 e-commerce websites, augmented reality and virtual reality videos, is another
394 recommendation (Yu et al., 2021). As technology is increasingly incorporated into food
395 tourism experiences, tourism marketers and cooking class organizers need to pay close
396 attention to online or hybrid formats to integrate the physical and virtual aspects of the
397 dining experience. Therefore, there is a need for more research on the technologically
398 enhanced dining experience.
399   As in any study, there are limitations. It would have been interesting (study that can
400 be considered a future) employ a longitudinal approach to examine how these
401 relationships change over time. The effect of traditional gastronomy on satisfaction with
402 the destination and restaurants, and subsequently tourists' recommendations, opens up
403 more lines of potential future research. One such avenue of research would be the analysis
404 of the role played by local residents in traditional cuisine and their degree of involvement
405 in securing tourists' loyalty to a destination.
406   While structural equation modeling was used in this study, qualitative research using
407 focus groups or in-depth interviews could help gain a deeper understanding of visitors'
408 evaluation of dining experiences. Doing so can shed light on gastronomic experiences in
409 traditional cuisine and what is called the soul or spirituality of cuisine, as has been
410 explored in a number of studies (e.g., Sharpley and Jepson, 2011; Bastenegar and Hassani,
411 2019).
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May, 3, 2022

Dear editor international journal of gastronomy and food science:

First of all, we thank you for the opportunity to submit the article " **Analysis of the impact of traditional cuisine on loyalty to a World Heritage destination**" for consideration and possible publication in the international journal of gastronomy and food science
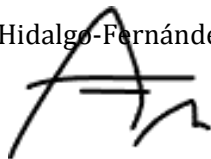
● Traditional cuisine as a factor is demonstrated is an important factor in the repetition and recommendation of destinations

● The world heritage cities present a gastronomy that must be protected, take care of those who visit the destination

● The traditional cuisine of a territory is the factor studied in this research that most influences satisfaction in destinations

● The article contributes to the importance of supporting traditional gastronomy

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Amalia Hidalgo-Fernández

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April., 28, 2022

Dear Editor international journal of gastronomy and food science:

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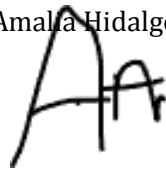
The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Amalia Hidalgo-Fernández

Ricardo David Hernández-Rojas: Conceptualization, Investigation, Validation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing

Nuria Huete Alcocer: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Validation, Investigation, Data Curation, Methodology, Software, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Amalia Hidalgo-Fernández: Validation , Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing