

14 Understanding memorable enogastronomic experiences: A qualitative approach

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The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Introduce those factors that make a memorable enogastronomic experience for tourists visiting a destination;
- Present qualitative findings that reveal that gastronomy and wines play a major role in the way that visitors experience a destination and indicate that some travellers would return to the same destination to savour its unique gastronomy.

Keywords: Food, wine, tourism, enogastronomy, memorable experiences.

Introduction

In recent decades, studies related to the culinary arts and wine have been receiving increasing attention from researchers in fields such as sociology, anthropology and tourism (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012). Gastronomy can be understood as an 'art of living', the possession of skills and knowledge relating to food and drink and to their choice, which enhances the pleasure and enjoyment of eating and drinking (Santich, 2004). The fact that gastronomy (the art of selecting, preparing, serving and enjoying food) has been celebrated for centuries elucidates that eating-related pleasures go beyond nutrition and subsistence (Macht et al., 2005). Wine culture has also accompanied the history of humanity, being the most consensual drink (besides water) to pair with the majority of regional cuisines around the world (Harrington, 2005; Koone et al., 2014). In fact, wine has been giving people pleasure for over 8000 years (Charters, 2006). Indeed, it may have been significant in human life even before bread was being made (McGovern et al., 2003).

There is a general perception of the link between the enjoyment of food and wine; as Louis Pasteur claimed, "a meal without wine is like a day without sunshine" (Pettigrew & Charters, 2006). A wider-ranging interpretation is given by Gillespie et al. (2002) who states that gastronomy is about the recognition of a variety of factors relevant to the foods and beverages eaten and consumed by a group, in a locality, region or even a nation. This interpretation helps to establish a connection between enogastronomy, tourism and development of niche travel and niche destinations (Kivela & Crofts, 2009).

It is now widely accepted that food and wine are an integral part of contemporary tourism (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Henderson, 2009; Hillel et al., 2013; Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Enjoying food while travelling is not new, but the role of food in tourism has dramatically gained importance among tourism researchers in recent decades, going from an obvious necessity for travellers to the appearance of various tourism designations related with wine and gastronomy (Stone et al., 2017). Although, there is no agreement on a definition of food-related tourism, designations such as 'food', 'culinary', 'gourmet' and 'gastronomic' tourism mention beverages and wine in particular in their definitions (Okumus et al., 2007).

Nowadays, memorable enogastronomic experiences represent a new benchmark for destinations, and tourism businesses must seek to deliver these as they are pivotal to becoming and remaining competitive in the marketplace (Stone et al., 2017). Food and beverage experiences are cru-

cial to destinations because they strongly influence feelings of involvement and place attachment (Henderson, 2009). Whatever the reason for visiting a tourist destination, enogastronomic experiences play a role in determining perceptions and satisfaction with the overall travel experience, influencing tourists' attitudes, decisions and behaviour (Macionis, 1998; Hjalanger & Corigliano, 2000). Understanding the visitor's enogastronomic memories is determinant, so the destinations must adapt to the preferences of the visitors (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Sthapit, 2017). Perceiving the elements that visitors experience most related to food and wine enables destinations to deliver experiences in which tourists are emotionally attached to the destination, which eventually influences their intentions of revisiting (Gross & Brown, 2006; Kivela & Crofts, 2006). Thus, it is crucial to understand what the elements are of the wine and food experiences that visitors most value during their stay.

Most of the existing studies on enogastronomic experiences use quantitative approaches, not allowing participants the opportunity to use their own words to describe the elements that have marked the experience (Carmichael, 2005; Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Pikkemaat et al., 2009; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012). The use of qualitative methods in tourism-related research is useful because it allows the research process to be humanized, embodying the researcher, humanizing the research process and inviting more critical playfulness with data by including the visitor's own words (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015). In this chapter, we intend to perceive which words are most used by visitors to express the feelings resulting from the experience in the destination visited.

Literature review

Enogastronomy

According to Kivela and Crofts (2006), gastronomy encompasses culinary elements (dishes, food and the methods to prepare them) as well as all that is related to enology, so local wines are considered as forming an integral part of a given type of gastronomy.

Gastronomy relates to the social, cultural and historical aspects of food and eating, encompassing the study of cuisines, restaurants and dining, food and wine matching, tourism and gastronomic writing (Santich, 2004). The fact that gastronomy is the expression of a region and its culture means that it can be used as a differentiating factor for a destination in an increasingly competitive global marketplace (Hall & Sharples, 2004). On the one hand, gastronomy is simply related to the hedonism

of enjoying good food and drinks and on the other, it is a complex discipline that encompasses everything into which food enters, including all the things we eat and drink (Scarpato, 2003). This link between gastronomy and wine is called enogastronomy (Miranda & Tonetto, 2014; Corvo, 2016). This link is not only justified by the tradition of wine-producing countries in consuming wine with meals, but also by the chemistry of the elements; that is, wine in all its versions (white, red, rosé, fortified, late harvest and sparkling) is a natural option for paring with food and thus emphasizes the organoleptic properties of most regional cuisines (Harrington, 2008). In making a food and wine pairing choice, this effect is many times the ultimate objective – the wine and food combine to create a totally new and superior gastronomic effect (Harrington, 2008). Regardless of the type of tourism, food and wine have become important travel motivators in their own right, sometimes representing the primary attraction in a country or region (Henderson, 2009).

Definitions of gastronomy, wine and tourism

Food and tourism have a very close relationship and food is a critical tourism resource (Quan & Wang, 2004). It is vital for physical sustenance and all tourists have to eat when travelling, but food can be a major draw and primary motivator for some, which satisfies a multiplicity of physiological and other needs and wants (Tikkanen, 2007).

Gastronomy is classified as the primary motivation for tourists who travel specifically to experiment with the local cuisine or to taste the dishes of a celebrity chef, and as a secondary motivation when the tourist considers the local cuisine as an important option, but not the only one among other attractions available in the chosen destination. (Lopez-Guzman & Sanchez-Canizares, 2012). Tourist food consumption is a unique form of eating in a foreign context (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Local food consumption can connect tourists with a destination's landscape and unique way of life (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012), cultural impressions and insights (Andersson et al., 2017) and local people (Baldacchino, 2015). As pointed out by several authors, there is a natural connection between wine and food that leads to enogastronomic experiences (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Wolf, 2014). Designations such as food tourism, cuisine tourism, gastronomic tourism, culinary tourism or gourmet tourism mention the integration of gastronomy and wine, which suggests that contemporary travellers search for unique enogastronomic experiences (Table 14.1).