

WHEN DO TOURISTS REALLY ENJOY AUTHENTIC AND EXOTIC FOOD EXPERIENCES? PRODUCT ADAPTATION AND TOURISTS' ATTITUDES

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ABSTRACT

Gastronomy is an essential component of the travel experience. The current paper analyses the extent to which the perceived authenticity in the local food, the degree of adaptation and the cultural contrast determine tourist memorable experiences. Moreover, it proposes the moderating effect of searching for authenticity and adaptation ability. Results from a sample of international tourists in Segovia who tasted a typical dish "cochinillo" (roasted suckling pig) support the positive effect of authenticity and cultural contrast in the perceived experience, whereas the product adaptation reduces the perception of authenticity and cultural contrast. Authenticity has a greater effect on the experience perception when the tourists search for it and individuals are less influenced by the cultural contrast when they are unable to adapt themselves to different cultures.

Key words:

Tourism, gastronomy experience, authenticity, product adaptation, cultural contrast.

RESUMEN

La gastronomía es un componente esencial de la experiencia de los viajeros. El presente trabajo analiza el efecto de la autenticidad percibida y del contraste cultural en la experiencia gastronómica de los turistas. Además, se propone el efecto moderador de la búsqueda de autenticidad y la capacidad de adaptación del turista en dicha relación. Los resultados obtenidos con una muestra de turistas internacionales que han probado la gastronomía típica (cochinillo) de una ciudad con un claro posicionamiento gastronómico-cultural (Segovia) apoya el efecto positivo de la autenticidad y el contraste cultural sobre la experiencia percibida mientras que la adaptación del producto reduce la autenticidad y el contraste cultural. Además, se prueba que la autenticidad posee un efecto mayor sobre la experiencia percibida cuando los turistas realmente la buscan mientras que los individuos con mayor capacidad de adaptación son menos sensibles al contraste cultural de la experiencia.

Palabras clave:

Turismo, experiencia gastronómica, autenticidad, adaptación del producto, contraste cultural.

1. Introduction

“Do we really want to travel in hermetically sealed popemobiles through the rural provinces of France, Mexico and the Far East, eating only in Hard Rock Cafes and McDonalds? Or do we want to eat without fear, tearing into the local stew, the humble taqueria's mystery meat, the sincerely offered gift of a lightly grilled fish head? I know what I want. I want it all. I want to try everything once.” — Anthony Bourdain in “Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly”

The understanding and appreciation of other cultures involves getting knowledge of their gastronomy (Long, 2004; Mason & Paggiaro, 2015). In fact, an important component of the tourism experience comes from the local food, that is, from the culinary or gastronomy tourism. Tourists are motivated by the desire to experience the real life of the local people and to live an authentic experience of the destination culture (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2011), and it request tasting the local food. Despite the importance of gastronomy as a powerful maker of cultural identity (Hillel, Belhassen, & Shani, 2013), a key motivator and an important pull factor, the studies focused on the mutual link or interrelationship between tourism and food had been quite neglected by scholars (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012).

Recently, the interest in this topic has increased and extended although it still continues to be an area of cultural tourism in which there are still many underdeveloped facets (Quan & Wang, 2004; Scarpatò, 2002). Food is considered now as a critical tourism resource (Henderson, 2009) and travel dining is considered as a core experience (Chang et al., 2011). However, there are many facets still unexplored or misunderstanding of the tourist experiences with local food (Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014). What kind of food experiences is desirable for tourist? Are destinations really capable of providing authentic experiences? Does high cultural contrast positively impact on overall tourist experience? Authentic products and high cultural contrast when eating local food can provoke unpleasant experiences? To what extent is advisable to adapt the local cuisine for international visitor?

Even if tourist literature has emphasized the authenticity of cultural attractions as an antecedent of tourists' satisfaction (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003; Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011) or tourists' experience (Chang et al., 2011; Lego & Wood, 2009), the effects of authenticity and cultural contrast in the case of food is not so clear. Firstly, the abundance of food products in a globalized market (Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014) and the existence of restaurants of international food around the world, make more and more challenging to transform genuine and authentic local products in memorable food experiences. Secondly, even if tourists are attracted by the local cuisine and eager to enjoy an authentic and different experience, the real experience can be unpleasant. Many authors have shown the ambivalence of gastronomy to trigger “peak touristic” experiences (Chang et al. 2011; Quan & Wang, 2004; Tse & Crotts, 2005) and as a barrier or an unpleasant activity that they prefer to avoid. Cohen and Avieli (2004) alert about the two faces of food in tourism: the culinary experience does not always mean fresh, exotic, and succulent food, but also, unfamiliar, unpalatable and disgusting dishes. The local food can be an impediment for tourism because of the problem to offer cultural acceptable food.

In the current study we posit that the tourists' experience can be more intense and memorable when they perceive authenticity in the local food and when there is a great cultural contrast. However, these effects are moderated by the tourists' characteristics: the search for authenticity and the adaptation ability. Moreover, restaurants and establishments can mediate between the tourists and the local cuisine (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). In many cases, local dishes are transformed in various ways to suit tourists' tastes and to make dishes more acceptable, under the risk of altering the perceived authenticity and the cultural contrast. The desire to expand the potential market of some restaurant chains has even provoked, as Hillel et al., (2013) note, that some cuisines seem to be more of an artificial creation or invention of marketers than something emerged from culinary tradition and ongoing historical processes. Based on these considerations, we also explore the influence of product adaptation on food perceived-characteristics, the perceived experience and the behaviour intentions (WOM and intention to repeat). The proposed model is tested in the case of international tourists that tasted a local product of the Spanish gastronomy.

The major contribution of this paper is that it provides guidance about the desirable degree of adaptation and authenticity of the culinary experience. Although, we support the idea that the authenticity and the cultural contrast are relevant attributes of the experience, findings indicate that the adaptation of the product reduces the perception of food authenticity and cultural contrast. Moreover, authenticity has a greater effect on the experience perception when the tourists search for authenticity. However, when individuals are able to adapt themselves to different cultures, the cultural contrast has not effect on the perceived experience.

2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

2.1. *Gastronomy tourist experiences*

In today's context one of the most important goals that tourism firms and destinations must achieve, is creating distinguishing, memorable and superior customer experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, Verhoef et al.2009). The tourism experience originates from a set of direct and interactions between a visitor and a product or destination that, frequently, is created by elements that escaped from the manager's control (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Moreover, touristic experiences are rich in experiential attributes and due to this, they are subjective and have a specific nature and personal value that makes it unique (McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Hossany & Witham, 2010).

Nowadays, gastronomy is a crucial component of the tourist experience in the destination and the idea about a symbiotic relationship between tourism and the food is widespread (López Guzmán Vieira-Rodríguez, & Rodríguez-García, 2014; Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Tourist destinations are more conscious about the positive impact to gastronomy on their development and economic viability (Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012: 928). Food can be a strategic instrument of destination planning and may reinforce environmental protection, therefore, it is an important marketing tool (Henderson, 2016) and a key factor capable of promoting local products and attracting new visitors (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Hall and Sharples (2003) remind the difference between gastronomy or food tourism (food as a primary trip purpose) and the consumption of food as an essential part of the travel experience. In the current research, we focus in the latter case, that is, in the role of gastronomy as a significant, essential and enriching aspect of the tourist experience. Nevertheless, even if food is not the primary purpose of a trip, eating should be considered as something more than a supporting activity or an extension of the daily routines of the visitor (Quan & Wang, 2004). Consumption of food must be seen as a "peak experience" that can contribute to the visitor having a memorable and intense experience (Quan & Wang, 2004).

From the tourist's perspective, food consumption can increase tourists' knowledge of the local cuisine, may conduct them to holistic and pleasurable sensory experience (Chang et al., 2011; Henderson, 2009) that generate feelings and emotions (Kivela & Crotts, 2006) and can reinforce their involvement in the local culture of the destination. According to Mason and Paggiaro (2012) the food experience is holistic since it results from the interaction of sensorial, affective, cognitive, behavioural and social experiences. Some studies have analysed how gastronomy influences tourist experience (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Horng, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2012; Chang et al., 2011; Quan & Wang, 2004). As WFTA (World Food Travel Association) noted, destinations are the place where "food and beverage meet travel and hospitality". Gastronomy tourism –as hedonic product- can offers pleasure, entertainment, excitement and helping tourists discover, understand and share differences between their culture and others with which they come into contact.

Individuals' overall appraisal of their experience plays a key role in their future decisions and behaviour. In the area of tourism, said future behaviour has often been measured as the intention to revisit the destination and to recommend the visit to others (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Oppermann, 2000), that is, the perception of a memorable experience influences the intention to repeat the visit and recommend the destination (Ali, Ryu, & Hussain, 2016; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Hossany & Witman, 2010). When tourists have a pleasant and enriching stay, they are more likely to want to repeat the experience and are therefore more likely to want to revisit the destination (Barroso Martín, & Martín, 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007). In other words, the memorable food experience is a motivation

and stimulus to return to a destination and taste again the same food. Kivela and Crotts (2006), for instance, found that a motive to return to Hong Kong was the expectations of gastronomy and Sparks, Bowen, & Klag, (2003) also related the intention to return to a wine region with the gastronomy past experience. Finally, Alderighi, Bianchi, & Lorenzini, (2016) also indicate that the previous experience with local food specialities is positively related to the intent to revisit a destination.

Moreover, after the visit, individuals may be willing to share their food experiences with other potential visitors. Tourists like to talk about what they have learnt and felt during their visit (Carballo, Araña, León, & Moreno-Gil, 2015) and to evoke pleasant memories of their stay (Ali et al, 2016). A pleasant food experience may therefore play a decisive role in their intention to share and recommend the destination to those around them (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Um, Chon, & Ro, 2006) and throughout social networks (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). Therefore,

H1. The perception of a memorable food experience has a positive effect on the tourist's behavioural intention (recommendation -H1a- and intention to repeat -H1b-).

Since we posit that memorable food experiences impact on tourists' behaviours, the remaining question is to know what are the characteristics of the food experience that makes it memorable. In the following sections, we deep in the food characteristics (authenticity, cultural contrast, and adaptation) and the tourist's profile (search for authenticity and adaptation ability) as determinant factors of the perception of the experience and the behavioural intentions.

2.2. Food characteristics: authenticity, cultural contrast and adaptation

Authenticity is a concept widely studied from different perspectives and areas (anthropology, sociology, psychology, economy, marketing, etc.) but it has a special meaning in the tourism context. Authenticity is a key construct in the tourist sphere, due to the experiential nature of tourist services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Sidali & Hemmerling, 2014). This concept has been associated with terms as "genuine", "real", "trustworthy", "tradition" or "origin".

Individuals are increasingly looking for authentic experiences. It is widely accepted that authenticity becomes an important aspect when visitors evaluate their travel experiences (Chang et al. 2011) although not all of them pursue it with the same extent or intensity (Ozdemir & Seytöglu, 2017). Previous work has shown that heritage, culture, natural resources and food, among others, can be distinctive resources with potential to attract seekers of authenticity. However, authenticity has a marked personal character as it is a subjective evaluation (Hillel et al., 2013; Newman & Dhar, 2014) that the individual has to experience and discover for himself (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Wang, 1999).

In this vein, more recent researches consider tourism activities as suppliers or creators of experiential authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006) and therefore the local food is conceived as an authentic experience. According to Cohen and Avieli (2004), tourists use different indicators of the authenticity (ingredients, cooking methods, presentation of the dishes, etc.) but not all of them determine the visitors' judgement in the same manner. In many gastronomy experiences, tourists evaluate the authenticity of the food based on the mode of preparation whilst in others this could be consolidated by ingredients. Chang et al. (2011: 309) posit that the sense of authenticity is not limited to whether the local cuisine is an exact replication of traditional cuisine, but can be extended to embrace existential authenticity, that is, to encounter one's authentic self (Wang, 1999, Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). As Hillel et al. (2013:201) points out "gastronomic journey of knowing oneself by knowing others, much depend on the perception of the local food as authentic".

Gastronomy determines and adds value to the overall experience and impacts on travel intentions (Kivela and Crotts, 2005; Horng et al. 2012). Food plays a prominent role in tourist decision-making and satisfaction (Henderson, 2009). Some studies show that food experiences are an important predictor of emotional experience (Lashley et al. 2004) and play a relevant roll in achieving visitors' satisfaction (Mason and Paggiaro, 2012; Harrington, Ottenbacher, Lowenhagen, 2015; Nield, Kozak and LeGrys, 2000) and therefore they can have a positive impact on future behaviour. In this line, the findings of Kivela and Crotts (2006) show that gastronomy has a positive impact on the perceived quality of the experience -especially for tourists with a deeper knowledge of cuisine and gastronomy-

and it also contributes positively to the intention to return. Kolar and Zabkar, (2010) confirm that object-based authenticity and existential authenticity have a positive influence on tourist loyalty.

Dining experiences also contribute to make travel visitors' experiences more distinctive and memorable and may lead them to share their experiences in social networks sites. When tourist feels that he has lived an authentic and unique experience, this feeling likely triggers his desire to share it with others and to generate content through channels for electronic word of mouth. Therefore, we propose that:

H2. The perception of food authenticity has a positive impact on the perception of a memorable experience.

H3. The perception of food authenticity has a positive impact on the tourist's behavioural intention (recommendation -H3a- and intention to repeat -H3b-).

Another component of the food experience is the *cultural contrast*. Tourism literature suggests that cultural similarity influences the intention to visit destinations because of similar cultural background, similar language, or similar religion (Ng et al., 2007). Byrne and Nelson (1965) denoted it as the similarity-attraction hypothesis. Spradley and Philips (1972) or Lepp and Gibson (2003) related cultural distant destinations with stress or risk perception. In fact, cultural distance may provoke a cultural shock, that is, the strain and anxiety resulting from contact with a new culture (Winkelman, 1994). However, Winkelman (1994) indicates that in the first stages of cultural shock people show interest, excitement or euphoria about a new culture and the differences are perceived as exciting and interesting. This situation is manifested the case of tourists whose experience in a destination is limited. McKercher and Chow (2001) propose that the greater the cultural distance, the greater the tourists' interest in participating in cultural tourism activities (Chang, Kivela, and Mak, 2011). According to Mak et al. (2012a: 178) travel is associated with experiencing 'otherness', that is, the sense of being distinct and strange (the perception of the boundaries that divide cultures), as well as new sights and experiences that are 'out of the ordinary'.

As regards the gastronomy of a destination, it is one aspect of the perceived cultural distance of a destination that may provoke stress, but, at the same time, attraction. In fact, for many tourists, consuming local delicacies and participating in local foodways are essential parts of the tourist experience (Chang et al., 2010; Mak et al., 2012b). Mynttinen et al. (2015: 457) indicate that "exposure to previously unknown food products or methods of preparation may even change the consumption patterns of a traveller after his or her return home". Therefore, the cultural contrast perceived in food may be considered as an element that makes the experience different, unique, and valuable and, consequently, will have greater impact on the tourist's intention to repeat and recommend the experience. Cohen (1972) argues that novelty seeking and strangeness are key ingredients in the travel experience and Mak, et al. (2012b) establish that contrast is one of the motivational factors underlying tourist food consumption. The new flavours discovered, the curiosity, and the sensation of experiment a new adventure or of taking a greater risk when trying new foods (Tse and Crotts, 2005) can make tourist keeps a differential memory of the experience that activates a unique feeling that impacts future decisions. Then,

H4. The cultural contrast has a positive impact on the perception of a memorable experience.

H5. The cultural contrast has a positive impact on the tourist's behavioural intention (recommendation -H5a- and intention to repeat -H5b-).

Total authenticity and great contrast in food may be "difficult to digest" for tourists. While some of them enjoy experimenting new ingredients or cooking methods and they desire to taste strange or unfamiliar dishes, others can prefer and choose familiar gastronomy and they only try local food if it is transformed or adapted to some extent (Chang et al. 2011). Otherwise, they rather refuse to taste the autochthonous culinary products because they are perceived as unfamiliar, disgusting, unpalatable or even frightening (Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Ji et al. 2016).

Cohen and Avieli (2004) suggest that destinations may adapt those aspects that do not undermine the authenticity of the product and to make it more palatable and attractive. Therefore, the visitors could

balance their desire for novelty with their need to be in a “bubble environment” or lower risk ambient without affecting the perceived authenticity of the experiences. However, this option has clashed with the strictest and encapsulated definition of authenticity, giving rise to a debate and controversy in this regard in the tourism literature. Some authors consider that adapting products/experiences to reduce the cultural contrast for foreign tourist might cause “decaffeinated” levels of authenticity, making that these food experiences could be considered as an example of “staged authenticity” (MacCannell, 1973). On the contrary, Wang (1999) suggests that tourists seek their own and intersubjective authenticity, and the issue of whether the object is authentic is irrelevant or less relevant. Therefore, as an exploratory hypothesis, we propose that the degree of adaptation of the food product may undermine the tourist’ perception of food characteristics, that is, the perceived authenticity and the cultural contrast.

H6. Food adaptation has a negative impact on of perceived authenticity (H6a) and on the cultural contrast (H6b).

2.3. Tourists attitudes: search for authenticity and adaptation ability

Ryu and Jang (2006) explained that the intentions of tourists to experiment with the local cuisine depends, among other factor, of their personal attitudes. As Tse and Crotts (2005:966) pointed, “curiosity is one of the strongest inner forces which drives people to learn, do, experiment, explore and experience”. Even so, “not every person is ready to immerse himself wholly in an alien environment” and individuals show different levels of novelty-seeking. Cohen (1972) distinguished four types of tourists based on the degree of familiarity or novelty that they seek in their travel: drifter, explorers, the individual mass tourist and the organized mass tourist. Plog’s (1974; 2001) Model Tourist Behaviour proposed three tourist typologies: (1) allocentrics or venturers are tourist who enjoy seeking adventure and living new experiences, (2) psychocentrics, non-adventure individuals who are inclined toward products and predictable environment which can make he feel safer; and (3) midcentrics, a mix or combination of the previous two. Finally, Hjlager (2003) identify four typologies depending on individuals’ preferences for novelty or familiar experiences: recreational, diversionary, existential and experimental tourist. As a matter of fact, most people make decisions searching for balance between the security need and novelty-seeking (Cohen, 1972; IsoAhola, 1980; Cohen and Avieli, 2004), which leave individuals immersed in a contradictory or dual behaviour.

Searching for novelty and authenticity affects the degree to which visitors imbue themselves with food and culture experiences (Tse and Crotts, 2005). As Cohen and Avieli (2004: 760) pointed, there are two opposed faces of food in tourism: the side of food as an “attraction” and the reverse side as an “impediment” (hygiene and health or habits and table manners) and suggested that “habitual attachment to accustomed foods and cuisine appears to be a general human tendency”. In a similar line, other authors as Fischler (1988) and Ji et al. (2016) distinguish between “neophobic” (tendency to avoid and considered strange/unusual food as reluctant to eat) and “neophylic” (desire to accept, enjoy and taste strange food) tendencies in food taste. Consequently, individuals who search for local and authentic products and customs in a destination will enjoy much more an authentic food experience than those who are reluctant to unpredictable environments. Therefore, we propose that:

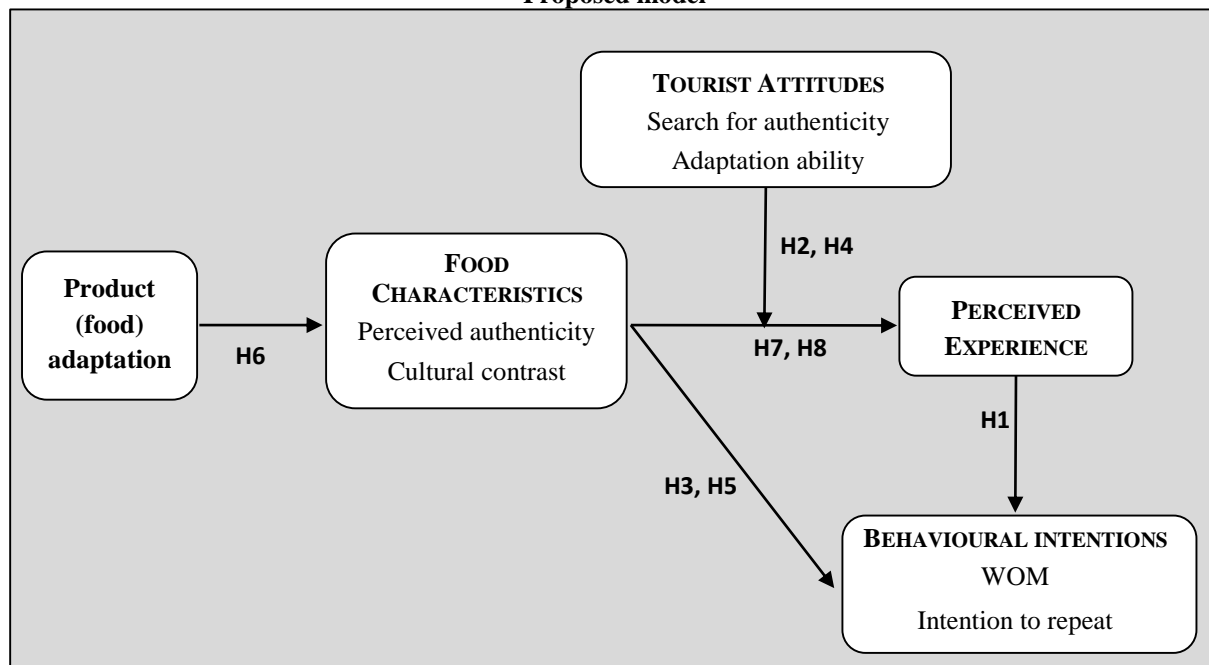
H7. The search for authenticity reinforces the positive effect of the authenticity on the perception of a memorable experience.

In addition to the search for authenticity, tourists also show different ability to adaptation ability to new environments. Crotts (2004) indicates that individuals will likely take into account the degree of similarities and differences of the countries they travel to and will adapt themselves to the environment in an effort to minimize potential friction during their leisure trip. However, while some tourists’ motto is “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”, other tourists have more difficulty to change their behaviour patterns. Tse and Crotts (2005) conclude that nationality influences culinary experimentation and that first-time visitors and older visitors prefer a limited range of culinary offerings. Winkelman (1994) suggests that individuals’ abilities that make an individual effective in intercultural communication and adaptation could reduce cultural shock, i.e., the ability to communicate effectively, the ability to establish interpersonal relationship, cultural empathy, and the ability to behave in an appropriate way and display respect (Cui and Van den Berg, 1991). Therefore,

the tourist's adaptation ability will favour the positive effect of food cultural contrast in the perception of a memorable experience. Thus,

H8. The adaptation ability reinforces the positive effect of the cultural contrast on the perception of a memorable experience.

FIGURE 1
Proposed model



3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

Data were collected through a survey conducted at international tourists visiting the city of Segovia (Spain). Segovia is a World Heritage City and one of its main attractions is its cuisine, which has become a bastion of Segovia's tourist industry and it is supported by the excellent agricultural and livestock products of the land. The main dish of the local tradition is the *cochinillo asado* or roast suckling pig, considered a worldwide famous delicatessen. The pigs are not heavier than 4-5 kilograms, milk-fed only, not older than three weeks, and are cooked in a special oven - made of artisan form with clay-, with natural wood. This is one of the most notorious and outstanding dishes of the Segovia's cuisine, being very usual that intellectuals, artists, prestigious personages and athletes of world-wide elite are going to taste this typical dish to some of its world-famous restaurants. The characteristics of that perceived novel foods reflect Quan and Wang's (2004) description about novel food experiences that include "the ingredients of foods being novel and enjoyable; the way that food is delivered or consumed being novel; and the "core" as opposed to "peripheral" ingredients remaining unchanged" (Ji et al., 2016: 392).

A questionnaire was designed to measure the variables in the model and a group of professional surveyors were in charge of data collection. Data were collected between May and June 2015. International tourists were contacted at the exit of some restaurants and were asked if they had eaten *cochinillo asado*. Those who had eaten it were interviewed. A total of 286 valid questionnaires were collected. The sample consisted of 50.3% men and 49.7% women. Age distribution was 24.3% up to 30 years old, 37.7% from 30 to 40 years old; 18.7% from 40 to 50 years old; and 19.3% over 50 years old. 40.5% were European visitors, 29.9% American visitors, 26.8% Asian visitors, and 2.8% from other countries. Respondents were asked about the motives to visit Segovia, through five-point scales which ranged from no important to very important motive. The means for each motive were as follows: food and cuisine (4.57), sightseeing (4.45), look new experiences and see new places (4.40), culture experience (4.38), visit monuments and national Heritage sites (4.35), leisure (4.16), rest and

relax (4.10), shopping (3.57), education and training (1.98), visiting friends and relatives (1.89) and business trip or work (1.85).

3.2. Measurement of variables

When possible, measurement scales were adopted from past research and adjusted to the context of the current study. All the variables were measured using five-position Likert scales.

The scale to measure the *perception of authenticity* comprises four items adapted from the scale proposed by Robinson and Clifford (2012) and designed based on the findings of previous researches (Chang et al. 2011). The perceived *cultural contrast* was measured throughout an ad hoc scale that comprises three items reflecting the extent to which eating *cochinillo* is perceived as exotic or unfamiliar (Hartmann et al. 2015). To measure the individual's *search for authenticity*, we created a three-item scale that indicates the tourist active searching or local and genuine products. The *adaptation ability* was measured by five items, that indicates the tourist's general capability to be introduced in other cultures and to enjoy other traditions. These items were developed based on previous research focused on food preferences (Chang et al. 2011). For the *perceived experience*, we adapted some indicators of the scales proposed by Kim et al. (2012), Rahman and Reynolds (2015), and Wang (2011), specifically, we considered five items that reflect the extent to which the experience was positively remembered (memorable, stimulating, exciting, or interesting). The *adaptation* of the food experience was measured as a dichotomous variable. Restaurants serve *cochinillo* in different ways. Some restaurants present it in the traditional way, the whole roasted pig (see Figure 2a). Another possibility is to cut it in pieces and serve it just as a piece of meat (see Figure 2b). Even if it maintains the authenticity of the product (it is the same dish, the same product, the same quality, and the same cooking method), there is an adaptation in the way it is served. This adaptation involves the elimination of one characteristic of novel food experiences, that is, the way in which food is delivered is not novel. The Figure 2a was considered a not-adapted product and the Figure 2b an adapted product. Therefore, the individuals were asked how the *cochinillo* they had eaten has been presented. 56.8% had tasted the adapted product and 43.2% the not-adapted product.

FIGURE 2
Experience adaptation



(a) Not-adapted product



(b) Adapted product

The scales of *recommendation* or word-of-mouth (WOM) and *intention of repeat* are based on those used by Barroso et al. (2007), Yoon and Uysal (2005), and Mason and Paggiaro (2012). The WOM was measured just with two items that indicate the individual's intention to recommend the *cochinillo* and to post comments about it in social networks as Tripadvisor. The intention to repeat also is measured with two items that indicate the intention to return to eat *cochinillo* and the intention to return because of the gastronomy.

Finally, the cultural context of the tourists' home country was introduced as a control variable. According to Hall's (1976) classification we distinguished between high-context and low-context cultures. This classification differentiates how people communicate in different cultures. High context implies that the communication is less explicit and formal, but unspoken and implicitly transferred, while low context implies that information is public and external, and explicitly exchanged. According

to this typology, the sample consisted of 54.2% individuals belonging to low-context cultures (Europe and North America) and 45.8% belonging to high-context cultures (Asia and South America).

Partial least squares (PLS) was used to perform the joint estimation of the measuring model and the structural model, specifically we used SmartPLS v3.2 (Ringle *et al.*, 2015). Table 1 shows the variables used in the study and the measurement indicators together with the corresponding descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). Information is also provided concerning the outcomes of the reliability and validity analysis of the measurement scales used. The composite reliability (*CR*) and the average extracted variance (*AVE*) values are given, as are the factor loadings, all of which yielded acceptable values. Table 2 shows the correlation matrix. The Fornell-Larker criterion confirms the discriminant validity.

TABLE 1
Measurement of variables

Variables and items	Mean	SD	Loadings
Perceived authenticity (<i>CR</i> = 0.885; <i>AVE</i> =0.659)			
Eating cochinitillo was an authentic experience	3.94	0.814	0.845
I think eating cochinitillo has helped me to get a better idea of the local culture	3.86	0.851	0.832
Eating cochinitillo, I've learned many things I didn't know	3.76	0.884	0.772
Now I understand local tradition and habits of Segovia cuisine	3.78	0.872	0.796
Cultural contrast (<i>CR</i> =0.847; <i>AVE</i> =0.651)			
Eating cochinitillo means a great cultural contrast for me	4.37	0.932	0.680
Eating cochinitillo is exotic for me	3.94	0.897	0.858
I barely knew this typical dish (cochinitillo)	3.90	0.883	0.867
Search for authenticity (<i>CR</i> =0.852; <i>AVE</i> =0.657)			
I try to know true products and customs from the place I visit	4.40	0.851	0.827
I avoid tourist-aimed products and I search genuine products from the place I visit.	3.94	0.749	0.789
I should eat local food while traveling. That's what we call "genuine travel"	3.94	0.858	0.815
Adaptation ability (<i>CR</i> =0.899; <i>AVE</i> =0.641)			
I really enjoy local culture	3.85	0.789	0.712
I like to immerse myself into the local lifestyle	3.74	0.947	0.784
I like tasting local products	3.98	0.774	0.767
I like practicing local traditions	3.68	1.090	0.885
I try to mix with the local people and not to look as a tourist	3.63	1.155	0.844
Perceived experience (<i>CR</i> =0.925; <i>AVE</i> =0.711)			
I will remember many positive things about cochinitillo or this food	3.96	0.845	0.808
This is a memorable food experience	3.88	0.864	0.818
Eating cochinitillo was stimulating	3.92	0.968	0.865
Eating cochinitillo and the way it's delivered were exciting	3.97	1.012	0.878
Eating cochinitillo was interesting for me	4.11	0.985	0.845
WOM (<i>CR</i> =0.861; <i>AVE</i> =0.756)			
If I talk about Segovia, I'll recommend the cochinitillo	3.76	0.933	0.884
I'll post comments about the cochinitillo in social networks as Tripadvisor	3.29	1.149	0.854
Intention to repeat (<i>CR</i> =0.926; <i>AVE</i> =0.862)			
I would like to visit Segovia again due to its gastronomy	4.18	1.044	0.930
If I come again to Segovia, I'll eat cochinitillo again	3.87	0.918	0.927
Product adaptation			
Not adapted=0; Adapted=1	0.56	0.496	1.000
Cultural context			
Low-context=0; High-context =1	0.46	0.499	1.000

TABLE 2
Correlation matrix and discriminant validity

	<i>Adaptation ability</i>	<i>Cultural context</i>	<i>Cultural contrast</i>	<i>Intention of repeat</i>	<i>Perceived authenticity</i>	<i>Product adaptation</i>	<i>WOM</i>	<i>Search for authenticity</i>	<i>Perceived experience</i>
<i>Adaptation ability</i>	0.801								
<i>Cultural context</i>	-0.170	1.000							
<i>Cultural contrast</i>	0.246	-0.037	0.807						
<i>Intention of repeat</i>	0.291	-0.108	0.449	0.928					
<i>Perceived authenticity</i>	0.402	-0.161	0.417	0.341	0.812				
<i>Product adaptation</i>	-0.170	-0.083	-0.118	-0.042	-0.109	1.000			
<i>WOM</i>	0.401	-0.096	0.339	0.644	0.346	-0.096	0.869		
<i>Search for authenticity</i>	0.490	-0.138	0.456	0.596	0.452	-0.070	0.450	0.810	
<i>Perceived experience</i>	0.402	-0.195	0.535	0.497	0.568	-0.052	0.545	0.551	0.843

(*) The main diagonal shows the square root of the extracted variance for the reflective variables

Since we collected survey data from single informants, common method variance (CMV) bias is a threat to the validity of our results. To avoid CMV bias, we followed some recommendations of Podsakoff et al.'s (2003) when designing the questionnaire: item wording was revised so as to avoid ambiguous or unfamiliar terms; and questions order did not match the causal sequence in the model. To assess the impact of common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted. In the exploratory factor analysis with all the indicators reveals six factors with an eigenvalue greater than one accounting for less than 69% of explained variance, and with a first factor explaining 15.4% of the total variance, which indicates that CMV in our study is not apparent.

4. Analysis and results

As already pointed out, PLS was used to test the proposed hypotheses was. Table 3 sums up the results of the estimation performed. The R^2 values are: $R^2_{\text{Perceived experience}}=0.512$ $R^2_{\text{WOM}}=0.293$ and $R^2_{\text{Intention}}=0.284$.

With these results, we find support for H1, the perception of a memorable experience has a positive effect both on the intention to recommend and the intention to repeat the experience in the future. The perceived authenticity of the food experience improves the experience perception (H2 is supported). However, we do not find support for H3a either H3b. The direct effect the perceived authenticity on intention to recommend and the intention to repeat is not significant. H4 is also supported, the cultural contrast has a positive influence on the perceived experience. On the other hand, the perception of cultural contrast has not a significant direct effect on the recommendation, but it has a positive direct effect on the intention to repeat the experience. Therefore, H5a is rejected and H5b supported. As for the product adaptation, results confirm the negative and significant effect of the adaptation on the perceived authenticity and on the cultural contrast (H6a and H6b are supported). We also introduced the direct effect of product adaptation on the perceived experience, the WOM, and the intention to repeat in order to discard a confounding effect, and we observe that the effect is not significant. The individuals who tasted the adapted product perceived less authenticity and less cultural contrast, but the experience and the future behaviour is not directly determined by the way in which the product was tasted.

With regard to the moderating effects, the search for authenticity reinforces the positive effect of authenticity on the perception of a memorable experience. Therefore. H7 is supported. In the Figure 3a the moderating effect of the search for authenticity is represented. We observe that the authenticity has greater effect on the perceived experience (greater slope) for those individuals who look for authenticity. In addition, they show greater levels of perceived experience.

TABLE 3
Hypotheses estimation

Hypotheses	Relationships	β^a
H1a	Perceived experience → WOM	0.493***
H1b	Perceived experience → Intention of repeat	0.333***
H2	Perceived authenticity → Perceived experience	0.300***
H3a	Perceived authenticity → WOM	0.038
H3b	Perceived authenticity → Intention of repeat	0.043
H4	Cultural contrast → Perceived experience	0.317***
H5a	Cultural contrast → WOM	0.052
H5b	Cultural contrast → Intention of repeat	0.253***
H6a	Product adaptation → Perceived authenticity	-0.125**
H6b	Product adaptation → Cultural contrast	-0.123**
-	Search for authenticity → Perceived experience	0.206**
H7	Perceived authenticity*Search for authenticity → Perceived experience	0.085**
-	Adaptation ability → Perceived experience	0.108**
H8	Cultural contrast*Adaptation ability → Perceived experience	-0.144***
	Cultural context → Perceived authenticity	-0.171***
	Cultural context → Cultural contrast	-0.047
	Cultural context → Product adaptation	-0.082
	Cultural context → Perceived experience	-0.078*
	Cultural context → Search for authenticity	-0.138**
Control effects	Cultural context → Adaptation ability	-0.170***
	Cultural context → WOM	0.004
	Cultural context → Intention of repeat	-0.027
	Product adaptation → Perceived experience	0.030
	Product adaptation → WOM	-0.061
	Product adaptation → Intention of repeat	0.007

(***) $p < 0.01$; (**) $p < 0.05$; (*) $p < 0.10$.

(a) Standardized Coefficients

However, contrary to expected, the adaptation ability weakens the impact of the cultural contrast on the experience. The greater the ability to adapt to different cultures of the individual, the less is the positive effect of cultural contrast on perceived experience. Thus, H8 is rejected. As we observe in the Figure 3b, while the cultural contrast has a positive effect on the experience in the case of individuals with lower adaptation ability, the individuals who show high adaptation ability the degree of cultural contrast has not impact on their perceived experience.

FIGURE 3
Moderating effects

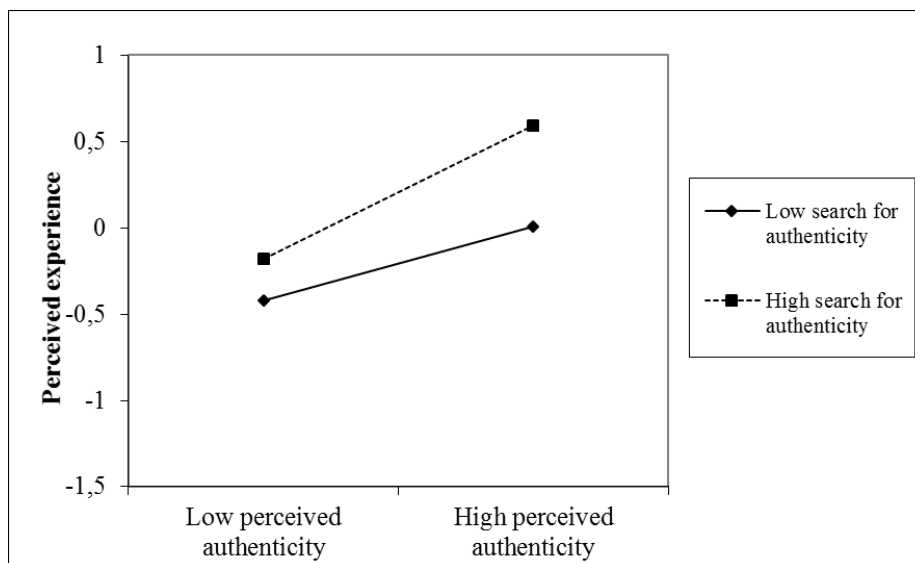


Figure 3a. Interaction Perceived authenticity * Search for authenticity

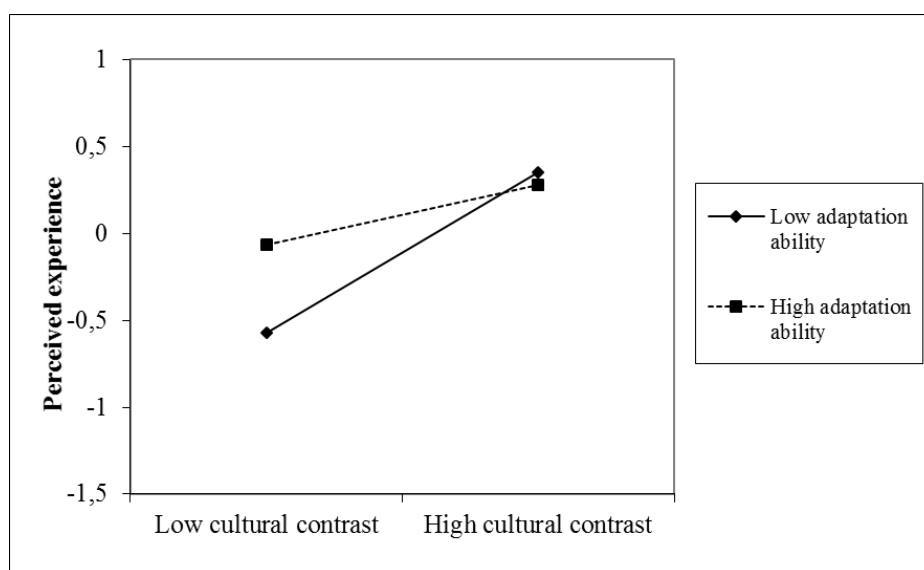


Figure 3b. Interaction Cultural contrast * Adaptation ability

Finally, the control variable, tourists' cultural context, has significant effects on the perceived authenticity, the search for authenticity, the adaptation ability, and the perceived experience. The tourists who belong to high-context cultures perceive less authenticity in the *cochinillo* than tourists from low-context cultures and their perceived experience is lower. In addition, tourists from high-context cultures show less adaptation ability and the search for authenticity is also lower.

In the Table 4 are shown the indirect and total effects. Results indicate that there is a negative indirect effect of product adaptation on the perceived experiences, however, the total effect is not significant. The positive direct effect offsets the negative indirect effect, that is, there is a suppressor effect. On the other hand, the accumulation of the direct and indirect negative effects of product adaptation on WOM results in a significant total effect (although $p < 0.10$). The perceived authenticity and cultural contrast show positive and significant total effects on the perceived experience, the WOM, and the intention to

repeat. Curiously, the perceived cultural contrast is the variable with higher impact in the intention to return, since it affects directly and indirectly throughout the perceived experience.

TABLE 4
Indirect and total effects

Independent variables	Dependent variables					
	<i>Perceived experience</i>		<i>WOM</i>		<i>Intention of repeat</i>	
	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Product adaptation</i>	-0.076**	-0.047	-0.034	-0.095*	-0.052	-0.045
<i>Perceived authenticity</i>	-	0.300***	0.148***	0.186***	0.100***	0.143**
<i>Cultural contrast</i>	-	0.317***	0.156***	0.208***	0.105***	0.358***

(***) p<0.01; (**) p< 0.05; (*) p<0.10

5. Discussion

The OECD (2012) indicates that the focus of many tourists has changed from the classic 'must see' physical sights towards a 'must-experience' imperative to consume intangible expressions of culture. Food plays a major part in the tourist experience of this intangible culture. Tourists pursue unique and memorable experiences, and eating and drinking are part of it. Since food is an increasingly important attraction for tourists and a platform for tourism development, many destinations have developed foods which appeal tourists' tastes and have designed food experiences based on local food culture (OCDE, 2012). However, while tourists demand traditional and authentic food, they also may be averse to unfamiliar foods. In this context, the current study analyzes how the cultural contrast, the authenticity or the adaptation of the gastronomy experience impact on the tourist experience and on the way the tourist will talk about the experience, recommend, or repeat it.

Findings show that the perception of authenticity in the food experience and the cultural contrast determine the perception of a memorable, exciting and interesting experience. The perceived authenticity and the cultural contrast, when result in memorable experience, increase the intention to recommend the experience or to repeat it in the future. In this sense, the cultural contrast is a reason to return even if the tasting experience has not been positive. Although the product adaptation (for instance, a different presentation or appearance) diminishes the perceived authenticity and the cultural contrast, it has not effect on the perceived experience. However, when the product is adapted, the intention to recommend or talk about it is lower than when the tourist has tasted the not-adapted product. Therefore, tourists' behaviour depends on the degree of adaptation of the product. In line with this result, Cohen and Avieli (2004) indicate that food involves the visual and the taste senses but they act in different directions. While the vision doesn't involve body risks, eating involves direct potential risks. So, when the expected tourists' behaviour mainly depends on their visual sensorial experience (for instance, sending a photo to friends or posting an image in Trypadvisor) it is preferable the not adapted product, while when it depends on the taste sensorial experience (perceived experience), the adapted product is acceptable.

The study also evaluates the role of the tourist's profile in the food experience. Results indicate that the authenticity of the tasted food has greater effect on the perceived experience for those tourists who are eager to search authenticity. In fact, these tourists always evaluate better the food experience. As for individuals who are able to adapt to the habits, uses or traditions of other cultures, the cultural contrast hardly impact on their experience. The greater the adaptability of the tourist the less is he/she impacted by the differences perceived.

From the results of this study, some managerial implications emerge. It is evident that tourist destinations should impulse the development of tourism throughout authentic food experiences that appeal tourists. Moreover, destinations should be more interested in the attraction of tourists for whom the gastronomy experience represents a great contrast or shock, since they will enjoy more the experience, will be ready to return and will be the magnet for future tourists. For instance, to reinforce the authentic experiences and the cultural contrast, destinations can develop gastronomy routes to experience the local cuisine in more authentic and unique environments, joining food and other

tangible and intangible elements of the destination, such as landscapes, lifestyle or enjoying the elaboration of products and foods.

Nevertheless, in spite of the degree of authenticity or novelty in the food experiences, tourists have different attitudes toward the local culture. These tourist preferences' divergences involve significant challenges for tourist destinations. On the one hand, tourism managers must often satisfy contradictory demands of international tourists (authentic versus adapted-familiar products) and on the other, they try to preserve the authenticity and cultural identity of its gastronomy. According to our results, while authenticity is always recommendable, the degree of adaptation will depend on the expected results. If we focus on the personal experience of the tourists, both adapted and not adapted products achieve a positive experience if the product is perceived as authentic and unique. However, if we focus on the recommendation, the WOM, and the attraction of new tourists, it is desirable a not-adapted product. This aspect has implications for advertisement, web pages, or any visual communication. It is advisable the use of images of not-adapted products on advertisement in order to remark the contrast cultural and to encourage the WOM or the intention to repeat the experience.

Once again, the segmentation of tourists seems to be essential to achieve the greater tourist benefits of the gastronomy local culture. Those tourists who search for authenticity are, evidently, the segment more desirable for food tourism, while the individuals more afraid of differences and novelty are not so interesting as food tourists. Tourist also can be segmented according to the adaptation capability. Maybe, we can return to the classical distinction between travelers and tourists, or between experienced and not-experienced tourists. Whereas the individuals with more difficulties to adapt to new cultures (maybe the novel and less-experienced tourists) are more shocked and surprised by the cultural contrast and, therefore, more impacted by the experience, the individuals more adaptable (maybe the travelers or experienced tourists), will enjoy the food experience, but it will let them a smaller footprint.

Some limitations can be found in this study. First, it focuses on a specific destination and a specific food product and it might condition the kind of authenticity and experience perceived. Second, additional characteristics of tourist profile have not been taken into account, such as prior gastronomy experience, previous knowledge of Spanish culture, or previous experience in international trips. Third, in the current research the kind of product tasted (adapted or not adapted) is supposed to depend on the restaurant presentation (the restaurants use to present the *cochinillo* in a specific way). However, we did not control if the tourists have selected the restaurant because of the kind of product served or if, once in the restaurant, they asked for a specific kind of presentation. Further research could employ experimental methodologies to manipulate different levels of product adaptation and control the tourist profile.

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