



The Intertwined Links in Sustainable Food Heritage Tourism: Local Entrepreneurs and Visitors Perspectives

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Abstract

The social and economic power of sustainable food heritage tourism is gaining momentum in recent years as an economic propeller to many entrepreneurial and business entities. This paper reviews the literature on the links created between heritage and food tourism. It separates this cultural experience from that of mass tourism. Additionally, it sheds light on the aspect of food as a fundamental part of a tourist's experience in understating a country's legacy. Food tells a deeply engaging cultural and historical story about every nation. Culinary specialties can be experienced by all senses holistically when a person is visiting a foreign country. This food journey differs greatly from other aspects of tourism. Traditional tourism does not engage the complete suite of sensations upon visiting landmarks, paintings or museums the way that the spirit of a place can be captured and lived *via* a plate. Moreover, most of the studies have focused on one region of the world, but the results are quite holistic, which in turn does not limit their viability and consequently they can be applied to any country around the globe. Some research focused on travelers' shared experiences and how food taught them a lot about each region and its people. While other studies looked into the economic aspect of food heritage tourism and how it can become an essential tool to revive many areas, especially marginal and rural ones.

Keywords: Food heritage; Heritage tourism; Food travel; Culinary tourism; Food as tradition preservation

Introduction

Many people traverse the world today in search for authentic food experiences, as the field of traditional tourism is witnessing some changes characterized by escaping the "routine" and finding delight in new culinary adventures [1]. New businesses are set up on the concept of attracting a differentiated type of tourism to traditional areas with tailored experiences to visitors.

Therefore, this paper will look thoroughly into the concept of food heritage tourism and the direct and indirect benefits of applying it to a

certain region [2]. The first step is defining the general concept of the integration between culinary and heritage tourism. Then some grey areas of this newly emerging trend will be covered, before looking into the numerous economic benefits that are gained by this field and how this is reflected on the passion of the local entrepreneurs to showcase their heritage and traditions through food [3-5]. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the tourist and his/her experience and memories that can create huge publicity of a certain region which will later reflect in the bottom line of the economy of that same area. This review concludes with some limitations of the literature and suggests for future research on the topic of heritage tourism and gastronomy [6].

Literature Review

Notions of gastronomic and food heritage tourism

The multifaceted views of gastronomic tourism have never been examined holistically [7]. The local entrepreneurial development is a future investment in sustainable rural gastronomy [8]. Therefore, a close study of all aspects in heritage tourism will have a significant impact on the profits of local businesses from one side and the experiences of tourists from another one. Culinary and heritage tourism is seen as a subset of cultural tourism [9]. The added value of heritage tourism benefits both, hosts and visitors. Consequently, tourists' loyalty towards a specific destination is shaped by food cultural heritage experience [10]. Rural regions are to benefit most or get hit worst by gastronomic tourism in cultural settings. Food heritage tourism comes in the form of "alternative tourism" to bring more opportunities to rural communities. Visitor's satisfaction level is highly correlated with the degree of connectivity between gastronomy and cultural heritage [11]. Also, many natural ingredients manage to reach tourists plate and showcase the abundance of the destination offerings [12].

Some countries still have limited potential in terms of the overall tourism, let alone the gastronomic one. Therefore, careful preparation and laying the groundwork for the overall tourism will directly affect culinary tourism and showcase its value [13]. The latter is generally perceived by the attention given from authorities to this subject matter. Sidali explain how Western food theories in tourism can be utilized to understand the typical behavior Kichwa indigenous groups enhance the culinary tourism offering in this tropical region. Namely, the country of Ecuador hosts many native cultures which when infused with the natural surroundings, these form unique ecosystems that are varied among them. This in turn propels the various options of culinary heritage that each community can offer to tourists.

However, a delicate balance must be kept between the types of tourists wishing to visit this region and the types of culinary and heritage tourism offerings these communities can supply to visitors. In the same context, the idea of marginal food is discussed by Stanford regarding remote Mexican areas where indigenous groups have successfully managed to create a vibrant atmosphere that is substantially different from other areas in Mexico and has the ability to promote regional cuisines.

Mnguni, proposes an educational center for indigenous food and cultural tourism in South Africa. The paper discusses how this has the magnitude to change tourists' perception upon visiting the country. A special focus is on plants and how chefs in the country can show the

orchestrated effect of using various ingredients in creating colorful recipes reflective of the country’s cuisine. Therefore, local food is a main contributor to many aspects of empowerment, enhancement, development and sustainability (Table 1).

Study	Key findings
Bessiere J	Heritage tourism led to urban development in rural areas.
	Locality is further reinforced through culinary tourism.
Charzynski P, Switoniak M, Burneika D, Skorupskas R	Culinary and heritage tourism is a subset of cultural tourism.
	Local airlines play a fundamental role in establishing a connection between localities.
Derek M	Sustainability in tourism is very much linked to gastronomy.
	Many nations are seen as leaders in the area of sustainable gastronomical tourism.
Hall CM, R Mitchell	Pairing between food and wine has become a vital inspiration for food heritage tourism.
Millan MGD, M Genoveva Millan Vazquez de la Torre and Rojas RH (n.d.).	More awareness and publicity is needed in Andalusia, Southern Spain to educate tourists about the local delicacies.
	Tourists love to bring back memories of their journey abroad, PDO products are the perfect fit.
Niedbala G, Jeczmyk A, Steppa R and Uglis J	Local entrepreneurial spirit is the engine of heritage gastronomy.
	It has a radical effect on the area of tourism.
Pavlidis G and Markantonatou S	Identity and culture are two of the main pillars that travelers seek when abroad.
	Divergence from the routine and the search for genuine traditions are the new goals of tourists.

Table 1: Notable studies showing key findings of links in food heritage tourism.

Gaps in gastronomic and heritage tourism definitions

Wine tourism is well established in many parts of the world, whereas culinary tourism is still an unexplored area. Tourists in locations such as Andalusia in Southern Spain are not well informed about the various traditional foods the area can offer on their trips [14].

Transportation methods to areas outside the capitals are fundamental for all types of tourism, especially in Indonesia [15]. Heritage is not only artifacts, objects and other tangible things from the past, there is also the intangible aspect such as language, ideas but most notably food heritage [16]. Also local airlines provide an essential role in connecting large countries together. For example, culinary destinations in Eastern Turkey are well linked to major cities for food heritage exploration [17]. Local entrepreneurial spirit is often overlooked in context of heritage and gastronomy tourism [18]. If the latter is taken into consideration it will have a radical effect in the area of tourism.

On the other hand, Derek showed that sustainability in tourism is very much linked to gastronomy as much of what’s in a tourist plate comes from nature. The latter is the area visited on a specific trip and hence a considerable dedication and effort should be given to understand it and never underestimate its effect on a tourist’s experience.

According to Pavlidis and Markantonatou research, many tourists are looking for identity and culture when traveling and not just a mere tourism experience. Therefore a “divergence” from the norm is what is needed for upcoming experiences. The old Greek notion of rest perceived from tourism was always discussed by ancient Greek philosophers. However, the new idea emerging nowadays is how to get the most of this “rest” while exploring a new culinary haven like that of Greece. Therefore, the study shows that while food is an essential element to our basic survival, it can also carry many significant meanings and relevance to our lives. This is the role culinary tourism in Greece to showcase the cultural heritage of the country to any tourist looking to see what ancient thinkers used to feast on.

The two aspects of food heritage tourism: Businesses and tourists

Economic perceived benefits: Many benefits are perceived from food and heritage gastronomy, these are mainly related to urban development in rural areas. In Asia, some countries like Thailand, have put a national plan to enrich gastronomic offerings as part of the overall tourism strategy.

On the other hand, tourists love to carry something home to remind them of their journey abroad. In the area of food tourism, the taste of the food reminds travelers of their experience and this is achieved through PDO-Protected Designations of Origin products that are produced according to heritages in a delimited area. Within the same framework comes the pork meat of a native white pig in Zlotnicka, Poland that can be enjoyed locally after being prepared by

the traditional method that is linked to the terroir and heritage of the place.

The initiatives of the European Union in safeguarding such products can have high impact on the heritage tourism outcome. Starting from this point, many culinary trails can be created in several places, not only in Europe but around the world. However, for the latter discussed pork meat in Poland, it can be used as a pragmatic example to showcase how this can be done. The article discusses how after creating the proper marketing for the flavorful pork meat, many tourists will be motivated to come try it in its local area of production. Therefore, after their visit, many complimentary activities can be added to the itineraries of the tourists. These may comprise many beverage tours like beer or wine or even other culinary experiences which all fall into the category of combining traditional food with heritage tourism. Therefore, proper development of local activities in rural areas has the potential to fuel a nation's GDP. Many local entrepreneurs are hungry to show visitors their creativity and provide an exceptional experience for the food gastronomy of their area. Their passion and dedication can greatly affect travelers and their overall trip and memories. This combined with tourists' enthusiasm to try new and local unique products is a win-win situation for all parties involved.

Food heritage tourism has the potential to revive Mexico's economy as well as many other Latin American countries. The country nowadays has seemed UNESCO endorsement for its local dishes to secure them in the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list. This strategy utilized by Mexico serves as a role model for many other Latin American neighbors to follow suit and attract many tourists who fall into the category of culture omnivores. The article goes on discussing how tourists are always looking for something new and different and that is especially true in the area of culinary experiences.

Nonetheless, localization has the potential of bringing additional tourists to a country and helping them spend more in different regions. One particular example is the case of Ayutthaya in Thailand, as many tourists head to this locality to enjoy the culinary offerings, not found elsewhere in Asia. Even though, many other spots in Thailand are perhaps more known and attract a wider array of tourists, some examples include the top visited islands and resorts areas of the country. Therefore, the research discusses the convenient ways of channeling a part of these tourists into the lesser famous area of Ayutthaya. While being there, they will enjoy a plethora of choices that will dazzle their taste buds and experience the abundance of culinary choices the locality has on offer.

Pavlidis and Markantonatou research discusses how Greek people devote much of their time to social ties and family, this is reflected in the gastronomical offerings of the country. With the onset of tourism in recent decades, many more tourists started to understand why the Greek live on average longer than other nationalities. Nowadays, this marveling idea has attracted many tourists to experience the Greek life and hence a cultural heritage through gastronomy have the potential to fuel the engine of the Greek economy.

In Kenya, gastronomic tourism is still in its infancy, however, great potential is to be reaped by exploiting its potential. The country can utilize the abundance of its heritage and culinary traditions in combination to its relative political stability in comparison to some of its neighbors. Many tourists nowadays would love to visit the African continent and experiment with lesser-known cultures and food experiences. Therefore, Kenya can quench the thirst of many enthusiasts

looking for this type of experience who can explore the local delights of every county. The paper devotes a number of recommendations including the drafting of the country's gastronomic strategy, creating food trails and routes as well as documenting all the authentic culinary and traditional recipes and dishes.

Tourists perception of food heritage gastronomy

Tourism trends have dramatically shifted in the past few decades. As per Niedbala, "currently, tourists are looking for unique local products". This was a particular case in a rural area in Europe. On the other hand, at another totally different spot in the world, many travelers regarded Malaysia as a unique culture in Asia with unlimited choices of freshly prepared tastings that are always on offer.

Jebotip has done a study on tourists in Kenya and found that they fall in many subcategories in the area of gastronomic tourism. The primary contains those tourists of high interest to sample food and drinks as the latter is their main propeller to take a trip. The secondary subcategory are those with moderate interest in trying traditional foods or might visit a festival or tour in the context of exploring the overall culture of the place. As for the third subcategory, they fall into those of "subsidiary to other interests" which translates as a traveler who simply needs to eat while on a trip and it happens that he/she tries the local food for the lack of alternatives. The Mexican cuisine is noted to have multiple scales and intensities in attracting tourists, the can in turn reflect positive results on the national GDP of the country. Moreover, all across Latin America, a sweeping phenomenon is occurring in the field of gastronomic cuisine. Many countries are resorting to protect their regional and traditional culinary identities as they have been rooted deeply with their ancestral heritages. This in turn has the power to differentiate each country's separate identity where sometimes they might be seen as a cluster that speaks the same language and share very similar traditions. Here comes the role of food, cuisine and gastronomy to set each country apart and create a fingerprint in the culinary and food heritage experience.

Charzynski, et al. noticed that tourists perceive food as part of the overall components of a country. It is a holistic experience as many tourists enjoy their meals outside and as a result, the climate, scenery, service, people and any sensation they might have becomes part of the overall heritage tourism experience they had in Turkey.

On the other hand, tourists in Latin America faced a different type of segregation for their identities. These were categorized as "survivors, enjoyers and experiencers" in Bolivia. In Greece, tourists are looking for a distinct flair in their visit. It is shaped by divergence in the form of new foods in regional settings. Also, the "European gastronomic heritage" is seen very vividly in Greece as many tours try to educate visitors about the heritage and culinary offerings of the country.

However, there are some cases like Andalusia, Spain where tourists come to try wine and not food products which makes this tourism section virtually non-existent. Tourists' perception is discussed in a novel way by Vitterso and Amilien when they described the concept of "tourist gaze". This concept analyzes not only tourists but also locals' perception and appreciation of local food. While most people visit Norway due to its natural beauty and fjords, its time the Norwegian grab the opportunity of showing tourists how food in Norway is a fuel not only to the body but to the soul as well.

While many tourists discuss the cleanliness of the Norwegian cafes and their concept of minimalism, Norway is looking to showcase what

is actually on the plate in addition to the pre-existing described ambiance. One particular sector of tourists that frequently visit Norway are the business tourists, these kinds of tourists are more keen to have an educational culinary aspect added to their trip. Therefore, many Norwegian chefs act as storyteller in exhibiting the Norwegian cuisine to such visitors and showing how it is deeply rooted with the country's heritage and traditions.

The culinary potential of preserving heritage and sustainability

Food as a heritage story teller: Vitterso and Amilien state that food tells much about the "cultural identity" of a certain rural region in Norway. Also, culinary tourism has become a vital part of any tourism activity. Similarly, food plays an essential role in the life of societies and individuals. It affects the everyday life of all Malaysians who contributed in the study that examined how deeply rooted is their food heritage with their individual identities. Likewise, gastronomy is an essential means to understand the roots of culture in a new destination. This latter was showed by the study of Santa Cruz, in Bolivia. The study analyzed the experiences of foreigners in the city of Oruro. Some regional areas in many countries like Turkey, would have never been explored without heritage and food tourism. Therefore, the gastronomy tourism comes as a handy way in exploring a place through its dishes, desserts, beverages, sauces and much more.

An interesting study conducted by Omar, et al. on international tourists visiting Malaysia found that tourists keep on returning to Malaysia due to its food and heritage tourism. They quoted the term as "intentional loyalty" on heritage food consumption. On the other hand, food tourism started as a complimentary service to local accommodations, nowadays it is a stand-alone experience that many tourists come to enjoy solely. Many forms of pairing between food and wine have become widespread today and are a source of food heritage tourism. Much of the Western tourists' perception of Malaysia can be attributed to food.

The level of acceptance of Malaysian food is directly reflected on the bottom line of the tourism sector in the country and on the enjoyment level of tourists. Pavlidis and Markantonatou 2020 researched the notion of gastronomic tourism in Greece and found that each dish tells a deeply rooted cultural story. These stories sometimes are overlooked by many guidebooks or tours either due to thinking that they are well understood by tourists which is very not the case and people need deeper education while traveling or it could be that the people involved in creating these stories are themselves not quite informed of the nuances of the culinary heritage. Therefore, careful and deliberate attention should be well devoted to this cultural heritage through gastronomy. Also, tourists are looking for more "divergence" from the routine which sets the perfect tone and context for these dishes to be explored and savored. As sometimes food is the perfect resort to unwind and let our imagination delve into the history of a new place. Therefore, if such place is very scenic like Greece and filled with history, it will set the perfect tone for foreign visitors to enjoy this Mediterranean nation.

Bessiere showed that rural tourism is more vivid in the area of storytelling as these places are more attached to redefining the concept of locality. This has a significant added value to be considered a drive to increase the overall tourism in a country. This is exhibited for the demand of the French rural areas where people get to explore the French countryside while sampling the traditional foods and drinks.

Drawing influences from the model of Bessiere and others, Vitters and Amilien concluded a study that showed the fundamental effect played by food in enhancing tourists' experience in Norway. Many aspects comprising quality, clarity and simplicity set the Norwegian cuisine in a differentiated sector of food trails. The fresh local produce combined with the traditional methods of preparing meals has been an exceptional storyteller of the Norwegian mindset to live life and enjoy it to the fullest. This is later reflected on tourists' experience upon enjoying the local foods.

Many farms in Norway have the potential of rivaling many famous food trails around the world as these farms are competing on a different level. The Euro MARC project showed perceptions of mountain produce for locals and tourists. The "tourist gaze" as described by John Urry in 1990 is further emphasized in the article and shows how tourists' senses are gauged upon seeing a new landscape for the first time. This concept can be utilized in any other tourist experience, such as trying new food or drink. Then it will be enhanced and magnified with proper storytelling to link the food with history and the story of the tradition of the country, thus creating a food heritage experience for Norwegian food.

This is the case of rural Mexican cuisines as discussed by Stanford where women chefs are playing an essential part in area such as Michoacan, Mexico. This has the potential to revive a whole community that may have been suppressed or marginalized historically. There is a wide consensus that tourists are more than ever curious to learn about new cultures that are unique and different. Usually, tourists are running away from the routine and ordinary when the travel. Therefore, providing them with food that is not commercialized or replicated anywhere else in the globe has the potential of making these visitors feel special and pampered. People love to talk about experiences when they are out of the ordinary and especially when they are linked to adventure or very rural settings. But at the same time, rural tourism gives voice to rural and sometimes marginal communities to showcase their offerings which in turn impacts them economically and has the potential of their cultural and social change.

On the other hand, sustainability is a fast emerging trend in the field of sustainability and many nations are positioning themselves in the leading spots for this area. Hence, a tourist's plate can be seen with equal importance to any piece of art exhibited at museums. Also, the concept of Ecosystem Services (ES) becomes quite important within this framework as it links humans to nature. The future is green and this idea is turned into points of action for many nations nowadays as it has many aspects and fields interconnected to it. Heritage tourism is one of the many fields that have the potential to attract many tourists to enjoy a nation and savor its green and organic food offerings.

Sustainability and area protection within heritage gastronomy

Food and culture have a far reaching ecological and sustainability dimensions than meets the eye. In Latin America, many countries are looking at "safeguarding" their unique and indigenous identities through preserving their local food heritage.

To maintain a thousand of years heritage in many Spanish areas, gastronomic tourism is essential for them. On the other hand, some areas in Thailand are suffering from mass tourism, therefore gastronomic offerings in the lesser known regions will help channel parts of crowds to these areas and an example would be Ayutthaya in

Thailand. Niedbala, discuss the notion of sustainable gastronomy and agriculture and how both of these enrich offerings for tourists especially in rural settings.

Discussion

Brulotte and Hryciuk, discuss how Mexico was one of the first countries to seek UNESCO recognition for its traditional food in 2010. As a matter of fact, it gained the designation of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) for its cuisine. This in turn has made it a “model for other countries seeking UNESCO recognition”.

Turkey might be one of the most visited countries, however South Eastern Turkey is still a gem waiting to be explored in the area of heritage tourism. This can be facilitated by either well researching the place beforehand or seek the assistance of local guides. These professionals provide insights and a shortcut for exploring quickly and enjoying intensely the vibrant atmosphere of this part of Turkey. However, Turkish food fanatics can equip themselves with some Turkish food vocabularies to avoid paying the hefty prices of tourists’ menus.

Conclusion

While food heritage tourism might still be in its infancy stage in some countries, others have already reached new heights in optimizing it to enhance their tourism offers. This field is pretty much linked to the economy of the country, where highly developed nations have many tools at their arsenal to utilize the gathered data and enhance tourists’ experiences. Many tourism boards have identified their USPs in their area and used their differentiating factors to attract an increasing number of tourists’ arrivals each year.

As for the case of Europe, many opportunities remain to be explored in the area of “terroir” and Geographical Indication (GI) where these notions have the potential to set apart each region in terms of food heritage offering (s). When tourists understand the heritage of what’s on their platter and see the history of what is in their glass, a new set of sensory characteristics will be developed for them while tasting the traditional foods. This in turn has the potential to enrich their overall trip experience and can add to the loyalty of recurring visits for years to come.

The above has also been understood in many Asian countries like Malaysia, where Omar discusses the level of “loyalty” of Western tourists and how the food can have the upper hand potential in drawing back tourists to the country. As Malaysia is a multiethnic melting pot, many tourists’ taste buds are delighted with the rich gastronomical offerings of the country. Most of these are fresh foods infused with hints of history and drizzled with splashes of tradition in addition to many exotic spices.

Food has the potential of survival for our body and soul. The latter maybe very much experienced while traveling as it breaks the routine and adds new dimension to our lives. The role of food heritage tourism is to revive our purpose of being a tourist and nourish our curiosity and thirst for education, adventure and exploring. These aspects have the capacity of enhancing our wellbeing and define a purpose to our lives and most importantly are catalyst to our overall happiness.

Limitations

All studies can be labeled in the context of “reactive” rather than “proactive”. That is, they are drawing conclusions of heritage tourism visitors experiences instead of shaping them. A much more effective approach is to set the foundational work that will be a direct and clear experiment of how tourists will solely react to food tourism experiences. The latter should never be a bi-product of a tourist experience and try to measure it, but it should be the main reason a tourist visit the country.

The studies did not look into culinary tourism as the main drive to visit a country, but how tourists reacted to traditional foods upon their travel. More research is needed to understand if culinary tourism will be the sole propeller for a tourist to visit a specific destination. That is, tourism has many aspects like site-seeing, museum visits, tours, etc... however only wine, beer or spirits’ tours are prominent in this area. Whereas, food tours to check the preparation of raw material and traditional methods of preparing certain products are still not very common for tourism. The latest is a fundamental area for tourism for regions like Europe.

Europe is a unique example of a mosaic of cultures. It relies mainly on regional difference between very neighboring areas. Therefore, the quintessential European experience for tourists is to show them how each area is different and distinctive from others through food heritage. The above mentioned and discussed studies rely mainly on capturing information from tourists perception instead of creating the experiences and study them. Some of the articles can be used as a starting point to embark on a journey of assessing traveler experiences in a specific region and with niche tourism like cheese, coffee or a specific spice production.

Data is very important in the field of tourism to turn it into very useful information. Therefore, many systems are still lacking in the area to capture tourism qualitative experiences and turn them into facts and figures. While many accurate reports can detail the number of tourist’s arrivals to certain countries or cities, some other local data might be missing, such as visiting local towns, farms and villages. However, the area of capturing the perception of tourists in certain places whether new or recurring visits are still not strongly integrated.

Recommendations

The European Union is a mosaic of different languages, cultures and heritages, therefore it is quite essential to showcase these in terms of culinary tourism and take every opportunity to advertise its existence. Therefore, authorities’ rules are fundamental in believing and supporting the goals of heritage and food tourism. Governments are the main propellers for such activities as well as municipalities can play a fundamental role in their region. This is due to the fact that small localities are the best knowledgeable parties of their specific area and know what might cater for tourists needs.

Themed festivals and events are the first step in showing the produce of a certain region. Be it food, drinks or even cooking methods, these events are the best live example of food heritage. Therefore, research and survey on what might interest tourists upon traveling to a specific region and how to manage their expectations are quite fundamental in this area.

The tours can be split into raw material tours like those exploring olive oil or vinegar. On the other hand, they can be tours involving the production of some typical products like prosciutto in Italy or jamon

in Spain. Even though many cheese tours are highly in demand in countries like France for Camembert or Italy for Parmiggiano region, however, less known cheese products can follow suit.

Pairings between foods and wines is a developing sector that is widely understudied. This sector has the potential to increase both channels of food and drinks demand. That is, one product maybe more popular than the other, therefore upon pairing them together, an integrated culinary sector can be boosted, where one famous drink will bring equal attention to it corresponding paired food. An example would be Prosciutto with specific Prosecco in Italy.

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