

# Learning Through Culinary Tourism and Developing a Culinary Tourism Education Strategy

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## **Abstract:**

A majority of leisure travelers (79%) learn about food and drink when they visit a destination (Stone et al., 2020). In addition, it has been suggested that food tourism supports regional identities while providing insight into a region's distinct character and culture (Jones & Jenkins, 2002). Although food tourism has been suggested to contribute to adding value to the travel experience (Marcoz, Melewar, & Dennis, 2016) while facilitating cultural sustainability (du Rand & Heath, 2006), very little has been written about the development of a multi-stakeholder strategy aimed to increase food knowledge among young residents, which may help to sustain local traditions and provide benefits to tourism providers. Building on stakeholder theory, fifty-five tourism stakeholders from 29 countries provided their expert recommendations for how destinations can get younger residents more interested in food and beverage. These recommendations were coded and classified into five categories, which could be used to develop a food tourism educational strategy: 1) education / formal education; 2) hands-on experiences and activities; 3) create awareness; 4) career, job, or entrepreneurship opportunities; and 5) connections with global or local issues. Expert stakeholders also recommended conducting a comprehensive assessment of local offerings before putting specific, long-term strategies into place.

**Keywords:** food tourism; culinary tourism; education; travel learning; food heritage; stakeholder theory

# Learning Through Culinary Tourism and Developing a Culinary Tourism Education Strategy

## 1. Introduction

Of the many benefits associated with travel, hospitality and tourism researchers have suggested that travel provides the opportunity to enjoy new food and drink experiences (Andersson & Mossberg, 2017), learn about local food heritage (Farsani, Zeinali, & Moaiednia, 2018), and connect food consumption with local culture (Wijaya, 2019). Furthermore, researchers such as Luoh, Tsaur, and Lo (2020, p. 6) have argued that “learning about local cuisines is arguably the fastest means through which tourists can get to know a tourism destination and bond with locals”. For travel destinations hoping to deliver these recognized benefits to potential visitors, it may be beneficial for locals, particularly young residents, to be better informed of local food and drink offerings, as well as the cultural bonds associated with those activities.

While opinions vary, it has also been suggested that in a globalized world, there is a constant threat to local food cultures (Beriss, 2019). According to Baghdadi (2019), globalized food (and fast food) cultures have contributed to the dilution of local food culture. This is significant, as culinary tourism experts from around the world recently expressed that the largest near-term negative impact to food tourism was globally standardized experiences (Stone et al 2020a). Results from that study found that nearly all (97%) experts surveyed felt protecting local heritage through food and drink should be an important goal for culinary travel stakeholders. However, only 44% of those experts felt this goal was currently being realized.

The motive to preserve local food cultures is driven in part by concerns for local and/or regional economies (Mizal, Fabeil, & Pazim, 2014), as it has been suggested that food tourism may significantly contribute to tourism expenditures (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). However, for many culinary tourism stakeholders, the preservation of local food cultures is not purely a matter of fiscal solvency. Other critical factors include the sustainability of heritage or local culture. In this context, we are referring to sustainable tourism. But what is sustainable tourism? One of the most common models used to describe sustainability is the tripartite model (Bergman et al, 2018), where sustainability is comprised of three overlapping concerns: social, economic, and environmental. For the purpose of this research, sustainable tourism refers to the management of cultural heritage and cultural tourism through the promotion of local development, satisfying the needs of tourists, and fortifying self-sufficiency (Briassoulis, 2002).

Previous research suggests that food tourism can play a significant role in sustainable tourism through regional identity formation and environmental awareness (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). In addition, the connections between tourism, cultural heritage, and education can be traced back as early as the “Grand Tour” (MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019). Yet, little attention has been given to how travel destinations can import local food and drink knowledge to young residents as a means of sustaining local culture or heritage. Thus, this research attempts to connect culinary tourism (also called food tourism, gastronomic tourism, or food and drink tourism) with education and sustainability, with an emphasis on social sustainability.

Grounded in stakeholder theory, this study collected data from key culinary tourism stakeholders or culinary tourism “experts”. These stakeholders were asked to assess the current state of food and drink education among locals in general, and to propose specific strategies that would enhance the education or knowledge of local food and drink among young residents.

Within this study, two surveys were conducted, with the first survey guiding the second. According to Liu & Shu (2020, p. 15), “the key point of sustainable tourism is to respect the cultural value of cultural heritage, starting from defining the concept of conservation through analyzing good practices.” With that in mind, this research provides guidance for destinations to improve their local food and drink culture by:

- 1) Assessing stakeholders’ perceptions of local food and drink knowledge; and
- 2) Identifying ways for destinations to get young residents interested in local food and drink culture.

The main objective of this study is to help local stakeholders in developing a specific approach to educating young residents about their local food and drink heritage. By doing so, we believe the potential benefits include a more effective sustainability strategy for destinations and an enhanced understanding of local culture among young residents, as well as making destinations more attractive to visitors searching for unique travel experiences.

## **2. Review of literature**

In this section, we posit that culinary tourism is a segment of cultural tourism and that cultural learning may occur from food and drink experiences. We present findings from previous research which suggest that many food tourists are motivated to travel for cultural reasons, including the desire to learn about other cultures. However, there is little previous research on destinations contributing to food and drink education of young residents through strategic means, which sets the stage for the research questions in this study. Finally, a brief overview of stakeholder theory and food networks are presented to frame the research outcomes.

Because this area of inquiry overlaps many research topics in tourism (e.g., heritage, sustainability, consumer motivations, food tourism), as well as other fields (e.g., education, network theory), all of these related topics may not be completely addressed in this review of literature.

### *2.1 Culinary (food) tourism as cultural heritage*

Food tourism is a segment of cultural tourism. Long (1998) proposed that “foodways may be one of the fullest ways of perceiving the other,” thus providing an integrated understanding of other cultures. Food tourism supports regional identities and provides insight into a region’s distinct character and culture (Jones & Jenkins, 2002). Everett and Aitchison (2009) wrote that food is “a cultural artefact with a myriad of facets” (p. 151) that tourists can enjoy through activities, such as food trails and food events. Richards (2003, p. 4) posited that food is “an important factor in the search for identity” because foodways are key elements of a culture. He proposed that food tourism must balance globalization and localization, realizing that ways of eating and foods eaten may change over time, just as cultures adapt over time. Additionally, foodways are set within a framework of place and regional identity. One example of an attraction with can teach about and celebrate these identities are food museums (Everett, 2016). Food tourism also contributes to cultural sustainability by preserving culinary heritage and adding to a destination’s identity (du Rand & Heath, 2006).

### *2.2 Cultural learning through food tourism*

The first definition of culinary tourism acknowledged that learning is likely to occur, as culinary tourism was defined as “the intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an Other” (Long, 1998, p. 181). This proposed that experiencing food is not just a touristic activity,

but an exploration and education. Several subsequent definitions of culinary tourism (or food tourism or gastronomic tourism) also acknowledged learning. Smith and Xiao (2008) defined culinary tourism as “any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates, or consumes branded local culinary resources” (p. 289). Chang, Kivela, and Mak (2011) connected culture and learning together, stating that “local cuisine serves as an effectual learning experience for tourists to appreciate the host culture, it renders them with enhanced embodied cultural capital. In this sense, local cuisine is analogous to a cultural attraction” (p. 308). Although many definitions include learning as a motivation for, and result of food tourism, there is a lack of culinary tourism research focused on education.

### *2.3 Learning as a motivator for food travel*

While there is a great deal of research on food travel motivations (López-Guzmán et al., 2017; Kim, Goh, & Yuan, 2010; Smith & Costello, 2009), learning is not a frequent area of inquiry. Learning about food and drink is often considered within a subset of other motivational categories, such as cultural exploration or personal growth. Ellis et al (2018) proposed that many foodies travel to develop new skills or knowledge and presented many motivations for food travel, including “cultural experience (authentic experience and cultural learning).” Fields (2002) also considered learning within the general category of cultural motivators. Kim, Eves, and Scarles (2009) found that “learning knowledge” was one of 9 motivational factors, and tasting local food helped travelers to learn and understand local culture. In one of the few studies with multiple questions about cultural learning, Kim and Eves (2012) developed a 31-item scale to measure motivations to taste local foods. Tourists considered learning as a high motivator to experience local food, ranking many items highly on a 7-point Likert-type scale: experiencing

local food enables me to learn what this local food tastes like (M=5.99); tasting local food served by local people in its original place offers a unique opportunity to understand local cultures (M=5.89); and experiencing local food gives me an opportunity to increase my knowledge about different cultures (M=5.47).

Smith & Costello (2009) developed a scale of “motivations to attend culinary events,” measuring three elements: food event, event novelty, and socialization. Within the food event, two questions measured learning: “because learning about new foods is stimulating” and “food events help increase my knowledge of local culture.” Çela, Knowles-Lankford, and Lankford (2007) found that learning was the third-rated motivator to attend a food festival in Iowa, behind tasting local or fresh foods, and relaxing...and spending time with friends and family.

#### *2.4 Learning about food while traveling*

It has been well-established that food tourism can serve as a learning experience (Ellis et al, 2018). However, based on an extensive review of previous culinary tourism research, few researchers investigated learning as a direct result of food travel activities. In a festival context, Organ et al (2015) did find that engagement with food and drink at a festival led to learning about local food and drink, as well as local producers. Luoh, Tsaur, and Lo (2020), considered learning through cooking classes while traveling, focusing on the role of fun and sense of accomplishment in helping students (travelers) to learn. The World Food Travel Association also surveyed 4,000 leisure travelers from six countries about perceptions of learning through food tourism (Stone, Migacz, Garibaldi, & Wolf, 2020). 79% of leisure travelers agreed (or strongly agreed) that they learn about food and drink when they visit a destination.

Previous research has also found that food connects visitors to a local culture, and many visitors seek to learn about local foods when they travel. Ottenbacher et al (2016) identified primary tourism attribute drivers for culinary tourism. Aside from the landscape, food/wine, and service quality, they identified “competencies of staff in hotels and restaurants” and “competencies of staff in wineries.” This indicates that local knowledge may contribute to providing an accurate cultural learning experience. There is also a local desire for more cultural knowledge at the local level. Stone et al (2020b) found that about two-thirds (64%) of respondents want to know more about the food history and heritage of the region where they live. This study uses stakeholder theory to identify ways that local knowledge about food and drink can be established in young residents.

### *2.5 Stakeholder theory*

Stakeholder theory originated in strategic management as an approach to understanding organizations within a greater societal context. Stakeholders are groups or individuals who can affect, or are affected by an organization’s activities (Freeman, 1984), and stakeholder theory addresses the responsibilities of an organization. Donohoe, Reyes, and Becerra (2015) summarized two key principles of stakeholder theory: 1) managers need to consider a range of stakeholders, and 2) managers have an obligation to these stakeholders. (Their chapter is recommended for a more thorough look at stakeholder theory in tourism.)

Today, stakeholder theory in tourism relates to stakeholders in the tourism environment or tourism infrastructure, rather than just stakeholders in a firm, as the theory was originally proposed. Getz and Timur (2005, p. 236) proposed that stakeholder theory could easily be

applied to destinations, not just organizations, as “the organizational setting of a firm and the concept of a ‘destination’ that is managed are somewhat similar.”

When considering stakeholders of tourism, it has long been a best practice to consider multiple stakeholders, as this allows destinations to “enable the optimal balancing of interests” (Getz & Timur, 2005, p. 236). d’Angella and Go (2009) considered stakeholder theory while studying the relationship of destination marketing/management organizations (DMOs) and tourism firms with regard to marketing efforts. In a model of stakeholders’ configuration, stakeholders included: the general public, companies connected through common trade associations/initiatives, customers, and NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Chase, Mishra, & Wolf (2014), identified similar stakeholders in the food tourism industry, also adding media, and students & researchers, and professional services (such as media relations and consultants).

Within sustainable tourism, a key goal is to ensure that benefits are shared (Liu & Shu, 2020). While different stakeholders may have different (sometimes conflicting) goals, “understanding the desires of residents and stakeholders is an essential consideration in conceptualizing the sustainability of tourism and benefit-sharing within varying and diverse local contexts” (Snyman & Bricker, 2019, 713). These benefits may be tangible or intangible, as discussed in Scheyvens (1999), and include elements of social (shared values) and economic (shared economic outcomes) empowerment among stakeholders and residents. This research builds upon this concept of multiple stakeholders, whose viewpoints are necessary and valued.

## *2.6 Food networks*

Especially within agritourism and rural tourism, it can be useful for stakeholders (such as farms and food producers) to work together by creating a network (Che, Veeck, & Veeck, 2005; Marcoz, Melewar, & Dennis, 2016). The lack of formal networks connecting farmers, restaurants, and tourists can impede food tourism development. For example, one of the barriers to creating local food systems is a lack of communication between farmers and restaurateurs (Curtis et al, 2008). Everett's (2016) discussion of food tourism supply chains demonstrates the importance of understanding connections among these stakeholders.

Another important aspect among creating a local food system is trust and personal relations between stakeholders (Roy, Hall, & Ballantine, 2017). Despite the challenges, successful development of these networks may offer economic vitality to rural areas (Dougherty & Green, 2011). Hall and Gössling (2016) recognized the important connections between food, tourism, and regional development. However, they also acknowledged that these often focused on rural, rather than urban areas.

Within food tourism, Hjalager (2002) proposed many connections between food and food tourism providers, ranging from simply expanding the food tourism offerings of a region's gastronomic resources, up to a "fourth order" gastronomy tourism development. Within this area, networks are used to create and transfer knowledge between a variety of food and tourism-related businesses. Others have outlined some best practices in developing food tourism networks. Rodriguez and Fuso (2014) discussed creation of food tourism development partnerships among stakeholders.

While detailed research on local food production systems (e.g. Hall & Gössling, 2016) and local food networks (e.g. Jarosz, 2000; Trivette, 2019), are outside of the scope of this

article understanding these relationships and limitations helps to advise the stakeholder approach in this study.

### *2.7 Framework for food tourism planning*

Du Rand and Heath (2006) developed a framework for developing food tourism, including a situational analysis, strategic evaluation of food tourism potential, and key marketing management tasks. Benefits of their framework include establishing partnerships, connecting the public and private sectors, improving communication, and interaction, and creating a focused approach. In other words, connecting stakeholders through a structured framework for food tourism development can benefit many of the stakeholders and the local food tourism industry. Their model demonstrates that a strategic approach to food tourism can be successful, beginning with an evaluation of the resources and attractions in the area.

While some destinations (e.g. Finland and Ireland) have general food tourism strategies (Failte Ireland, 2018; Havas & Adamsson, 2020) and individual businesses (e.g. food tours) may educate visitors or locals, very little has been written about the development of a multi-stakeholder strategy to increase food knowledge through food tourism businesses. Even within food tourism research works (e.g., Dixit, 2019; Everett, 2016; Wolf, 2019), education may be mentioned, but rarely the focus of any included article or chapter. One exception found was provided by Croce and Perri (2017), who presented a plan for teaching through food travel – but very specifically on providing guidance for educating children through hands-on experiences, including generating children’s interest, learning through playing, and providing support materials.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that learning can be a motivator for food tourism, and that learning may occur during food tourism activities. However, based on previous research, there appears to be a lack of knowledge on how destinations may take a strategic approach to promoting learning about local food and drink. Stakeholders may provide suggestions that can be utilized to fill these gaps.

### **3. Methodology and survey design**

Two surveys were used in this study. Survey 1 provides quantitative data and identifies the need for survey 2. Qualitative data from survey 2 is the primary focus of this study.

#### *3.1 Stakeholder perceptions of food and drink knowledge in tourism environments (survey 1)*

The first survey was an online survey sent to a purposive sample of tourism and food tourism experts from a variety of backgrounds, including tourism industry practitioners (e.g., tour operators, chefs, food tour guides) and other food tourism stakeholders (e.g., media, DMOs, academia, non-governmental organizations) in fall 2018. Respondents were selected by four food tourism experts to represent a wide range of expertise and geographic regions. Most stakeholders were selected due to their involvement with the World Food Travel Association, with a few additional stakeholders added so that additional countries and industry segments were represented. Questions in this survey included goals of the food tourism industry, positive and negative impacts on food tourism, predictions for food tourism segments, and insights on food tourism topics (including learning and education through food tourism). A portion of the data was published in <name of industry report withheld until after review>.

For this study, relevant questions included two topics: 1) understanding how certain actions would help to preserve food and drink traditions; and 2) perceptions of local knowledge of food and drink traditions.

### *3.2 Stakeholder ideas for increasing local food and drink knowledge (survey 2)*

The second survey was sent online to a purposive sample of tourism and food tourism experts in fall 2019. The method of sample selection was similar to survey 1, and many of the same respondents were included, along with additional experts identified by the World Food Travel Association. The survey topics considered various aspects of food tourism. For this study, two questions are addressed. First, respondents were asked their level of satisfaction with “the way the food tourism providers are currently ... using food or drink to educate visitors.” The most important question in this study was the open-ended question: How can cities or regions get young residents interested in learning about the food and drink culture of their local area?

## **4. Results**

### *4.1 Classifying stakeholders*

Expert respondents were separated into two groups: primary and secondary stakeholders. Clarkson (1995) identified primary stakeholders as those necessary for a business' survival. Secondary stakeholders influence and affect (or are influenced or affected by) the corporation. Here, primary stakeholders include those in tourism or food businesses. Secondary stakeholders include those whose careers are related to food tourism but who are not directly engaged in food

tourism. Consultants were classified as primary or secondary, depending on if their primary focus was determined to be food tourism. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Profile of Respondents by Industry

	Survey 1 (N=29)	Survey 2 (N=55)
<b>PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS</b>		
General tour operator / travel agency	1	6
Food & beverage tour operator / tour company	3	11
Restaurant, café, bar, foodservice	1	2
Lodging	2	2
Beverage producer or attraction (wine, beer, spirits, etc.)	0	2
Food producer or culinary attraction	1	3
Marketing or consulting (food or drink focused)	4	3
<b>SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS</b>		
Media, blogger, writer, videographer, photographer	3	6
Activist, writer	1	2
Destination management/marketing organization (DMO)	3	2
Academia / Research	3	8
Association or NGO	3	5
Marketing or consulting (general)	2	2
Other	1	1
Anonymous	1	

#### 4.2 Stakeholder perceptions of food and drink knowledge in tourism environments (survey 1)

The first survey was completed by 29 respondents from 18 countries. Twelve were considered primary stakeholders, 16 were secondary stakeholders, and one remained anonymous (See Table 1). The countries represented were Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Nepal, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, and USA. These stakeholders believed that, to preserve food and drink traditions, it is necessary to educate and train local residents. They also stated their belief that both residents and hospitality and tourism employees needed to know more about local food and drink

traditions (See Table 2). While this is a small sample for a quantitative survey, it provides the background for survey 2, which is the focus of this research.

Table 2: Stakeholder point of view: Local food and drink learning & knowledge

	Mean	Standard Deviation	% Who Agree or Strongly Agree
Restaurants should teach visitors about food (not just provide them with meals)	5.72	0.92	62.1%
In general residents need to know more about local food & drink traditions	5.79	1.08	62.1%
In general hospitality & tourism employees need to know more about local food & drink traditions	6.45	0.95	86.2%
<i>7-point Likert-type scale (7=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree)</i>			
Please tell us how important you think each of these actions is to preserve authentic food and drink traditions in a city or region?			
	Mean	Standard Deviation	% Rating Very Important or Extremely Important
Educating and training residents about the local foods & traditions (N=28)	4.29	0.66	89.3%
Getting younger residents involved in preserving food traditions	4.24	0.91	82.8%
Aligning different providers (hotels, restaurants, producers, tour operators) to the same goals	3.93	1.03	72.4%
<i>5=extremely important; 4=very important; 3=moderately important; 2=slightly important; 1=not at all important</i>			
<i>N=29 unless otherwise noted</i>			

Stakeholders were asked how important they felt certain actions were in preserving food and drink traditions in a city or region, using a five-point scale (1=not at all important to 5=very important). Respondents felt that it was “very important” (m=4.26) to educate and train residents about local foods and traditions. Respondents also felt it was “very important” to get younger residents involved in preserving food traditions (M=4.24).

Stakeholders believed that both locals in general and hospitality and tourism employees lack knowledge about local food and drink. They provided their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The two items were: “In general, residents need to know more about local food and drink traditions” (M=5.79, SD=1.08) and “In general, hospitality & tourism employees need to know more about local food and drink traditions” (M=6.45, SD=0.95). They also agreed that restaurants should teach visitors about food, rather than just serve meals (M=5.72, SD=0.92). Respondents acknowledged that it is important for industry stakeholders (such as hotels, restaurants, producers, and tour operators) to be aligned to the same goals.

Overall, survey 1 provided evidence that stakeholders think that educating and training local residents could help to preserve food and drink traditions, and that they also perceived a local knowledge gap in understanding local food and drink. A follow-up survey suggested ways to fill this knowledge gap by helping younger residents to become knowledgeable about local food and drink.

#### *4.3 Stakeholder ideas for increasing local food and drink knowledge (survey 2)*

The second survey had 55 expert respondents (29 primary stakeholders and 26 secondary stakeholders, representing 29 different countries (See Table 1). The primary country represented by the respondents included: Albania, Austria, Bonaire (Dutch Caribbean), Bulgaria, Chile, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Nepal, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, and USA. Responses to the open-ended question (“How can cities or regions

get young residents interested in learning about the food and drink culture of their local area?") were coded and categorized in a multi-step process.

Data was analyzed following suggestions by Bryant (2014), beginning with open coding to determine key aspects and reduce the data. After that, strategies are dependent on the research team, as long as the purpose is to find high-level codes (called "themes" in this paper) to capture the data, essentially moving from initial coding to focused coding (Bryant, 2014).

This study began with open coding in which two researchers read all responses in detail and separately categorized the data into general "clusters." Then, a third researcher reviewed the general clusters, along with the original responses, to consolidate the clusters into condensed "themes." Following identification of major themes, the two initial reviewers used selective coding to better conceptualize the original responses into the themes. Some respondents gave answers which included multiple themes, so these are counted more than once in the totals. Finally, the first two researchers met to clarify any differences between their individual coding to generate final coding. Within the responses, stakeholders included suggestions from school-age children up to college students.

Upon initial review, one author generated 22 clusters of responses (e.g. culinary competitions, hands-on experiences, cooking workshops). Separately, a second researcher generated thirteen clusters. The third reviewer condensed these clusters into five general themes, which all researchers agreed upon. Inter-coder reliability was high when categorizing the open-ended responses into these five themes. The two researchers coded 151 items, with an agreement of 87%. After meeting to eliminate discrepancies, the total responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Stakeholder suggestions for getting young residents interested in local food and drink culture

Theme	Examples	Number of stakeholders mentioning this theme	
		Primary (N=29)	Secondary (N=26)
Education / formal education	Education, schools, school curriculum, state education system, custom-made study	18	6
Hands-on experiences & activities	Events, contests, local markets, tours, festivals, celebrations	10	14
Create awareness of local food & drink	Advertisements, promotion, social media, education campaigns	9	11
Career, job, or entrepreneurship opportunities	Jobs, internships, careers, encourage entrepreneurship, businesses	4	4
Connections to global or local issues	Connecting with sustainability, climate change, diversity, history	3	3

*Many responses contained more than one theme*

In order to get young residents interested in learning about the local food and drink culture, five themes emerged from the data:

1. Education / formal education: Teaching youth and incorporating local food education into schools
2. Hands-on experiences and activities: Festivals, tours, workshops, contests, etc. to generate interest in and knowledge of local food and drink
3. Create awareness of local food and drink: Social media, storytelling, marketing and promotion so that residents know what is available
4. Career, job, or entrepreneurship opportunities: Creating and promoting jobs, internships, and entrepreneurship programs so that young people can pursue careers in food
5. Connections with global or local issues: A general category which connects local food to other issues, such as sustainability, diversity, social justice

#### *4.3.1 Education / formal education:*

While it is not surprising that “education” was noted in a question about “learning,” respondents felt it important to include some variety of food education into local schools. 24 respondents (44%) mentioned the importance of food heritage education in the schools, classrooms, or focused on school children. Nearly two-thirds of primary stakeholders mentioned this (63%), compared to only 23% of secondary stakeholders

Representative responses included: experiences in the schools, nutrition education, and classes in school study programs. Instead of just considering nutrition education, which is present in many schools already, respondents felt that schools should have a role in teaching about local heritage, and even tourism. These responses included: “Education in schools from primary school with an emphasis on history and nutrition” (primary stakeholder from South Korea) and “include tourism and cooking classes in school study programs.” (secondary; USA)

Understanding of food was also related to sustaining local cultural heritage “They can help them first by educating first and promoting the local culture. You cannot be proud and interested in something that you don't know anything about” (primary; Haiti). They also considered that there may be benefits in lifelong learning and passing this knowledge forward. “There should be an effort made at the [High School] and College level to educate young people on the traditions of the area so they can be proud of their town/city and pass the information on to others” (secondary; USA). A few respondents also mentioned the importance of learning from elders or older generations.

#### *4.3.2 Hands-on experiences and activities:*

Hands-on experiences were stated by stakeholders to be a key element in creating a knowledgeable populace. Twenty-four respondents (44%) mentioned participation in food activities as a way to get younger residents interested in food and drink heritage. Here, a greater percentage of secondary stakeholders (42%) mentioned this theme, compared to primary stakeholders (31%). Experiences included: festivals, food tours, cooking competitions, cooking classes, fairs, and agricultural/farm visits. A secondary stakeholder recommended “open day tours of the region to allow residents to immerse themselves as a tourist in their local areas. Many locals do not know what is at their doorstep. Locals and businesses need to be tourists of their areas before they can really offer an experience to a visitor” (stakeholder elected to remain anonymous).

Within this theme, affordability and accessibility of food experiences were identified as having importance. This was mentioned by five respondents. A secondary stakeholder from Greece proposed that “young residents could have some incentives (no fees or low fees) in order to visit local farms and/or food businesses, experience those organisations and learn about local food.” Another recommended that destinations could offer “free cooking workshops or free food tours in the city provided by municipalities or food producers” (primary; Turkey). This acknowledged that there may be cost barriers to learning about local foods.

The two most popular themes (education in schools and hands-on activities) were frequently mentioned together, acknowledging that experiential education may be a beneficial supplement to classroom education. Eleven respondents (20%) mentioned the importance of

educating in the schools combined with hands-on activities, a combination of the top two themes. For example,

“[Incorporate] in the curriculum of the schools, subjects of tourism and gastronomy that value local heritage ... These subjects [should] have practical hours in which students tour the places where there are examples of food and drink with knowledge. This will enhance the meaningful learning of young people ... [and build] gastronomic tourism as a business opportunity and as a tool for sustainable development.” (secondary; Chile)

“By creating awareness of the culinary heritage of their own environments by means of education in the schools and other institutions; local markets with opportunities for these young residents to participate as entrepreneurs on an informal basis; sharing eating cultures and cuisines of different groups with one another at festivals, etc.” (secondary; South Africa)

#### *4.3.3 Create awareness of local food and drink*

Aside from traditional education and experiential education, twenty respondents (36%) felt that awareness of local food and drink needed to be increased. These responses included awareness at a national level, promotion or cross promotions, and social media. This seems to indicate a connection between food tourism marketing and learning. Six respondents specifically mentioned social media, such as the secondary stakeholder from Spain who recommended “ensuring food and drink providers are connected on social media and most importantly ENGAGE on those channels by responding in a timely manner.” An Albanian

primary stakeholder recommended “story-telling and marketing strategies that are attractive for the young residents. Eating and drinking for leisure has to become (as it has already done in certain parts of the World) fashionable.”

#### *4.3.4 Career, job, or entrepreneurship opportunities*

Career and professional opportunities, internships, and developing entrepreneurs may be an additional way to generate interest (identified by eight respondents; 15% of sample). Stakeholders recommended showing young people careers in food or food tourism and encourage them to pursue these careers, through both informal (knowing that such careers exist) and formal (internship or entrepreneurship skills) means. A secondary stakeholder from the USA suggested that the industry should “engage students through paid internships with local tourism and food enterprises [and] encourage entrepreneurship.” A primary stakeholder from Italy proposed that areas of study and career development are connected: “Involve them with custom made study, research and career program and offering the possibility of a profession and career in their place of birth rather than looking for a career far away from their roots and customs.” This suggests that career opportunities may contribute to economic solvency by retaining local residents through creating and preserving local jobs.

#### *4.3.5 Connections to global or local issues*

Finally, six stakeholders (11%) proposed that connections should be made between food tourism and other interests of young people or global issues in general. Tying culinary issues to global issues is becoming very common in conversations within the food services and agricultural production industries, including topics like sustainability, climate change, food

waste, food miles. This broad category included social interests of young residents, like incorporating music with food at festivals. Some also suggested social issues, like sustainability, social justice, and diversity, acknowledging that food may be a very important interest for some, but others may be passionate about other issues: “Believe younger residents have concerns about climate change and an interest in social justice issues and tie those to a local region's food system. Taking their interests and finding overlap in [the] local food system” (primary; USA).

#### *4.3.6 Assessing local offerings*

Aside from the learning themes, many respondents listed the importance of assessing the local food and drink offering at the destination before beginning an education program. For example, a secondary stakeholder from Japan stated: “firstly regions should learn and find if there [is a] regional food & drink heritage & culture. Secondly they should let resident know their rich resources.” A Spanish secondary stakeholder recommended: “This will be very different from destination to destination, as it is largely based in culture, current economic situation and many other very site-specific factors. What everyone CAN do is study their young population and, data in hand, draft a strategy on how to get them interested.” It is acknowledged that this may be a complicated undertaking, which may take a great deal of study and negotiation between stakeholders (which may differ depending on the destination). However, without prompting, stakeholders indicated that the process of identifying local food heritage should be considered.

## 5 Discussion and professional application

### *5.1 Framework for a food tourism education strategy*

Here, we propose a framework for a food tourism education strategy, with a focus on stakeholder cooperation toward a key goal: educating young residents about food. One key element that seems to be a prerequisite to education is taking an assessment about the local food culture (similar to the situational analysis step in Du Rand & Heath's 2006 framework). In general, this knowledge generation could be coordinated by a DMO, with food tourism providers, agricultural or production businesses, and local historians adding their expertise.

Then, a food tourism education strategy could be developed with multiple stakeholders. Here, we place the themes identified in this study into an actionable strategic framework:

1. Learn about and define the local food culture: DMO; providers; agriculture; local historians
2. Create awareness of the local food culture through media, social media, and marketing/promotions: DMO; providers; media
3. Plan educational programs in the schools: educators; community; providers; students
4. Plan hands-on experiences which are accessible to young residents: community; providers; DMO; entrepreneurs; students
5. Encourage and develop entrepreneurship, internship, & career opportunities: educators; providers; entrepreneurs

Throughout this process, it is recommended to make connections between global issues (such as food waste or climate change) and local food and drink. In addition, it is recommended to find out what issues are important to local residents (such as social justice or sustainability), in order to frame food and drink within a framework that locals care about.

## *5.2 General discussion*

This research builds upon the concept of sustainable tourism development and connects local food and drink knowledge with the tourist experience. Through stakeholder involvement, we propose that, in order to meet the desires of residents (to learn more about their local food and drink culture), tourists (to learn while traveling), the food tourism industry (to attract more visitors), and destinations (to retain their local food and drink), that actions can be taken to increase the food and drink knowledge of residents. It is believed that this knowledge can lead to more representative food and drink offerings in destinations and a better sense of pride in the local area. This contributes to sustainable tourism, cultural sustainability (by retaining and building upon food and drink traditions) and economic sustainability (as the local area can profit from food tourism).

Understanding the educational benefits of tourism have been explored (see Stone & Petrick, 2013), yet learning through food and drink has only been a minor research topic. Learning can be a key motivator for food tourism (Cela, Knowles-Lankford, and Lankford, 2007; Kim & Eves, 2012), and the results of this study show how destinations can develop the learning benefits, which could contribute to visitor attraction and satisfaction. These findings can be combined with the research of Luoh, Tsaur, and Lo (2020) and Croce and Perri (2007) to design fun and memorable educational experiences.

Stakeholders believe that food tourism providers should educate both visitors and residents (especially hospitality and tourism employees) about local food expands upon the idea that food tourism contributes to cultural heritage and regional identity (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). This study advances the research further by incorporating the voices of stakeholders to identify novel ways to retain this heritage. The results of this study can be viewed within Hjalager's (2002) typologies—a continuum from simply enjoying the food to understanding, experiencing, and exchanging knowledge about the food. Additionally, this framework could be coupled with research in particular regions (e.g. Everett & Aitchison, 2010; Pepela, 2014) to create an integrated strategy incorporating positioning of a region's food heritage with education about this heritage. These could include a wide variety of elements, depending on the region, such as: knowledge of local agriculture; traditional recipes, ingredients, or food preparation methods; development or invention of new foods or dining styles; incorporation of cuisines from other cultures.

Additionally, this research provides a more holistic approach to retaining local food heritage, advancing from studies focusing on particular regions or foods (e.g. Ranta & Prieto-Piastro, 2019). Destinations can utilize the general strategies from this study, combined with their own identification of local food heritage, to develop a food tourism education strategy. Destinations and DMOs, such as Visit Finland and Failte Ireland, have produced detailed food tourism strategy plans (Failte Ireland, 2018; Havas & Adamsson, 2020). This research extends their strategic approach into education. While this paper did not test the concept, stakeholders inferred that is likely that there are positive benefits to students and the communities from additional knowledge of local heritage.

Stakeholders in food tourism are well-defined (Chase, Mishra, & Wolf, 2014), but they are often considered as just one portion of a food or tourism network. Thus, this study continues previous work (e.g. Everett's 2014 discussion of supply chains) of linking related industries to food tourism, by identifying connections throughout the production process (from farmers' markets to restaurants/chefs). This builds upon the research of Roy, Hall, and Ballantine (2017) and Che, Veeck, and Veeck (2005), which considered networks of farms, food producers, restaurants, and chefs. Likewise, researchers (e.g. Rodriguez & Fuso, 2014) have suggested best practices for developing networks and strategic alliances among varied food tourism related businesses. This paper expands on these ideas by suggesting ways in which these stakeholders can work together to create a food tourism education network.

## **6. Limitations and suggestions for future research**

This research provided recommendations for destinations to improve their economic and cultural sustainability through educating residents on local food and drink culture. However, each destination must evaluate its own resources, so this plan may not be appropriate for all destinations. Additionally, there is no clear definition of local food (Martinez, 2010), so destinations and researchers must make their own decisions regarding these issues. To propose a general framework, this study used international stakeholders, when each destination's stakeholders may believe differently. Just as Ranta and Prieto-Piastro (2019) acknowledged that it is difficult to define national foods, many local stakeholders may have different opinions of what constitutes "local" food and drink culture, so this must also be considered in the first step of the action plan. While a great range of stakeholders were considered in this study, the study is limited in that only these stakeholders were considered.

In surveying stakeholders, researchers intentionally left the term “learning” and “young people” to be undefined, as to generate unfiltered responses. Further researchers could investigate learning in different school settings (from primary schools to colleges), or learning at different age levels, perhaps proposing curricula or activities for different ages. Likewise, we recommend connecting pedagogy with food tourism to determine how food learning could be incorporated into educational systems.

To continue this research, a greater range of stakeholders could be surveyed using quantitative methods to create additional insight into food heritage education. Destination managers could prepare a similar study in their local area to determine what stakeholders believe to be important and to ensure their participation. They may also develop a food and drink heritage education plan in schools and assess short-term learning outcomes and longitudinal learning outcomes.

To determine more about food learning in general, researchers could assess actual learning outcomes (about both foods and cultures) from food festivals and food tours. Differences in learning may depend on many factors, from identification with a region to the motivation for travel. Additionally, researchers could compare learning outcomes from food tours in different areas or regions.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study examined the connection between food tourism and learning. As tourists often learn about food and drink while traveling, these food experiences also influence their satisfaction and return intentions (Stone, Migacz, & Wolf, 2018). It is proposed that retention of local knowledge may help to maintain food and drink culture. Unfortunately, food tourism

stakeholders do not believe that local food and drink knowledge is currently being preserved.

Following stakeholder suggestions, the action plan provided here may help a network of local food tourism stakeholders, from farmers to restaurants to tour operators to help the community or region to retain knowledge of local food and drink heritage. By incorporating multiple stakeholders into these plans, it is more likely to have long-term success by working together to ensure that tomorrow's residents become more knowledgeable and respectful of local foods and traditions.

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