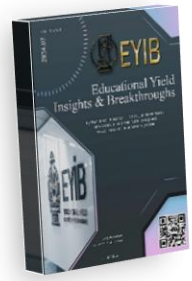
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THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE IN REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

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Annotatsiya

Gastronomy is an integral element within the cultural tourism industry as it allows traditional recipes to be maintained, supports local businesses and ensures cultural knowledge is preserved. Uzbekistan has a vast gastronomy culture as it has a rich history of trading, diverse produce and cultural exchange. Utilising cuisine can have positive impacts on a region by encouraging tourists to travel to smaller areas, engage with the local people and understand the cultural traits of a region. This article will explore how sustainable gastronomy can support the development of tourism in regions of Uzbekistan. A qualitative approach has been taken throughout this research project as it looks at academic sources and cultural heritage sources. Gastronomy tourism can support small businesses, increase local food chains, preserve traditional food knowledge and provide a diverse range of tourism products within regions. However, in order for it to be effective in the long term, community involvement, responsible resource management, appropriate infrastructure and cooperation between sectors of tourism should be included.

Kalit so'zlar: gastronomic heritage, sustainable tourism, regional tourism growth, Uzbek cuisine, cultural identity, culinary traditions, local communities, tourism sustainability.

Introduction

Tourism is an important part of the industry offering authentic experiences to tourists to educate them on the culture and lifestyle. Whilst landmarks such as historical and architectural, alongside natural landscapes are seen to be very valuable, food can offer unique insights into the connection people have with their history and environment. Food can be seen as a form of cultural expression and can be seen as contributing to regional development. Uzbekistan has a rich past with growing their culture through generations of farming, trade, travel and sharing their culture between countries in central Asia. Traditional foods like Plov, somsa, lagman and shurpa are often associated with Uzbekistan. However, their food culture can be seen through the creation of breads, seasonal cooking, preservation methods, the local market culture and their values of hospitality and family in each region. There have been numerous exchanges of ingredients, methods and knowledge due to the connections to the Silk Road, but there are many unique food traditions that have evolved due to the

differences in geography and agriculture. This can be an opportunity to develop food tourism experiences to showcase the unique nature of the culture. A sustainable relationship can be created with local producers in the region by eating food at local restaurants, bakeries, markets and homes. This can help small businesses by providing them with additional income. It can also encourage tourists to visit areas that they wouldn't normally visit. The younger generations can also benefit as they will have the motivation to learn traditional cooking methods. There can be some risks when developing food heritage in a business. There may not be any uniqueness in the region due to high levels of standardisation. If tourism isn't well managed it can put extra pressure on water, agriculture and waste resources. If only a few businesses are receiving income from tourism then the local community won't benefit. This research can help to create a balance between food heritage and tourism. This article will look into how sustainable food heritage can be used to help develop tourism in regions of Uzbekistan by being traditional to the culture, involving local people and using resources sustainably.

Literature review

This has been researched in the tourism literature. Culinary tourism was developed by Long (2004). Using food as a way of experiencing culture. Tourists can enjoy traditional dishes cooked in traditional ways which helps them understand about the values and culture of the place. Hall and Sharples (2003) have researched food tourism and looked at how relationships between the destination, food producers, hospitality and tourists will affect the tourism industry. This provides insight into how important the food system is. When developing a tourist experience in a region it is likely that farmers, market, food production, chefs and cultural organisations will affect the experience. Importantly sustainability plays a large part in gastronomy tourism. Food tourism has been researched by the World Tourism Organization (2012). This could involve local food products. Gastronomy tourism should provide opportunities for the local economy but also ensure the environment and culture are protected. Looking at the cultural heritage literature there is a need to protect the culinary traditions. The UNESCO guidelines for intangible cultural heritage recognise the importance of actions, knowledge and skills in the community. Many times this is included in culinary traditions. Recipes and cooking techniques are taught by watching and being involved in the community. People need to be involved to protect these traditions. This is important especially in destinations with a diverse culture. Local food and traditions can help to differentiate between localities. This can be used to create a brand for the destination and provide knowledge of the culture. Culinary cultures are constantly evolving and change through interactions with society, migration, agricultural changes and exchange between communities. Uzbekistan has great potential for gastronomy tourism due to the traditional foods they produce, varied agricultural industry and great hospitality. Major cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara already have established tourist reputations however there is potential for linking food culture with rural tourism. This demonstrates there is potential to increase attractions in areas by focusing on food culture. However factors such as community involvement, local economy, environmental issues and maintaining diversity need to be considered. This research looks at several factors relating to each other when looking at gastronomy culture and using food culture as a resource to develop tourism in regions.

Methodology:

This article uses a qualitative approach to research. Descriptive analysis and literature review were used. A search was conducted looking at academic references related to gastronomy tourism, sustainable tourism development, food culture and cultural tourism. References to intangible cultural heritage were also considered. The research looks at 4 key factors within sustainable gastronomy culture; economic, cultural, social and environmental. This will help identify potential benefits to using traditional cuisines to develop tourism. The economic factor looks at how food tourism can provide employment opportunities and support small businesses, agricultural producers and local supply chains. The cultural factor looks at how traditional recipes, cooking techniques and food traditions are maintained. The social factor looks at how local people, family run businesses and local knowledge holders are involved within tourism. The environmental factor looks at how food is sourced responsibly, food produced seasonally, efficient water usage and reducing waste. Examples of areas within Uzbekistan were used to demonstrate how food culture can help diversify tourism. Samarkand and Bukhara have great food cultures, Fergana Valley has great agricultural traditions and traditional markets, bakeries and local food producers could provide new experiences for tourists. As this research was based around secondary data and a conceptual analysis of the topic, there were no interviews, questionnaires or statistical analysis required. This research has highlighted areas that can be used to help promote the development of tourism through sustainable gastronomy in Uzbekistan, therefore allowing further quantitative research in the future.

Findings

There are many ways that sustainable gastronomic heritage can help develop tourism across regions. An effective brand can be made using the food culture of the country. There are a wide variety of foods across the country however every region will have their own way of cooking, using certain ingredients and presenting them. This can create unique food products. Food tourism can bring economic benefits by bringing business to local businesses. Local restaurants, traditional bakeries, guest houses, farmers and small food producers will benefit from tourists wanting to try local food. This can create relationships between tourism businesses and local businesses. Thirdly, food tourism can help protect recipes. Creating food demonstrations, food festivals and encouraging the community can help encourage passing down recipes through generations. Experienced cooks can gain recognition and income. Finally, food heritage can be used to promote diversification. Food walks can be created which take tourists to local farms, markets, bakeries, restaurants and cultural locations. This will encourage tourists to visit places not in the most established area. Rural areas could benefit from this with the right resources and willingness. Sustainable food tourism can help create more environmentally friendly practices. Using local produce, seasonal foods, efficient water and less food waste can create responsible tourism. However this very much depends on how they are producing, transporting, storing and consuming their food. There are many challenges within this area including uneven tourism infrastructure, lack of trained staff in some smaller businesses, limited online marketing and possible loss of culture. This shows that simply because Uzbekistan have gastronomic heritage it does not necessarily mean there will be growth in the

region. Careful planning is required to ensure the cultural, economical, social and eco focused objectives are met.

Discussion

A sustainable food culture can offer authentic experiences for tourists. By linking food culture to the overall culture and economy it allows people to participate with food tourism. This can help to create a different image for tourists. Activities relating to food can allow people to participate in the culture including eating, shopping, cooking displays and meeting with food producers. The main consideration would be the regional aspect of the area. As there is variety within the foods of Uzbekistan there is a potential to offer authentic experiences. Samarkand and Bukhara are already known for their culture but can incorporate food into their offering. Other areas can create food products based around their farming, seasonal foods, traditional bread making and eating locally. This can increase tourism within the country. It can also make smaller areas more visible. Food tourism can help connect tourism to local production and small businesses. Restaurants and guesthouses can purchase ingredients from local farms and suppliers. This will however depend on how involved the local businesses are. If policies are put in place to encourage training, development and collaboration between the food producers and hospitality businesses it can ensure tourism provides authentic opportunities for locals. It is important to be careful with keeping culture in place. Food should not be seen as something static to entice more tourism. The local community should be included in the way they want to showcase their food culture. Those with specialist knowledge should be rewarded. Sustainability needs to be considered. There may be extra pressure on food, water and waste resources in the area due to travelling. So the tourism organisation should make sure they are buying responsibly. Try to ensure there isn’t a lot of food waste and that resources are being used efficiently. This will be most successful if they work with local infrastructure, food producers, businesses and public institutions. Showing the planning will require cooperation between regions. Working together with tourism organisations, food producers, culture organisations and local authorities will be needed for the food trails, local food experiences and food festivals in the region. Technology and multilingual resources can be used to make this more accessible. It should be promoted with high quality service, high food safety standards and realistic expectations. When analysing the findings consider the limitations of this method. This method was using secondary research so wouldn’t indicate how impactful gastronomic tourism has on employment, household income, expenditure and the environment in specific regions of Uzbekistan. Further research can be conducted to answer these questions. This could be done through interviewing local food producers, questionnaires with tourists and comparing famous food tourism spots with those becoming popular. Overall, there are many benefits that sustainable gastronomy tourism can provide. However, it must be well executed to ensure local involvement, knowledge of local cuisine is preserved and there is a good balance between the commercial aspects.

Conclusion

A sustainable gastronomy heritage can play an important role in developing tourism in regions of Uzbekistan. An opportunity to promote local culture through traditional foods can be provided. This can help to improve local business through

providing opportunities to learn about the region through its food. As well as, providing tourists with additional activities to compliment their visit to historical sites. This shows how gastronomy tourism can help local food producers. In turn helping small businesses in the area and providing a variety of tourism. However, this will only happen if there is community involvement, appropriate facilities, trained staff and a good collaboration between tourism. Tourism strategies in regions should include gastronomy trails, community led food experiences, responsible buying, recording culture and better online promotion. These should be tailored to the specific region and created with local communities. Due to this being based on secondary sources and no primary field data, further research should be done. This could include looking at the differences in demand across the regions, the economic impact of local food businesses, community views on gastronomy tourism and how environmentally friendly tourism businesses are. Overall, gastronomy can be seen as an attractive asset but it also presents as a living resource that can be incorporated sustainably within the region. This will allow Uzbekistan to move forward with a more varied and inclusive tourism industry.

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