

ETHICAL, CREATIVE AND FOOD TOURISM - A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?

by Dr. Diane Dodd



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With the rise of the independent traveller and the rise in food and creative tourism new opportunities are emerging to support food and culture diversity. As grass-roots consumer conscience takes hold there is a new drive towards sustainable and ethical tourism models.

In a trend first identified in the CITM in 2012, a growing number of Chinese international travellers (67 per cent -v- 62 per cent in 2013) say that they prefer to make their own travel arrangements when travelling abroad, rather than joining an organised group, a growth of five percentage points over 2013. This development is reflected by hoteliers who say that 71 per cent of their Chinese guests now travel independently, up one percentage point on last year. However, there is a marked geographical split with hoteliers in APAC reporting this figure as 77 per cent, with 75 per cent in Latin America, 72 per cent in North America and 65 per cent in Europe.

Furthermore the report identifies that Chinese independent traveller's rate by importance when selecting a holiday destination, safety first (48%), and after that historical and cultural sites (37%) and cuisine (29%). Both cultural and food rate higher than 'value for money' in this survey (26%).

The most popular activities for Chinese tourists when travelling in Europe are sightseeing (73%) and dining (64%). This rates much higher than for example visiting beaches (36%)... therefore the sand and sun destinations may need to rethink!

¹ Report Hotels.com™ Chinese International Travel Monitor (CITM) https://press.hotels.com/content/themes/citm/assets/pdf/citm_uk_pdf_2014.pdf (accessed 1 June 2015)

In recent study by (Viassone and Grimmer, 2015)² the topic of ethical food, which is a fairly recent concern, in international academic debate is discussed. There is still a lot to learn about the role 'ethical food' plays in the tourism sector and in tourist destination management. The aforementioned study looks at the attractiveness of ethical food for tourists and as a driver for destination selection. It asks if it is possible to take advantage of ethical food tourism drivers in certain tourist destinations. Results show that ethical food can have an important role to play in the future of destination attractiveness if clever events strategies and projects highlighting ethical food are involved and that this has the potential to contribute to the sustainability of a destination. In the same paper, the authors explore strategies to exploit the potential of ethical food to develop tourist destination attractiveness including:

- Governments and local bodies should support the consumption and production of ethical food, thus driving process down as consumption increases. At the same time, it is important to remember the need for appropriate pricing, to ensure animal welfare, environmental respect, and a salary sufficient to provide a living wage for the producer.
- Education in ethical values to achieve long term behaviour change by structured educational program, including the development of research, information interpretation and decision marketing skills.
- Diversification of food production range in order to respect and accommodate the cultural diversity of food choices. Improve the level of transparency of the provenance of product for the consumer. Marketers need to create alternative ways of presenting value and cost, changing the way businesses define value in the economic exchange system. Promotion of the various attributes of ethical food and in building trust in this food category.
- Food and logistic industries should also aim at a higher level of sustainable distribution so as to cover more than carbon emissions. Explanation of the way their distribution models contribute to addressing the social and cultural concerns expressed through the notion of food miles.
- Create a sustainable supply chain able to align the incentives of all supply chain players (especially smallholders).
- Achieve higher level of flexibility in policy implementation when it comes to the effect of agriculture on the environment as well as the impact of rural development on upstream and downstream industries. Taxation on unhealthy food stuffs.
- Packaging of ethical food. Active packaging providing recyclable, lightweight and biodegradable products. Technology may be harnessed for a more sustainable food supply chain, able to eliminate

² Milena Viassone, Martin Grimmer (2015), Ethical Food as a Differentiation Factor for Tourist Destinations: The Case of "Slow Food". Journal of Investment and Management. Special Issue: Attractiveness and Governance of Tourist Destinations. Vol. 4, No. 1-1, pp. 1-9. doi: 10.11648/jjim.s.2015040101.11 <http://article.sciencepublishing-group.com/pdf/10.11648/jjim.s.2015040101.11.pdf> (accessed 25 May 2015)

wasted space, increase shipping capacity, and reduce inbound shipping costs and greenhouse gas emission during transport and production.

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IGCAT’s mission is to empower and facility local communities to realise the potential of their distinct food, culture, arts and sustainable tourism and local resources.

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