

FOOD TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE: CREATING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NATIONAL PROGRESS

Peace IGWE¹, Samson MADUEYUOGHASI²,
Gladys AMACHERE³, & Nennaaton Alex-AKEKUE⁴
^{1,3}Department of Marketing, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
²Department of Marketing, Imo State Polytechnic Imo State, Nigeria.
⁴Department of Marketing, Rivers State University, Rivers State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This research examines the role of Nigerian food tourism as a shielding mechanism for cultural heritage while creating economic growth and national progress. The research examines how Obudu Ranch and Oka Awaka and Okazi Emii food festivals use traditional local foods to develop cultural identity which influences tourists' perceptions of destinations. The Nigerian food industry maintains a wide range of traditional dishes yet its tourism sector is fraught with multiple challenges arising from weak government support and poor food quality and inadequate supply chain systems, religious rules, security issues and increasing expenses. Food tourism has established itself as a top revenue-generating tourism segment which supports employment growth and develops destination images worldwide. Nigeria can develop food tourism as its major economic base through sustainable food supply chain development and innovative culinary experience creation and policy adjustments that supports cultural and religious practices. The research necessitates studies for comparison and innovative marketing strategies and flexible models to establish Nigeria as a foremost international food tourism destination.

Keywords: Food tourism, sustainability, cultural heritage, destination branding, economic development,

INTRODUCTION

As part of the global tourists' destinations, a number of local communities in Nigeria account for a sizeable integral scenery, rich in some distinctive leisure environments and cuisines that draw tourists from different parts of the world for likable experiences. Notably, some special sights, sounds and delicacies explain some unique and robust cultural attributes and peculiar atmosphere in several places in Nigeria, with pleasant memories in the minds of tourists who yearn for the most part of the tangible and intangible experiences. Destinations like the Obudu ranch in Cross River State and rituals such as the annual Oka Awaka and Okazi Emii food festivals in Imo State, host tourists from far and near and often highlight spectacular cuisines of the local Emii and Awaka populations (Nwokorie, 2015). The unawareness of culinary tourism as a frontal tool for promoting tourists' destinations and the local economy has provided unending curiosity as to why there is sloppy operation of tourism growth potentials and relative passivity of festivities' development over time. The effect is captured in the retrogressive impact it has had on destination development and innovative adoption in terms of tourism product diversification, marketing and local community branding.

Food tourism is presumably one of the sub-sectors that contributes immensely to economic growth and national development in the hospitality industry. It enhancing experiences and economy value-chain is by no small means a linkage to knowledge of cultural heritage, relaxation, aesthetics and entertainments. Food tourism is one of the growing sub-sectors where sight-seeing, local delicacies experiences and socio-cultural value exploration blend with the appreciation of culinary delights. While food is one of the basic human necessities, food tourism serves as an embodiment of cultural identity and distinctiveness which gives tourists a deeper comprehension of a new environment and outlook,

synthesized with travelers' unique destination experiences. Basically, local delicacies, food festivities e.g. new yam festivals in some part of Nigeria, varieties of wine, recipe book, specialty shops, food events, cooking classes and other physical experiences within the culinary experience are examples of food tourism. As an avenue for wealth creation and expansion of food business, food entrepreneurs engage in tangible and intangible aspects of food and drink businesses, designed to enable target market(s) learn more about local customs, histories, civilizations, and religions of host communities and people of other climes. As a key factor to income generation and revenue mobilization process, scholars and business owners prioritize food tourism innovativeness as a more conceivable way of improving service experience both for the benefits of firms, tourists and society in general.

Tourism has become a household name in every corner of the world as one of the largest sources of economic growth, work and culture exchange. Arguably, food industry is one of the fastest-growing niches of the global tourism industry over the last 10 years. Precisely, culinary tourism and allied activities to tourism contribute more than USD 21 billion to the Australia economy before the pandemic, which confirms that the country is capable of not only leveraging its natural resources but cultural culinary as well; gastronomic experiences, as a form of attracting foreign tourists (Tourism Research Australia, 2021).

These figures appear valid hence, showing that tourism cannot only be confined to amusement but a complex and complicated aspect of the economy and as such, has remained a driving force that ushered in investments, local businesses and unprecedented development to many economies. Food tourism is not so new in destination marketing and experiential tourism however, modern tourists have more to do with the immersive and in-depth experience of local cuisine and culture in the tourist destination area (Hjalager and Kwiatkowski, 2021).

Real eating does not relate to food tourism. Probably, the food related tourists will leave an impression on whether they are buying local arts, cultural events or music festivals, museums and outdoor activities. The spillover effect of these interactions is experienced in the economic performance of the locals in a positive manner besides enhancing their personal travelling experiences. It concurs with UNWTO (2022), Wondirad et al. (2021). It is the breaking point of this diversified spending pattern of food tourism as a booster of comprehensive economic growth and development in a broad area of sectors that encompass agriculture and hospitality, retail and entertainment.

Though researchers such as Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis and Cambourne (2003), postulated that there existed a symbiotic relationship between gastronomy and tourism, the current studies indicate that the inter-dependency between the two has been intensified in the twenty-first century. It is a multi-sensory experience of the destination, with the tourists being able to enjoy the destination as a mix of flavor, beauty, history, and stories of the locals (Lee and Scott, 2022). The host economy is affected by the interdependence between food, culture and leisure through the trickling effect because it rejuvenates most of the industries. The multiplier effect of tourist spending is one of the background processes through which culinary tourism may be applied to achieve sustainable growth as it re-distributes all tourist dollars in the local economy more than once (Perez-Galvez et al., 2021). The idea of food tourism today however now has also come to have different meaning far out beyond gastronomic tourism, it is a socio-economic system that has the capability of organizing culture, community and business. It transforms the visitor by educating him on the culture, and empowers the local individuals by giving them jobs, entrepreneurship, and identity assurance (Okumus et al., 2021). The case of the United States and Australia has shown that food and cultural tourism is a success and supported by the robustness of

well-established infrastructure and policy frameworks in transforming the destinations to the effective ecological and cultural exchange destinations.

Food Tourism and Rising Demand for Tourist Destinations

Food tourism (FT) is distinct and noteworthy to be referred as dining and drinking experiences (Nwokorie, 2015), FT as aver by other authors, includes visiting restaurants, food festivals, food producers; primary, secondary of facilitators within considered locations where the main reasons for traveling are to sample food or experience the characteristics of a specialized food production with respect to a region. (Ellis, Park, Kim, and Yeoman, 2018). Subtle advancements, induced by changes across the world has grossly affected the demand for food and tourism in the culinary business. Though history has it that as at 1950s, about twenty-five million tourists voyaged within and around the word but today, such number has surged into several millions across same world. Yeoman (2012) had estimated that by 2050, the number of tourists around the globe would be over 4 billion. This estimation has rather increased the common thinking that tourism would lead economic front of many nations. Arguably, a significant portion of tourists' routes, centers and destination choices would perceptibly shift towards food tourism and semblance hubs. The contemporary hospitality industry and attendant shared values are reflected in food tourism advancement, as major centers of tourist attraction where some of the main economies are gradually trailing and converting cultures and its relics into museum as a way of enhancing tourists delight (Yeoman and McMahon-Beatte, 2016).

The Role of Food Tourism in National Development

Food tourism is embellished with socio-cultural anthropology through a gamut of conceived attraction and interaction of tourists, targeting local destinations by means of food medium (Ellis, et. al., 2018). The culinary business has become a beacon of economic progress in strengthening and promoting Marketing efforts of numerous tourism brands such as local and national branding. There are enormous significant roles played by Food tourism in growing the local economy through food experience adaptation, as a means of producing new tourism products, designed to meet industry needs, continued innovation and development of businesses in the Nigerian food sector. Other critical roles food tourism plays are apparently showcased in its contribution to livelihood in Nigeria. This is further considered in the preservation of the local cultural heritage thus; building on existing tourism assets, driving socio-cultural oriented innovations and promoting destination experiences. Destination visitors for the experience sought are increasingly demanding for local food and drink. This demand spree is yet contributing to the long-term sustainability of Nigerian food system, community involvement in the agricultural supply and value chain and the entire ecosystem.

In adding to the claim of being essential elements of the destination experience, food and drinks are now being increasingly recognized as controlling inducements in the tourism adventures. Notably, there is a difference between travelers who eat as part of their journey experience and those whose activities, behaviors and destination choices may be driven by their gastronomic interests when defining food tourism. Though, the term "food tourism" is more intricate in conceptualization and may not wholly be referred to restaurant or food vendor visits. As a reasoned posture, Tourism may further involve dining out and cuisine is thought to be just as important as the environment, lodging, and landscape value proposition.

The pursuit for distinguishing and unforgettable dining experiences by tourists is a fair portrayal of what culinary tourism represents. The distinction however crisscrosses on the misconception between agricultural tourism and culinary tourism is that the previous is a subset of rural tourism, while the latter is a subset

of cultural tourism, cuisine being a reflection of culture. Culinary tourism and agric-tourism are inextricably linked, since agriculture is foremost considered in the food value chain (Wolf, 2006).

As a result of the growing trends toward tourists' interests in visiting authentic brand destinations for a top-notch culinary experience, Yeoman (2008) conclude that cuisine plays a big role in how tourists perceive a destination. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012), food tourism influences travel destinations in choice places like Italy, Hawaii, France, and California and many other places of attraction. Due to the level of cuisine contributions in terms of economic development of any nation in the course of enhancing total tourist experience, it is expected that more local areas in Nigeria should be sited more as important travel destination.

Food Tourism as a Major Economic Contributor to Tourism Sector

Food tourism is explained broadly and explained beyond mere place visit in exploiting a people food Caravan. It encompasses all classified and memorable culinary experiences acquired in the quest to having firsthand involvement. The cost of gaining the desired experience may not always correspond to the value so derived though, typical food tourists may see it as fun, eating at a roadside café in unusual places. A study conducted by Tourism Queensland aver that provided that tourist's trip often leaves them with a lifelong reminiscence and noted that, travelers make the maximize their travel experiences. In similar study, some Australian tourists were asked to recount on the qualities and specific items that contribute to their destination's culinary appeal, 36% of tourists choose local cuisine, reputation got 18% of the replies, tradition received 9% while cuisine variety received 73%. (Nwokorie, 2015).

Tourism accounts for 83% of revenue generation in developing economies. It has also created jobs for diverse' groups of people around the global space, prompted key developments in terms of infrastructural expansion, promoting cultural exchange as well as relationship between the foreigners and the natives. It has also remained the most substantial source of foreign exchange after petroleum in some of the developing countries. As at 2022, The United States of America was deemed to be the foremost among countries with inward bound tourism earnings, with revenue estimated about 137 billion U.S. dollars, while Australian economy in 2016, made more than 21 billion dollars from tourism commercials. There are gamut of pointers showing that food tourism does not only create an avenue for tourists to taster local cuisine but to further open up more prospects for revenue generation when visitors partake in other adjunct activities such as shopping, film festivals, music carnivals, museums visits and engaging in other facets of general outdoor recreation while on special vacation (Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis & Cambourne, 2003). These leisure contexts add encouraging multiplier effects on the local economy (Wolf, 2006).

Food the Bedrock of Tourism Business

Arguably, Food tourism has given rise to the obvious economic robustness that some countries enjoy today where festivals, wine consumption, assortments of delicacies sampling and other corresponding services contributed hugely in the enrichment of the tourism industry. The tourism business is in part, significantly dependent on food. Basically, most elements and activities associated with vacation is comprised of food, liquor and other related wines. Experience had shown that most local meal treats in terms of foods and drinks usually symbolizes the beginning and end of each day travel escapade. Though tourist may have become much choosy about their preference on purchase decisions, trip makers are still very interested and flexible to new experiences, flavors and tastes. Today, just the local food and beverages alone can turn a place into a well-known tourist destination when effectively situated.

Irrespective of the size of the destination, food and drinks complement add significance to many tourist tactics. According to Hall (2012), 86% of distillery visitors are from outside of Scotland, and whisky tourism is projected to have contributed £30.4 million to the Scottish economy in 2013. The major role of food tourism is to expose already existing tourist experiences to various tourism segments by packaging and selling them. Business owners strengthen food tourism by looking out for strategic locations for relaxation, turning those locations to dining spots and developing food supply networks that enhance continuous supply from the residents. It also creates histories behind each of the delicacies available for visitors' experience and enables support system for patronage.

Other vital value chain that supports success in the tourism industry are the intangible assets. Among these are goodwill, trademarks, brand recognition, copyrights, trade names, patents, R&D, brand equity, customer lists and licensing. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012), immaterial assets are quickly taking the lead in achieving strategic tourist policy formulation and increasing regional economic attractiveness. When assessing regional economic growth policy initiatives, the question of who benefits should be the focal point. Persuading travelers to pause, spend more money, and stay longer is the core importance of positioning food tourism as a key driver for economic development (Hall, 2012). Integrating food tourism into wider regional development campaigns requires retaining visitor spending, building networks with a variety of regional stakeholders, and refining intellectual capital. However, the location concern, target market, and major commercial goals of the campaign can limit how well the food producers are integrated into the tourism development business mix.

Food Tourism and Sustainability

Attaining culinary sustainability is necessary for the tourism industry to flourish. One of the ways to improve and sustain food tourism business in Nigeria and anywhere in the world is by taking actionable steps, such as involving all stakeholders in the local food value chain; production, provision and management, as well as tour guides in concerted marketing efforts. This has deeply enhanced urban destination tourism development efforts. Although many tourism destinations and regions utilize food chain and food tourism as strategic ways of promoting destination marketing nevertheless, binding strategy with issues of regional identity and product development appear to be key in the sustainability initiative.

The dominant idea behind sustainable food supply chains is to integrate elements of the food supply system to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of local communities while contributing to national revenue. This objective is in accordance with the three pillars of sustainability, namely socio-cultural, economic and environmental factors. Rendering on Smith (2008) position, there are eight priority areas of sustainable food supply chains; safe and healthy products, enabling people access to nutrition and information, providing communities and economies with ancillary services in both rural and urban areas encouraging workable land management system as a means of sustaining societal livelihoods, considering the challenges within the eco-system with much focus on available natural resources, reduction in energy consumption, efficiently managing inputs and renewable energy, ensuring worker welfare, hygiene and safety, achieving a very high standard of animal health and wellbeing and consistently ensuring that resources for growing food and providing public benefits are ensured (Muangasame and Park, 2019).

To achieve sustainability in the culinary sector, food supply chains operations must be flexible to a wide spectrum of actors, each with different tasks and influences in the production and supply value network.

Considering the value-chain actors are farmers, transportation facilitators and delivery workforce, processing and manufacturing concerns, retailers, and consumers. Nevertheless, the government's regulatory and supportive roles outside the supply chains architecture is crucial for each of the eight significant areas listed above (Smith 2008). More to sustainability discourse is the need to mitigate the effects of rising inflation, address some of the avoidable security lapses affecting farmers in the process of food production, delivery network, improving economic activities and destinations of attractiveness. These pointers would include organizing restaurant shows, initiating, promoting and sponsoring food festivals, food trail and others viable tourism endeavours. Advisably, effective management of these events can retain the food tourism industry's essence and create more vibrant sector, targeting local destinations all year round across the geo-political zones in Nigeria.

Security Challenges to Food Tourism Sustainability

Some among many other challenges facing food tourism sustainability especially in Nigeria are the growing insecurity in the country and successive inflations. Insecurity increases more in the face of socio-political violence; kidnapping and banditry, lack of patriotism and is capable of hampering food tourism sustainability at the long run. Nigeria, like many other countries of the world especially, in Africa, faces security threats from banditry and other social vices, describing violent crimes and robberies committed in places where the rule of law had presumably failed. It is understood to mean a gang-affiliated robbery and mugging group that operates in remote areas where security architecture must have been compromised or absent given a defined region of a nation. The formation of armed groups with the intent to attack government, social, business entities and individuals and violently depriving them of their belongings. Being associated with such groups and taking participating in its related attacks explicates the acts of today's banditry (Ladan & Matawalli, 2021).

Banditry will undoubtedly have a negative influence on food security because it is associated with violent and robbery operations against the society, in particular, tourists visiting remote areas to experience the cuisine and rural residents, who probably are involved in the food system and value chain in the first place. Food security will be achievable when everyone in the society always has access to nutrient rich food such that is safe, sustain food tastes and preferences to an active healthy lifestyle and their dietary requirements (World Food Summit resolution, 1996).

Food security was simply conceptualized by the Food and Agricultural Organization as the availability of food in terms of production, distribution and consumption. Food security worldwide is taking a centre stage of academic discourse as being at serious stake as it has apparently been the case in certain regions within Northern Nigeria even in the recent times when there are repeated cases of violence which led to instability of rural regions where the majority of the populace is made up of farmers. The Federal Government of Nigeria has realized that communities in the northern part of the country where most of the farming activities occur are under serious threat posed by banditry thus putting the sustainability of the food value chain at risk.

As such, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched an Agro-Rangers Corps in rapid reaction initiative to address the menace of attacks by bandits against farmers. It was also meant to protect the farmers and their investments in agriculture in the country, both in terms of preventing attack on the farmlands as well as making farmers have confidence to work on their farms and not to fear attacks. However, it has not just been successful in dealing with insecurity challenges to food production and supply chain up to the year 2024. Consequently, these activities of banditry and kidnapping have further caused the loss of numerous lives today, bringing food production and tourism experience an all-time low.

Inflation, Challenging Food Tourism Sustainability

High inflation amongst other issues is one of the major factors that hinders the demand for travel among the developing nations of Africa. Inflation, best captured to explain the increase of overall price levels while value of money decreases. It happens as a result of economic imbalance in any economy. Due to the dynamic nature of the sector, both micro (like product, pricing, place and promotion) and macro (like global economic trends), have had significant impact on world's tourism experience hence, inflationary effect occurring in various world economy. Ranging from retailers in some tourist destinations regularly increase their food prices on the assumption that wealthy tourists would always patronize their meals. Land values also to an extent contribute to inflation in tourist destinations since tourism multiplies the demand for land. Uncertainty surrounds the degree to which locals' income and employment gains offset inflationary price increases, let alone the economic stress such that behaviour can cause to other citizens within the low-income brackets (Miljak, et al., 2022). Unexpected changes in expenses, consumption, output, investment, savings, and budget are all attributed to inflation, as a result of money losing value while prices keep increasing. The most important effect of tourist induced inflation experience is that in most places like Nigeria where such is the case, cost of living is highly expensive. Though, the most important cause of inflation in Nigeria is the rising increase in energy supply and how they complement other activities. Thus, sustainability can be achieved in the food tourism sub-sector when the economy is totally under the watch to be relatively stable in order to enhance key agents in the food tourism distribution chain and consumption explore more creative ways of being innovative.

Essential Tools for food Tourism Sustainability

As applicable in other cultures around the world, cultural events like the Arugungu fishing festival and the carnivals in Abuja, Calabar, and Lagos, food festivals can help the tourist industry in Nigeria with its branding and destination marketing efforts to achieve greater success through sustainability of innovative cultural engagements. Nigeria showcases a variety of diversities of fascinating local foods with high nutritional values that reenacts tourists' experience. Food festivals will undoubtedly play a significant role in terms of contributing to sustainability of the experiential economy by utilizing these regional cuisines in showcasing Nigeria's cultural heritage and diversity to a global audience with a view to providing local food producers in popular tourist locations with new or more economic options.

Another significant contributor to the food sustainability value chain is Food Trails: The food trail offers a fantastic complementary tourism attraction in the culinary business. A trail, according to Hall (2012), is an assortment that generates unique experiences offered by firms that are not necessarily focusing on tourism. The local tourism organization assists in marketing the trail to the appropriate tourism markets, but it does not produce the raw materials of the individual experiences. Among nations effectively benefiting from contribution from food trails as support system is the UK (Walker and Evans, 2012). The extent to which investment in tourism-related activities can assist investors benefit from tourists' patronage of community food supplies whether at the local, national, or foreign level depends on the level of commitment assigned to it.

a restaurant week is often regarded a city-wide occasion where restaurants services offer tourist friendly prices and special menus to board spectrum of patrons (Hall, 2012). The goal is to attract as much patronage as possible. It gives loyal customers an incentive to stay connected to the service provider. Walker & Evans, (2012) opine that the sale of food on discounted prices is just one of the strategic intuitions of a successful Restaurant Week. It is an effective approach towards expansion of firm's consumer-base as well as creating avenues for launching new ventures in the food industry, with

intention of fostering a sense of customer loyalty. Basically, loyalty programs are essentially designed to attract repeat purchase by inspiring first-time tourist not only to try the destination but to remain loyal to it.

Constraints on Food Safety and Quality: previous studies observed that issues arising from food safety and quality are mostly caused by improper handling of the food products in the production, collection, processing, and distribution flow. Poor quality output can also be caused by inadequate procedure used in food collection. Efforts to include sustainable techniques into the production and collection of locally grown food have not been robust enough in terms of securing standard food safety/quality management systems, the majority of processing facilities in Nigeria lack contemporary mechanisms for managing food safety and quality (Offiong, 2011, Nwokorie, 2015).

Poor relationship between producers and processors remains obstacles that would require attention in order to achieve food sustainability in the tourism value chain. An illustration is provided by the local dairy industry in Northern Nigeria, where the majority of milk production is done by unorganized rural farmers without any formal relationship with the processors. This would compromise the availability of milk both in quantity and quality. The situation can be addressed if small scale food producers prioritize engagement in adequate market evaluation as a means of identifying consumer expectations, and adopting hygiene-based process as recommended by the standard organization of Nigeria (SON), while embarking on the business of production and distribution. According to Nwokorie, (2015) there is still much work to be done as goods are not up to consumer expectations and production appears not focused on the market.

Religious concerns: Since greater part of the food supply chain appear to be coming from the Northern part of Nigeria, approaching issues of local religious beliefs and fanaticism with a touch of liberalness can go a long way in terms of promoting food sustainability efforts, thus increasing productivity and guaranteeing sustainability in areas of higher revenue yield. This is imperative as religious concerns do result to tourists being frequently denied of opportunities to partake in the culinary experiences, they had planned to engage in. Religious limitations are inclusive among many problems that inhibit tourists' preferences to specific cuisine at one time or the other. Religion induced regulations are usually encountered by both local and foreign visitors in Nigeria's conservative Islamic regions, where prohibitions on certain foods, such as alcohol and pork, are enforced by the Sharia law (Nwokorie, 2015).

Though this view might in some ways be affected by acknowledgement of the need for tourists showing regards to existing local cultures and traditions as is obtainable in a given environment. However, a look at the positive multiplier effects in terms of huge revenues derivable from food tourism business made possible through policies and programmes that promote religious liberality, therefore calls for systematic adjustments over some religious believe systems to accommodate full utilization of tourist destinations and creation of services atmospheres for marketing and local brands sustainability. The fact that use of religious liberalization as an approach in the promotion of tourism business is attainable even in the core Islamic States of Nigeria, is being demonstrated in the adjustments made by the government of Saudi Arabia that now legalizes consumption of alcohol beverages by tourists/ visitors that chose the country as tourist destination. Efforts in that direction is imperative for the growth and sustainability of food tourism in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Nigeria's tourism industry, particularly the food sub-sector is progressively pacing in momentum, influencing not only the likelihood of social expression, inventive and legacy preservation of her culture but broadening the economic space, job creation and empowerment. The practices of food festivities and commemorations, demonstrate in details, the diversities of Nigeria's cuisines and the remarkable experiences drawn by both local and international tourists. Food is an inevitable basic and represents a large chunk of expeditions of cultural heritage, connecting tangible consumption and intangible legacies hence, an embodiment of destination branding and attractiveness.

In spite of the cultural endowment, the Nigeria's food tourism sub-sector had obviously remained less explored. Consequently, the enormous setbacks within the food sub-sector have reduced its strategic development potentials, coupled with seeming economic challenges; food quality guarantee, poor institutional funding have yet exacerbated the industry growth. Besides, poor supply chain architecture, religious sentiments, and deficient food technology have remained some of the noticeable setbacks of the country from becoming one of the topmost food tourism destinations within the continent of Africa.

This article places emphasis on food tourism as not just an assemblage of food meal fare or display of culinary heritage but a pathway to socio-economic change and particularly consolidating on racial distinctiveness. Food tourism, has the potential to initiate social effervescence and economic earnings on foreign exchange, expand the country's value chains in agriculture and induce infrastructural advancement. Therefore, prioritizing food sub-sector at the vanguard of Nigeria's tourism conversation is central to economic sustainability, resilience and predictable world tourism environment.

Implications

Policy and Strategic Advancement: comprehensive conversation, negotiations and procedural enactments on policy frameworks that evaluate and integrate food tourism into national development plan. Investigation can be better focused on; agro-allied, security, socio-cultural and policy framework of Nigeria to align with food tourism development.

Tourism Innovation and Value Chain Upgrade: emerging research should create innovative platforms on how food production, sales and delivery can grow the Nigeria's food industry. This would involve the assessment of food routes and festivities and how they can be integrated into sustainable tourism with attendant effects on home-grown economies.

Cultural and Religious peculiarities: cultural heritage, religion and tourism, when fused, usher in a new area of scholarly endeavours. Academics and future researchers can further examine how cultural possibilities and tourism policies can be well articulated, religious standards negotiated, encouraging participation in food tourism without invalidating the local identities.

Sustainability and Resilience: Further studies can investigate the possibilities of integrating sustainable food supply chains into tourism sub-sector that reinforces partnership, resonates environmental friendliness, economic sustainability and socio-cultural peculiarities. Food safety and security can as well be empirically investigated. Besides, it is the opinion of this study that future research develops resilient models for the Nigeria food sub-sector.

The characteristic of consumers and Market Demand: further Studies should examine tourists' passions and preference for Nigerian foods so that industry players can be more focused in planning better service experiences. This would require researching into the use of storytelling, digital marketing, and food branding to enable tourist make informed decision and forming their loyalty opinion on destinations.

Comparative and Global Positioning: conduct a comparative study with other global food tourism destinations and vendors. Such scholarly exploit would guide Nigerian tourists and destination researchers on how to get accustomed to other well-established models to its peculiar cultural heritage.

REFERENCES

- Chen, Q., & Huang, R. (2016). Understanding the importance of food tourism to Chongqing, China. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 22(1), 42-54.
- Du Rand, G. E., & Heath, E. (2006). Towards a framework for food tourism as an element of destination marketing. *Current issues in tourism*, 9(3), 206-234.
- Ellis, A., Park, E., Kim, S., & Yeoman, I. (2018). What is food tourism?. *Tourism management*, 68, 250-263.
- Everett, S., & Aitchison, C. (2008). The role of food tourism in sustaining regional identity: A case study of Cornwall, South West England. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 16(2), 150-167.
- Hall, C. (2012). The importance of food tourism. Retrieved September 10, 2012, from 3Mi Advantage website: <http://www.3miadvantage.co.uk/sme-marketing-business-blog>
- Hall, M. C., Sharples, L., Mitchell, R., Macionis, N., & Cambourne, B. (2003). *Food tourism around the world: Developing management and markets*. Butterworth-Heinemann/Elsevier.
- Ladan, S. I., & Matawalli, B. U. (2021). Impacts of Banditry on Food Security in Katsina State, Nigeria: A Recent Study. *Emerging Challenges in Agriculture and Food Science* Vol, 1(9).
- Lee, K. H., & Scott, N. (2015). Food tourism reviewed using the paradigm funnel approach. *Journal of culinary science & technology*, 13(2), 95-115.
- Miljak, T., Perman, L., & Lozic, I. (2022). THE IMPACT OF INFLATION ON RESTAURANT PRICES IN CROATIA IN THE TOURIST SEASON 2022. *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings*, 61-68.
- Muangasame, K., & Park, E. (2019). Food tourism, policy and sustainability: Behind the popularity of Thai food. *Food tourism in Asia*, 123-142.
- Nwokorie, E. C. (2015). Food tourism in local economic development and national branding in Nigeria. *HATMAN Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 5(1).
- Offiong, A. V. (2011). Indigenous foods: Enhancing Nigeria's tourism potential. Retrieved September 12, 2012, from Weekly Trust website: <http://www.weeklytrust.com.ng/index>
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012). *Food and the tourism experience: The OECD workshop*. OECD studies on tourism. OECD Publishing.
- Rousta, A., & Jamshidi, D. (2020). Food tourism value: Investigating the factors that influence tourists to revisit. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 26(1), 73-95.
- Smith, B. G. (2008). Developing sustainable food supply chains. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 363(1492), 849-861.
- Tourism Queensland (2003). Food tourism. TQ standard visitor survey. Retrieved September 16, 2012, from TQ website: http://www.tq.com.au/fms/tq_corporate/research/fact_sheet/food_tourism
- Walker, W., & Evans, S. A (2012). The importance of food tourism. Industry comment from ITTFA. Retrieved September 14, 2012, from ITTFA website: http://www.travelmole.com//news_feature.php?news
- Wolf, E. (2006). *Culinary tourism: The hidden harvest*. London; Kendall/Hunt Publishing
- Yeoman, I., & McMahon-Beatte, U. (2016). The future of food tourism. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 2(1), 95-98.
- Bajrami, D. D., Radosavac, A., & Vuković, D. (2021). Will we travel again? Tourism industry development in the post-COVID-19 period. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 38, 100822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100822>
- Hall, C. M., Sharples, L., Mitchell, R., Macionis, N., & Cambourne, B. (2003). *Food tourism around the world: Development, management and markets*. Routledge.

- Hjalager, A. M., & Kwiatkowski, G. (2021). Culinary tourism: A review of trends and research directions. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 40, 100869. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100869>
- Lee, J., & Scott, N. (2022). Gastronomy experiences and cultural meaning in tourism: The role of authenticity and emotions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 93, 103379. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103379>
- Okumus, B., Koseoglu, M. A., & Ma, F. (2021). Food tourism research: A systematic review of 20 years. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(3), 1036–1072. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2020-0241>
- Pérez-Gálvez, J. C., López-Guzmán, T., & Muñoz-Fernández, G. A. (2021). Culinary tourism as a tool for sustainable local development: Evidence from Spain. *Sustainability*, 13(7), 4002. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13074002>
- Tourism Research Australia. (2021). State of the industry 2021: Tourism's contribution to the Australian economy. Canberra: Australian Trade and Investment Commission.
- United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2022). International Tourism Highlights, 2022 Edition. Madrid: UNWTO. <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284423412>
- Wolf, E. (2006). Culinary tourism: The hidden harvest (2nd ed.). Kendall/Hunt Publishing.
- Wondirad, A., Tolkach, D., & King, B. (2021). Culinary tourism as a driver of destination branding and economic development. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 20, 100584. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100584>
- World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). (2023). Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2023: United States. London: WTTC.