

# 5

## Planning and Developing Tourism for Foodies

### Learning objectives

Readers are expected to learn the following from this chapter:

- How to put foodies at the core of food tourism planning, development and marketing
- How to conduct a self-diagnosis of food tourism development and potential
- Preparing and using key performance indicators
- The meaning, purpose and process of developing food tourism clusters
- The application of the cluster concept to rural and urban areas
- Destination concepts for food tourism focused on experiences for foodies
- The meaning and co-creation of authenticity in food tourism
- How provenance is connected to the concept of authenticity and why it is important to foodies

### Planning and development: foodies at the core

Based on a sound understanding of the foodie and food tourists, this chapter outlines a planning and development process that puts foodies at the core. It is true that destinations and businesses cannot usually ignore the local resident market, nor the tourist who wants a good food experience while travelling for other purposes. The point is simply this: if you want to grow food tourism you really have to design experiences and your marketing specifically for foodies.

In Chapter 6 we provide case studies and examples to illustrate food tourism planning and development at all levels, from country and region to city and individual enterprise, all with foodies as the focus. In Chapter 7 planned events are featured, owing to their pivotal role in food tourism; and in Chapter 8 marketing and communications to foodies are the subject.

This chapter begins with a general discussion of planning and developing food tourism, but not in the usual supply-side manner. Rather, we stress planning for foodies and those highly-involved, experienced food tourists who will constitute the highest-yield food tourists - and the most demanding.

Most of the conventional wisdom on food tourism, as reflected in articles and textbooks, is really about supply-side development or traditional planning and marketing approaches. For example Mykletun and Gyimóthy (2010) stressed the significance of networking entrepreneurial processes in the branding and development of tourism destinations. Ottenbacher and Harrington (2013) illustrated six key elements that closely link to successful culinary tourism strategy, namely: the strategy itself, cooperation among stakeholders, leadership issues, regional products/services, communicating quality standards, promoting regions as perceived by tourists. Of course these elements are all important, but should not be the starting point.

In this book the emphasis is placed on keeping the foodie at the core, and this is in line with experience marketing and service-dominant logic. In other words, the starting point is not with what you have (however great or unique you think your food is) but with an understanding of the foodies and food tourists. Kivela and Crotts (2006) were on this track when they said that DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) are to create visitors' desires of local destinations through educating tourists about why the local cuisine and culture are special and unique.

Until recently, however, there has been insufficient knowledge of foodies and food tourists to make this approach realistic. Hall et al. (2003) in their book *Food Tourism around the World: Development, Management and Markets*, mostly examined the potential of food tourism and the supply/development aspects. They did consider motivations, with the proposition that food tourists can be separated into a continuum of increasing special interest: from 'culinary' to 'gastronomic' to 'gourmet' tourism. They acknowledged, "there is little published research on how this market is constructed" (p. 62).

## ■ **A demand-side approach**

Various published typologies have been based on the assumption that a high interest in food generates the fewest number of visitors. They also assumed that these highly motivated food tourists seek out restaurants, markets or wineries, and that all or nearly all of their activities are food-related. This might or might not be true, it depends on the location and the types of visitors being attracted.

Here is a new typology, based on aggressive food tourism development goals:

- Large numbers of *dedicated food tourists* visit the destination because of its reputation for high-quality and diverse food-related experiences; they are

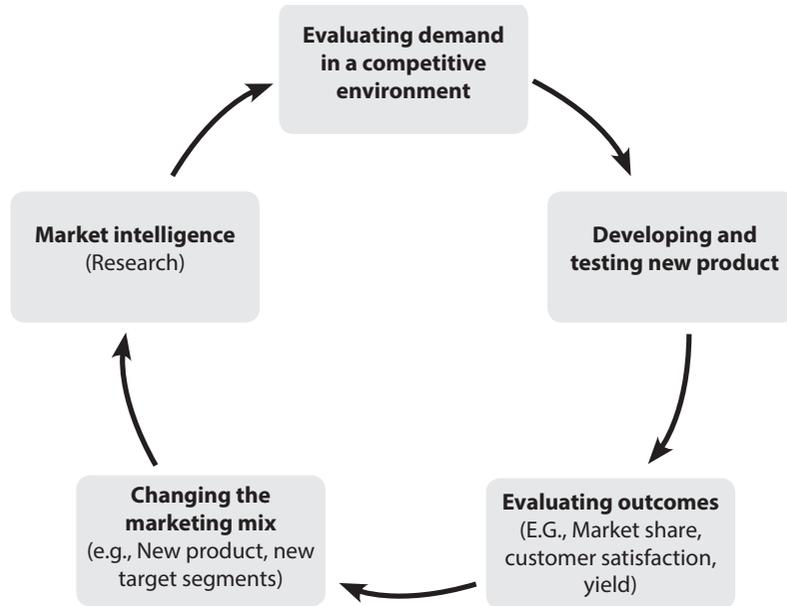
high-yield tourists as they are willing to spend more for the customized, hands-on experiences they seek; they spread the word that this destination is worth a visit, and a repeat visit, contributing to its overall reputation as an attractive destination.

- Many other *cultural tourists* are attracted, and while they are not dedicated food tourists they are food lovers and they expect high-quality food experiences because of the destination's established reputation.
- *All visitors*, most of whom are not foodies, receive high-quality food experiences and this contributes to a globally successful destination brand.

This simple typology reflects reasonable goals for food tourism development, in concert with overall destination branding. There is no need to assume that dedicated food tourists will be small in numbers, indeed that is probably what happens when there is no understanding of what foodies need and the 'product' on offer is not appealing. On the other hand, as mentioned elsewhere in this book, it is generally better to attract a small number of high-yield food tourists than large numbers of tourists seeking low-cost experiences.

Our process does not assume that all foodies become food tourists, nor that all food tourists are potential customers for any particular destination or service. But it requires market intelligence based on original research into the target segments, not a reliance on data about who is already coming to a given place and what they are spending their money on. That common approach to tourism research leads to superficial understanding of the foodie and inappropriate communications or product development. For example, a common market segmentation approach is based on demographics or socio-economic variables (e.g. upwardly-mobile singles; two-income couples without children; active seniors) and while these factors do affect tourism in general, they say nothing about food tourism motivation or foodie identity and involvement. The same critique applies to all special-interest tourist segments.

A model is provided in Figure 5.1 which illustrates the demand-side approach, and while planning can begin at any stage in this process we start by considering market intelligence.



**Figure 5.1:** A demand-side approach to food tourism planning and development

## Market intelligence

There is a growing body of research-based knowledge available on the foodie and food tourists, as summarized in this book, but data and analysis does not automatically yield intelligence. It is best to customize research and analysis, including market segmentation, for the exact needs and purposes of the city, destination or product to be marketed. What we have been able to do in this book is give examples of how research leads to implications for Australia and Sweden, but the data could be applied to the other countries from which we obtained large samples of foodies.

Refer to Figure 5.2 which provides a comprehensive self-diagnostic for destinations interested in progressing their food tourism development and marketing. It includes specific types of necessary market intelligence and appropriate research methods.

## Evaluating demand in a competitive environment

Everything done to develop and market food tourism has to be in the context of evolving supply and demand conditions. Will foodies travel to a city if they hold a poor comparative image of its food distinctiveness, price or quality? It can never be assumed that having good product or doing a lot of branding and marketing will result in increased food tourism. Regular evaluations of competitors are required, including gaining a detailed understanding of why foodies make their choices.