The Role of Food and Culinary Condition in Tourism Industry

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Abstract: From the public perspective food assumes a secondary and minor role in tourism industry which is evaluated by Tourists words of mouth. Occasionally in these assessments, even the diversity of globetrotters' viewpoints and their cultural, social and even religious characteristics are not taken into consideration. In this article various effective techniques for attracting tourists' attention to Iranian dishes are discussed. Additionally, some attempts made in different states for achieving desirability of food, its ingredients and delivering problems from world travelers' view, have been pointed out. The gap between the culinary condition and tourists' expectations has also been debated.

Key words: Food • Tourist • Local restaurants • Culinary places • Traditional restaurants

INTRODUCTION

Recently, tourism industry not only has been one of the rapidly growing fields of the world economy, but also has brought about economy development for diverse states and regions [1]. The predictions made for the issue indicate its noticeable growth in coming years which would entail the increase of jobs pertaining to this industry. This rise requires serious attention to programming in the industry.

Different authors have found tourism programming as preliminary to development of successful tourism management [2, 3]. Disparate tourists destinations all over the world has proven that a proper programming could reduce negative effects and improve and preserve tourism market in that area or state. Thus, programming can be suggested as a sine qua non of tourism-oriented economy development success [4]. The first step in the programming is to identify the effective factors. Any prerequisites, commitments and current limitations, can influence the process in one way or another.

Determining those factors that attract tourists' attention is a requirement for this step. Unequivocally, marketing decision making and strategic programming for tourism industry demand the recognition of these effective elements in choosing destination by tourists [1].

Food is one of the principal factors items that have been neglected in the most of the studies. To survive, in the first place, every tourist as an organism is in need of eating and drinking. This requirement holds true for all the tourism destinations and situations in the world. Moreover, food impresses other aspects such as travel agencies' culinary program, the final price of hotels, culture assimilation and many other components.

One of the main implicit factors that tourists consider in choosing the destination is food. As Lacy and Douglass mentioned "every tourist is a voyeuring gourmand" [5].

Recently, the investigation of food, eating and culinary condition has been considered as a vast field of study in the subfields of sociology and anthropology [6, 7, 8]. Although it is taken for granted that food and other food-related factors are indispensable components in all the stages of a tourist travel, a small number of studies have been undertaken on food as an independent factor for attracting tourists [9, 10], the tourists eating habits, their table manners and assimilation to culture process and the mutual impressionability of tourists and hosts [10].

An international conference on cuisine and tourism was held in November 2000, in Cyprus. It was acknowledged, in a majority of articles, the local meals play a leading role in impressing tourists and increase the
attractions of a region [11, 12]. In the above mentioned conference there was no mention of the effects of different areas' local dishes on tourists and only the sanitation of nutriments and applying the food preservation standards across diverse regions were investigated [13].

The Ecological Position of Food in Tourism: In recent times, the projects that have inspected the shift of tourism industry toward a top quality industry not only have had an important position but also have turned into the goals of some political instruments [14]. One of the subsections of the industry which is of paramount value due to its high sensitivity and implicitness is food industry.

Tourism speculators either overtly or covertly have a tendency to introduce travelers as tourists. This predisposition brings about prioritization of tourist attractions as the pivotal social analysis of a tourist [15]. The configurations of the issue include focusing on visual aspects of tourism in every region which means giving preference for one or two senses over other humane senses and mental dimensions.

Giving priority to sight sense has had two major consequences in tourism study. One relates to taking the tourists as observers into account, in which their physical needs have been examined in an implicit way; and the other is the position of their senses which has been posed on the background of and subject to sight sense [16]. Although senses, taste and particularly eating and drinking have not that been addressed in the studies related to anthropology and sociology; their centrality in these experiments is crystal clear [17].

Socio-Economic Position of Food: In the old literature of tourism, food has been considered at a prospective destination as an attraction. Fresh seafood in beach resorts, traditional cookery, the famous restaurants in expensive hotels, on the cruise liners or in the major commercial centers all and all are built for this purpose. In fact, all the countries and even cities expand their unique culinary attractions to engage more travelers [18, 19].

Food takes a major part in opting for destination. The findings of a study conducted by Enteleca Research and Consultancy [20] indicates the food plays a main role in making half of the tourists stay and shop.

"Food Tourists", compared to other tourist groups, have been the most faithful group to destination (host). In their decision making for selecting the destination of travel, local meals perform a crucial role [21].

For Hu and Ritchie [22] food holds the fourth position in perceiving a destination as an attractive place. In a similar investigation, seeking for the reason of tourists' reference to Turkey, food was identified as the fourth factor of tourists' satisfaction feeling and their prime reference motive [23]. In another study food has been found as the second attraction in Hong Kong, the fourth in Bangkok and the fifth in Singapore [24].

In addition to significance of food in choosing destination, it is also of sizable effect in the tourist expenditure share. As Hudman asserts, food is an important part of tourism industry which comprises 25% of total tourist's expenditures [25]. Today, this amount is even larger. The outcomes of another study demonstrated the tourists make minimal savings for food cost among various costs [26]. According to the estimation of Australian Bureau of Tourism Research during a year (up to march 2003) they had spent 2.4 billion dollars for drinking and eating, which makes up, in sum, 22% of total costs of foreign visitors of Australia.

The noteworthy point about the posture and prominence of food is that tourists most often than not don't choose their destination based on their expected food, but they terminate their satisfaction of holidays and travel memories discussing over food. The issue illustrates that despite most of tourists opt for destination resting on some perceived aspects or expectations (such as beaches, accommodation etc), but their real satisfaction is obtained through other aspects (i.e. food) which is usually not taken into the initial consideration [27]. A great deal of respondents in Sparks and Beverly's study put emphasis on the key role of food in deriving their general satisfaction of a destination. Therefore, the promotion of variety of food products and the restaurants of an area give rise to attractiveness of that location [28].

Food and Ingredients Features in Tourism: Almost all the studies run on the effect of food on tourism, have examined and found it as an attraction. By the same token, food is important to the same extent regarding other facets. While traveling, it can be considered as a necessity, a vital prerequisite for other tourists' activities and as a reason for their satisfaction. Even the tourists are not satisfied with their visited place and the food is not familiar to them; it will not be possible to avoid eating and drinking [17].

To enjoy food, some conditions should be met. Although it is likely that the presence of some of them wouldn't satisfy tourists but lack of such conditions,
Hence, tourism is a way to move away from monotony of daily habits. One of the experiences of such a change is food. There are two types in variety-seeking behavior: one is changing routine's ingredients across time, for instance, an American who eats Chinese food every weekend, has routine variety-seeking behavior. The other group has novelty-seeking behavior. These people are looking for dishes that have not experienced before [36].

Structural factors perspective, on the opposite side of daily food habits, classifies tourists' daily eating habits into two parts: 1. the routine stubborn "central" or "core" ingredients and 2. the other part the adaptable "peripheral" ingredients [37].

It doesn't matter how "peripheral" ingredients undergo changes and the central ingredients remain untouched and act as a base for external "peripheral" ingredients changes. But what is important is the alteration of the central materials so that an attractive and at the same time novel food can be obtained. For example in the southern part of China rice is considered as the basic "core" food ingredients in their daily meals and potato is the "peripheral" ingredients for adding variety. Chinese people can sometimes use potato instead of rice, as the main component of food, but, most often than not, replacing rice with potato is difficult for them [36].

Taking the two perspectives into consideration, tourists most often look for new foods to complement their best recreational time. Such eating which can be the best memory and experience of travel manifests itself in new form in tourism industry. In this huge and sometimes monopolistic section which is a motive for tourists, various palatable and at the same time different dishes derived from daily foods can be a peak touristic experience can be distinguished. Under such conditions, foods and drinks themselves can be an attraction for tourists. Such as Chilli festival in Singapore foods festival [38], Wine tour in Europe [39] and so on.

The Effect of Preserving and Sanitation: Tourists are confronted with some external threats such as particular crimes, inhospitable weather and unexpected illness during travel which may affect or spoil their holidays and travels. Accordingly, it stands to logic to take the fear of illness as a reason for suspiciousness and dubiety about an area's foods. Tourists in the first place encounter with the unwanted effects of food such as stomachache, subsequently the long term effects manifest themselves (e.g. harmful chemicals in food) [40]. It merits mentioning that the tourists spend a qualitative and rather short and
costly span of time; thus it is ideal to exploit this time as much as possible. They are willing to pass their travel time in a way other than the common routine of their lives and enjoy their stay instead of suffering stomachache [41]. Not only this malaise in itself is awful, but also may confound the primary expectation of a tourist from travel and construct a negative picture of host area.

The largest effect of negative attitude resulted from culinary problems can be traced in the stories that tourists tell about an area without any particular reason. Such as those tales about the special type of threat caused by cookery which is prevalent in the areas like Egypt. The tourists’ perception of food health in a region can be affected by the caveats and the advice of guidebooks on the area’s local meals. Scrutinizing these sources shows diarrhea as the most frequent type of malaise.

Many tourists are afraid of eating or buying food from peddlers. This selectivity has made theorists devote their attention to Thai peddlers’ foods. They have come up with the idea that tourists have the false perception of unhealthiness of peddlers' foods.

Health issues also affect agriculture of the area. Studies have revealed that northern America's tourists because of being afraid of food-related ailments are more inclined to have meals similar to their country's dishes. Such demands influences in the production rise and the quality improvement of these foodstuffs in that area [42].

Generally speaking, sanitation and the method of preserving foodstuff affect tourists' willingness or unwillingness to eat destination meals.

The Way of Offering Food: Food-Tourism is a appealing factor in the marketing of different destinations [9, 17, 43] which increases the destination value and prominence [43, 44, 45]. Food can grant success, tranquility, thrill, status and lifestyle [46].

Inasmuch as cuisines and culinary issues and the ways of serving dishes to tourists vary from a nation to another and since the nations are branded for their particular local meals, food can make a significant difference among diverse world tourist destinations [21], such as Chinese, Italian, French and Mexican food and so on.

Offering food in different tourist destinations takes place in tree ways. The common and general way is to serve the foods in the restaurants. The second one is to delivering in the feasts or festivals where food plays the central role of tourist marketing in. The third method is to present foods in canned or packed form. This way has been put into practice in some countries like Hong Kong. The findings of a study undertaken on the tourists opinions about Iran's restaurants, demonstrated the more tendency of tourists to traditional eating places and grillrooms compared with the other types of restaurants.

Restaurants: People, who leave their home for travelling, have to eat out of home. According to the findings of Michalski [47], in 1989, Americans spent 37% of their food costs in restaurants. This rate rose to 43% in 1990 and the costs paid for food in restaurants was 6/2% of the total consuming costs of the society [48].

Restaurants serve a significant and vital role in tourism. Not only they provide tourists with food, but also they create their experiences. In fact, restaurants are not merely designed for eating purpose [49]. Foodservice, which plays a supportive role, is key parts of tourism industry. Flawless performance of restaurants requires deep understanding of customers' demands, needs and expectations.

Some researches have studied the effects of food serving quality on the selection of places by tourists. In theses researches, eating food has been investigated as one of the travelling motivations and as a factor affecting the selection of restaurants by the passengers [50, 51]. However, there is a lack of academic literature in the field of turning the restaurants into well-known and historical attractions [52].

Undertaking voyages is of the significant activities of the society. Increase in income and profitability has led to the growth of tourism industry [53].

Motivations for dining out completely associated with socio-psychological motivations for a pleasant trip. Crompton identified seven motives in travel satisfaction, which included novelty, socialization, prestige, rest and relaxation, education, enhancement of kinship relationships and escape from a mundane environment [54]. Other studies have also found similar motives for eating out [55]. Although there is no literature base about the required conditions for restaurants to be turned into a tourist attraction, the conducted researches indicate that tourists consider the places as attractions that allow them to see, involvement and be sensitive. In other words, tourist attraction is a physical development, which provides the tourists with the opportunity to gain experiences through cooperation [56]. Therefore, these places should be planned, developed and managed for viewers' participation to experience another pleasure in life.
Jafari has described the attractions as the background of tourism and categorized them into three groups of natural, socio-cultural and manufactured. The natural attractions refer to mountains, lakes and natural sceneries. Examples of socio-cultural elements could be history and religious works. Finally, manufactured elements relate to the attractions such as human-made buildings, monumental buildings and parks. In this categorization, restaurants and other recreational places are listed under manufactured elements' category [57].

Tourists’ tendencies towards eating local foods may be raised by changing their negative attitudes towards local foods, particularly, through the traditional dining rooms, which offer experiences similar to "being at home" experience [58]. A number of debates have revolved around this issue; i.e., changing the restaurants into places where tourists could feel comfortable.

First, in spite of a rise in the number of traditional dining rooms, few local foods are served in western countries. Among European countries culinary, the French the and Italian foods are mainly noticeable, however, only a limited number of their local foods such as Pizza and lettuce salad are served, additionally, since these foods are familiar to the majority of people, they may not be considered as local foods. Some countries like Greece and Turkey, however, are exceptions. Among other non-European foods, Chinese, Japanese and Indian ones are extremely famous [59].

Second, an increase in the number of restaurants does not mean a rise in the rate of people who go there. In a study conducted by Warde and Martens about eating out, it was revealed that in England, only 20% of people had the experience of eating out for three times and more in dining rooms (Sofre-Khane) and 48% never ate in dining rooms or the restaurants that serve traditional foods, during the last year. Furthermore, 48% of the foods that people ordered in these restaurants were the familiar dishes that they had eaten them at home before [7].

Third, getting familiar with local foods' types is limited to a little number of people from the middle class of the tourists' community, who attach high importance to the cultural values and take pleasure of eating foreign foods, moreover, have enough money to order them. The findings of Warde and Martens confirm this claim. Furthermore, they suggest that cultural and social factors strongly surpass the amount and number of local foods [7].

Forth, most of the traditional restaurants select a limited number of local foods out of a large number and serve them; that is, their list of foods is a brief one which does not represent the wide variety of local foods of tourists' destination [60]. These restaurants limit their foods to a few foods familiar to the tourists instead of introducing the richness and assortment of that area's local foods. It is for this reason that, in Thailand, for example, western tourists refer to peddlers [17].

Serving food is also another experience in countries such as Hong Kong, China and some other areas, poultries, dogs, snakes, or other animals are slaughtered while tourists are watching and then they are cooked. Although, studies indicate that slaughtering animals before the tourists' eyes cause them to be doubtful and obsessed at the time of eating, it does attract many fans because it is exciting [31].

In some countries, mainly in the third world countries, another reason for tourists' reluctance to eat local foods (even though they like them), is their lack of familiarity with the foods' ingredients and the way of ordering them. Not knowing the host country's language by tourists and not presenting menus of foods accompanied with their ingredients in different languages by restaurants, especially in the Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, are major reasons of this reluctance. The problem causes tourist not to understand the waiters and get confused and doubtful [17].

**Canned/Packed Foods:** Tourists do not always eat their foods in restaurants, in some occasions, particularly when staying in various places is not possible because of time limitation, the canned food are consumed. Canned foods are one of the suitable means of offering food, especially when tourists are in roads or moving in vehicles. They often contain the typical foods of the area. For example, in Taiwan, these cans definitely contain rice, meat, poultry, fish and some vegetables. These types of food services not only could help in saving time, but also it can make tourists able to save the eating times in tours. In Taiwan, the majority of tourist groups use canned foods, in particular, when they are setting out to the next destination. Moreover, tourists enjoy eating in moving train while watching surrounding scenery. This phenomenon has resulted in formation of tourists' positive attitude towards travelling by train in Taiwan, which is known as the canned food-in-train culture. According to the data given about the railroad of Taiwan, more than four millions of canned foods are sold annually; it is worth mentioning that this rate is constantly increasing. Therefore, canned food could be propounded as one of the food offering ways. However, this issue requires more study, particularly in the field of environmental pollutions [61].
CONCLUSION

With respect to the implicit significance of food in tourism, Iran as a country which has high agricultural merits could create a great motivation for attracting tourism. These abilities along with ethinical diversity and consequently food variation, may be an appropriate base for tourism. However, for accomplishing this goal, paying attention to two crucial points is highly significant: first, the food itself and second, the way of its serving. Concerning the first point, with reference to the Iranian foods' quality, an appropriate variety for different cultures and nations could be created through focusing on foods' appearance, its similar ingredients in tourists' homelands foods and compounds of its ingredients. Respecting the way of serving the food, for the type and nature of the Iranian food, it is not possible to offer most of them in canned form. On the other hand, serving foods in traditional dining rooms may take a central part in tourists' satisfaction with foods. Furthermore, it may be claimed that another point underlying food offering is the ability to communicate with tourists, which can be fulfilled by presenting some explanation about foods, the regional culture lying beneath their way of cooking, etc.

REFERENCES

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