A Qualitative Analysis of Gastronomy Tourism Strategy and Action Plan*

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Abstract

Interest in Gastronomy Tourism, a type of tourism that is increasingly the focus of the competitive strategies of mass tourism destinations, is also increasing. Gastronomy Tourism is included in development plans by destination management organizations and destination managers due to its contributions to tourism destinations in particular as well as wider national economies. This study examines the Gastronomy Strategy and Action Plan, a theme that has received limited thus far. Qualitative research methods were used in this study, and content analysis was utilized to analyze data. Four main sub-themes (vision, mission, aims-objectives, and action plans), under the main theme, are divided into different categories. The findings of the study show that the strategies and action plans adopted by different destinations have a common set of qualities and similar approaches. They also reveal similarities with the action plans analyzed in previous studies.

Keywords: Gastronomy Tourism, Tourism Strategy, Planning.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of many sources of income for a region. Countries unhappy with the proportion of global tourism revenue that they receive are aware that tourism is a means of reducing interregional development disparities, and thus may strive to increase their share of the growing global tourism market. Countries and regions can achieve this objective by highlighting different aspects of their local food (Sims, 2009) or local cuisine that have the potential to attract tourists and developing them into touristic products (Ab-Karim & Chi, 2010). For this reason, many countries are attempting to prioritize gastronomy as one of alternative types of tourism (Gálvez et al., 2017). For example, cultural elements, particularly those relating to gastronomy culture, are being heavily promoted in order to generate tourism all year round (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Consequently, many countries are including gastronomy-related activities in their tourism strategies (Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2010). In addition, destinations that want to increase awareness of their gastronomic assets and develop gastronomic tourism in the region will often determine and implement gastronomic tourism strategies separately from national tourism strategies. Planning can lead to a rapid, healthy development process in terms of a region's resources, and can minimize problems that may arise during this development process. Countries that receive a large share of global tourism revenue engage in sectoral tourism planning in order to increase their share. In addition, regions that want to turn tourism into an income stream often engage in industrial tourism planning. Such sectoral planning can be carried out either within national borders or at a regional level. In order to compete with other popular destinations, and understand and improve gastronomy tourism planning, it is important to learn from other practices and to make national or regional gastronomy planning a benchmark for global best practice (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Horng & Tsai, 2012). By adopting a comparative perspective, the present study aims to facilitate discussion by providing information about gastronomy tourism and strategies that are used in the field of gastronomy tourism. It also attempts to identify the gastronomy tourism strategies and action plans developed by the destination management organizations of the countries presented in this study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Relationship between Gastronomy and Tourism

There is increasing awareness of the relationship between gastronomy and tourism (Boyne, Hall, & Williams, 2003: 134). In the competitive global tourism market, all destinations seek to offer a different product in order to distinguish themselves from other destinations (Shenoy, 2005: 3). According to Richards (2002: 3), as competition between tourism destinations increases, local cultures become an increasingly valuable source of tourism products for attracting tourists. The tourism perceptions of many tourists are shifting, from an emphasis on the 'must-see', involving physical observations of places such as museums and historical buildings, to a desire for 'must-have experiences', such as lifestyles and food culture. As all people have to be fed, either at home or outside the home, food and drink have always been fundamental for life (Brisson, 2012). In postmodern societies, gastronomy plays an important role, not only at the center of the tourist experience, but also because it plays an active role in creating the identity of a society (Croce & Perri, 2010). It is possible to examine the relationship between gastronomy and tourism in terms of destination, tourists and the economy.

The use of gastronomic heritage to strengthen the touristic products of a region is increasing (Boyne et al., 2003: 132). For example, Hu & Ritchie (1993) found that region-specific dishes stand out as the fourth most important factor that determine destination choice among tourists after climate, accommodation and scenery. The local dishes that tourists eat during their holidays continue to be a separate experience in their minds (Quan & Wang, 2004: 302) and can impact their decision to revisit a destination (Kivela & Crotts, 2005: 42). Shenoy (2005: 3) states that local cuisine and gastronomy can be a distinctive source of tourism products for regions aiming to attract more tourists; examples of this include wine tourism (Croce & Perri, 2010; Dumais, 2002; Hall & Mitchell, 2000; İlhan, 2007; Northwood, 2000).

For some tourists, experiencing the local cuisine is the main motivation for visiting a region, as well as for pleasure. According to Shenoy (2005: 2), while some tourists only want to satisfy their hunger, others see tasting local cuisine as one of their motivations for travel. For Fox (2007: 554), tourists are attempting to socialize through eating local food, seeing local people's beliefs and experiencing their culture. While gastronomy doesn't appear be the main motivational factor determining destination choice, it plays a secondary or partial role in such choices made by tourists (Herrera & Herranz, 2012: 7). Indeed, research shows that the role of food in tourism satisfaction is important and that food has a significant impact on destination choice (Akgöl, 2012; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Demir, 2011; Kalkstein, 2007; Nield, Kozak, & LeGrys, 2000).

From an economic point of view, food and drink play an important role in the development of tourism services as they constitute more than 30% of tourist expenditure, expenditure that usually goes to local businesses (OECD, 2012: 9). According to Richards (2012: 14), the connections between food and tourism provide a platform for local economic development, a platform that can be strengthened by gastronomy experiences such as festivals, local restaurants, etc., which contribute to destination branding and marketing. Numerous studies have shown the importance of food expenditure for both the tourism industry and the local economy. For example, the average daily expenditure of tourists participating in wine tourism in Italy in 2010 was 200 Euros, while in 2003, this figure was 150 Euros. Another study by the University of Barcelona suggests that 30% of tourism expenditure in Barcelona is spent on gastronomy. In Canada, in 2010, 2 billion Canadian dollars were spent on food and drink in the province of Ontario; this figure accounted for 46% of total tourism expenditure (Richards, 2012: 22). As Akgöl (2012: 28) points out, the relationship between gastronomy and tourism is not a superficial and unidirectional relationship where food consumption is simply a matter of satisfying a compulsory need; rather it is a deep, two-way relationship that affects destination choice as well as satisfaction levels. In addition, as seen from previous research studies the relationships between gastronomy and tourism should be maintained for tourists, destination and economy.

Impacts of Gastronomy Tourism

The effects of gastronomy tourism are among the most noteworthy in the relevant studies, where it is also stated that gastronomy is a powerful tool for destination marketing. For example, Everett & Aitchison (2008: 150) argue that gastronomy tourism has three main impacts on a destination; economic, social and environmental sustainability. According to Kivela & Crotts (2005), gastronomy tourism is a sector that creates remarkable and loyal customers in terms of economic returns. Hjalager (2002: 22) has developed a model that reflects the gastronomy and tourism development of a region, known as a typology of gastronomic tourism destinations. Hjalager (2002: 23) points out that economic performance takes a place at the highest level in this typology. Barkat & Vermignon (2006: 1) argue that gastronomy plays an important role in adding value to a destination, and that gastronomy tourism encourages new economic initiatives as well as contributing to local community pride and the consolidation of the local identity. Furthermore, according to Kalkstein (2007), gastronomy tourism provides an intimate connection

between local people and visiting tourists, and leads to the development of a strong destination image. According to some researchers (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Girard & Nijkamp, 2009; Herrera & Herranz, 2012) gastronomy tourism plays an important role in shaping the identity of a region, maintaining its cultural heritage and renewing its socio-cultural texture. In a similar study, Hall, Mitchell, & Sharples (2003: 57), who examined the importance of gastronomy tourism for local development, argued that the healthy establishment of a relationship between food and tourism contributed not only to economic growth but also to the strengthening of local identity and culture. In summary, the effects of gastronomy tourism are the development of the regional economy, higher incomes, the consolidation of local ownership and local identity, the improvement of the image of a destination, and the maintenance of cultural heritage.

Gastronomy Tourism Strategies

It is possible to divide tourism planning approaches into two types; classical and modern. In addition, participatory and strategic planning approaches have been proposed in recent years that go beyond the modern approach (Türkay, 2014). According to Kahraman & Türkay (2014), there are different planning approaches that include strategies that can form the basis of tourism planning; these are a Situational and Flexible Approach, a Comprehensive Approach, an Integrated Approach, an Environmental and Sustainable Approach, a Social Approach, an Executable Approach and a Strategic Planning Approach. It is argued that, while all of these approaches involve different motivations and may lead to different applications and different results, they can all be applied together. Many countries have recently started to include gastronomy-related activities in their tourism planning and policies and a willingness to create a niche tourism segment with only gastronomic infrastructure in certain destinations. As Su & Horng (2012: 94) have pointed out, these policies and tourism planning initiatives reveal a close relationship between gastronomic tourism development and national or regional strategies. In Europe in particular, the sea-sand-sun trio and the natural-cultural diversity of a region is a major alternative to gastronomy tourism.

According to Boyne & Hall (2003), it is necessary for stakeholders to be included in the process, and targets should be determined in order to ensure good planning in gastronomy and tourism management. An information and training pool should be established and all stakeholders involved in the process including businesses and employees should be provided to make maximum use of this pool. In doing so, many benefits will be provided to all stakeholders including enterprises and employees, to make them aware positive results, to

recognize their training needs, and to see where they are. Then, to attract the attention of tourists, concrete gastronomic elements should be promoted and the necessary resources and strategies should be created. Continuous improvements should be provided through a process of monitoring and evaluation. In summary, Boyne & Hall (2003) have highlighted the importance of cooperation with stakeholders, education, gastronomic product creation, resource supply and monitoring and evaluation strategies for the successful development of gastronomy tourism. Horng & Tsai (2012), in their research using resource-based-theory, suggested four success factors: a) identifying and using gastronomic resources; b) evaluating the government's resources for publicity; c) adopting marketing strategies for promotion and d) creating an educational environment for gastronomy tourism. In Hjalager's "A Typology of Gastronomy Tourism" (2002), the author argued that there are four levels to the successful development of gastronomy tourism. This 4-level typology can be a guide for those who want to develop planning and strategies for gastronomy tourism, including promotion and capacity building, product and quality creation, gastronomic activities, and training and research strategies. However, it is thought that research into planning and strategies for gastronomy tourism are insufficient; there is a need for research that includes empirical studies. In another study, Ottenbacher & Harrington (2013) identified the following six key elements of a successful culinary tourism strategy: the strategy itself, cooperation between stakeholders, leadership, culinary profile promotion, the communication of quality, and enhancing tourists' perceptions.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to understand the strategies and action plans developed by destinations to increase gastronomic tourism revenue and market share. In doing so, it aims to explore the gastronomic tourism strategies and action plans adopted by destinations that are significant in terms of gastronomy tourism. Qualitative research methods were used in accordance with the stated purpose of the study. By using qualitative research methods, researchers can also benefit from a number of secondary sources, such as written and visual material, alongside data collected through interviews and observations (Decrop, 1999). Written materials used for the review of documents can be benefited alongside other sources of data, as well as a stand-alone data collection technique (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2011). In this context, written materials relating to the Gastronomic Tourism Strategies of some of the countries described in this study were also collected.

Data Collection

As a result of a comprehensive literature review, it was decided that "food tourism strategy", "food tourism action plan", "culinary tourism strategy" and "culinary tourism action plan" would be used as research keywords. The unit of analysis of the study is the strategy and action plan documents obtained by entering these keywords into a Google search engine. These keywords were searched separately to obtain reports and action plans. The first 10 results pages of the search engine were used to determine the sample limit for each keyword. A total of 54 documents were downloaded, of which, the authors considered 24 to be documents related to strategies and action plans; these 24 documents (appendix-1) were then subjected to the analysis. The analyzed documents are strategic plans for touristic destinations in countries such as Canada, Australia, Austria, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well the wider United Kingdom, all of which have international recognition in gastronomy tourism. Ten of the documents related to the provincial and county-level, four are at the state level, nine are at the national level and one is at the international level.

Data Analysis

An inductive content analysis was undertaken as part of the analysis process. Neuman (2013) states that when using qualitative research methods, raw data is placed into conceptual categories in the coding process and themes or concepts are generated. According to Thomas (2006), the inductive content analysis technique used in qualitative research refers to the process of obtaining a concept, theme or a model through the comments made by the researcher on the raw data. The analysis process was carried out by two independent coders. Under the heading "gastronomy tourism strategy and action plan", four sub-themes were identified which were then divided into further categories. After the categories were analyzed by the coders, all of the statements for verification were also analyzed by a 'word cloud'. A word cloud is a visual representation of word frequency. The more frequently a word appears within a text being analyzed, the larger it appears in the image generated. Word clouds, also called tag clouds, are increasingly being employed as a simple tool to identify the focus of written material (Atenstaedt, 2012). Common words and numbers were removed from the word cloud in line with the research goal and to ensure verification. Words that are synonymous or express the same meaning were combined by the coders. In addition to generating this image, a word cloud also shows the frequency of a word in the form of a number. These numbers were used to determine the categories. The word cloud for the sub-theme 'vision' is shown in the diagram in Figure -1, as an example of a word cloud.

Figure 1. World Cloud of the 'Vision' Sub-Theme

FINDINGS

Mayring's (2003) approach for content analysis has been adopted that consists of four basic stages: data collection, descriptive analysis, category selection and material evaluation (Chang & Katrichis, 2016). In this vein, it has been observed that the strategies that have been developed to promote gastronomy tourism are comprised of four main components: the national, regional, local and sectoral. The Gastronomy Tourism Strategy and Action Plans of the destinations featured in the documents reviewed in this study are comprised of vision, mission, aims and objectives, which are all elements of a strategic planning process (Nagy & Fawcett, 2009). In this context, therefore, "Vision", "Mission", "Aims and Objectives" and an "Action Plan", which are important for the successful implementation of strategies, are identified as sub-themes.

Vision

The categories highlighted under the sub-theme of vision are: reputation, authenticity, a strong sense of place, cultural experience, sustainable touristic products, gastronomic identity, sustainable tourism sector, leadership, low poverty rate and an innovative economy. These categories are described by the statements in Table 1. A good example of a vision statement found in one of the documents is as follows: "*By 2015, culinary tourism in Ontario is a leading contributor to the economy*". Another example, this time of a vision statement for a national gastronomic tourism strategy, is as follows: "*South Australia's food, wine, and*

tourism sectors will form a winning partnership to put SA firmly on the global map. It will achieve the mantle of one of the finest, most authentic and environmentally sustainable food and wine destinations in the world."

Table 1. The Most Common Statements under Vision

- Being a leader in contributing to a sustainable tourism economy
- Being a leader in the gastronomy tourism sector
- Becoming a must-see gastronomic destination
- Creating a strong sense of place
- A unique sense of place as a cultural experience
- Ensuring the sustainability of the products grown in the region
- Being remembered as a place where one can experience gastronomy tourism
- Developing businesses and entrepreneurs

Given that the statements regarding the vision theme described in in Table 1, it is clear that destinations that tries to reach a leading position in the gastronomic tourism sector mostly focus on these issues: sustainability, image, reputation and a strong economy.

Mission

While the concept of mission was included in some of the documents examined, it was not as important as the concept of vision. The categories highlighted under the mission sub-theme are: experience, quality, sustainability, competition, innovation, service, knowledge, product and development. These categories are described by the statements in the

following table (Table 2). One of the best examples of the kind of mission statements found in the documents is as follows: *"Position Australia's wine and food as vital and vibrant tourism experiences by expanding, improving and diversifying the product offerings and the destinations they represent."*

Sustainability comes to the fore again in the statements in Table 3, which presents the most frequently encountered statements concerning aims and objectives. The destinations' targets concerning gastronomy tourism include strengthening the economy, providing employment, providing benefits

Table 2. The Most Common Statements under Mission

- Achieving high quality standards
- Offering unforgettable and authentic local gastronomy experiences
- Offering innovative products, services and experiences
- Creating a sustainable supply chain
- Being a service and information platform for public, private and academic environments
- Providing opportunities for the development of new tourism products and experiences
- Creating a regional identity, agricultural resources and gastronomic products
- Supporting competition in the gastronomy tourism sector to ensure economic, environmental and social sustainability
- Development, diversification and capacity building for tourism experiences involving regional gastronomic products
- Providing a legitimate framework for transparency in public-private cooperation

When the above statements, which are within the scope of the mission of strategic plans, are examined, it is clear that the concepts of sustainability, product and experience are present, as they are under the vision sub-theme. However, these concepts are here offered in the context of the mission sub-theme.

Aims and Objectives

The categories highlighted under the sub-theme of aims and objectives are: quality, value, sustainable tourism, labor skill, local food, awareness, training, research and promotion. In order for a Gastronomic

to producers, contributing to the social and cultural values of the region.

Action Plans

The categories highlighted under the sub-theme of strategic plans are: organization, work plan, funding, marketing, communication, collaboration, promotion, services, information, investments, monitoring, training and research. In the strategies developed by destinations, the following statements featured most frequently.

Table 3. The Most Common Statements under Aims and Objectives

- Creating a sustainable and viable gastronomy tourism sector
- Increasing the value and quality of gastronomic tourism experiences for tourists
- Making gastronomy activities one of the destination's most important events
- Making the region's gastronomic products globally recognizable
- Contributing to the economic, social and cultural values of the destination
- Strengthening the basic agricultural and food production of the region
- Increasing the existing opportunities for tourists visiting the destination
- Creating a skilled workforce
- Increasing awareness in the domestic market
- Increasing the number of tourists as well as income and tourism employment
- Ensure that all producers in the destination benefit
- Providing coordinated marketing and branding
- Creating know-how and sharing information

Tourism Strategy and Action Plan to be successful, it is clear that destinations should adopt the objectives and targets stated in Table 3 below.

It is clear that there are many destination action plans aims at achieving goals and targets related to gastronomy tourism. Although there are minor differences in the action plans of destinations, they are

generally similar. Apart from sectoral action plans that include identity and story creation for gastronomic products and increasing the number of local products on restaurant menus, the action plans in Table 4 are similar to action plans for general tourism development.

innovative products and experiences, and being a service and information platform.

Taking into consideration their aims and objectives, it is clear that objectives such as creating sustainable

Table 4. The Most Common Statements under Action Plans

• Establishing a tourism organization for the development and implementation of strategy and action plans
• Establishing and formalizing partnerships with strong organizations
• Including all stakeholders in the process
• Creating an advanced communication network
• Establishing a sustainable financial resource model with government and sector support
• Developing information resources
• Managing information and investment recommendations from a single source
• Investing in R & D performance monitors
• Investing in education and vocational development
• Developing a Gastronomy Tourism marketing plan
• Collecting and comparing information about successful and unsuccessful destinations
• Encouraging businesses in the region to use existing local products
• Creating an identity and story for gastronomic products
• Establishing awareness-raising activities for all stakeholders, including the local community and businesses
• Increasing the number of local products in restaurants menus
• Developing measurement tools for performance evaluation
• Examining and developing the educational curriculum in the context of Gastronomy Tourism
• Investing in vocational education for the sector
• Establishing monitoring and evaluation
• Rewarding achievements

CONCLUSION

In this research, gastronomic tourism strategies prepared by various countries between 2009 and 2017 were discussed. An attempt was made to explain these gastronomic tourism strategies by analyzing the themes and categories that emerged from the findings. Although the strategies for planning, which were subject to content analysis, were largely similar to traditional tourism planning, it is clear that almost all of the documents related to the development of gastronomy tourism are based on a strategic planning approach since concepts such as vision, mission, aims and objectives, action plans, monitoring and evaluation are more prominent. Another finding that emerged from the plans in the documents is that a participatory planning approach has also been adopted because all of the stakeholders in the sector are involved in the process. For this reason, it can be said that these destinations have adopted multiple planning approaches in order to ensure the success of gastronomy tourism. Following an examination of the themes in the findings using content analysis, it can be said that these destinations tend to position themselves as leaders in gastronomic tourism when determining their visions. When determining their missions, it is clear that they mostly take on the duties of creating

tourism, increasing the number of tourists, increasing incomes, increasing local production, increasing the quality and recognition of touristic products, creating a qualified workforce, raising awareness and creating knowledge are the most important. Although there are dozens of action plans for each objective, it is noteworthy that each region uses similar methods expressed using important concepts such as organization, cooperation with stakeholders, fundraising, education and research, the creation of a marketing plan, and monitoring and evaluation.

The action plans of the regions are also similar to the road maps in previous studies mentioned in the literature (Boyne & Hall, 2003; Hjalager, 2002). The four success factors that Horng & Tsai (2012) identified using a resource-based approach are present in every one of these region's gastronomic tourism strategies. Another important detail is that the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the gastronomy tourism planning process have been highlighted. This shows that these regions have adopted a community-based tourism approach in their gastronomic tourism strategies. Thus, it is hoped that this will prevent the monopolization of the benefits of tourism and ensure that all stakeholders see these benefits. When the countries that have prepared these strategic plans for

gastronomy tourism are examined, it is worth noting that they are countries that receive a high proportion of global tourism revenue (UNWTO, 2018). For this reason, the gastronomic tourism road map used by these countries is important for countries such as Turkey hoping to emulate this success. Tracking and analyzing gastronomic tourism policies is also important to ensure the expectations of such high-income visitors are met. Although research on Gastronomy Tourism has increased significantly over time, research into gastronomy tourism plans and strategies are thought to be insufficient in number in Turkey. In this context, it is thought that the results of this study are important and unique as they contribute to the elimination of this knowledge gap. However, although this study may contribute to the preparation of gastronomy tourism plans and strategies, it is thought that the necessary information and infrastructure related to gastronomy tourism is insufficient, and it is recommended that more comprehensive research on this subject be undertaken in future studies.

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Appendix 1: Documents reviewed for content analysis

1	2020 Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan
2	Oxford County Culinary Tourism Strategy: Project Methodology and Work Plan
3	Alberta Three-Year Culinary Tourism Strategy 2013-2016
4	Culinary Tourism In Ontario: Strategy And Action Plan 2005-2015
5	UNWTO Gastronomy Network Action Plan 2016 / 2017
6	Food & Drink Case Study Margaret River 2016
7	Cape Breton Island Culinary Tourism Roadmap Final Report
8	Driving and Mobilizing Growth by Leveraging Irish Food and Food Tourism
9	Food and Wine Tourism in New South Wales 2015
10	Taste 2020 A Strategy for Food and Wine Tourism in Western Australia for the Next Five Years & Beyond 2015 - 2020
11	Anglesey Food Tourism Strategy and Action Plan
12	The County of Wellington Food Tourism Strategy: Executive Summary
13	The Food Tourism Action Plan for Wales 2015 – 2020
14	Southern Queensland County Regional Food & Wine Development Plan
15	Colac Otway Food & Wine Tourism Strategy
16	Harnessing The Tourism Potential of Wine and Food in Australia
17	Victoria Regional Tourism Strategy 2013 – 2016
18	Enhancing Irish Food Experiences The Way Forward Food Tourism Activity Plan 2014-2016
19	South Australian Food and Wine Tourism Strategy 2009 – 2014
20	Food Tourism Action Plan "Food and Drink for Wales" 2009
21	Ontario's Four-Year Culinary Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2011 – 2015
22	Action to Promote Locally Sourced and Produced Food and Drink - Scotland
23	British Columbia Culinary Tourism Strategy 2017
24	City of Greater Dandenong Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2014 - 2018