

Every tourist is a voyeurism gourmand tourism essay



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This chapter will continue on from chapter two and aims to discuss in detail the culinary tourist. The researcher will define the term culinary tourist and explain how these types of tourists can be categorised. This chapter will also outline the issues facing sustainable tourism and authenticity in relation to food tourism and the culinary tourist. Furthermore, the researcher will highlight the Travel Activities and Motivation Survey (TAMS) which is considered to be the most comprehensive profiles available of culinary tourists. Finally, the researcher will investigate the culinary tourist in Ireland. Although data is scarce in relation to the Irish culinary tourism industry, a Mintel report which was published in 2009 provides some knowledge into both the international and Irish tourists who holiday in Ireland.

Eating is one of our most basic physiological needs even when outside our usual environment (Tikkanen 2007). Yet, information on food tourism and the culinary tourist appears rare. Chapter two outlined the fact that food is a very much overlooked element of tourism literature (Selwood 2003). As a result of this lack of direct research into food tourism, there are few insights into the demographic and psychographic characteristics of food tourists (Wolf 2006), and those insights that do exist are considered by Hall et al (2003) to be largely superficial. Murray (2008) agrees and states that terms such as food tourism or the culinary tourist could be used in ways which are misleading and, as a result, may cause inappropriate decisions to be made by tourism planners and operators. Murray (2008) suggests that once culinary tourism has been identified as a potential avenue to pursue, the natural tendency is to identify the market, and that leads immediately to segmentation. However, some tourists may be culinary enthusiasts rather

than culinary tourists, and although interested in food, culinary activities are not the main purpose of travel for these types of tourists (Murray 2008).

In spite of the recognition that little is still known about either the food buying-behaviour of tourists or of the role it plays in the overall travel decision, destinations are increasingly using food as a means to differentiate themselves and broaden their market base (Hall et al 2003; McKercher, Okumus, and Okumus 2008). As previously discussed, food is an important tourist attraction and enhances or is central to the visitor experience (Henderson 2009). For many, “ food becomes highly experiential (i. e. much more than functional) when it is part of a travel experience, it can become sensuous and sensual, symbolic and ritualistic, and can take on new significance and meaning” (Hall et al 2003, p. 61). Long suggests that “ the culinary tourist anticipates a change in the foodways experience for the sake of experiencing that change, not merely to satisfy hunger” (Long 2004, p. 21). Long's definition implies that intentionality is required whereas Wolf (2006, p. 2) proposes a more lenient definition; “ the true culinary tourist is not a snob, but rather an explorer who also happens to be an impassioned aficionado of food and drink”. Therefore, the culinary tourist could be defined as loosely as someone who appreciates local food or someone who spends time in a grocery store in a foreign country. Due to broad definitions such as this, one could acknowledge why research on culinary tourists is rare. The Culinary Tourism in Ontario (2005-2015) Strategy and Action Plan makes a very noble attempt to differentiate between tourists with intentionality and those who are better described as enthusiasts. The Action Plan illustrates

culinary tourism markets being broken down by an understanding of what motivates the traveller:

Primary Travellers whose main focus and intent is for a culinary tourism experience.

Secondary Travellers whose focus on culinary tourism is shared with another tourism motivator such as golf, shopping, visiting family and friends.

However, culinary tourism is part of their itinerary.

Tertiary Travellers whose itinerary or motivators does not include culinary tourism. Culinary tourism experience is impromptu or ad hoc to their original intent (Culinary Tourism in Ontario (2005-2015) Strategy and Action Plan, p. 21).

3. 3 Location, Sustainable Tourism and Authenticity

Sims (2009) remarks on the growing body of research which is beginning to prove that sensations of taste, touch, sound and smell can play an important role within the holiday experience, adding that “ holiday food” is becoming of particular importance to researchers (Sims 2009, p. 321). Crofts and Kivela (2006, p. 355) agree and cite that “ our sensory perceptions play a major psychological and physiological role in our appraisal and appreciation of food, as they do for other experiences at a destination”. Dining out is a pleasurable sensory experience, hence, the “ feel good” factor which tourists experience as a result of food consumption at a destination is a “ pull factor” and a marketing and merchandising tool that cannot be underestimated (Crofts and Kivela 2006, p. 355). For this reason, one can argue that tourists

often place considerable emphasis on how they feel at a destination, and <https://assignbuster.com/every-tourist-is-a-voyeuring-gourmand-tourism-essay/>

how they experience what the destination offers, by carefully selecting that special restaurant and/or food that might fulfil a particular personal desire (Crotts and Kivela 2006). Although many studies identify and address factors that affect destination choice and image, very few empirical studies address the role that food plays in the way tourists experience the destination. Dining habits can also provide an insight into ways of life, helping tourists understand the differences between their own culture and those with which they come into contact with (Hegarty and O'Mahoney 2001). However, it must be acknowledged that the variety of foods on offer at a destination can have major implications for the economic, cultural and environmental sustainability of that tourism location, with researchers arguing that a focus on locally sourced products can result in benefits for both the hosts and the culinary tourists (Clark and Chabrel 2007; Sims 2009). Sims (2009, p. 322) argues that "local food and drink" products can improve the economic and environmental sustainability of both tourism and the rural host community through "encouraging sustainable agricultural practices, supporting local businesses and building a "brand" that can benefit the region by attracting more visitors and investment". Furthermore, Sims (2009) explains that local food can play an important role in the sustainable tourism experience because it appeals to the visitor's desire for authenticity within the holiday experience. At present, there is a trend towards universal standardisation and homogenisation, which is demonstrated by the spread of fast food chains (Henderson 2009; Keel 2010). Concurrently, tourists are becoming more adventurous and are open to new food experiences (Daniele and Scarpato 2003; Henderson 2009).

Many culinary tourists are also seeking genuine and authentic which can be found in local foods and eating-places (Henderson 2009). Therefore, one can conclude that tourist destinations could successfully differentiate from other locations through local authentic food. As explained above, authentic food consumption at a destination creates a “ pull factor” for the consumer (Crotts and Kivela 2006, p. 355). Furthermore, increasing tourist consumption of local foods can generate a multiplier effect that will benefit the local economy and provide a boost to rural destinations looking to develop a sustainable tourism industry (Sims 2009; Torres, 2002). In addition, concerns about the environmental consequences of transporting food across the globe have led researchers to argue that buying local food products is vital if the tourism industry is to reduce its carbon footprint (Mitchell and Hall 2003; Sims 2009). In Rebecca Sims (2009) article titled “ Food, place and authenticity”, she studied how local food has the potential to enhance the visitor experience by connecting consumers to the region and its perceived culture and heritage. She focused on two UK regions for her report, the Lake District and Exmoor. Her results illustrated that over 60% of the tourists interviewed said that they had deliberately chosen to consume foods or drinks that they considered “ local” while on holiday which suggests that, tourists are seeking products that they feel will give them an insight into the nature of a place and its people Sims (2009, p. 329). However, this demand for local food could also be viewed as a search for authenticity. Over 50% of the tourists interviewed in this study said that they had bought, or were definitely planning to buy, food and drink as souvenirs of their holiday, with less than 10% saying that they were not interested in doing so (Sims 2009, p. 328). The souvenir purchasers varied in their levels of enthusiasm, <https://assignbuster.com/every-tourist-is-a-voyeuring-gourmand-tourism-essay/>

from “reluctant” buyers who felt compelled to buy small gifts for family or colleagues, to one enthusiastic couple who, while visiting Exmoor, had spent £60 on specialist tea and coffee by a renowned local tea merchant in addition to “the usual stuff like fudge” (Sims 2009, p. 328). Tikkanen (2007) concurs with Sims (2009) and relates food tourism to Maslow’s hierarchy. Tikkanen (2007, p. 725) identifies five approaches to food with respect to motivation for a visit. These five approaches are “food as a tourist attraction”, “foodstuffs as a tourist product component”, “food experience in tourism”, “the role of food in culture” and “linkages between tourism and food production”. This approach to the theory surrounding the culinary tourist demonstrates that food consumption is regarded as one of the most important factors in the marketing of a destination (Tikkanen 2007).

Hence, food and tourism are increasingly combined. Food can draw a person towards or back to a holiday destination, plus more and more food products are now bought as souvenirs, which, if managed correctly could result in benefits for both the hosts and the culinary tourists.

3.4 Travel Activities and Motivation Survey

While few demographic and psychographic data exist to draw a comprehensive picture of the typical culinary tourist, one major study conducted in Canada can provide some insight. In April 2001, the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) released the Travel Activities and Motivation Survey (TAMS), Wine and Cuisine Profile Report which is considered to be one of the most comprehensive profiles available of culinary tourists. This survey offers a comprehensive assessment of travel behaviour and motivators and provides a rich and authoritative database by which to <https://assignbuster.com/every-tourist-is-a-voyeuring-gourmand-tourism-essay/>

develop future marketing strategies. According to this report, both young and mature singles along with young and mature couples were most likely to exhibit an interest in holiday activities associated with food and wine (TAMS 2001). Interest in such activities also increased as the level of education and household income increased (TAMS 2001). While this information represented Canadian travellers, the results for US travellers were extremely similar. The report did not break down travellers by specific age groups but rather categorises travellers as young or mature. The report found a high correlation between culinary tourists and exploration (TAMS 2001). This concurs with Wolfs (2006) definition above and suggests that culinary tourists are explorers. “ Those who exhibit an interest in vacation activities associated with wine and cuisine were considerably more likely to have sought out vacation experiences associated with exploration (e. g., visiting historical sites, natural wonders), personal indulgence (e. g., to experience the good life, visiting a casino, experiencing city life such as night life) and romance and relaxation (e. g., experience intimacy and romance, relax and recuperate)” (TAMS 2001, p. 19). A more recent TAMS, based again on the Canadian and US markets was published in 2007. The survey revealed that 37% (or 7. 7 million) of Canadian travellers and 33% (or 58. 6 million) of American travellers were wine and cuisine enthusiasts, exhibiting either a moderate or high interest in wine and cuisine-related activities while on trips during the years 2005-2007 (TAMS 2007a; TAMS 2007b).

Similar to the 2001 survey mature (35-64 years old) couples and families (those with kids) were more likely to be interested in wine and cuisine-related activities. Young couples (less than 35 years old) and senior couples

(over 64 years old), though to a lesser extent, were also actively engaged in activities associated with wine and cuisine (TAMS 2007a). Once again the 2007 report shows a strong association between tourists with an interest in wine and cuisine with increasing levels of education and household income (TAMS 2007a; TAMS 2007b). Also interesting to note is the fact that wine and cuisine enthusiasts were frequent travellers, taking an average of 4.1 trips between 2004 and 2005 versus 3.2 trips for other travellers (TAMS 2007a; TAMS 2007b). Relative to other travellers, wine and culinary tourists had a higher tendency to consult a large number of information sources when they were planning trips. Using the internet (86%), considering their own past experiences (63%) and taking advice from friends and relatives (55%) were the most popular information sources (TAMS 2007a). They were also more likely to read the travel section of daily and weekend newspapers and to surf travel-related websites than other travellers (TAMS 2007a; TAMS 2007b). It must be noted that this report evaluated the demographic behaviour of Canadian and American culinary tourists; therefore, an opportunity exists to investigate whether culinary tourists from other countries share similar demographic and psychographic traits.

3.5 The Culinary Tourist in Ireland

As explained above, studies into the demographic and psychographic characteristics of food tourists are in the minority. While the TAMS provide an insight into American and Canadian tourists, a Mintel report which was published in 2009 provides some knowledge into both international and Irish tourists who holiday in Ireland. Among Irish tourists, quality is the most important factor for food. Availability of local produce is also significant, it is

however recognised that these factors result in a premium price for food and so are most appealing among the older and more affluent consumers (Mintel 2009). Mintel (2009) reported that younger adults and those from lower socio-economic groups were more price sensitive while holidaying in Ireland, therefore, low cost fast-food appeals to this segment, making them less important for the food tourism market.

This study stated that the most likely consumers to visit fine dining and local independent restaurants, and those most likely to show a keen interest in food while holidaying in Ireland are those aged 35 to 64, and those that fall under the upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class (ABC1) age bracket. These age groups are fortunately the fastest growing in Irish society and forecasted to make up the largest segment of the Irish population for the next decade. In terms of broader tourism trends, it is consumers from these age and socio-economic categories that are most likely to visit Ireland from abroad, and are the most likely to stay in Ireland from the Irish population. Irish culinary tourists have become of particular importance during the current economic climate as many Irish consumers are now considering holidaying at home rather than going abroad. Furthermore, this report stated that the internet is the most widely used source by tourists for both bookings and seeking information prior to taking a holiday or short break within Ireland. This presents a strong portal for the promotion of the Irish food tourism industry through tourist authority websites such as Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. At present, these websites provide little or no information about food in Ireland. However, it should be noted that many older consumers have been slow to adopt to the internet, and given that these

consumers form the key groups for food tourism, traditional channels should not be abandoned. Also mentioned in the report was Ireland's €200 million festival sector, another key channel for the food tourism industry, which has a large portion dedicated to food and drink. Guides such as the Michelin guide, the Michelin Pub Guide, and the Bridgestone Guide are seen as exceptionally influential on consumers' choices. Positive online reviews also have an influence as more consumers than ever use the internet. Mintel (2009) acknowledge a the trend that Irish and UK consumers have a growing affinity with food, with broadening tastes and a renewed appreciation for local ingredients and modern takes on traditional dishes, as seen with the growth of farmers markets and artisan food producers. Much of this revival and new interest in food has been driven by the media with channels like Channel 4, the BBC and RTÉ using primetime slots for cooking and food interest programmes. Ratings figures from the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board for the first quarter of 2009 show that some of the more popular cooking programmes are among the top five highest viewed shows, particularly Masterchef on BBC and programmes featuring celebrity chefs like Heston Blumenthal and Gordon Ramsay on Channel 4.

However, due to the current economic crisis, a growing number of people are eating and entertaining at home, and television has become a highly influential forum for promoting good quality food. Although this may have taken somewhat from the restaurant industry, this is in turn creating potential for cookery schools. With the growing interest in food, and the growing number of people entertaining at home there are positive signals for cooking schools, particularly within the domestic tourism arena. However,

the cooking courses at these centres are relatively expensive compared to other holiday activities and in recessionary times, luxuries such as these may be less accessible if pricing strategies are not reviewed. Although this report portrayed a positive perspective for the Irish food tourism market, value for money remains a major factor hindering the development of culinary tourism in Ireland. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are issues regarding the perception that Irish food is expensive, service related issues, Irish food cost issues and the lack of innovation among food producers (Coughlan 2009). The report suggests that the government has dedicated a significant amount of funding toward promoting tourism; however, high taxes are affecting competitiveness. Failte Ireland found that although nearly 98% of tourists would recommend visiting Ireland, 19% of these had some reservations. Of this 19%, 26% stated that their main reservation was the high prices in Ireland (Failte Ireland 2010). In addition to this is the concern that not enough emphasis is being placed on promoting Ireland as a food tourism destination (Mintel 2009). These issues must be addressed if Ireland is to be perceived as a desired destination for the culinary tourist.

3. 6 Summary

The literature reveals that there are few insights into the demographic and psychographic characteristics of food tourists. Yet, eating is one of our most basic physiological needs even when outside our usual environment. Hence, everyone needs to eat. Therefore, it is difficult to define and describe the culinary tourist. Moreover, some tourists may be culinary enthusiasts rather than culinary tourists, and although interested in food, culinary activities are not the main purpose of travel for these categories of tourists. However, for

some tourists, food becomes highly experiential and consumers are increasingly aware of the benefits (economic, environmental and health related) of local produce, and there is an increased desire to sample local dishes, foodstuffs and drink.

Although, there is little known about either the food buying-behaviour of tourists or of the role it plays in the overall travel decision, destinations are increasingly using food as a means to differentiate themselves and broaden their market base. From this discussion of the literature, it can be seen that local food has the potential to play a central role within the tourism experience. There is a renewed interest in local food and drinks festivals, as well as an increased interest in local markets as tourists seek out authentic food experiences. These local food and drink products can improve the economic and environmental sustainability of both tourism and the rural host community. This chapter also discussed TAMS which is considered to be one of the most comprehensive profiles available of culinary tourists. This survey offers a comprehensive assessment of travel behaviour and motivators and provides a rich and authoritative database by which to develop future marketing strategies. Furthermore, an insight into the both the international and Irish tourists who holiday in Ireland was provided using a Mintel report which was published in 2009.

As suggested in the above section, food tourism is a possible competitive advantage and it can be a core element in the branding of a country or destination by marketers.

Domestic and international visitors are becoming more adventurous and open to new experiences overall and with specific reference to food. Many are also looking for the genuine and authentic, which, it is believed, can be found in local foods and eating-places (Reynolds, 1993).