

THE ROLE OF GASTRONOMY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Gastronomic tourism, an increasingly popular niche of the travel business, provides a unique combination of gastronomic pleasures and cultural exploration. This thesis studies how food influences tourist destination preferences, promotes cultural interchange, and contributes to sustainable tourism. The project investigates the economic, cultural, and environmental implications of gourmet tourism through case studies, surveys, and stakeholder interviews. It also identifies difficulties, such as the risk of over-commercialization and resource depletion, and proposes methods to encourage authentic and sustainable culinary tourism.

Key words: Gastronomy, tourism, meal, food, tourist, culture, industry, culinary.

Traveling for food involves much more than just enjoying a good meal, a few beers, or a few glasses of wine. It enables us to completely immerse ourselves in a location's history and culture, creating a unique and unforgettable travel experience. This industry's expansion is linked to a noticeable trend: more and more tourists are seeking out real experiences since they are tired of tourism that is done for tourists. There has never been a greater opportunity for all businesses in the tourism, gastronomy, and cultural sectors to grow, gain more recognition, and attract more customers. Young adults up to the age of three are the ones who are most enthusiastic and interested in gourmet tourism. The remaining individuals are above 55, with over 60% falling between the ages of 36 and 55. According to statistics, 15% of people go on these excursions in group tours, 35% travel with friends, and 50% go with their spouses. Tourists in this industry are identified by their age and demographics, as well as by visiting the culinary routes. Compared to other tourists, they have a bigger budget, and the majority of it is spent on food.

- They seek out the finest quality and outstanding service at rates that reflect their dining experience.

- they want to experience that country's cuisine rather than just whatever they can find anywhere, they choose places with a wide variety of traditional meals.

- They prefer to eat at restaurants that address their worries about the origins of the ingredients and the methods of preparation.

- If they are at ease and content with their first visit, they will return to find out what they were unable to do on their first visit. They prefer gastronomic routes that

involve social interaction, like winery visits, restaurant tastings, cooking classes, gastronomic festivals, or popular markets.

Comparing this concept to the more globalized culture of today, where products and services are readily duplicated and dispersed globally, is particularly fascinating. In this case, food tourism is the unique characteristic of a region's identity. Culinary tourists are interested in the food they are consuming, which must, of course, be locally produced, but they are also interested in the food's production, origins, and path to the plate. One of the best examples of this is the growing popularity of wine tourism. Through these events, visitors can learn about the history of the wine, take part in the grape harvest, and even buy the beverage they helped create. The travel experience where individuals visit various locations to sample new and varied local cuisines is known as "food tourism." Here are some of the benefits of gastronomic tourism:

Experiencing new cultures: By sampling local foods, travelers get a chance to learn about the rich culinary history and experience new cultures that they may not have known before.

Supporting local economy: Food tourism provides an opportunity to support local farmers, producers, and businesses. Tourists can purchase local ingredients, dine at local restaurants, and visit food markets, thus boosting the local economy.

Health benefits: Food tourism can have health benefits as travelers may choose to eat fresh, locally-sourced, and organic food which is often healthier than eating processed or fast foods.

Entertainment: Food tourism provides a new form of entertainment where travelers can explore new cuisines, attend cooking workshops, and partake in food festivals.

Environmental sustainability: By eating locally and minimizing food transportation, food tourism can also be a sustainable practice as it can reduce the carbon footprint and support local sustainable farming practices.

The present condition of gastronomic tourism is quite promising and rapidly growing. Food and beverages are becoming critical factors that people consider when they plan their trips. Travelers nowadays are more open to explore new food experiences and are willing to pay more for unique and authentic culinary experiences. The increasing interest in gastronomy has led to the development of food festivals, food tours, cooking classes, farm-to-table experiences, wine tasting, and other food-related activities. Many countries are promoting their unique culinary offerings to attract more tourists. For example, Japan is promoting its traditional sushi, ramen, and sashimi dishes, Italy is renowned for its authentic pizza, pasta, and wine, Thailand for its spicy and flavorful street food, and Peru known for its distinct cuisine that combines indigenous and foreign culinary traditions. Additionally, the rise of social media has contributed to the popularity of gastronomic tourism. Food bloggers and influencers

share their food experiences with their followers and have a significant impact on their follower's travel decision.

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