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Beyond fueling our bodies to feeding our minds

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Abstract: Food consumption in tourism is linked with creating sustainable experiences and promoting a new way of being fed and eating. This research note analyzes the relationship between new trends in food consumption and food tourism. From a descriptive approach, it reveals the meaningful connection between producers and consumers. Food tourism stakeholders should consider applying segmentation techniques to personalize its offer and create unique food experiences. Further research is required, especially concerning the Gen Z lifestyles and its impact on the future of food tourism.

Keywords: food tourism, Gen Z, responsible tourism, sustainability.

1. Introduction and context

Food tourism, culinary tourism or gastronomic tourism are terms employed to explain that the main motivation of tourists is focused on visiting different elements inherent of the food services in a tourist destination, i.e., food establishments, food festivals, food producers (Hall and Sharples, 2003; Horng and Tsai, 2012; Ellis et al., 2019). Previous studies focused on analyzing the evolution of food tourism research considering their importance in pushing food production (Hall and Gössling, 2016) and their implications with sustainability (Yeoman and McMahon-Beatte, 2016; Baum, 2019). Departing from a bibliometric analysis, Okumus et al. (2018) identified a strong link between sustainability and food tourism.

Okumus (2020, p. 2) highlights that future food tourism research must focus on “food waste, environmental challenges and sustainability issues”. Previous studies also identified a relationship between lifestyle and consumer purchase (Damijanić, 2019). Haenfler et al. (2012) stated that lifestyle promotes social movements linked with social change and they refer to the term ‘lifestyle movements’ that promote individual and collective action to change society (Haenfler et al., 2012). In fact, there are some trends related to lifestyle linked to sustainability, such as veganism, minimalism and zero waste. Considering this approach, this paper aims to identify how food tourism experiences are linked to sustainable food consumption.

The Covid-19 pandemic provokes changes in food consumption that will impact food tourism systems in a current context facing a failure in the global tourism system

(Fountain, 2021). In this sense, Gen Z and Millennials are changing their food consumption, producing important changes in food production (Bollani et al., 2019; Sahelices-Pinto et al., 2021; Robichaud and Yu, 2021). This fact is linked with an increase in the number of people with specific food needs, i.e., vegans (Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2021).

2. Methods

This paper is based on industry reports and published research to identify the current trends that inform food consumption patterns in tourism. This is particularly relevant for the planning and developing food-based tourism experiences as drivers of responsible and sustainable future tourism systems.

3. Towards a more responsible food system

The World Food Travel Association (2021) defines food tourism as ‘the act of traveling for a taste of place to get a sense of place’ and understands food travelers as people who visit places other than where they live. It may include a neighborhood in the same city where we live or a faraway remote destination. A food tourism system includes several actors from the travel and hospitality industries, the food and beverages industries, and a wide range of other stakeholders, as observed in figure 1. These actors, which embrace all the agents within the food value chain from farm to table, are crucial to face the challenges derived from a glocalized food system.

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increasing preoccupation with the revival of culinary cultures. This trend departs from a growing number of people who cook at home and ‘enjoy the benefits of healthier meals you

make yourself at home. And relish in the fact that you can identify every ingredient you put into your food – and your body’ (World Food Travel Association, 2021). On some occasions, this home cooking relies on family recipes that also contribute to preserving and promoting *our* traditional cuisine. In turn, this is framed in a context of responsible production and consumption that strongly supports hyperlocal economies. It means that the food stores closer to us (namely, a fruits and vegetables shop, a fish shop, a butchery shop) are the food stores that act as gatekeepers of the products’ origin and warrant a meaningful connection between producers and consumers. A report by Mintel (2019) reveals that shortly ‘urban and vertically farmed food and local micro-farms produce the majority of the food people consume’. In addition, Rützler (2021) states that the future of food will be driven by a growing relevance of domestic agriculture, increasing food diversity.

According to the Accenture Strategy (2017), ‘food retailing and production are changing around the globe. From how food is designed and where it's grown, to how it's consumed and who is consuming it, the food industry will soon look nothing like its former self’. This also includes a changing consumer shifting towards health consciousness and technology access. Another report by Mintel (2021) says that ‘technology will provide more proof and will be used to incentivize healthy habits’. The sales of healthy food products are rising globally, and companies need to claim to be ‘sustainable’ and be ‘sustainable’, which requires a dose of transparency. Consumers ‘are willing to pay more for products and services from companies committed to positive social and environmental justice’ (Accenture Strategy, 2017). Technology is also a driver of traceability, which is a source of trust where brands meet consumers’ ethical expectations. Trust is an antecedent of purchase. In this sense, ‘the focus on getting

the best value for one's money will motivate brands to be more transparent about product price by providing details

about the ingredients, processes, and people reflected in a product's price' (Intel, 2021).

Figure 1. The food tourism industry cluster.



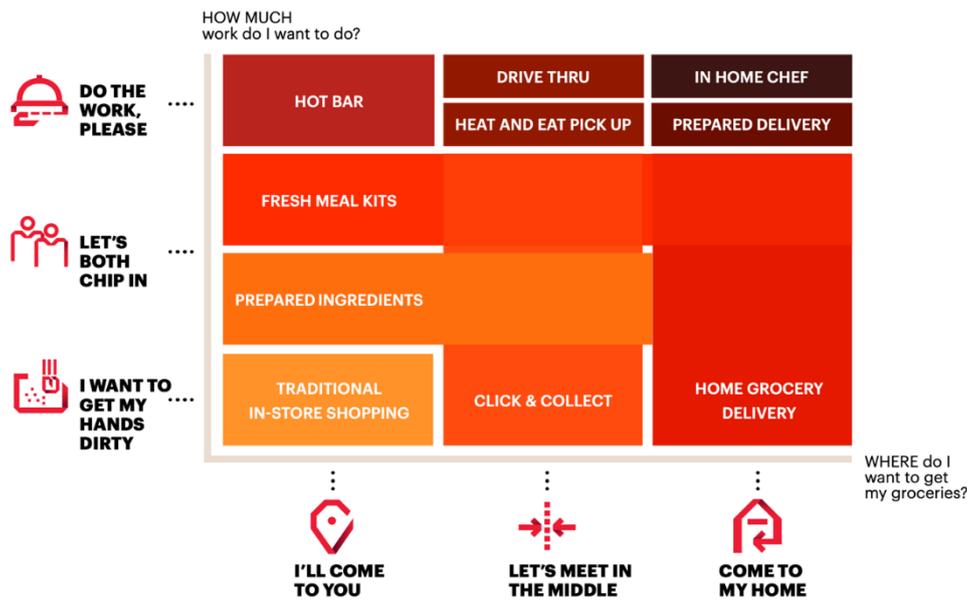
Source: World Food Travel Association (2021).

Food contributes to unique individual and social experiences and helps mobilize consumers to do the good as possible. As Intel reports (2021), 'food, drink, and foodservice brands can act as facilitators that help consumers become part of the change they want to see in the world. Brands will draw on their resources and reach to organize consumers to take action in local and global communities'. This idea also fits contemporary notions of regenerative and transformative tourism (Ateljevic, 2020; Hussain, 2021), with special attention to the role of food in tourism (Fountain, 2021; Fusté-Forné, 2021). In this context, recent reports have also focused on the food consumption and motivations of Gen Z and 'young people see healthy eating as an integral part of their

physical and mental health' (EIT Food, 2021). This feeling has increased with the pandemic and has also urged further attention by food stakeholders.

While affordability emerges as a critical driver of health food products choices, 'young people want transparency, evidence-based information and support from food brands and governments' (EIT Food, 2021). According to the EIT Food report (2021), Generation Z citizens want a healthier food system where they can actively participate, which not only allows consumers to track eating habits but also promotes advice on the link between food and mental health. This is not only concerning food products but also food experiences in the context of food tourism.

Figure 2. The framework of food experiences.



Source: Accenture Strategy (2017).

For example, figure 2 shows the food consumption options drawn from consumers' motivations. It includes the types of food experiences that need to adapt to new trends, such as less red meat consumption (Mintel, 2019), veganism (The Vegan Society, 2021), and both plant-based proteins and ethnic dishes (National Restaurant Association, 2020). These trends reveal a connection of responsible food to people, places and practices as a path to protect and promote healthy food habits in sustainable food futures.

4. Conclusion

This research note shows that responsible and sustainable food consumption in tourism is having a growing significance. The global food production system must adapt its offer to people with specific food needs, considering the tendency to follow healthy habits and consume high-quality food experiences. Moreover, food waste reduction initiatives in the tourism industry are also important to adapt a sustainable

offer to a sustainable demand (Goh and Jie, 2019).

Implications

The management and marketing of food-based tourism experiences must be based on creating strategies considering the different segments of the foodie traveler market (Knollenberg et al., 2021). These new segments base their food consumption on their lifestyle and the contribution of the type of food, the way of cooking it and their quality on their wellbeing, as it happens with veganism (Bertella, 2020). The segment that comprises Gen Z shows an interest in sustainable food with a strong influence of eWOM on their consumption decisions (Robichaud and Yu, 2021).

Future research lines

Future research lines should be focused on analyzing the food consumption behavior when traveling considering these trends, especially in the case of Gen Z. Also, it is important to understand healthy eating

habits in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Author profile



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