

The power of imagination in gastronomy: the impact of black truffle consumption at origin

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Abstract

This study explores the role of mental imagery in gastronomic experiences involving exclusive, scarcely accessible products. When consumers vividly imagine these products during a gastronomic experience, they better appreciate their value, increasing their purchase intentions and willingness to pay. Two key drivers of this imagery are identified: service quality and narrative during consumption. The research focuses on black truffle, a high-priced gastronomic tourism product whose exclusivity stems from its limited sensory availability. Based on data from 168 participants at a black truffle culinary event in its harvest region, the analysis shows that service quality and narrative enhance the vividness of mental imagery. This, in turn, boosts perceptions of value for money and exclusivity. Both perceived value for money and exclusivity significantly drive purchase intentions, and value for money perception increases willingness to pay a premium for local food products.

Track: Tourism Marketing