

GASTRONOMIC TOURISM AS AN ENGINE FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Gastronomy is becoming one of the key pull factors to define the competitiveness of tourist destinations and to respond to the desires of a kind of traveler increasingly identified with the search for authenticity.

The aim of this paper is to present an approach to gastronomy as a key element in the development (and consolidation) of tourist destinations. We also discuss how food and cuisine is a main motivation to visit a certain place or, in our specific case, one of the main motivations for traveling to the city of Cáceres, Spain.

Key words: Tourism, Cáceres, local development, motivation.

JEL: L83, Q13

1. Introduction

In the twenty-first century tourist activity has undergone major changes in both supply and demand. Among others, the emergence of low cost airlines, the Internet phenomenon and its impact on tourism, the trend towards shorter holidays but with a higher frequency throughout the year or the desire of tourists for new destinations is implying great changes in the structure of firms and the strategy of tourist destinations, encouraging competitiveness among different geographical areas (Ketenci, 2010). Moreover, the tourist choices are increasingly defined on the basis of feelings and the need of new experiences. In this regard, remember that, traditionally, tourism has prioritized one sense over the rest of them: the sight. In this line of responding to a greater enjoyment of other senses, new products appear in the tourist market such as wine tourism, gastronomy tourism or olive oil tourism. Thus the gastronomy tourist (wine tourism or olive oil tourism) is dipped in a complete sensory experience, especially in terms of taste. According to Cohen and Avieli (2004), the tourist, through the food, gets greater engagement with the environment where he travels, what makes him getting an experience far beyond the sole observation mentioned above. It is worth pointing out that the food (including wine) is part of the social and cultural heritage of peoples, and that it reflects a certain style of living in different geographical areas and that gastronomy is something rooted in their own culture and tradition (Mitchell and Hall, 2006). In addition, these initiatives can improve the relationship between tourism and the local community (Llorca Rodríguez et al., 2013).

The aim of this paper is to present an analysis of gastronomic tourism in the city of Cáceres (Spain), differentiating tourists, as has been done in different academic studies (i.e. Rodríguez and Rivadulla, 2012), by regions in order to get to know their profile and present their main motivations regarding the cuisine of the city. To this end, the paper is structured in five sections. After this introduction, in the second paragraph we present a review of the scientific literature in this field; the third section embraces the description of the geographical area; in the fourth paragraph the methodology used is explained and, finally, a fifth section presents the main results of the research.

2. Literature review

Culinary tourism can be defined as a type of tourism in which tourist buys or consumes regional products (including drinks) and/or observes and participates in the production of food (ranging from agriculture to cooking schools) (Ignatov and Smith, 2006).

Scientific literature in the field of gastronomy tourism is based on various researches. These publications include the two works coordinated by Professor Hall that analyzes both the food (Hall et al., 2003) and wine tourism (Hall et al., 2000), the work of Hjalager and Richards (2002), the study of Boniface (2003), contributions by Long (2004) and investigations of Cohen and Avieli (2004).

The scientific literature (Tikkanen, 2007) notes that the food (and wine) establishes a relationship with tourism through the following variables: first, as an attraction, which means that the destination can use the typical local cuisine as a resource to promote and advertise that geographic area; second, as a component of the product, which explores the design of gastronomic routes; third, as an experience, addressing the existence of places where the food takes on a level of excellence and becomes itself a claim; fourth, as a cultural phenomenon, sustained in the structuring of different food events. Thus, gastronomy tourism has a higher or lower degree of development in accordance with the level of connection that it has with local culinary culture and with the natural resources of the place where it is settled (Riley, 2005). Gastronomy plays an important role both in the tourist satisfaction and as part of the cultural and environmental heritage of the destination (Ignatov and Smith, 2006).

The scientific literature deals with the study of gastronomy tourism in different parts of the world, highlighting especially areas located in Asia, since it is precisely this continent, and because of the different flavors that are opposed to Western cuisine, which is currently setting the trend in culinary tourism. Also, in recent years there has been a major takeoff of Latin American cuisine, emphasizing mainly Peru. In this sense, the literature documents the importance of gastronomy tourism in places like Hong Kong (McKercher et al., 2008), other Asian countries (Avieli and Cohen, 2004) and Turkey (Okumus et al., 2007). Similarly, in Western countries, several research have been carried out focused on Argentina (Schulter, 2006), Canada (Stewart et al., 2008), Croatia (Fox, 2007) and Finland (Tikkanen, 2007).

Geographic area description

The city of Cáceres is located in the northern part of the Spanish region of Extremadura. It has a population of 95.668 inhabitants (National Statistics Institute –NSI–, 2012a) and is identified as one of the major centers of the region. Cáceres is the capital of the homonymous province and its economy is based primarily on the services sector. Within the same, tourism plays an important role and its tourist vocation is mainly cultural. The City boasts of a high quality architectural heritage which has been declared World Heritage in 1986 by UNESCO. Today its old city is the best preserved and is recognized as one of the best historical ensembles in Spain (Ortega et al., 2012).

In Tables 1 and 2 is shown the evolution of the number of travelers and overnight stays in the period 2007-2011 in the city of Cáceres.

Regarding the local cuisine, Cáceres stands out for having a culinary culture with a strong identity based in the use of local products, many of which are certified with seal of quality (Protected Designation of Origin, PDO) .

Among such PDO we have to highlight the following: Ham Dehesa de Extremadura, Cherry from the Jerte Valley, Extra Virgin Olive Oil of Gata-Hurdes, Villuercas-Ibores Honey, Torta del Casar cheese, Ibores cheese and Paprika from La Vera (Ortega et al., 2012).

Table 1. Evolution of the number of visitors to the city of Cáceres. Period 2007-2011.

YEAR	TOTAL	DOMESTIC TOURISTS	FOREIGN TOURISTS
2007	213,383	187,980	25,403
2008	201,187	176,357	24,830
2009	206,973	183,021	23,952
2010	215,490	192,783	22,706
2011	233,053	202,811	30,242

Source: National Statistics Institute –NSI- (2012b).

Table 2. Evolution of the number of overnight stays in the city of Cáceres. Period 2007-2011.

YEAR	TOTAL	DOMESTIC TOURISTS	FOREIGN TOURISTS
2007	342,243	300,590	41,653
2008	336,971	295,418	41,553
2009	326,969	286,717	40,252
2010	341,579	306,930	34,644
2011	368,701	326,394	42,306

Source: National Statistics Institute –NSI- (2012b).

These products are processed and produced in rural areas in the proximity of the city of Cáceres and acquire their special organoleptic properties due to local climate, the employment of traditional production processes and the geographical location of this specific area. Game meat is also one of the distinctive elements of the culinary traditions of the city, being the basis of many recipes and dishes (quail, partridge, venison and wild boar, etc.), that gave life to thematic route, the Game route, which aims to enhance the local cuisine of Cáceres (Ortega et al., 2012). However, the star product of the local culinary tradition is recognized in the Iberian pork and all its derivatives (ham, sausages and meat products). Therefore, traditional dishes of the Extremadura cuisine have their roots in the raw materials cited, i.e. the Iberian pork and game meat.

Besides quality local products, Cáceres offers a wide variety of restaurants that stand out for their dishes, their location and the talent of their chefs. Some of them have been awarded by the major national and international food guides such as Repsol and Michelin. Most of these restaurants are located in the historical and monumental part of the city offering travelers the opportunity to enjoy two cultural heritages at one: the historical-monumental and the gastronomic one, which enriches the travel experience.

3. Methodology

The methodology used for this research was based on the realization of a fieldwork aimed to know the profile and motivation of tourists in relation to the gastronomy of the city of Cáceres. The fieldwork has been performed in the restaurants themselves, at the time when tourists were having lunch or dinner.

The structure of the survey used in this research is based on various previous works (Ignatov and Smith, 2006; Okumus et al., 2007) and responds to five aspects: socio-demographic characteristics of the tourist, economic profile, travel motivation, travel characteristics and evaluations and opinions. The surveys were conducted between April and May 2012. Participants completed the survey in full independence, although the interviewers were present all the time if the tourist had any difficulty in filling the survey. The latter was completely anonymous. Previously a pre-test of 12 surveys have been conducted in order to detect deviations and errors. The total of surveys obtained was 630.

The items used are intended to respond to the indicators and measures proposed to perform an analysis of the demand and selected in order to make systematic comparisons between different dining destinations (Fox, 2007). Thus, we used a mixture of technical measures with a 5-point Likert scale to assess the motivation and expectations, yes/no answers and both closed and open questions, where respondents could make comments about their dining experience. The total number of tourists who visited the city in 2011 was 233,053 (NSI, 2012b). The research sampling error was $\pm 3.9\%$. Table 3 presents the research sheet.

Table 3. Technical details of the research on demand

Number of tourists (year 2011)	233,053
Sample	630 surveys
Sampling error	$\pm 3.9\%$.
Sampling method	Simple random sampling
Period of survey	April-May 2012
Control of the sample	Implementation and supervision of fieldwork by the authors of the research

Source: Own Elaboration

The collected data were organized, tabulated and analyzed using SPSS 15.0. The data processing was performed by using univariate and bivariate statistical tools.

4. Results and discussion

Table 4 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondent tourist in the city of Cáceres.

According to Table 4, the main region of origin of tourists is Madrid followed by Extremadura (with the exception of the city of Cáceres). In fact, these two regions together with Andalucía, Castilla and León and Valencia provide more than 75% of

domestic tourists who travel to the city. In terms of education stands out the segment of people with university studies. In terms of age groups, there is a great similarity between three age ranges. Furthermore, we can also say that tourists who come to the city have a high economic level, in fact, 29.6% admit that their income is above 2,000 euros per month. As for the length of stay, the majority (37.4%) remains one night in the city of Cáceres while 29.1% spend between 3 and 7 days in the city and 25.6% does not stay overnight.

Also, for the 44.4% is the first visit to the city. Most respondents travel together with their partner (43.4%) or with colleagues and/or friends (34.8%).

Table 4. Socio-demographic characteristics of tourists in the city of Cáceres

Variable		Percentage	Variable		Percentage
Gender (N = 616)	Men	49.4%	Region (N = 631)	Madrid	20.8%
	Women	50.6%		Extremadura	17.1%
				Andalucía	13.6%
				Castilla and León	13.2%
				Valencia	10.9%
				Others	24.4%
Age (N = 629)	< 30	15.9%	Income (N = 533)	< €1,000	17.6%
	30-39	23.4%		Between €1,000 and €1,500	27.2%
	40-49	25.1%		Between €1,501 and €2,000	25.5%
	50-59	21.9%		> €2,000	29.6%
	60 or >60	13.7%			
Education (N = 574)	High School	30.1%			
	Professional training	12.7%			
	University	57.2%			

Source:

Own Elaboration

Association was detected in the differentiation between the autonomous community of origin and age (Pearson Chi-squared= 256.672, $p= 0.000$), with the educational level (Pearson Chi-squared= 60.332, $p= 0.002$) and income level (Pearson Chi-squared= 76.947, $p= 0.002$).

Regarding the motivation to visit the city of Cáceres the main results are in Table 5. Outcomes have been measured on a Likert scale of 5 points, 1 - very unimportant, 5- very important, for tourists coming from the five Spanish regions that emit the major tourist flows towards the city of Cáceres.

Table 5. ANOVA. Purpose of the visit to the city of Cáceres

Purpose	Madrid	Extremadura	Andalucía	Castilla and León	Valencia	F (p)
Culture	4.22	4.23	3.96	3.94	4.12	1.832 (0.024)* *
Gastronomy	4.06	3.59	4.04	4.00	4.05	2.375 (0.02)**
Rest and relax	3.68	3.51	3.31	3.43	3.29	2.253 (0.005)*
Leisure	3.30	3.59	3.61	3.47	3.04	2.842 (0.000)*
Visit friends and family	2.34	3.37	2.10	2.35	1.51	4.069 (0.000)*
Educational	1.93	2.91	2.19	2.21	2.60	3.108 (0.000)*
Sport	1.72	2.57	1.83	1.64	1.61	2.706 (0.001)*
Work	1.65	2.50	1.84	1.44	1.47	3.080 (0.000)*
Medical	1.21	1.91	1.34	1.36	1.19	2.520 (0.001)*

Source: Own Elaboration, p > significant at 1%, p > significant at 5%

According to data collected in Table 5, there are two main reasons to visit the city, to learn about the culture and heritage of the city and to enjoy the local gastronomy. Thus, according to the scientific literature (Schlüter, 2003, Fox, 2007), the cultural and the gastronomic tourist are closely related. In fact, focusing on the motivation to enjoy the gastronomy the average rating it gets is quite high, being in four regions higher than 4, and only in Extremadura, less than 4 but still with important evaluation (3.59). In fact, if we compare these two main motivations, the average rate that culture gets is 4.07, although there are two regions, Andalusia and Castilla y León, who do not get to 4, while in the case of gastronomy, all of them, but Extremadura, exceed the rate of 4.

5. Conclusions

Gastronomy has become one of the key elements for the development of tourism in different destinations. In this paper we have presented the results of a research conducted in the city of Cáceres which addresses the relationship between tourism, culture and gastronomy.

The main results support the idea that gastronomy is already one of the main motivations to visit a particular place and also is configured as a key element for the development of the image of agricultural products of a certain geographical area. On the

other hand, results confirm that the strengthening of the relationship between culture and gastronomy has to be considered as a key element to consolidate a specific destination.

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