



Understanding India - South Africa tourism: The Impact of Food Tourism on the Socio-Cultural and Economic Fabrics in Durban

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Abstract

India-Africa relations is distinct and owes its origins to a common past that the countries share. In this paper the researchers attempt to trace India's engagement in South Africa and its socio-cultural and economic impact in the coastal city of Durban. In order to gain an insight on the socio-economic activities and the cultural dynamics, a qualitative research design was used. Twenty key informant interviews were conducted. The results show that eating food is not just what we enjoy but it is additionally a medium of cultural exchange and experience. For Africans from other African countries based in Durban, the presence and availability of Indian food, fulfils a cultural and emotional gap by creating a space to their 'remembered places'. The paper concludes that Indo-Africa engagement has accelerated growth on investment and culinary tourism. The paper recommends the development of culinary itineraries and the expansion of socio-economic and cultural programmes in South Africa.

Keywords: Food, tourism, enculturalisation, cultural exchange, cuisine, identity

Introduction

The relationship between India and Africa dates back to its shared common past that saw the struggle against poverty, colonialism and illiteracy. South Africa has become an important trade partner for India, with a huge potential for investment and trade. For Indian businesspersons, Africa is an untested domain, which could provide the key to unlocking India's prospects to cement and engage Africa at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Over the years India has opened its doors for investment and eagerly invites foreign capital investment to ensure that it fulfills its development agenda. Its overall relationship fosters cooperation particularly in South Africa where it seeks to advance "both countries' interests in promoting good governance, supporting economic growth and development, increasing access to health and educational resources, and helping to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflicts on the continent" (Pham, 2007).

India's presence in Africa and the availability of their food has become one of the ways in which India has made its mark on the sub-continent. Indian foods connect Africans to the Indian continent, and to distant places they have never been to and may never visit. The historical links have created a drive where tourist arrivals from India into South Africa, has grown significantly. As a result, the number of food tourists has also grown significantly. The rise of gastronomic tourism has led to food markets appearing as a new type of resource and tool for the regeneration of urban centres (Dimitrovski and Vallbona, 2017). As noted by Frisvoll, Forbord and Blekesaune (2016) food has been seen as an embodiment of cultural



and geographic or rural characteristics. Food reflects local people's traditions and culture and in some cases, it is used as a means for social and commercial activities. Consequently, tourists find markets to be a reflection of the cultures they want to discover and enjoy during their holiday time (Dimitrovski and Vallbona, 2017). Hence, as 'foodies' are lured by the pleasure of experiencing food, within tourism which is commonly referred to as cuisine, there is culinary, gastronomic, and gourmet tourism and even tasting tourism, whisky tourism and wine tourism (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2017).

Objectives of the study

Food markets as a tourist resource enable travellers to have new experiences (Dimitrovski and Vallbona, 2017). Therefore, the main objectives of the study were as follows:

Firstly, to examine India-South Africa relations with particular focus on tourism and its socio-cultural and economic impact in Durban. Since the study sought to fully understand the role of India-South Africa partnership, we took an ethnographic and anthropological observation and questioned how food has been used as form of cultural exchange.

Secondly, to examine how Africans from other African countries based in Durban, experience Indian food, the extent to which food creates a space to their "remembered places" and how this type of food fulfils a socio-cultural and emotional gap.

Thirdly, to discuss the presence of Indian food in Durban to show how "Indian cuisine" has insinuated a new dimension through which South Africa showcases its national identity.

Fourthly, to examine the extent to which enculturation of Indian foods has influenced the culinary map of South Africa particularly in Durban.

This paper takes a contrapuntal modernity by questioning the food web that knits India to Africa. The researchers trace how this web has accelerated growth in culinary tourism, and how this has also led to increased business opportunities for the Indian-South Africa invisible export market and employment for the local population.

Fifthly, to draw on anthropological theory of 'entextualisation' to enrich the understanding of cultural transportation, while the critical theory granted the researchers the opportunity to reflect on the impact of such engagement.

Literature Review

India and Africa share centuries of cultural and economic ties (Jagtiani, 2012) and these bonds are historical and time tested (Bhatt, 2008). The origins of this relationship however, are vague, but there are distinct similarities between India and Africa based on, botanical, geographical, zoological, anthropological, climatic, and cultural characteristics. As emerging economies, India and Africa have much in common, for example, rich natural resources, similar demography and large domestic markets that provide a natural synergy for building partnerships (Bhatt, 2008). Historically, India established its trade relations with the African countries as long back as in the 16th century. The trade routes are symbolic to this claim. Ancient claims of India-Africa partnerships are well documented (Bhatt, 2008; Pham, 2007; Jagtiani, 2012) from the export of indentured labourers by the British Indian Administration to build Indian communities from the horn of Africa to the Cape of Good Hope.

India's support for freedom to be granted African countries was unequivocal, given its own fight for its independence from Britain in 1948. It has been involved in a number of India-Africa initiatives (that is India-SADC forum, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), talks with ECOWAS, ECCAS, COMESA and EAC in the Western, Central and South Eastern



nations of the African continent and extend lines of credit to these countries). India has pioneered TEAM-9 (Techno-Economic Approach) with West African Countries meant for infrastructural development (Nair, 2009). "India and the African nations have been building strong and mutually beneficial associations", that are enduring, empowering and energising (Bhatt, 2008). India-Africa relations have emerged from two fronts shifting from Nehruvian and Gandhian principles to pragmatic economic diplomacy (Jagtiani, 2012), that is globalisation and the rise of India as one of the fastest developing economies. India's approach to Africa has been carefully planned to avoid the pitfalls other countries have experienced. India began to view Africa through strategic lens and realised economic engagement with African countries could serve its national interests (Jagtiani, 2012). Its rapid growth has meant a revisit to its needs, priorities and obligations. Its diverse roles have made it possible to impact on African lifestyles, from finance, technology, and agriculture and tourism development thereby influencing the lasting socio-cultural and economic impressions. To continue to do so, Pham (2007) explains that, "it would entail greater interaction with people of Indian origin in Africa, which involves the task of bringing Africa closer to the people of India through cultural events like the Festival of Africa in India".

Power Relations in Engagement

In dealing with relations especially cross-culturally, power is always implicated. Firstly, we would like to underscore the fact that most of what has come to be accepted and known as Indian cuisine in South Africa has occurred through cultural transportation. This cultural transportation carries with it the issues of knowledge and power and its influence on society, are well-articulated by Michael Foucault. His ground-breaking work "The subject and power", (1994) helped the researchers to understand the phenomenon under investigation. Their interest on in Foucault's work is on the role of power within a society and how power exists in a mutually constitutive relationship like that of India and Africa. Power in this case is not negative or used in a forceful way but in what Foucault (1994:343) describes as "a way in which certain actions may structure the field of other possible actions...a mode of actions upon actions". This would mean that depending on the economic standing of a given group, in this case India relating with South Africa, would structure the culture and behaviour of the other group, in this case South Africa.

Whilst some broad areas such as, India-Africa economic and political relations, capacity building, emerging areas of mutual cooperation and the role of India diasporas in Indo-Africa relations have been explored extensively (Roy, 2010), only a few studies have interrogated this subject at a micro-level. To contextualise India-Africa relations from a destination's perspective, we shall discuss this issue from a cultural and food perspective. Based on Mintz and Du Bois (2002) analysis on how, "food studies have illuminated broad societal processes such as political-economic value-creation, symbolic value-creation, and the social construction of memory", we will explore culinary tourism as a driver for development and its impact thereof on the socio-cultural and economic fabric of society.

Food and Tourism

A review of various literature on food and tourism show that gastronomy is slowly topping the list about sustainable consumption (de Jong and Varley, 2017; Boesen, Sundbo and Sundbo, 2017), nationalism (Neuman, 2017), identity and cultural exchange (McCann 2017) and gastro-diplomacy (Suntikul, 2017)). Food is the one of the key elements of a nation's culture and identity, along with its history, symbols, myths and discourses (Yeoman and McMahon-Beatte, 2017). Enjoying food is an important part of the tourist experience and exploring the local cuisine is the key element for a contemporary tourist (Ketter, 2017; Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2017). In places where tourism is perceived to be an important element of the local economy, the government may engage to manage, implement, control and improve tourism



in the area (Dimitrovski and Vallbona, 2017). The level of engagement is dependent on the local residents' views, the potential contribution of tourism and the role of tourism in the local economy. There is a link between the perceptions of tourists and the lifestyle led in those cities. Culinary exoticism prevailed over familiarity (Lallani, 2017). There is widespread agreement that tourism impacts on the local fabric in different ways, for instance, in the modification of the socio-cultural environment, the creation of businesses, introduction of policies that stimulate tourism businesses, changing landscapes, organising and disorganizing social configurations (Dimitrovski and Vallbona, 2017). Eating at ethnic restaurants in one's home country can be viewed as a sort of *ersatz* tourism and also as a step in a longer process of coming to understand, appreciate and participate in another's culture (Suntikul, 2017). In their study on interested in eating and drinking, Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen (2017) concluded that experiences are unique to a particular individual. They claim that experiences relate to cognitive and emotional appraisal and those experiences can be differentiated to intensity and extensity. Local food specialities allow tourists to authentically connect with people and places through their senses because they can gain personal and bodily memories of consuming a local brand and product at that destination (Chen and Wu, 2017; Mossberg and Goolaup, 2017).

Methodology

The researchers used a qualitative approach in order to gain an insight on the socio-economic activities and the cultural dynamics in Durban. This was particularly important in this study as they sought to discover new, different or unknown information and gain insights into the socio-cultural and economic impacts of India's engagement in Durban. To develop meaning and represent reality, they relied on a literature review for interpretation and re-interpretation. They reviewed reports on India-Africa relationship, relevant government initiatives, newspaper articles, published journal articles and field notes. A saturation level was reached after carrying out twenty in-depth-interviews with key informants. An unstructured questionnaire was used for data collection. The choice of this tool was influenced by the complexity of the subject; therefore, they wanted to elicit elaborate and detailed explanations, clarifications and responses. Questions were phrased in such a way that broad questions were worded more specifically to probe for certain responses and could be adjusted based on the variation in individual responses. The researchers positioned themselves locally and observed the human conditions particularly in the city centre of Durban. The use of anthropological observation helped them to construct and account on what they were able to understand from both within and externally as natural phenomena.

Results

India-South Africa engagement: empirical evidence from Durban

"Tourism is a major economic activity in the city of Durban (or eThekweni as it is known in the post-apartheid era), which is situated on the east coast of South Africa in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)" (Maharaj, Pillay and Sucheran, 2008). "Durban has long earned its prime position as one of South Africa's most popular year-round tourist destination due to its inexpressive beaches, warm ocean, sunny climate and rich and diverse cultural heritage" (Maharaj, et al., 2008). Durban is one of Africa's busiest harbours. International and domestic tourists are attracted to it by its "unique environmental assets, exciting waterfront developments, impressive conference facilities, sporting and other major events, all supported by a well-developed city infrastructure, transport and communications systems and world class commercial and financial services" (Durban Metro, 1999). To understand the socio-cultural and economic fabric of Durban, the researchers took a historical perspective, and dug out information regarding South African Indians as events unfolded. If one looks at Durban it is an interesting city filled with a multi-racial society. Amongst the Cities in South Africa, it is the only one with two dominant ethnic groups that are ethnically different though numerically



alike (Meer, 1969). These groups share common social, political and economic lifestyles. South African Indians and Africans share a common history of frustration backdating the riots of 1949 (Ginwala, 1948). With India-Africa relations, this has been rekindled with a new emphasis on race relationships. Relationships between Indians and other races have become amicable. Whilst there is distinguishable level of differences culturally, politically and occupationally, the relationship is non-racial, non-violent and non-sexist as enshrined in the South African constitution. The researchers are aware of the Equity Act but to distinguish these two dominant groups they referred to South African Indians as Indian whilst the Zulus and other black ethnic groups were called Africans.

“Despite their previous differences, and despite the small and significant areas of conflict, which still persist, there also exist strong emotional bonds between the two peoples, bonds forged in the shared misery of economic circumstances, joint experiences of malnourished babies, of living in overcrowded shacks, of sharing a communal tap, and communal privy” (Mukherji, 1959). The harmonious relationship that exists between Africans and Indians today was brought about the shared efforts exerted in fighting apartheid during the 1949 combined riots. Based on its shared past both parties have bonded and core-existed voluntarily. As Meer (1969) once puts it “...Indians and Africans in Durban have experienced more contact in many more ways than any other racial groups in the city, moving ever closer together in a community of interest”. Joshi (1973) explains that throughout the “years the Indian community has made significant contributions to the cultural, social and political life of South Africa, adding a vibrant colour to the magnificent tapestry of people that populate the country”. Though complex in their different ethnic groups, some Indians have a limited social system for example; Hindus have a heritage of social division and stratification where food taboos are a very important part of life. Numerous scholars (Ginwala, 1948; Younger, 2010; Hansen, 2012) acknowledge that food taboos among women have become very important in constructing Indian women’s identity especially during menstruation, after child delivery and in case of death.

Food as a way of conveying information about inter/cross cultural relations

A thorough analysis of the history of different food traditions shows that food is associated with specific national identities. According to the cultural materialistic perspective by Douglas (1975), food is used, “as a code of conveying information about social events and social relations and the commonalities of the structure of each meal across culture”. “It is an anthropological truism that food is both substance and symbol, providing physical nourishment and a key mode of communication that carries many kinds of meaning” (Wilk, 1999). This notion is reinforced by narratives from the respondents who note that:

“...artistic artefacts create an intimate attachment associated with food in a place. I like particularly the Indian homemade food, which creates an artisanal quality that signifies the character and graphic garnishes that create emotional bonds. Eating Indian food creates a memorable experience that lasts for a long time. I personally like food here; it gives me a sense of a place, its people and its personality” (Respondent 5).

Apart from creating emotional bonds, food creates a memorable and enjoyable experience, as can be seen below:

“Even though we may be different in colour, gender, nationality etc, food binds us together be it locals or visitors, I have come to appreciate others better, their culture, and wellbeing and this creates an enjoyable experience indeed” (Respondent 2).

Food helps in constructing territorial identities by creating informal circuits of knowledge as can be seen from the respondents comments.



"I believe tourism contributes to mutual construction. Our territorial identities are enhanced and respected. Tourism has created an informal circuit of knowledge that has helped us to make choices of what we want and when thereby instilling a sense of belong. If you visit a place and you feel like an outcast, you will never appreciate the value of that place" (Respondent 8).

Ritchie and Zins (1978) list food as one of the components of cultural tourism, implying that food is representative of culture. Even though some "food theorists have normally confined themselves to studying consumption patterns within structured environments like the home, family dinners, festivals and restaurants with hardly any reference to tourism" (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhoft, 2001) food eating patterns signify cultural identity. As one respondent noted:

"...Indian food traditions have become our tradition, through learning and remembering how our great grandparents used to eat, drink, sing, dress and speak, we can easily associate and identify ourselves" (Respondent 10).

Studying people's food-related activities is unique in that the tourists leave their structured environments, where the demands of the tourist lifestyle prevent them from going through the normal eating rituals thus forcing them to make do with what is available" (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhoft, 2001). One respondent commented that:

"...in Durban, consuming food is becoming one of the most sought after activity as food has become both a form of nourishment, recreation activity and experience. Food is one burgeoning element that identifies us and gives us a distinct uniqueness" (Respondent 6).

Therefore, food tourism fosters a multi-agency approach and acknowledges the importance of nurturing social capital that underpins transnational identity.

Building a transnational Indian identity through food in Durban

Increasingly especially after the fall of apartheid, it has become difficult to talk about South African cuisine/culinary practices without bringing India/Durban Curry into focus. Many studies have demonstrated that food is particularly an important symbol of personal and group identity, forming one of the foundations of both individuality and a sense of common membership in a larger bounded group (Wilk, 1999). One respondent commented:

"There are a lot of similarities amongst us due to exposure to international media, cultural exchange, and aggressive marketing but we continue to be separated by our cultural boundaries. What makes us unique is our memorable identity which is based on what eat, what we prefer, what choose not to eat and food that we associate with" (Respondent 2)

As can be seen, what is recurrent in these ethnographic accounts of food and eating is the conception that "nostalgia" functions as a kind of affective "mechanism" connecting food consumption to the production of (trans)nationalist identities, the ingestion and incorporation of symbolically charged foods are a significant means through which (trans)national subjectivities are produced (Harbottle, 2000; Dawkins, 2009). Another respondent observed that:

"The number of food festivals organised by producers and retailers, and the events taking place create a conducive environment to use food for social bonding. You can tell who is who based on what they eat. I realise that most people do not shun local food, we eat together and drink together, I like trying new foods, I like good food. As a tourist I believe the abundance of food enriches cultural diversity" (Respondent 4).



Therefore, if one desires to consume certain food that is familiar to them, they incorporate racialised and gendered class subjectivities into the body based on nostalgic and nationalist discourses. For Africans from other African countries based in Durban, the presence and availability of Indian food, fulfils a cultural and emotional gap by creating a space to their “remembered places”, thereby filling a cultural gap. One respondent stated:

“...you see, tourism is about experiencing, this experience is intangible and variable. The level of relationship built between the host and hostess determines my perception of a place. If the level of contact is ‘artificial’ then that jeopardises our relationship. You can feel the cultural gap if you do not have a sense of belonging to a place. Food is by any means the only motivator that can bind people together by connecting the food producer and tourists themselves” (Respondent 3).

The power of food as a symbolic and material framework for producing, transforming and understanding the self depends upon the fact that, unlike most other forms of material culture, food is perishable and therefore a constant human need (Holtzman, 2003). Through ethnographic and anthropological inquiry, we argue that food is an experience, not only as something that we can enjoy but also as a medium for cultural exchange. We observed that the presence of “Indian cuisine” in South Africa has insinuated a new dimension through which South Africa displays its national identity. One African national coming from Cameroon commented:

“I like the food here in Durban; it makes me think of home. The flavours, the spices and the cooking methods are not different from home. However, their curry is good!” (Respondent 1)”

Dawkins (2009) notes that in multicultural societies, gastronomic habits become the markers of cultural continuity, difference, and assimilation. For other African nationals, i.e. from Kenya, are used to Chipati, the nearest food that they can associate with in Durban is Rotti, whilst Cameroonians and Nigerians are used to Jelof rice and fried rice respectively, their nearest food is Breyani. Therefore, the ‘enculturalisation’ of Indian foods has added a new flavour into the culinary map of South Africa particularly in Durban.

Culture and cuisine as drivers of tourism growth in Durban

“As a service industry, it is generally argued that tourism is labour intensive and that one of the major impacts of tourism development, especially at a regional and local level, is job creation” (Maharaj, Pillay and Sucheran, 2008). “It is clear that older modernization and acculturation theories that predicted a growing homogenization and westernization of the world's cultures are inadequate in a world that seems to constantly generate new diversities, new political and social divisions, and a host of new fundamentalisms” (Wilk, 1999). As one respondent noted:

“...although food can promote external knowledge, in this global world you cannot live in a vacuum, there is a form of exchange, tourists create ‘a patrimonial conscience’, therefore the renaissance of local identities is harmonised. I think culture is not static, reality is constructed and re-constructed. The food we used to eat in the olden days has changed significantly due to technological advances in production, processing and even the cooking methods have changed thereby designing new territorial spaces”(Respondent 7).

“At the heart of the identification of heritage there is familiarity, a form of recognition, an ‘inherited conscience’, and a shared judgement on the importance of the objects in question, the culinary processes of a region that are indicative of a state of society and of its mentalities” (Bessi re & Tibere, 2013; Bessi re, 2013). Because advocates of culinary tourism have linked food with tradition, the claim that these terms are synonymous with culture is validated (L pez-Guzm n and S nchez-Ca nizares 2012; Horng & Tsai, 2012). Therefore, this implies



that cultural tourism is a broader concept in alternative tourism. Hence, some scholars have even propagated for this form of tourism because of its sustainability (De la Barre & Brouder, 2013; Everett & Slocum, 2013; Bessière, 2013). As one respondent noted:

“Food is an economic driver in Durban, you cannot do without food. Thirty percent of my budget goes to food. I think the increase in the number of people eating out, being pre-occupied with other chores, cooking becomes the last thing that one can do particularly if you are staying alone, and in that case buying food from restaurants becomes an inevitable option (Respondent 4).

Surprisingly, “the growth of culinary tourism has been seen as an outcome of a trend where people spend much less time cooking, but choose to pursue their interest in food as a part of a leisure experience such as watching cooking shows, dining out and culinary tours” (Sharples, 2003; Youngsun, 2010). The striking aspect of culinary tourism “is one where the itineraries chiefly include visiting restaurants, local food producers, and food markets” (Kivela & Crofts, 2005). One respondent notes:

“Durban is full of a variety of activities, these include, festivals and events, food shows and sporting events. During these events, we have the opportunity to eat and drink. Even going to the extent of eating some foods that I am not familiar with, which is good for the community” (Respondent 2).

As can be seen, the divide between cultural tourism and culinary tourism is very thin and needs to be explored further. Some scholars have proposed variations to culinary tourism such as “culinary tours, for the more adventurous, may include cycling and walkabout gourmet explorations throughout the gourmet regions” (Scarpato, 2002) and using cuisine as a key aspect of the travel experience (Horng, & Tsai, 2012). Through anthropological observation and contrapuntal modernity, the researchers explored the food web that knits India to Africa. Considering the increased numbers of international tourists coming from India, they linked tourism to this food web. The result is the accelerated growth of culinary tourism, which has resulted in increased business opportunities for the South African export market and employment creation for the local population. As can be seen in the above discussion, food can be used as a way of conveying information about inter/cross cultural relations and to build (trans) national identity which has impacted positively on the socio-cultural and economic fabric of Durban.

Socio-cultural and economic impact of India-South Africa partnerships in Durban

The socio-economic impacts of this development are a result of both technological advances and market liberalization, which are just beginning to be felt. The transfer of technologies and experience from Indian operators will undoubtedly accelerate Africa’s progress (Pham, 2007). The researchers argue that the presence of South African Indians in Durban has influenced consumption and taste of food which reflects a constitutive power. They furthermore observe that the most important question is to do with the economic capital in the form of ownership of businesses. A cursory look at the tourism and other related businesses shows that most of the businesses are owned and operated by Indians. Due to the “past discriminatory laws that deliberately excluded black people from key jobs, education and training, development opportunities, property ownership and access to capital, to date there is an uneven distribution of wealth between Africans and Indians” (Maharaj, et al., 2008). This is exhibited through “access to foreign goods, objects”, lifestyles, knowledge “and family connections” (Wilk, 1999). One respondent narrates:

“...well, there is a lot of variety here, from food to accommodation. It depends on what you want. If your pocket is ‘loaded’ and you can afford expensive food, you can go for it, it is there. But with my family we prepare our food from home so that we can spend quality time at the



beach. You have self-catering accommodation facilities which are cheaper, for food you can also buy on the street” (Respondent 9).

“The nature of tourism in any given community is the product of complex interrelated economic, political and social factors” (Peck and Lepie, 1989). Whilst there is a significant growth in domestic tourism arrivals, most of them are Africans who tend to occupy low priced accommodation establishment. However, high occupancy rate was observed in and around hotels in Durban. The growth in tourism has an agglomeration effect particularly on the businesses in Durban. One respondent commented:

Tourism is a modern engine for growth; any local economic development strategy that does not factor in tourism opportunities is prone to failure. Everything has become tourism driven; the continued growth in tourism businesses has a ripple effect. Apart from profit generation for businesses and revenue for the local authority, incomes from these businesses have become a source of revenue for locals (Respondent 7).

As can be seen on the above comment, most locals are employed either directly or indirectly in tourism establishments, with “black employees generally” holding “semi/unskilled positions”, whilst “white employees are employed at higher paid managerial and administrative levels” (Maharaj, et al., 2008). However, the burgeoning tourism activities have gone a long way in improving the standards of living of people and enhancing social cohesion. Being a hub of all activities, ranging from sports events to cultural and religious events, the impact of these events has led to a number of social, economic and infrastructural developments. Tourism has also been used as a vehicle for cultural preservation. Whilst there are debates on this subject, locals tend to benefit through cultural dances, selling cultural artefacts, community pride and cultural identity thereby enhancing the socio-cultural and economic fabric of Durban.

Discussion

India’s engagement in South Africa has far-reaching consequences on investment, promotion of good governance, supporting economic growth and development, increasing access to health and growth in tourism. Hence, the presence of India, particularly in Durban has made Indian food its hallmark. Through the anthropological theory of ‘entextualisation’ the researchers have enriched the paper’s understanding of cultural transportation. They argue that the cultural landscape of “India, from the earliest Vedic period to contemporary times, is littered with food” (Khare, 1992). Therefore, if food is shared always, where people come together to eat, be it during specific events or normal family meals, food becomes a social urge. Nowadays, urban food markets are no longer merely a place where locals buy food for their daily needs (Dimitrovski and Vallbona 2017). Important occasions are marked by sustainable consumption (de Jong and Varley 2017) and sharing, time for thanks giving is symbolised through food as an expression of altruism be it friends, relatives, visitors or foreigners.

In ordinary societies, food is used to create bonds and cement relationships, identity and cultural exchange (McCann, 2017). Food in Durban has been used to build a transnational Indian identity. A courteous reception is determined by the expression to give food. Thus food becomes not just a symbol of, but the reality of love and security particularly where food is shared and eaten, it commonly “connotes a generalized egalitarianism” (Khan, 1994). Other scholars like Neuman (2017) claim that food and cuisine can construct the nation. Whilst food is necessary for the body’s biological processes, it is used as an economic commodity where income is generated through its sale, in some cases it is used for rituals and social transactions be they religious or traditional.



As can be seen above the role of food in social and familial interactions tends to cement the relationship, for instance Suintikul (2017) claims that gastro-diplomacy removes social boundaries and reduce ethical concerns. The literature on the anthropology of food shows that food has been used as a social divide, for instance, social classification for religious groups and common people. Khare, (1992) observes that since everyone must eat, what we eat becomes the most powerful symbol of who we are. Thus, food is not seen here as primarily a symbol of a nation but more as commodity branded by nationalist assumptions (Neuman, 2017). To set your-self apart from others by what you will and will not eat is a social barrier is almost as powerful as the incest taboo, which tells us with whom we may or may not have sex with (Khare, 1992). Eating is one form of creative activity in which subjects are allowed to make choices about what will come to constitute their very being, both corporeally and symbolically; it should come as no surprise that these decisions are politically charged and that they cannot escape the weight of history in their articulation (Rouse & Hoskins, 2004).

Culture and cuisine as drivers of tourism growth in Durban

“Anthropologists have long recognised that food habits encode social structures and relationships and that the study of food is an important key to understanding society” (Khare, 1992) construct crucial aspects of individual and group identity across the lines of ethnicity, kinship, gender, and age (Holtzman, 2003). Food is used as a sacrifice and offering to gods; it links the dead and the living. Some religious groups use food for fasts and this is associated with holiness, divine and purity. The food consumption of tourists is a complex behaviour, related to a large set of cultural, social, psychological and economic variables (Ketter, 2017). The belief that good food does not only create a good body but a healthy mind shows the extent to which food can be used in exploring one’s spiritual aspirations and demarcate social boundaries. Frisvoll, et al. (2016) who purport that food is an embodiment of cultural and geographic or rural characteristics, supports this view. As noted, studying food habits, descriptions, customs, behaviours, practices, prescriptions, banquets and fasts bear messages about society.

Socio-cultural and economic impact of India-South Africa partnerships in Durban

Anthropological approaches to food and its effect, have the potential to expose the mechanisms between the intimate practices of the everyday and “the big issues of twenty-first-century politics” (Caldwell, 2005). In this part of the paper, the researchers use the critical theory to reflect on the impact of food on India-Africa engagement. Based on the arguments presented above, it is obvious that food has an effect on Indo-South Africa relations, hence ethnic, religious and class identifications have influenced food preferences and identity. Food has historically linked people across cultural and geographical distances and divides, going back to the ancient trade routes on goods such as spices, coffee and sugar (Suintikul, 2017). The number of South African Indians has made a significant impact on different spheres of social life in Durban, from tourism, sports, religious events, lifestyle, business and other social norms (Shah and Shende, 2017). Not only has this relationship influenced national food identity, other nationals living in Durban coming from the other parts of the world particularly the west Africa have also come to appreciate Indian foods. Hence, tourists’ interest in food can stretch over a continuum (Ketter 2017). To them, Indian cuisine signifies, and reminds them of food back home. As Dawkins (2009) explains, for migrant and diaspora communities, the desire for and consumption of familiar foods acts as an “intimate frontier” between self and other, which produce particular gendered, racialised and classed subjectivities and incorporate nostalgic and nationalist discourses into the body. Therefore, food is an obligatory rather than a discretionary aspect of travel, as no person can avoid eating (Suintikul, 2017). “Anthropologists have more commonly recognized peoples on the move such as migrants, refugees”, and colonizers “as agents of dietary change” (Dawkins, 2009).



India-Africa relations are exhibited in classic food ethnographies where food is used for social exchange, food security and for eating and rituals. The tasting of local food serves as both a cultural activity and a mode of entertainment, introducing the tourist to new tastes, flavours and traditions (Ketter, 2017). Furthermore, eating habits tend to construct and reconstruct identities (Andersson, Mossberg and Therkelsen, 2017). Interestingly, what unites food tourism scholarship is an understanding that travellers are seeking opportunities to dwell in landscape as a way to learn and connect with place and culture (de Jong and Varley, 2017). It can be seen that “gender and political economy” can be “expressed through food”, as Kahn (1994) emphasises that food, gender identities, and social values express “gender hierarchy and food sharing rules”.

Conclusion

To understand the socio-cultural and economic fabric of Durban, this study took a historical perspective, and sought out information regarding South African Indians as events unfolded. In concluding the above discussion on Indo-Africa relations, it has been shown that the relationship between food heritage and identity constructions should embrace a full understanding of tourism. This study has revealed that in ordinary societies, food is used to cement relationships, identity and cultural exchange. Food in Durban has been used to build a transnational Indian identity. Using both postmodernism and contrapuntal modernity, the study has shown how increased interaction with people of Indian origin in Africa has brought Africa closer to the people of India through cultural events. Thus by engaging contrapuntally, the paper provided other acceptable and enabling ways of understanding this relationship. India-South Africa partnership has reshaped the socio-cultural and economic fabric particularly in Durban because of accelerated growth in tourist arrivals. The results thereof being the spread of both direct and indirect tourism businesses, local employment, redistribution of wealth and the overall wellbeing of society.

In this paper, the researchers have argued that even though there is a distinct difference between Indians and Africans, these two groups share common social, political and economic lifestyles. Through transnational Indian identity, Indian food heritage has constructed a unique culinary web that has helped to enhance the South African cuisine. The study has also revealed that for Africans based in Durban from other African countries, the presence and availability of Indian food fulfils a cultural and emotional gap by creating a space to their “remembered places”. The study examined the issue of multicultural societies and gastronomic habits and discussed the markers of cultural continuity, difference, and means of assimilation. India-Africa relations are exhibited in classic food ethnographies where food is used for social change, food security and for eating and rituals. Thus, for Indo-South Africa partnership to be mutually beneficial, India’s engagement in South Africa should add a vibrant colour to the magnificent tapestry of people that populate the country and expand economic, cultural, social and political programmes in South Africa.

Recommendations

India’s engagement in South Africa has far-reaching consequences on investment, promotion of good governance, supporting economic growth and development, increasing access to health and a growth in tourism. Therefore, Government and organisations responsible for tourism planning and development should focus greater attention on the development of food tourism. Considering Durban’s historic past, and that the City is rich in cultural diversity, food as one of the components of cultural tourism is important and food-eating patterns signify cultural identity. Therefore, the consumption of certain food should be used to fulfil a cultural and emotional gap by creating a space for visitors and migrants alike to encounter their “remembered places”. The power of food as a symbolic and material framework for producing, transforming and understanding the self, depends upon the fact that food is perishable and



therefore a constant human need, and can be used as a medium for cultural exchange. Therefore, there is a need to develop culinary itineraries chiefly to include visiting restaurants, local food producers, and food markets.

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