

Exploring The Role Of Gastronomy In Tourism

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Abstract

This paper summarizes the arguments and counterarguments within the scientific discussion on the issues of gastronomy and gastronomic tourism. Gastronomy is a great asset in tourism. It is the part of culture and traditions of countries. Good cuisine is interesting for everybody, as they all want to try good and tasty food. Many people travel just for gastronomic purposes. Food is the essential need for human being, and it may become the main motivating factor for deciding to travel. So the phenomena of gastronomy and its role in tourism are worth exploring.

The main purpose of the article was to analyze the role of gastronomy in tourism.

The methodological tool for the research was a survey, some hypotheses were derived, which were analyzed via Crosstabulations with Pearson Chi-square testing.

The investigation of the topic and the results of the analysis state that gastronomy is the part of culture and traditions of a country and also the art and culture of cooking. The research empirically confirms and theoretically proves that many people prefer local cuisine of the destination despite high prices and they evaluate the importance of good cuisine of the destination very high. Also the overall satisfaction with the journey is influenced also by the local cuisine of the destination.

The main conclusion is that gastronomy may promote tourism and countries which have gastronomic heritage, should evaluate it and include it in touristic offers by making a gastronomic brand of the region or country. Countries should have a gastronomic tourism development plan. Gastronomic tourism should contribute to accomplishing of sustainable development goals. It may be a driver force for advancing the economy, creating new jobs, increasing the income of population who works in that sphere, etc. In order to meet the needs of tourists, countries should carry out research to understand the consumer motivations and behavior, and based on it to create gastronomic tourism product. Besides, educational organizations should prepare high qualified professionals for the sphere, as the staff competence has a great impact on service level, which in its turn influences customer satisfaction.

The results of the research can be useful for the state organs, private sector, also for researchers of tourism sphere.

Keywords: gastronomy, culinary, tourism, culture, tradition, destination.

JEL Classification: Z3, L83, L66.

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Introduction

Gastronomy plays an important role in tourism development. Gastronomy is a part of culture; it shows the traditions and values of nations. Tourists get to know the cuisines of different countries while travelling. Sometimes gastronomy plays the decisive role in making a decision about travelling. Also it has a significant impact on the satisfaction of tourists from the overall trip. So the issues of gastronomy and tourism are very important and worth exploring in order to develop a gastronomic brand and promote tourism.

The purpose of the article was to study the meaning and role of gastronomy in tourism. Besides exploring some literature issues, an analysis was done to evaluate the importance of gastronomy for tourists, their food preference, etc.

Food has an important role in the development of tourism services, since it often comprises 30% or more of tourist expenditure. Spain has become a leading gastronomic destination through the development of regional gastronomic diversity and the development of high-quality food experiences. Italy has a highly developed gastronomic landscape. In France, Sopexa has positioned itself as a benchmark agency for international marketing, specializing in food, wine and lifestyle. It has over 50 years of experience in building the reputation of the French agrifood industry and supporting the branding of France as a gastronomic destination. In Latin America, culinary heritage is now being recognized as a potential area for the development of sustainable tourism, which can be particularly important in generating income for local communities (OECD, 2012).

With the aim of presenting the current situation of destinations around the world with respect to gastronomy tourism, UNWTO conducted an online survey targeting UNWTO Affiliate Members including but not limited to, DMOs (Destination Management Organizations), educational institutions, marketing and consultancy firms, accommodation providers, the meetings industry, food and beverage providers and wineries to better understand the perspective of the private and public sectors on gastronomy tourism and its importance for a destination. A total of 77 responses were received in which 67.5% of them were from Europe, 22% from the Americas, 7.8% from Asia and the Pacific and 2.6% from Africa. The majority of respondents represented governmental departments (41.5%) and not-for-profit organizations (28.5%); as well as educational institutions (15.5%) and private sector businesses (14.5%). The 87% of responding organizations believe that gastronomy is a distinctive and strategic element in defining the image and brand of their destination. The other 13% of respondents who answered alternatively selected VFR (visiting friends and relatives) as a main motive to visit their destination. With regard to the question of gastronomy being a driving force for tourism development, the average of the answers was 8.19 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is "strongly agree". Approximately 70% of respondents have already targeted gastronomy tourists as a market segment; however, only 10% of them believe that gastronomy tourism has enough promotion in the destination. 65.5% believe that it is being promoted, although insufficiently. More specifically, 46.5% have a gastronomy tourism strategy in their respective destination's Tourism Action Plan. All respondents have carried out activities to promote gastronomy tourism and none of them believe that targeting this segment of tourists has had a negative impact in any way (UNWTO, 2017).

The 4th UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism was organized in Thailand from 30 May to 1 June 2018. It specifically focused on harnessing the power of technology as a driver for sustainable growth. The main closing remarks of the forum stated that gastronomy tourism can make an important contribution to the Sustainable development goals: set policies and business strategies for food waste, community empowerment and job creation. A better measurement and better understanding of gastronomy tourism is needed: advanced research on consumer motivations and behavior and the measurement of the economic impact of gastronomy tourism. Besides, changes require new professional skills where education and training are fundamental in meeting these challenges (UNWTO, 2018).

The 5th UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism was in Spain, on 2-3 May 2019. It focused on job creation and entrepreneurship as a means to advance tourism's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (UNWTO, 2019).

Literature review

The word gastronomy is derived from the words "gastros" and "gnomos" (which mean "stomach" and "knowledge or law" in Greek). Another word is culinary, which means dishes, food, food preparation techniques (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Culinary is a Latin word "culina" (means kitchen or cooking) (Montarini & Staniscia, 2009) and it refers to ingredients, foods that are prepared, beverages, production process (Hornig & Tsai, 2010). Gastronomy is not only about food but also about beverages (Sanchez-Canizares & Lopez-Guzman, 2012).

It was Long (2004) who first used the term "culinary tourism" in 1998 to express the idea of experiencing other cultures through food and wine. Wolf (2002) defines "culinaria" and gastronomy tourism as "travel in order to search for and enjoy prepared food and drink and unique and memorable gastronomic experiences."

Food and cuisine are an integral part of the culture of communities and destinations and tourists want to experience and “taste” the region they are visiting (Bessiere, 1998).

Although “gastronomy” is defined as the art of eating and drinking in many sources, it in fact is an inter-related branch of art and science that has a direct relation with chemistry, literature, biology, geology, history, music, philosophy, psychology, sociology, medicine, nutrition, and agriculture (Kivela & Crofts, 2006).

Boyne, Williams, and Hall (2002, p. 91) state that the “inter-linkages between tourism and food are many and deep. Henderson (2009) presents three research lines around the relationship between tourism and gastronomy: food as a tourism product; the marketing of food to tourists; and food tourism as an instrument of destination and general development.

Tikkanen (2007) considered that a pleasant eating experience is one of our main physiological needs at all times. Henderson (2009) and Alonso (2010) stated that food and tourism share a very close relationship with access to good food, being a critical tourism resource. A region’s local foods can be a motivating factor among tourists seeking unique and authentic experiences and it is during these events that tourists are exposed to their host’s cultures (Plummer et al., 2005 cited in Alonso, 2010).

As the motivation of the tourist revolves around food, experiencing new tastes, and exploring the history or culture, it becomes gastronomic tourism (Hall and Sharples, 2003; cf. Chaney & Ryan, 2012).

Thus, food is an essential prerequisite that all tourists eat when travelling and for some good food can be a major draw and primary motivator (Henderson, 2009).

Food had become recognized as:

- A part of the local culture, which tourists consume;
- A part of tourist promotion;
- A potential component of local agricultural and economic development;
- A regional factor that is affected by the consumption patterns and perceived preferences of the tourists (Hall and Mitchell, 2001; Misiura, 2006 in Tikkanen, 2007).

Gastronomic tourism includes visiting food producers, food and beverage festivals, restaurants and special places related to some special foods together with tasting a special dish, observing its production and preparation processes or eating a special dish from the hands of a very famous chef as well as seeing how a certain dish is being prepared (Hall et al. 2003; Hall & Mitchell, 2005).

McKercher et al. (2008) have segmented the market into three subgroups. The first group travels to a destination especially for gastronomic reasons who try to experience local food. Most of their activities during their stay are related to gastronomy. According to the second group, food is important but not that much. It has an important role but gastronomic issues do not direct the holiday decisions. The last group has a continuum from less gastronomic activities to none.

For Shenoy (2005) there are only three types of gastronomy tourists. The first group is culinary tourists, for whom food has an important role and they have a special interest in food-related activities during their holiday. The experiential tourists try local food but are not interested in much as the culinary tourists. The third group is general tourists group who are totally the opposite of the culinary tourists in terms of gastronomic interests.

According to a study by Kivela and Crofts (2009) gastronomy is considered as a modern cultural resource and thus, it satisfies all the conventional requirements of cultural tourism products. Their research showed that motivation to travel for gastronomic reasons is a valid construct for the purposes of market segmentation. Besides, gastronomy has a very big role in the way that visitors experience the destination, and therefore, travelers would like to return to the same place to savor its unique gastronomy.

Another research for exploring food tourist desires and intentions to consume local cuisine was done in six restaurants in the South-Eastern USA among 430 tourists and the results showed that positive emotions and self-identity had the strongest influences on desire; besides, the frequency of past behavior had the strongest influence on intentions to consume local cuisine (Levitt, et al., 2017).

A recent study by Stone et al (2017) was carried out to identify elements leading to memorable food, drink, or culinary experiences while traveling. Qualitative analysis based on a survey of 1000 tourists in four

countries found five general elements which lead to memorable food travel experiences: food or drink consumed, location or setting, companions, the occasion, and touristic elements.

Another research was done in Taiwan by Lin, Pearson and Cai (2011) which suggested that food may be used as a form of destination brand identity and may become a powerful factor in building a destination brand.

Methodology

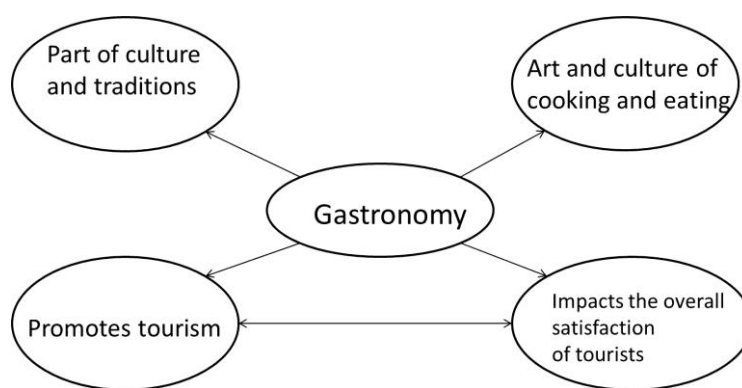
Thus, from the literature some hypotheses may be derived:

H1: Gastronomy is the part of culture and traditions of a nation or a place.

H2: Gastronomy is the art and culture of cooking and eating.

H3: Gastronomy has a great influence on tourism and many people travel with gastronomic motivations. So it promotes tourism.

H4. Good cuisine impacts the overall satisfaction of tourists.



Source: Processed by the author.

Figure 1. Research Framework

To verify these hypotheses, we have conducted an empirical analysis. We have made a survey and various people have participated in it. The quantitative and qualitative results were analyzed via Crosstabulations with Pearson Chi-square testing (setting significance level $\alpha = 0.05$). The value of the Chi Square statistic provides a test whether or not there is a statistical relationship between the variables in the cross classification table.

Discussion of results

The survey was conducted online. 100 people of different nations from USA, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, Cyprus, Estonia, France, UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Greece, Spain, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Italy, Bulgaria, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Armenia, Japan, China, India, Lithuania, participated in it.

50% of the participants were male and 50%-female.

69% of the participants were 21-35 years old, 18% were 36-50 years old, 8% were under 20 years old and 5% were 51 and elder.

According to 78% of the participants gastronomy plays any role while deciding to travel, 9% answered 'no', and 13% answered 'I do not know' to this question.

The participants evaluated the importance of good cuisine of the destination for them the following way:

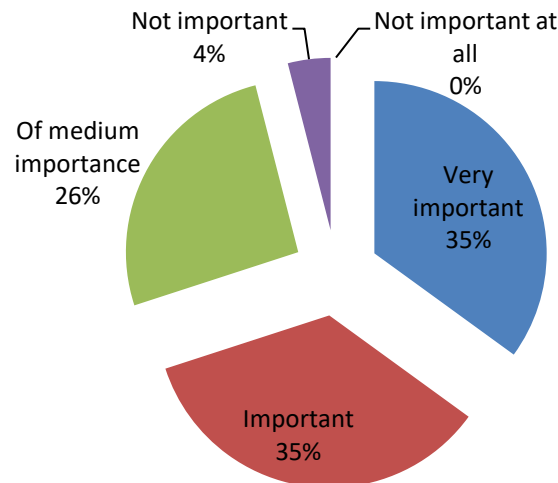


Figure 2. The importance of good cuisine of the destination

Source: Processed by the author based on the survey results.

To the question whether the participants prefer local or international food during travel, they answered the following way.

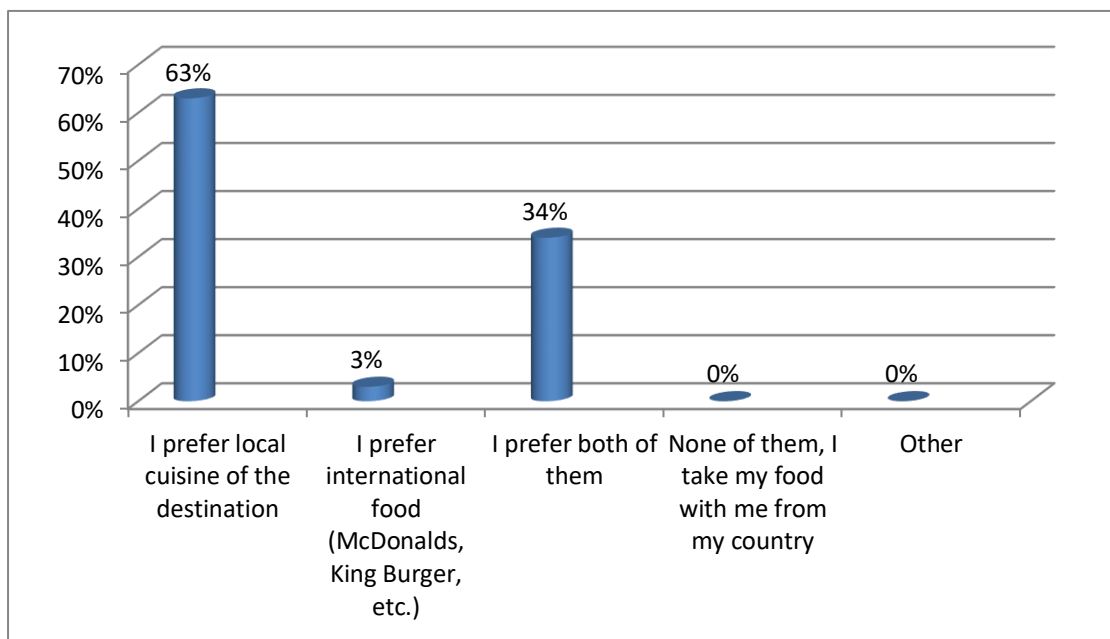


Figure 3. The preference of local or international food

Source: Processed by the author based on the survey results.

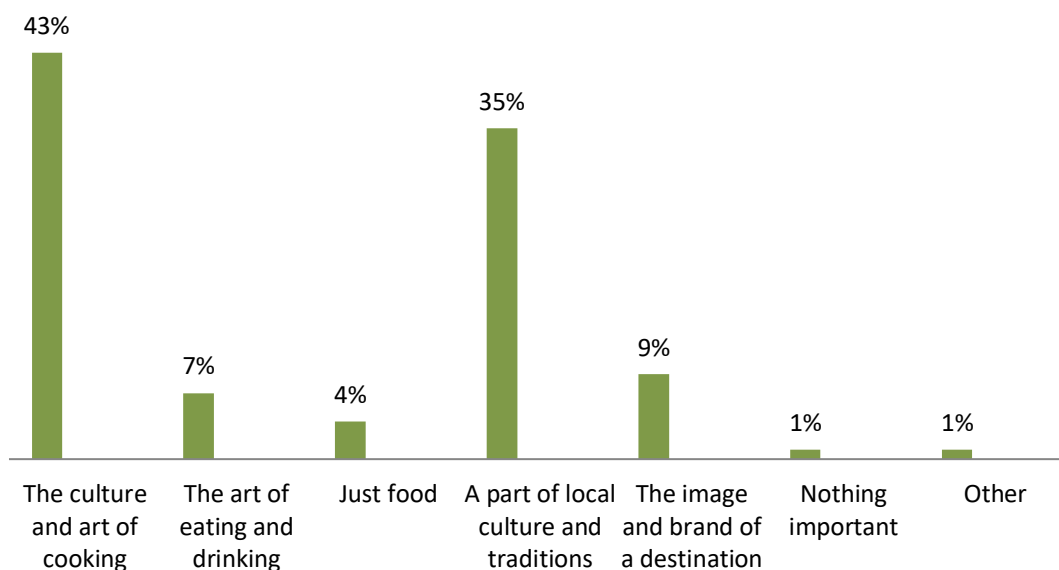
The participants evaluated the impact of food prices of the destination on their consumption or future travel decisions the following way:



Source: Processed by the author based on the survey results.

Figure 4. The impact of food prices of the destination

For the participants, gastronomy is:



Source: Processed by the author based on the survey results.

Figure 5. The meaning of gastronomy

The other option was the study of gastrointestinal issues.

81% of participants have never traveled for gastronomic purposes (getting acquainted with local cuisine, learn cooking; participate in food festivals, etc.), and 19% have taken gastronomic tours (both domestic and international).

The participants also mentioned that cuisine of the destination has an impact on their satisfaction: good and tasty food makes to fill satisfied with the destination and you always have good memories, while because of bad food you may dislike the place and are not satisfied with your travel.

The participants have mostly tried the national cuisines of Spain, Italy, Greece, France, Portugal, China, also Sweden, Japan, Armenia, Georgia, Dania, Ukraine, Vietnam, Lebanon, Austria, Argentina, Slovakia, and Brazil.

The mostly liked national cuisines were the following: Spanish (tapas, paella, tortilla), Italian (pasta, pizza, tiramisu), Greek (fish food, moussaka), Japanese (sushi), Portuguese (francesinha, bola de berlim, pastel de nata), German (pretzel), Austrian (apple strudel, schnitzel), Armenian (lavash, dolma, barbeque), French (éclair), Chinese (rice), Georgian (Adjaran khachapuri, khinkali).

The crosstabulation analysis between the role of gastronomy in tourism according to respondents and their food preference shows, that majority of respondents who think that gastronomy plays any role in tourism, mainly prefer local cuisine of the destination.

Table 1. Role*Preference cross tabulation

			Preference			Total
			I prefer both of them	I prefer international food (McDonald's, King burger, etc.)	I prefer local cuisine of the destination	
Role	I do not know	Count	6	0	7	13
		% within Role	46.2%	0.0%	53.8%	100.0%
	no	Count	3	0	6	9
		% within Role	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	100.0%
	yes	Count	25	3	50	78
		% within Role	32.1%	3.8%	64.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	34	3	63	100
		% within Role	34.0%	3.0%	63.0%	100.0%

Source: Processed by the author using SPSS software.

The cross tabulation analysis between the importance of gastronomy for participants and their food preference shows, that people who evaluate gastronomy as very important, important, and of medium importance, prefer local cuisine of the destination.

Table 2. Importance*Preference cross tabulation

			Preference			Total
			I prefer both of them	I prefer international food (McDonald's, King burger, etc.)	I prefer local cuisine of the destination	
Importance	important	Count	13	1	21	35
		% within Importance	37.1%	2.9%	60.0%	100.0%
	not important	Count	2	0	2	4
		% within Importance	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	of medium importance	Count	9	2	15	26
		% within Importance	34.6%	7.7%	57.7%	100.0%
	very important	Count	10	0	25	35
		% within Importance	28.6%	0.0%	71.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	34	3	63	100
		% within Importance	34.0%	3.0%	63.0%	100.0%

Source: Processed by the author using SPSS software.

The cross tabulation analysis between the importance of gastronomy and the meaning of gastronomy according to participants shows, that people who evaluate gastronomy as very important and important, refer gastronomy as the culture and art of cooking and as a part of local culture and traditions.

Table 3. Importance*Meaning cross tabulation

			Meaning							Total
			A part of local culture and traditions	Just food	Nothing important	The art of eating and drinking	The culture and art of cooking	The image and brand of a destination	The study of gastrointestinal issues	
Importance	important	Count	12	1	0	2	18	2	0	35
		% within Importance	34.3%	2.9%	0.0%	5.7%	51.4%	5.7%	0.0%	100.0%
	not important	Count	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
		% within Importance	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	of medium importance	Count	10	2	1	2	7	3	1	26
		% within Importance	38.5%	7.7%	3.8%	7.7%	26.9%	11.5%	3.8%	100.0%
	very important	Count	11	0	0	3	17	4	0	35
		% within Importance	31.4%	0.0%	0.0%	8.6%	48.6%	11.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	4	1	7	43	9	1	100
		% within Importance	35.0%	4.0%	1.0%	7.0%	43.0%	9.0%	1.0%	100.0%

Source: Processed by the author using SPSS software.

The cross tabulation analysis between the importance of gastronomy and the impact of prices on consumption shows, that people who evaluate gastronomy as very important, important, and of medium importance will consume food despite the level of food prices.

Table 4. Importance*Prices cross tabulation

			Prices			Total
			The price is no matter, I prefer high quality food	The price is very important, I will not consume in case of high prices	The prices are important, but anyhow I eat local cuisine	
Importance	important	Count	7	11	17	35
		% within Importance	20.0%	31.4%	48.6%	100.0%
	not important	Count	1	0	3	4
		% within Importance	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	of medium importance	Count	3	5	18	26
		% within Importance	11.5%	19.2%	69.2%	100.0%
	very important	Count	12	5	18	35
		% within Importance	34.3%	14.3%	51.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	23	21	56	100
		% within Importance	23.0%	21.0%	56.0%	100.0%

Source: Processed by the author using SPSS software.

The significance level of the above mentioned variables are more than 0.05. so there is a high level of significance.

Table 5. Pearson Chi-Square testing

Variables	Pearson Chi-Square Value	Significance
Role*Preference	1.706	0.790
Importance*Preference	4.458	0.615
Importance*Meaning	17.376	0.497
Importance *Prices	8.556	0.200

Source: Processed by the author using SPSS software.

Thus, our main hypotheses are confirmed, as the results of our analyses show that gastronomy has a role in deciding to travel, and despite the fact that few people traveled just for gastronomic purposes, anyhow many people prefer local cuisine of the destination (even despite of prices), they evaluate the importance of good cuisine of the destination very high, so we may conclude, that gastronomy has a great influence and it directly and indirectly promotes tourism, and good cuisine will impact the overall satisfaction of tourists.

The analysis also shows that for many people gastronomy is considered to be the part of culture and traditions of a nation or a place, and the art and culture of cooking and eating.

Conclusion

Gastronomy really plays an important role in tourism. Many people choose destination because of its local cuisine (for example many people want to try famous cuisines of Spain, Italy, etc., or participate in famous food and beverage festivals, etc.). Even if tourists do not travel with the main gastronomic purposes, however they consume local cuisine. For many people gastronomy is the part of culture and traditions of a place and nation, and they get acquainted with them via cuisine. Many people consider gastronomy as an art of cooking, as various methods of cooking have a great impact on the taste of food. Our analyses showed that good cuisine of the destination is very important for people, and many of them prefer local cuisine of destination while travelling. Moreover, the relationship between prices and importance showed that people consume local cuisine despite high prices, and for many people the price is no matter as they prefer high quality food.

The analysis also showed that the cuisine of the destination has an impact on satisfaction level. If people do not like the food, they will be less satisfied.

The more liked cuisines were the famous ones, like Spanish, Italian, Greek, French, however less knowns also are interesting for tourists and many people travel to discover new places, new cultures, new cuisines, and new traditions.

Thus, we may conclude that gastronomic tourism is a prosperous type of tourism. Gastronomy may promote tourism, so for every country and nation it is important to evaluate their national gastronomic traditions and make touristic packages based on it, creating the gastronomic brand of a destination and presenting it as a part of their culture.

Countries should have a gastronomic tourism development plan which will introduce the gastronomic map of the country. Gastronomic tourism may contribute to the accomplishment of sustainable development goals. Gastronomic tourism is a driving force for developing the economy, creating new jobs, increasing the income of population who works in that sphere, etc. In order to meet the needs of tourists, countries should carry out research to understand the consumer motivations and behavior, and based on it to create gastronomic tourism product. Besides, educational organizations should prepare high qualified professionals for the sphere, as the staff competence has a great impact on service level, which in its turn influences customer satisfaction. Thus, a comprehensive work is needed in many spheres to promote gastronomy tourism of countries.

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