



Exploring Zambia's Culinary Tourism Potential

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Abstract

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<p>Discovering the native cuisine can be the main purpose of travel as is in the case of culinary tourism. Contemporary culinary studies have acknowledged the importance of local cuisine as a fundamental component to a destination's attribute, qualifying its status as a tourist attraction. However, in Zambia this status is presently underdeveloped, despite the huge untapped potential that culinary tourism presents. Therefore, this thesis seeks to explore some of the countries' local cuisines as well as culinary practices which could be developed and promoted as tourism products that could potentially attract food tourists who are seeking unique local and authentic culinary experiences.</p> <p>This study seeks to answer the main research question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is local cuisine impacting the current travel trends for the food tourists?• What kind of practices could help boost the Zambian culinary promotion? <p>The main objective of this study is to identify tourists' motivations as well as expectations regarding their culinary experiences while in a new destination. The target group for the study were the food tourists.</p> <p>The study also seeks to highlight best practices being applied in other culinary tourism destinations. Hence, Finland was used as a case study citing specific attributes on how local cuisine could potentially be used as a unique selling point in culinary tourism.</p> <p>The theoretical framework focuses on food travellers as the main target group in this study, with the aim to investigate how cuisine influences their choice of holiday destinations. Secondly, it also introduces the definition of culinary tourism that points out food as the main motivator for food travellers when choosing a destination. Additionally, the theoretical framework presents the role that local cuisine plays in enhancing tourism experiences.</p> <p>For this research-based thesis, a qualitative method was chosen. A non-participative method was applied for the data collection and thematic analysis was used for analysing the data.</p>
Key words Culinary Tourism, Local Cuisine, Food Tourists, Culinary Promotion

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

In recent years, culinary tourism is becoming a real player in the tourism market, making food and beverage related services and events a source of attraction to a great number of tourists each year. Local cuisine, however, requires strategic decisions about supplying products and services that are relevant towards tourists' demand, thus interactions between private and public actors regarding food and tourism both within and around the destination become the focus point. It is through these interactions that food experiences for tourism consumption are selected, communicated, and made available for consumption.

This paper seeks to explore the potential that Zambia has in terms of culinary tourism, one of the country's lesser exploited types of tourism. This is evidenced by the limited attention awarded to the relationship between tourists and their eating or culinary experiences in the general promotion of the Zambian tourism. This research was mainly prompted by the growing tourist segment known as the food tourists also referred to as the foodies, whose primary motivation to travel is to participate in local cuisine and beverage experiences.

The art of combining food and tourism is having a powerful appeal in the recent years. Offering local products and culinary traditions to both international and national visitors is adding a new component to the image of tourist destinations, hence creating additional economic activities in and around the destination (Halkier 2012, p.1). Despite this obvious appeal, very few African destinations find it easy to translate local cuisine into a resource in tourism development. Turning local cuisine into tourism requires local food experiences – specific products or culinary practices that could be made accessible (organised, produced, packaged, communicated) for visitor consumption.

The main aim of this research is to focus on the current travel trends in relation to local cuisine and its impact on the food tourists' choice of destination. Secondly, to explore the best practices that might be implemented to promote the Zambian culinary products, making them accessible to its international visitors. It also aims at identifying the importance and benefits of promoting local cuisine as a marketing tool to attract the target group (food tourists), who are seeking to get a sense of place through their experience with the destination's local cuisine.

The objective is to identify food tourists' and expectations regarding culinary experiences and particularly their motivation to try out local cuisine while in a new destination. Lastly, to highlight some of the best proven practices that have been adopted in some culinary destinations whose local cuisine have become one of their main tourist attractions.

1.2 Scope and choice of the topic

As the food travel trend continues to grow, with many people searching for the perceived authentic experiences, it has led most destinations to gradually make adjustments in an attempt to respond to the travellers' expectations.

The author's interest to do an in-depth study on the topic was ignited by the 2021 food tourism research, whose primary goal was to create a food tourism trail for the city of Vaasa in Finland. The results of the research revealed how much potential culinary has on a destination and its impact on the growing food travel trend. The author saw the need to research further by including the home country Zambia, whose culinary tourism is currently underdeveloped, while using Finland as a case study to highlight some of its best practices in promoting its local cuisine as culinary tourism products.

Therefore, the author believes that the quest to explore Zambia's culinary tourism potential would help readers and those in search for unique culinary experiences to learn more about the country's cuisine and consider visiting. Secondly, that the best practices highlighted might enlighten relevant authorities on how other destinations are promoting this type of tourism.

1.3 An Overview on Zambia's Tourism

Located in the southern part of Africa, Zambia offers a wide spectrum of tourist attractions from natural (e.g., the Victoria falls, Wildlife safaris) to cultural ones. It is a landlocked country with a total area of 752 612km² and a population of 19.6 million people according to the Zambia Census (2022). Zambia is regarded as a safe and very tourist friendly destination with its infrastructure that is relatively well developed.

The country is inhabited by various tribes and ethnic groups that contribute to the unique mix of different traditions and cultures. These are coupled with interesting cultural events such as traditional ceremonies/festivals which attracts both local and international tourists. Zambia possesses significant potential for tourism and offers a wealth of natural tourism assets (Travel and Tourism 2021). The country is fortunate to have some highly desirable tourism attractions based on wildlife such as 20 national parks and 34 game management areas that together occupy about 10 percent of the country's total land area. Its game reserves provide a high animal density and a sanctuary to a wide variety of wildlife. The country offers one of the best game-viewing opportunities in the world. Zambia is among the most water-rich countries in Africa, and its many rivers cascade into fabulous displays of waterfalls. Among them, is the spectacular 1,708 meters wide Victoria Falls – one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the world and a UNESCO Heritage site. Although there are 17 other beautiful waterfalls dotted around the country. Just like wildlife tours, 'Waterfalls tours' are

becoming a popular trip providing access to these out-of-the-way delights as well as opportunities to see rural village life in Zambia. (Seshamani 2014).

The Zambian tourism industry has for decades focused largely on wildlife tourism promotion. It is high time the country considered widening its tourism capacity to strengthen its image for competitive advantage in growing inbound tourism. According to research, food consumption in the tourism industry is mainly considered a supporting tourist experience and seldom as a core attraction for visitors. Therefore, it cannot only be regarded as food intake but also recognized as a potential brand for marketing to attract tourists. (Getz and Robinson, 2014). Recent studies have also looked at the food tourism concept from specific angles such as visitor experience, culture, and cultural anthropology in line with tourism. (Aguilera, 2018).

Furthermore, Zambia's destination image could also be developed as a culinary tourism destination in addition to the numerous natural, cultural and heritage assets that have already put the country on the world map in terms of tourism. Culinary tourism also known as; Gastro tourism involves travel with the main motivation being the destination's food culture. The country has a very good variety of cuisine and gastronomic products, as well as a very strong culture, presenting a stable mix of pull factors for visitors. Therefore, a range of diverse cuisines can be developed for culinary tourism products to appeal to foodies (people who loves food and are very interested in different types of food).

Being considered as an essential tourist activity, eating is claimed to often create an experience that fulfils the visual, auditory, taste and smell of all the five senses more than anything else. This sensory enjoyment leads tourists to achieve the experiential part during their stay in a new destination. It also gives them an opportunity to explore the other cultures through sensory channels. In this context, culinary tourism can be seen as inspiring and promoting practices that could get visitors engaged in the production of these specific foods and consume local foods and beverages. (Mahachi-Chatibura, 2016).

2 The Zambian Cuisine

A destination's local cuisine is a socio-cultural element of a destination's cultural heritage that defines and mirrors the local culture, traditions, and natural environment (Long, 2004). Traditional Zambian cuisine is part and parcel of its culture. The main staple food in Zambia is maize. This cereal accounts for the highest percentage of calories and protein intake in the Zambian national diet. Of the 22 countries in the world where maize accounts for the highest percentage of the calorie intake in the national diet, 16 are in Africa (Nuss and Tanumihardjo, 2011). In 2007, the daily energy intake from maize in Zambia was 51.8% for adults, with a protein intake of about 54.9% (Nuss and Tanumihardjo, 2011).

The Zambian native cuisine is based on maize flour. It is used as the main ingredient to prepare traditional meals namely nshima, which is prepared by gradually adding maize flour to warm water and allow the porridge to boil for a while, then add more flour while stirring vigorously until it simmers to a texture like that of mashed potatoes. The most common accompaniments (mostly referred to as relish) eaten with nshima include vegetables, fish, meat or poultry products. It is normally eaten at lunch and dinner. Sometimes nshima is replaced with cassava, rice, or potatoes.

Mopane worms (Ifinkubala in local language) is another dish made up of all edible insects such as caterpillars. They are found in mopane woodlands characterized by the mopane tree (*Colophospermum mopane*) from where the caterpillar entirely derives its nutrition. Apart from being considered a delicacy by most Zambians, mopane worms contain significant amounts of micronutrients, such as copper, magnesium, manganese, selenium and zinc according to studies. They are also nutritionally rich in protein, fat content and carbohydrates (Kwiri, Mujuru and Gwala, 2020). Recent studies on edible insects as a means to address global malnutrition and food insecurity, Tao and Li (2018) argued that the practice of consuming insects provides a nutritional relief to many malnourished people especially in developing countries.

In local communities, people also partake in wildlife consumption such as kudu, antelope, impala, baboon, crocodile meat, a very good source of protein, tourists are often encouraged to consume such typical, native cuisine which according to Lamoureux (2018) evokes a sense of place. Huijbens & Einarsson (2018) also added that such consumption is linked to the notion of an "authentic" experience of the host culture.

Although sub-Saharan Africa is not renowned for cheese production and does not have famous indigenous fermented milk products such as yogurt or kefir, there are traditional popular fermented milk products in most countries. An example is Mabisi, a Zambian traditional fermented milk product. Mabisi also referred to as 'sour milk' is made through spontaneous fermentation of raw milk at

ambient temperature using a calabash (gourd), clay pot, plastic, or metal container. It is mainly consumed as a beverage or eaten with nshima. According to the study, Mabisi is one of the fermented dairy products rich in beneficial microbes. (Moonga et al. 2019).

In addition, there are other non-alcoholic cereal-based beverages that are widely consumed across the country, among them are; Munkoyo and Chibwantu. Similar to Mabisi, these beverages are also produced using the fermentation process. The main motivation for local people to produce these products is their appealing taste, improved nutritional B value and prolonged shelf life. (Schoustra et al 2013) The fact that they do not necessarily need refrigeration is another advantage for people especially in rural areas who may lack cooling facilities needed to preserve most beverages. Over the last few years, variants of Munkoyo and Chibwantu have become commercially available via an alternative production process that involves the addition of enzymes and artificial flavourings. Further studies also revealed that fermented products are known to promote human health because they are nutritious and safe, as the microbial communities in the products are highly stable and are able to withstand an invasion by pathogenic bacteria and in some cases detoxify the raw materials. (Obadina, Oyewole & Odusami, 2009).

2.1 Zambia's traditional culinary practices

For most cultures food is not merely for sustenance; it also serves as a conduit for cultural expression as well as preservation. Although the globalisation and cultural diffusion processes are slowly leading to the erosion of traditional culinary practices, Harries, Chisanga & Drimie (2019) noted a reverse in an inclination towards foreign food types to local and plant-based diets.

The country's ability to harness its culinary resources by developing them further into visible and accessible culinary tourism products could become one of the dominant forms of economic activities. Some of which may include organizing food fairs in strategic tourist locations, for the purpose of showcasing the local cuisine. This would be a great opportunity to not only create awareness but also provide a learning experience for the tourists, regarding the country's local cuisine and some of the unique food preservation techniques that have existed from time immemorial which have been embraced as part of the cultural heritage. Successfully converting these traditional cooking techniques and food preservation methods into an educational experience for tourists seeking to explore some of the innovative ways that have been invented by the locals before modern preservations were familiar to them.

- **Sun-drying technique** – Like other cultures, the Zambian food culture has a rich history of having used various techniques regarding food preservation. Among the ancient traditional methods include the familiar sun drying technique, one of the easy and relatively cheaper techniques used to reduce moisture content for microbial growth for instance in fruits,

vegetables, grains, mushrooms and fish. The sun drying technique is widely used in Zambia, this is attributed to the eight months of sunlight annually. Cultivation is done only in selected months of the year making a number of fruits and vegetables seasonal, thus creating a huge need for food preservation for later consumption.

- **Smoking technique** is another important method of food preservation. Formally, after the hunt, hunters smoked large amounts of meat for easier transport back home and also to preserve it. The technique is still being used not only for meat and fish preservation but also for the intense flavour the smoking process gives to the food. Smoked meats are less likely to turn rancid or grow molds than unsmoked ones. (Soul 2005). Additionally, smoking serve to reduce the fat content in food as it is left to drip out during the smoking process, leaving an altogether healthier final product.
- **Dry Salting technique** has been used as a food preservation method from ancient times, due to its ability to preserve most foodstuffs for months and even years. Consequently, this method of preservation confers a unique and delicious flavour to food whose refinement derives from its high degree of salinity. Most fishermen in Zambia use the salting technique first, before sun-drying or smoking the fish, to further prevent it from decay. It is also applied to certain vegetables during the sun-drying process.
- **Fermenting** is the process of encouraging the growth of “good bugs” to inhibit the “bad bugs” that spoil food. This is another commonly used food preservation technique in Zambia. It is mostly used to preserve traditional beverages such as mabisi, munkoyo, chibwantu as earlier mentioned. Many fermented products can be produced without any special equipment, hence it is relatively affordable for the common people.

It is evident that most of these traditional preservation techniques may not be possible in other parts of the world due to varying weather conditions. Yet, the unique and useful features they present, such as eco-friendly, easy to use, cheaper, no side-effects compared to some of the negative health and environmental effects of some artificial preservatives making them worth promoting to the outside world. More so, there is need to motivate the locals whom according to Aluga and Kabwe (2016) seem to be more attracted towards modern preservation techniques despite their many harmful side-effects. Creating awareness campaigns, seminars, newspaper articles and possibly new industries aimed at promoting these traditional food preservation techniques by highlighting their health as well as environmental benefits would greatly benefit the locals, the government as well as the future generations.

3 The Concept of Culinary Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2017a, defines culinary tourism also known as gastronomic tourism as a type of tourism activity which is characterized by the visitor's experience linked with food related products and activities while travelling. It may also involve other related activities such as visiting the local producers, participating in food festivals, and attending cooking classes. Furthermore, the World Food Travel association (2021) defines culinary tourism industry clusters to include three categories of actors that make up the industry. The first cluster, "food and beverage" which comprises service providers to form the food industry such as markets, cooking classes and food festivals. Grocery stores and food production facilities also belong to this cluster. The second cluster is the "travel and hospitality" this includes operators working within the tourism industry, from tour operators and DMOs to transportation and accommodation. The third and last cluster is named "others", it covers the supporting organisations that indirectly affect the food tourism industry, such as the government, schools, suppliers, and the media. (World Food Travel Association 2021).

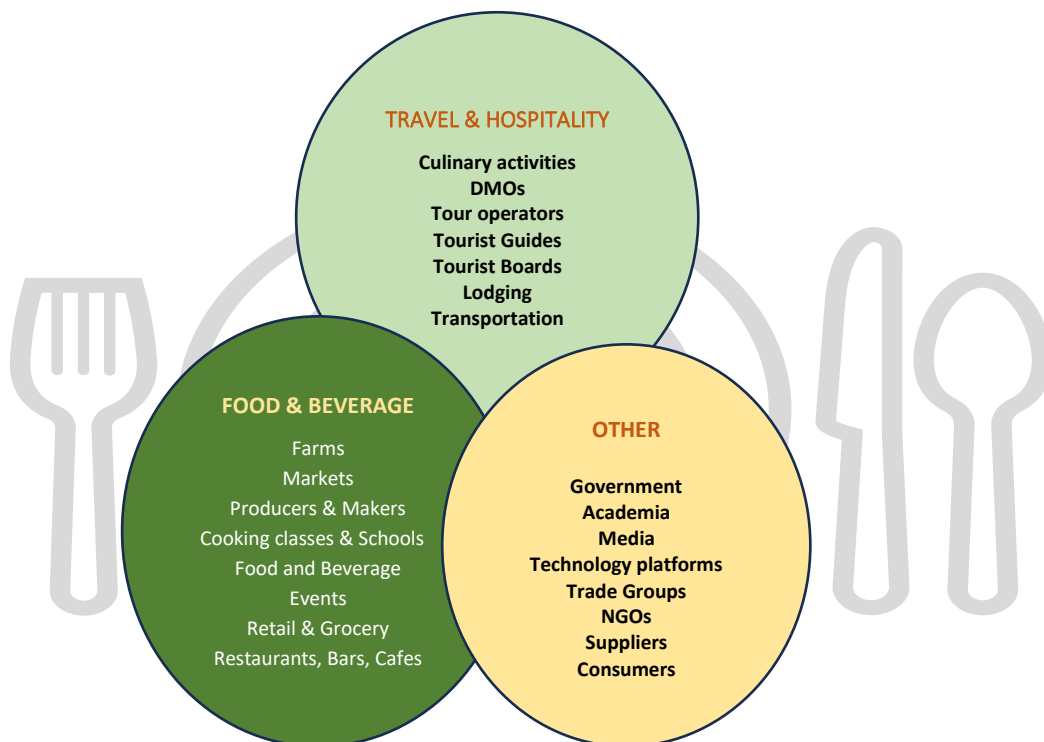


Figure 1. Food tourism industry clusters (World Food Travel Association 2021)

The world food travel association have evolved their culinary tourism or food travel definition from 2001 to the present day. The definition from the year 2018, with food being one of the main motivators for the traveller and when choosing a destination as illustrated in figure 2. The search for unique food experiences in particular the food or culinary tourists also referred to as the “foodies”, where they are willing to spend more money and time on food and beverages than ever before. This has given rise to the current definition of culinary tourism as the act of traveling for a taste of place to get a sense of place. (World Food Travel Association, 2021).

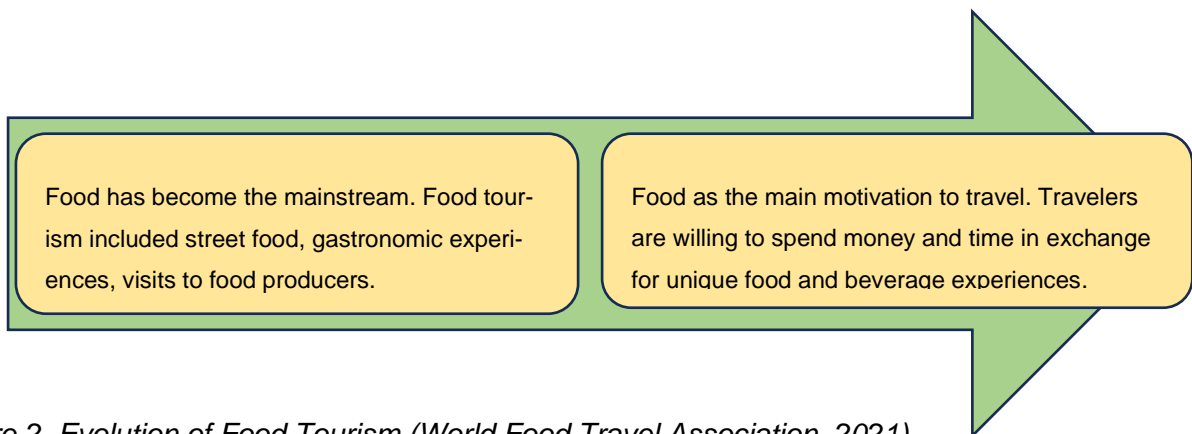


Figure 2. Evolution of Food Tourism (World Food Travel Association, 2021)

Even though everyone must eat while travelling, the most common way to define culinary tourism according to Everett (2016) is that one of the motivators of the trip must be food related. Sormaz, Akmese, Gunes and Aras (2016) defined culinary tourism as “being in pursuit of unique experience of eating and drinking and getting to know the unique characteristics of a country through food”. World Food Travel association (2021) have also noted that 53% of leisure travellers currently can be classified as culinary tourists. Among visitors, food experiences have been a popular part of traveling for a long time. While food tourism as an industry on its own has continued to grow, it is increasingly becoming a subject of study among researchers too. (Duralia 2017). From as early as the 16th and 17th century, the research had found that while traveling, people considered food to be one of the significant differences between their own culture and the culture of the destination they were visiting. Therefore, food and food culture have since been considered as an interesting factor that reveal in depth, the true values, heritage, and way of the life of the locals (Mulcahy 2019). People can express pride in their heritage by cooking and sharing their national foods by showcasing their ways of doing things with people from other cultures (Le 2017).

3.1 The role of Cuisine in Tourism Experience

Culinary tourism is an increasingly expanding sector of tourism in which tourists experience local food and beverages of other destinations and appreciate their unique cultures. Over the years as a matter of fact, culinary tourism is becoming an emergent alternative to mass tourism. It is becoming evident that many holiday destinations worldwide are being sought after for their traditional cuisine and beverages. In recent scientific literature, culinary tourists are travelling specifically in search for genuine and memorable experiences by means of authentic local cuisine and beverages. This was also supported by the UNWTO that recognised food as a key element of all cultures and a major component of global intangible heritage. As such, culinary tourism incorporates moral and economical qualities dependent on the territory, landscape, local culture, local food items and authenticity (UNWTO 2013).

3.1.1 Holiday satisfaction

Satisfaction is considered as the outcome of a subjective evaluation of whether something meets or exceeds the needs of individuals. It is argued that local cuisine and local cuisine experiences are an important source of enjoyment during a holiday. However, tourist satisfaction is a multifaceted concept and influenced by various attributes including perceived value, the destination environment, and the tourist themselves (Andersson and Mossberg, 2017). Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen (2017) also added that local cuisine experiences can also determine tourist satisfaction as they could add to the holistic or overall holiday experience. Prior research (Oliver and Burke, 1999) also demonstrated that customer satisfaction significantly influences future behavioural intentions such as revisit and/or positive word of mouth. Alternatively, negative experiences with local cuisine may cause the opposite behaviour. Moreover, researchers such as (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017) suggest that attitudes towards local food can also be predictors and determinants of customers' satisfaction.

3.1.2 Authenticity perception

A wide range of attempts have been made to define the concept of authenticity. Therefore, common themes emerge with words such as original, real, genuine, true, and honest often used (Özdemir and Seyitoğlu, 2017). Authenticity is recognized as an important aspect of the culinary tourism (Ellis et al., 2018) with local cuisine recognised as part of the culture, heritage, and traditions of a place. Additionally, other studies have also added that authenticity is a vital component of the visitor's experience which acts as an underlying driver in tourist destination choice, travel motivation and satisfaction (Cetin and Bilgihan, 2016). It can therefore be argued that tourists who search for local food are also on a quest to find authenticity (Ram et al., 2016). As other

researchers have also highlighted, tourists seek authentic, rewarding, meaningful, multisensory, and transformative experiences when visiting places. (Buzova et al., 2020; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022).

3.1.3 Memorable culinary experiences

Memorable food and drink experiences have been linked to an increase in travel satisfaction and positive word of mouth (Stone and Migacz 2016). According to Tsai 2016; Ali, Hussain and Ragan 2014, locality could be one of the factors that influence tourists' memorable experiences. Researching local cuisine in Taiwan, Tsai (2016) noted that travellers who experience local gastronomy expressed a higher level of attachment to the destination, as food unites visitors with a local culture. Further research about food and souvenirs, Lin and Mao (2015) suggested that food helps tourists to appreciate an abstract culture via tangible means which may create a connection with the culture. Kim (2014) also added décor as another element that boosts tourists' imagination which tailors the experience. Canny (2014) noted that the service quality was the chief factor influencing restaurant satisfaction, followed by food quality and the physical environment.

Social interactions are a key to creating memories in food and beverage experience because of the individuals who shared in the experience. Chandralal and Valenzuela (2015) developed a memorable tourism experience (MTE) scale to include social connections and human interactions' influence on MTE. An old model developed by Quaj and Wang (2004) described a food experience as either a "consumer" experience or a "peak" experience that is likely to be created when consumers' utilitarian needs have become intensified by the introduction of novel elements. This finding was later reproduced in experimental designs Crollic and Janiszewski (2016). Table 1 below represents a summary of the five factors that may impact memorable food or drink tourism experiences.

Table 1. Possible determinants of memorable food/drink experiences.

<i>Determinants</i>	<i>Proposed definitions</i>	<i>Based on</i>
Local culture	Offers the opportunity to taste dishes made with local ingredients, recipes, and technique	Kim (2014) and Lin and Mao (2015)
Décor	Facilitates the immersion into the food/drink experience using music, design, architecture, colour, and smell	Kim (2014)
Service quality	Based on the extent to which staff is perceived by travellers as being friendly, courteous, helpful, and willing to go the extra mile	Kim (2014)
Social interaction	Relates to whether food/drink experience fosters social interaction between the travellers and the residents as well as between travellers and their party	Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013, 2015);
Novelty	Refers to the extent to which the food/drink experience provides as intensification of daily life experiences by offering novel, fresh, and original features	Quan and Wang (2004); Ritchie and Crouch (2003)

3.2 Local cuisine as a tourism attraction

Local cuisine is proving to have an undeniable influence on the destinations. Being one of the cultural tourism products, the significance of food has increasingly been emphasized in many destinations. Hence, culinary tourism turns to be one of the factors that tourists use to measure the quality of a trip, thus destinations that provide better cuisine will have the competitive advantage over others. Subsequently, culinary tourism contributes greatly to the overall economic performance of a particular destination (Wijaya 2019). The influence of cuisine has the potential to positively affect the destinations' cultural and economic aspects. According to Allied Market Research (2020), the global culinary tourism market value was estimated at \$1,116.7 billion in 2019, and it is projected to

reach \$1,796.5 billion by 2027, an estimated 16.8% growth between 2020-2027. These numbers indicates that it is both globally and locally something worth investing into.

In addition, the World Food Travel Association (2021) at least 25% of the total visitor spending in a destination, is on food and beverage. Hence Culinary tourism is proving to be a flourishing niche belonging to the industry which is expected to grow considerably as it is becoming more recognized all over the world. This proves that a destination could greatly benefit economically through its distinctive food and beverage specialities. Deducing that a destination which promotes its unique food culture would more likely take the lead in the tourism market with minimum marketing and product development.

Therefore, local cuisine could be the main attraction appealing to those seeking authentic and novel experiences (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen 2017). Local cuisine has become an important factor in the tourist experience and a key determinant in tourist destination choice. Cetin and Bilgihan (2016) added that local cuisine is important for tourist satisfaction. Despite a growing interest in food tourism (Ellis et al., 2018; Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2017, 2016) a couple of studies examined whether tourist's attitudes to local food can influence their travel behaviour (Chen and Huang, 2019). Particularly, the inter-relationship between tourist attitude towards local food, destination choice, motivation, and holiday satisfaction remain relatively unexplored (Williamson and Hassanli, 2020).

3.3 Local cuisine as a pull factor

Consumers are increasingly interested in local cuisine (Williamson and Hassanli 2020, Ellis et al, 2018). Research shows that for some tourists, food represents a 'pull' factor and a reason to choose a specific destination (Su et al., 2018). Tourists may be drawn to a region to sample a Michelin starred restaurant, such as Noma in Denmark. Additionally, tourists may be attracted to a destination based on regional specialities for instance tapas in Seville or pintxos in San Sebastian. In contrast, food such as paella in Valencia or pizza in Naples may be perceived as an essential part of the holiday experience but may not entice tourists to choose a certain destination (Bjork and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016). In a similar manner, tourists who have a casual interest in food may value local cuisine at a destination as a traditional and authentic part of the culture and heritage. however, few studies have investigated the influence of attitudes to local cuisine as an antecedent in destination choice.

3.4 Local cuisine as a travel motivator

There could be various reasons as to why people choose to travel and why they choose one destination over the other(s). According to the push and pull factor theory, first introduced by Dann (1977) in the context of traveling, these reasons can be divided into internal “push factors” and external “pull factors”. Even though the theory is rather old, and the travel industry has changed tremendously since it was introduced, yet it is still widely used while researching and analysing travel motivations. While analysing the push and pull factors in the context of motivation for food traveling, Su, Johnson and O’Mahoney (2018) found that the number one internal motivator among the research subjects was the taste of food. Recently, attempts to identify facets of Memorable Travel Experiences (MTE) have extended to culinary tourism, with findings largely suggesting that food experiences while traveling are more memorable than those experienced at home. It is believed that memory is an important aspect and perhaps the single most important source of information that motivates a traveller when decided to revisit a destination. Positive memories of enjoying local foods also enhance tourists’ attachment to the place (Tsai, 2016). Secondly, the biggest push factor was found to be cultural experience and thirdly, it was socialisation. Therefore, it is not surprising that socialization has been indicated as a dimension in travel motivation in food tourism studies (Kim 2013).

The same study revealed that among the food enthusiasts, there are three most important pull factors for a destination to be chosen as a food travel destination according to Su, Johnson & O’Mahoney (2018) namely, core food tourism appeals, traditional food appeals and local destination appeals. Similarly, in another study about wine tourism conducted by (Toncev et al, 2016) in Tri Morave sub region, socialisation with friends was found to be among the main internal motivators especially for the returning customers. In addition to that, authentic experience and learning something new were motivating factors for revisiting a destination.

Furthermore, the survey research on culinary motivators of tourists in Costa del Sol by Perez-Priego et al (2018), revealed that the culinary motivators of an individual are conditioned by the degree of interest they have toward local cuisine. In this survey, the respondents who had a high interest towards local cuisine, perceived food as being more than just something to eat. They viewed it from the angle of “triple purpose”, meaning that in addition to just gaining a new culinary experience, they saw food as a means to learn about the culture of the destination and a way of socializing with the locals, relatives, or friends. (Perez-Priego et al 2018).

4 Culinary Tourism Promotion

In a relatively old British food journal, Henderson (2009) stated that tourism is a very competitive industry and destinations compete for visitors offering their local and unique characteristics. Henderson pointed out that destinations should take advantage of their local and national uniqueness and use them as a differentiation and value proposition in their marketing and advertising efforts. Therefore, one of the key strategies in culinary tourism marketing is for destinations to plan their marketing messages that would drive tourists to try local cuisine and products or to guide them to visit sites that are related to food. Or even an immersive experience such as cooking local food accompanied by the destination's residents.

Birkic, Klopota and Grgic (2020) added that the internet is a vast platform to promote tourism related products, as tourists nowadays are relying largely on the internet when it comes to travel information as well as information pertaining to their choice of destination. Thus, digital marketing offers an advantage for rural tourism to be able to directly contact potential tourists, communicate with them about destination's services and products they offer. In addition, the authors also pointed out that content marketing goal is to attract customers to the services and products presented. Therefore, the use of the correct channel, at the right time, with a precise and specific message for the target group results in effective marketing. (Birkic, Klopota and Grgic, 2020).

4.1 Cuisine as a destination branding tool.

Earlier authors such as Woisetchlager and Michaelis (2012), defined brand image as consumer perceptions that are formed in their memories which are reflected in brand associations. Brand image associations that exist in consumers' minds about a brand include symbolic meanings and functions, which are aspects of the tangible or intangible quality of certain attributes of goods or services (Persson, 2010). Therefore, in terms of culinary tourism, local food could be considered the main component to building a destination brand as it has a strong connection with the destination which makes it even more interesting for tourists' visit.

Most recent authors have highlighted how challenging it is for tourism destinations to build a brand image while at the same time form and maintain durable customer relationships through marketing. (Latif et al 2016). Thus, destinations ought to have organisations and other stakeholders whose major role is to make constant improvements on the destination's brand image. As brand image is related to the creation of competitive advantage for the destination and its products, thereby creating an attractive image in the customers' minds (Latif et al., 2016). According to Mankhomwa et al (2020), there is a link between tourism, food, destination, branding, and marketing due to the interconnected cultural value of both the tourist and the local population.

4.2 Cuisine as a promotional tool via social media

At the beginning of the twentieth century, most enterprises and organisations used the internet as a one-way communication, which is comparable to traditional promotion tools to advertise their products and services. Nowadays, thanks to social media, the use of the internet in marketing communication is changing significantly. User generated content on various social networks largely determines the image of a destination, its revenue and ultimately its survival in the market space.

Lately, there has been a heavy influence of social media on travellers, particularly food tourists who could also be divided into segments by generations. According to research conducted by Kaufman (2020), he found that particularly Millennials (born 1981-1996) and Generation Z (born 1997-2021) who are particularly interested in memorable experiences including food traveling experiences, and the best way to reaching these “foodies” would be by marketing these experiences on online platforms. As such, destinations should create experiences and market them via social media to attract this segment of travellers who are seeking new experiences.

Fortunately, the new opportunities for communication with users are also available to organisations in the tourism industry. More and more literature publishers such as Hysa B, Karasek A, Zdonek I (2021) acknowledge the increase in the use of social media by various age groups. This also includes making travel arrangements. Research also shows that many recreational travellers' choice of destination is being influenced by online sources. Destination Analysis (2019) reviewed that (52%) used online travel agency, recommendations such as TripAdvisor (44%), destination-specific (18.5%) when travel planning.

Although, there has been little research focusing on the use of this medium in destination marketing, with the help of the current development of new technologies, social media will play a significant role in marketing activities in the field of tourism and more especially supporting the promotion of destinations by guaranteeing an appropriate number and type of tourists. As tourists are more and more willing to use social media at various stages of their journey, such as planning, realising, and sharing travel experiences. Social media has provided an opportunity for destination marketers to leverage on, this include building a relationship with tourists before, during, and after their stay.

5 Finland as a Culinary Tourism Destination

“This is Europe’s hottest new food destination” wrote Hetter (2018) in a CNN travel edition about Finland. As one of the main goals for writing this thesis was to explore possibilities to promote the Zambian culinary products as tourism experiences. Finland being relatively new as culinary tourism destination was chosen as a case study following the various strategies that are successfully being implemented to promote its culinary tourism.

The Finnish food tourism evolves around stories as well as cultural heritage. The usage of pure, natural, and local ingredients plays a big role in the experiences. There are different food trials and picking, cooking, and eating experiences in natural sceneries, guided tours and activities in specialised shops and breweries. Not forgetting different food events, such as fairs or markets as well as market halls that are popular especially during the summertime. (Visit Finland 2020). Finnish food travelling experience product is said to be at its best when travellers get to take an active role to learn something in the process.

One of the main cornerstones of food tourism in Finland, apart from the great tasty food and drinks, is a cohesive product that makes a seamless entity together with the story. In addition, specialized and customized customer service is also an important part when creating a memorable experience for the customer, and this takes dedicated personnel.

The story, the milieu as well as the aesthetics need to all work together. (Visit Finland 2020). Finland’s goal is to invest in a responsible and sustainable food tourism, so both ethics and transparency needs to be in order. Hence it is beneficial for stakeholders such as local providers to work together to create mutually profitable and even better products as well as services for the customers (figure 3)

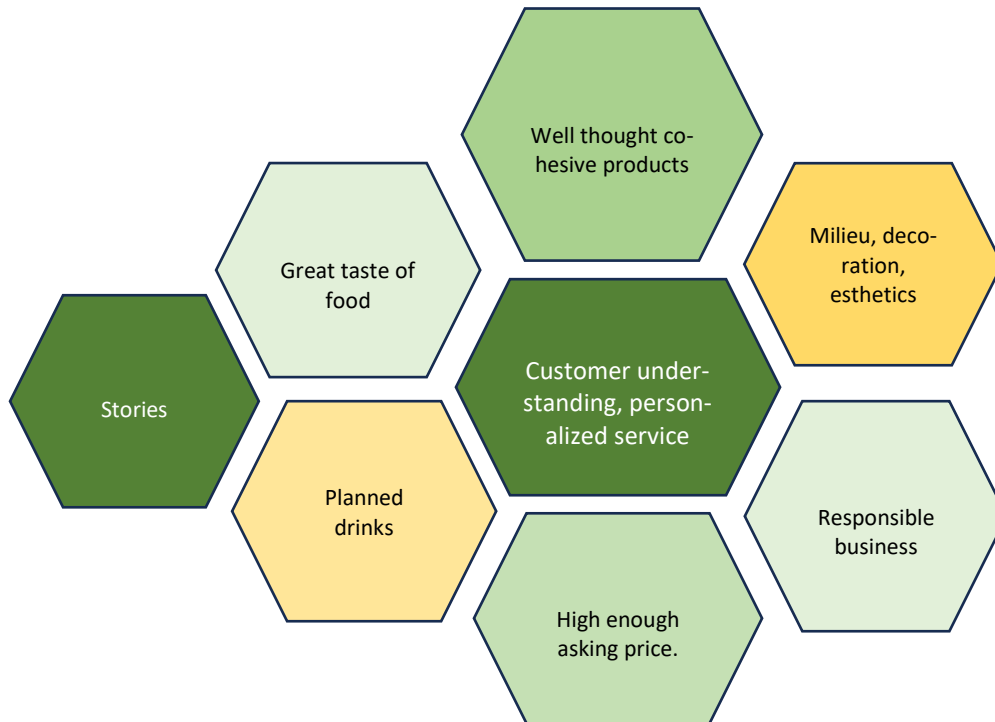


Figure 3. The corner stones of Finnish food tourism (Visit Finland 2020)

Culinary tourism is one of the central themes that is continually being developed in Finland's tourism strategy. According to the strategy, cooperation between operators, development of new food tourism products and increasing know-how are needed. Food and food tourism is the only tourism "activity" in which all tourists participate, as food is an increasingly attractive part of tourism. For this reason, Finland through the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment created a travelling strategy called Food Travel Strategy of Finland 2015-2020, it was developed to support development work of food travelling as a tool to be used for operators and actors on the travelling field. This was preceded by the 2020-2028 strategy: Hungry for Finland. Its main vision is to develop the Finnish food tourism in a coordinated manner by building functional ecosystem works as a national coordinator, developing networking, versatile tools and increasing competence for industry operators. Through this strategy, the operators in travelling industry are encouraged to collaborate experiential and responsible food tourism products which are easy to access and easy to buy. (Visit Finland 2020).

5.1 Finnish Food Travel Strategy

The Finnish Food Strategy's core marketing messages and curated product themes highlight the Finnish diverse food culture, clean food, and innovative food products (figure 4). This is aimed at strengthening the image of Finland as a culinary" tourism country, and to guide product development.

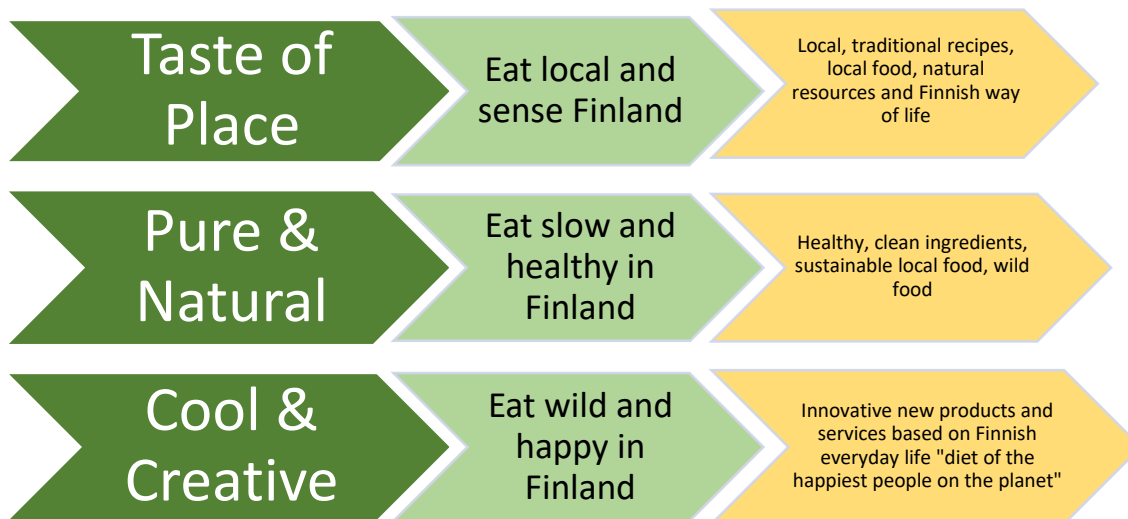


Figure 4 Finnish Food Strategy themes (Visit Finland 2020)

- “Taste of Place – Eat local and sense Finland!”** This product theme communicates the local food culture. It emphasizes the “Finnishness” and what Finnish lifestyle tastes like. The Finnish Food Travel Strategy attempts to communicate through this theme, the rich, local, and regional food culture could freshly be recognised. The Finnish food culture includes the picking of ingredients by oneself freely in the forest, such as mushrooms, berries, and wild herbs. The theme also emphasizes the importance of having the local food products as well as wild food where they can be visible and accessible to the customers. Making it possible for travellers to familiarize themselves with the Finnish way of life via food.
- “Pure & Natural – Eat slow and healthy in Finland!”** This theme wishes to convey a message about cleanliness and greenness of Finland. Nature in Finland is kept very clean and clean food products are good for ones' body and peace of mind. Wild food is one of the most appealing dimensions of Finnish food travel. In addition to this is the friendly and ecological Finnish climate which could be attributed to waste management and minimal food production (Havas & Adamsson 2020.)

- **“Cool & Creative – Eat wild and happy in Finland!”** This aspect encourages entrepreneurs and companies to innovate new things, products, and services from the “diet of the happiest people on the planet” according to the World Happiness Report (2022) and to create new and easy-going services and products based on the Finnish everyday life. Generally, culinary experiences in Finland can be very exciting and exotic for travellers such as the different kinds of restaurants. According to Havas & Adamsson (2020), daring and courageous are strengths of the Finish food travel, thus entrepreneurs are also encouraged to corporate and create new food travel products for instance, in form of “food trails” or “food routes” which include food and food related activities. This is in line with the visit Finland (2020) whose aim was to increase awareness of the Finnish food culture and food travel through top line quality food travel products, hence increase the general competitiveness of the travelling and food sector in Finland.

The Finnish food travel evolves around stories and cultural heritage, hence, the usage of pure, natural and local ingredients play an important role in creating experiences. Most of these experiences are created along the forementioned food trails which are packed with interesting activities such as cooking, picking (mushroom/berries) and eating experiences in natural sceneries, tours in specialised factories and breweries. Not forgetting different kinds of food events, markets and market halls that are popular especially during the summer-time. (Visit Finland 2020). The Finnish food traveling experience product is at its best when the traveller gets to take an active part and learn something new in the process. Therefore, one of the main cornerstones of culinary tourism in Finland, apart from the great tasting food and drinks, is a cohesive product that makes a seamless entity together with the story. Specialized and customized customer service are also an important part when creating a memorable experience for the customer, and this takes a skilled and dedicated personnel. The story, the milieu and the aesthetics need to all work together. (Visit Finland 2020).

5.2 Making Finnish Food Traditions and Stories Visible

Hungry for Finland is the lab and accelerator for the development for Finnish food tourism. Its main aim is to make Finnish food tourism products experiential and responsibly purchased through the development of food tourism networks and increasing expertise. The Hungry for Finland network acts as a national coordinator, offering among other things trending studies, webinars and seminars, research and development projects as well as information and versatile tools needed to increase competence for the industry operators. Therefore, to achieve this, projects such as HOHA are meant to help Hungry for Finland build a functional ecosystem project. The HOHA project seeks to reach out to the food tourism entrepreneurs in sparsely populated regions to develop experiential and purchasable food tourism products through storytelling. (Visit Finland 2023).

The project has been implemented in the form of a series of workshops held remotely. These workshops were flexibly implemented, taking into account the needs of participating companies. One of the goals is to bring Finnish food traditions and stories to light. Creating an atmosphere where entrepreneurs could get ideas for their own storytelling projects, how to review them and make them visible in the food tourism of the region. Secondly, to develop story-based food tourism concepts under the guidance of a story-telling expert. Encouraging companies to pilot new products after the workshop using instructions and tools given in the workshop.

Thirdly, to increase communication skills of food operators in sparsely populated areas, by focusing on communication as well as marketing tools that are introduced during communication training sessions. The fourth goal is to allow the entrepreneurs to further develop storytelling food tourism products they built in the workshop with the help of experts. Finally, a user friendly guide will be built and presented to the companies involved in the project, to use it in service delivery and to effectively communicate to the right target group.

6 Methodology

This part of the thesis discusses the methods used for this research. The data collection method and data analysing method will also be introduced. Furthermore, the description of the empirical research process will be made in this chapter.

6.1 Non-participant Observation as Data Collection Method

While using observation as the primary method in research, it is essential to have clear and distinct research questions and be consistent and systematic throughout the study (Ciesielsca, Boström & Öhlander 2017). The aim of this research was to examine the characteristics of the key motivators that influence food travellers' choice of destination. Furthermore, to find answers to the following research questions:

- How is local cuisine impacting the current travel trends for food tourists?
- What kind of practices could help boost the Zambian culinary promotion?

To answer the research questions, the appropriate methods needed to be chosen carefully to best serve the purpose of the research. Whereas quantitative research is based on numerical data that can be used to for example confirm or disconfirm a specific hypothesis, qualitative research can be used when the aim is to find more comprehensive understanding on the research matter (Streefkerk 2019). When conducting qualitative research, the two main ways to collect data are interviews and observation (Adedoyin 2020). There are two different approaches to observation research method: participant and nonparticipant. In participant observation, the researcher actively takes part and tries to understand and observe the researched situation from the point of view of the subject. While in the non-participant approach, the researcher remains passive and observes the situation or subjects without interacting or intervening in any way. (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey 2005.)

The nature of this research is qualitative rather than quantitative, as the main goal was to explore Zambia's culinary tourism potential while identifying the best practices being applied by other culinary tourism destinations. Considering the nature of the target group (food tourists), the researcher opted to utilise technological arrangements during the non-participant observation process rather than physical, as the latter would have demanded more resources timewise as well as financially. Secondly, physical arrangements would have prevented the researcher from accessing a larger representation of the target group regarding the subject. Technological arrangements on the other hand, provided an opportunity to reach a wide range, represented by different countries, age groups, food culture and values, hence creating a wider perspective in

answering the main research question. For these reasons, participant observation methods were ruled out.

To find reliable and current data for this research, online sources such as country tourism websites, food travel sites, travel blogs and food travel related articles were utilised. There was sufficient data on social media channels such as Facebook, food travel magazines where the target group expressed their views as well expectations regarding local cuisine while on their tours in a new destination were noted. Following these channels, also revealed a lot of similarities between what was being reported in articles and blogs as the 'Current Travel Trends' matched the expressions of the observed target group on these social media channels. Therefore, the observation method using online sources was an ideal method for the research as it provided complimentary data.

6.2 Thematic Analysis as Data Analysing Method

Qualitative researchers ought to demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner" (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules 2017), choosing a suitable data analysis method and tools are therefore one of the most important parts of the research process.

Thematic analysis is one of the data analysing methods that can be used when handling a large amount of raw qualitative data. The main aim of this method is to identify common themes within the data, and to organise it based on those themes. Thematic analysis makes larger entities easier to understand and unlike other more advanced analysing methods and it does not require a lot of prior technological knowledge and skills from the researcher (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules 2017).

The first step in the thematic analysis is to get familiar with the data by carefully going through it. In the second phase, the data is "coded" into small packets of information and underlying topics and key themes. The third step is for creating theme groups for the coded data where similar themes are in their own groups. The final step in the process before the data is ready to be reported, is to name the theme groups with descriptive titles (Sendze 2019). The process was reviewed multiple times during the process to make sure all themes were found and accurate. After categorising the data, each group was named with a descriptive title that summarises the underlying theme. Once the final analysis was made, the findings were read and transferred to the results.

Therefore, thematic analysis was chosen as the data analysing method for this research as it allowed to view the raw written data in a more organised, easily readable form. Since all the data was already in a digital form, going through it using the coding method made it a lot easier to understand.

In addition to conducting a thematic analysis, an observation table was used as a tool for summarising and getting familiar with the data. The key themes were organised and picked from online sources as shown in appendix 1, this helped to support the analysing process and reliability of the data, making it easier to read and understand the data. Description of how the observation table was built and used was included in table 2.

6.3 The Research Process

The empirical research process started after finalising the theoretical framework part of this thesis. The observation began on the 30th of August up to 7th of September, 2023. Analysing of the data took place between 12th of September and 18th of September, 2023. Thereafter, writing down of the results began on the 23rd of September and went on until 30th of September, 2023. The conclusion as well as the discussion of the research findings were written between the 2nd of October and the 9th of October, 2023.

The observation process was done using online sources between 30th of August and 7th of September 2023. Google was used as the main search engine to look up for different food travel blogs, articles as well as websites discussing the current travel trends in relation to culinary. Hashtags were also used on social media platforms such as Facebook and TripAdvisor to identify posts and comments made by the target group regarding food related activities they enjoy or expect to experience during their trip(s). The research included both wider searches such as “the current culinary tourism trends” and more specific searches on “when and why local cuisine during travels”.

During the observation process, the common “key themes” were identified from the data collected as the target group’s perceptions and views towards local cuisine while in a new destination. The identified themes were written in a short form for easy reading and to get familiar with the data before writing down the results. The observation process was a guide to answer the research question of this thesis. Whose main focus was to investigate how local cuisine is impacting the current travel trends for the target group (food tourists). Secondly, to explore some of the best practices that could help boost the Zambian culinary tourism promotion.

Table 2. Observation Process

Date	Key Themes	Summary
30 th August	Discovering Hidden Gems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Exploring off the beaten path destinations ➤ True flavors and traditions of the local culture
1 st September	Gaining authentic cultural experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A memorable eating experience on the plate. ➤ Captivated by the story behind each dish and its significance to the locals and their culture.
2 nd September	Expanding culinary horizons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tasting excellent flavors of high quality and healthy ingredients.
4 th September	Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Favouring local and pure organic ingredients ➤ Embracing Zero-kilometre food trend.
4 th September	Food quality and authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Showcased authentic local dishes that are unique to the destination and its rich culture.
6 th September	Food safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Concerns about High standard of hygiene ➤ Special diets options
7 th September	Connecting with the locals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ E.g Attending cooking classes

The themed analysis was done from the raw data collected from webpages. The analysis started with cutting texts into small parts by using different colours to code, identify and highlight important themes as well as key words in them. Thereafter, parts of the descriptions were rearranged and grouped based on similarities as well as differences. Miro an online mind map was used to create thematic map of the findings.

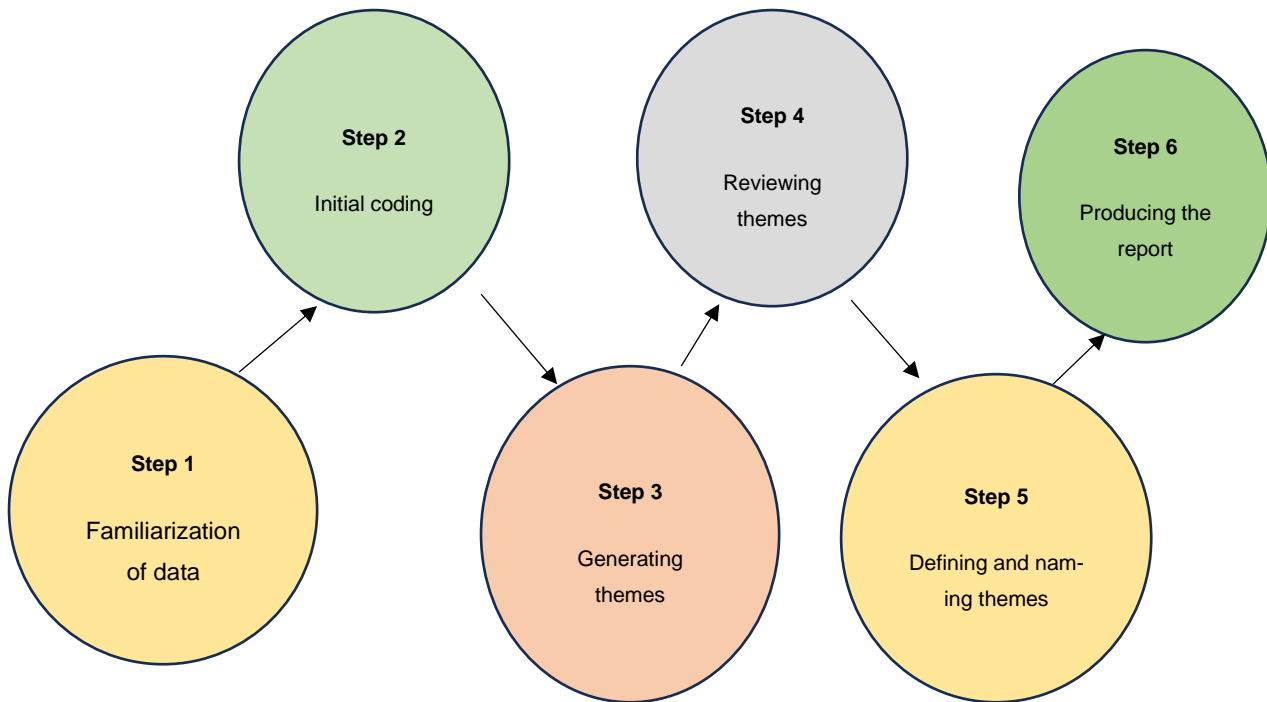


Figure 5. Steps of the analysing process (adopted from Sendze 2019)

7 Results

This chapter discusses the results of the research. The characteristics of the key themes were highlighted in the observation process. These were viewed from the perspective of the target groups' motivation to try out local cuisine while in a new destination. These were based on the current literature on food travel trends as well as social media sources. Secondly, strategic food related activities or practices that could be included in the promotion of the Zambian local cuisine as potential culinary tourism products.

7.1 Key themes

- 1) **Discovering hidden gems** – The willingness to explore off the beaten path destinations to experience authentic cuisine, lead many food tourists on an exciting adventure to discover hidden gems such as a local market or a family run restaurant that could uncover unique local culinary experiences that might not be available in the tourist hotspot.
- 2) **Eating Experiences** – Many are taking advantage of the flourishing local cuisine options during travels. A thrilling experience that can provide a sense of accomplishment and openness to the overall eating experience.
- 3) **Expanding Culinary Horizons** – An exposure to new and unique flavours and ingredients during travels offers an opportunity that food travellers consider as “expanding their culinary horizon”. Activities such as sampling local cuisine during cooking classes, enhances culinary knowledge as well as appreciation for the destination’s unique culinary traditions and techniques.
- 4) **Sustainability** - It is apparent that sustainability in food tourism is increasingly becoming an important aspect that diners also seem to be appreciating its positive impact on both the environment as well as one’s own health. This was evidenced by the target group’s appreciation for destinations and dining places where local and organic foods were included on the menu, owing to their appreciation for local and pure ingredients and the growing Zero-kilometre food trend. Secondly, the demonstration of zero-waste techniques as a way of minimising waste as much as possible in dining places.
- 5) **Food Quality and Authenticity** – Finding quality and authentic food is a concern for many travellers. One way for most travellers is to inquire from the locals where fresh and well prepared dishes are sold. This creates a learning experience about the rich food culture of a destination, expressed through traditional food preparation, food preservation techniques and possible history behind them.
- 6) **Food Safety** - Food safety is one of the major concerns that preoccupy tourists especially when travelling to unfamiliar destinations. The target group expressed their willingness to pay extra where necessary to dine in an environment with high standards in terms of

hygiene. Secondly, where restaurant staff demonstrated adequate knowledge for ingredients and paid attention to customers' requests for special diets due to allergy or personal preference.

- 7) ***Building Connections with Locals*** – To others, trying local food provides a natural icebreaker for conversation and interaction with the locals. This is an act that helps tourists to build a lasting connection with the locals, even after their trip is over and encourages future visits to the same destinations.

7.2 Strategic Food Related-activities

During the research it was also clear that apart from the target group's eagerness to try out local cuisine while in a new destination, they also expressed their keen interest to participate in food related activities which according to them, created memorable experiences during and after their trips. These included Food trails (tours), local cooking classes, restaurants, food and cultural festivals, fairs, local markets and farm visits. Most of these activities were described as being enjoyable and also convenient, as could be participated in by various segments such as, family travellers, a group of adults, couples as well as solo travellers. It was also apparent that these food related activities if well implemented could be used in the promotion of Zambia's culinary products to its international tourists.

i) Food trails (tours)

This is a trend that is becoming popular with most destinations. Creating the possibility for travellers to explore in-depth some authentic dining experiences that reflect local and regional flavors and culture. Food travellers are becoming more and more interested in such activities as they hold great historical and cultural value of the destination.

ii) Local cooking classes

An activity that has increasingly filled the travel itineraries. Food travelers who are also interested in cooking are looking forward to taking part in a cooking class while on a tour around the destination. They are considered very entertaining and a great opportunity to learning different recipes and techniques from a local chef.

iii) Farm visits (Local producers)

A fun way of taking tourists through the food production process, from planting to producing food and drinks, learning how food reaches the table. Visitors find it quite fascinating, visiting local farms

while enjoying the countryside. In most destinations, the producers organise and guide the visit, or work in conjunction with specialised guides and agencies for instance to visit productions of honey, beer, fruit plantations as examples.

iv) Local Cuisine Restaurants

Food travellers are always curious to immerse themselves in local cuisine to get to learn more about culture, and history of the local people. Hence the restaurant menu ranging from traditional and classic (modern) restaurants to authentic local dishes are most preferred. Showing appreciation to innovative concepts focused on destination's rich food culture but also biodiversity appreciation of different cuisines from other regions.

v) Food and Cultural Festivals

According to the target group, it is very important to pay attention to the festive calendars of the city they intend to visit, as "where there is a party, there is food". Therefore, cities that are including gastronomic offers during cultural festivals are being considered worthwhile visiting for this segment. Taking advantage of such events is also a good opportunity to promote the city's unique traditional cuisine.

vi) Fairs and Local Markets

This food tourism activity involves visiting local markets and fairs. They provide an excellent way to try ingredients and learn about the region's biodiversity while interacting with producers and the local community. Mostly such market experiences are made either independently or with the help of a local guided, with the aim to explore new flavours in the local markets.

vii) Tasting sessions

This activity has mostly been famous in the beverages, for instance, in wine, crafted beer, spirit tastings. Sessions where different samples of drinks or foods are presented and savoured. Food travellers find these sessions very interesting as they get to understand more about the products' ingredients, characteristics, the nuances of different production processes, or learn harmonization tips while being guided by an expert.

8 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the first research objective was to establish if local cuisine does influence food tourists' choice of destination. Overall, this study found key significant points related to the purpose of the research.

Firstly, attitudes to local food are a determining factor in destination choice. This significant attitude to local cuisine and destination choice relationship entails that local food functions as a destination trigger. As such, tourists may choose a particular destination due to the local food it serves and for the anticipated food experience it offers. Therefore, local cuisine can no longer be viewed as a supporting resource but rather as a destination attraction. Hence, according to Bjork and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2017), it could be determined that local food as well as various local cuisine-related experiences are critical factors in enticing tourists to visit a destination.

Secondly, attitude towards local cuisine influence overall holiday satisfaction. The correlation between attitude to local cuisine and satisfaction reveals that for food tourists in particular who has an inherent positive interest in food, their local cuisine experiences are an important contributor to overall holiday satisfaction. Therefore, it could be argued that local cuisine ought to meet the expectations of tourists to guarantee a satisfactory holiday experience. As such, it could also be inferred that bad local cuisine experiences have the potential to induce levels of holiday dissatisfaction.

Thirdly, it was found that tourists with an interest in local food recognised local cuisine as an object related authentic experience. This implied that food tourists mostly viewed the significance of local cuisine with the desire to understand how it can relate to a specific place and its culture. In this sense, if consuming local cuisine on a holiday is turned into a tourist activity, rather than merely being regarded as an object, then food constitutes a form of existential authenticity. Thereby, understanding what tourists perceive or evaluate as authentic local cuisine experience, must be considered when developing destination marketing strategies to enhance their overall culinary experience.

8.1 Theoretical Contribution

In conclusion, this study has highlighted how local cuisine is impacting the current travel trends and a determinant of destination choice for food tourists in particular. As such, this contributes to the field of food tourism by focusing on the role of cuisine in influencing travel motivation, satisfaction, and perceived authenticity in the overall tourism experience. The theoretical contribution of this study provided an explanation on the value tourists are placing on the food they consume during

their holidays and how this has significantly affected the current travel trends. According to the recent literature, it is evident that cuisine is being viewed as one of the major attractors for most destinations whose marketing strategies are clear.

8.2 Managerial Contribution

From a practical perspective, this paper contributes to the better understanding of the role of local cuisine from a tourist's perspective as a means of highlighting best practices that could be adopted in developing Zambia as a culinary destination. From the findings, it is important for destination marketers, policymakers, local cuisine producers to be mindful that food tourists are inherently interested in local cuisine. Hence, the results of this study stressed that their motivation to search for food experiences is linked to locality. As such, this could be achieved by highlighting local cuisine produces, cafes and restaurants in promotional materials, social media platforms and websites. Consequently, promoting local cuisine can also generate additional benefits for the destination itself through complimentary activities, such as local farming, food shops as well as food production.

It is, therefore, important for destination marketers such as Tourism Agencies to actively collaborate with relevant stakeholders to deliver food tourists' expectations such as experiencing authentic local cuisine, learning about the culture and heritage of a destination through stories behind the local cuisine and traditions. Hence, these and many more culinary tourism offerings need to be developed continuously to appeal to those seeking for memorable dining experiences while on holiday in a destination of their choice.

8.3 Learning process of the author

The overall experience of collecting, analysing, and writing data throughout the study, was a valuable learning process. As this was the first wider research solely conducted by the author. Among the underlying points of improvement during this process have been the ability to search for reliable data from the right sources and how to use it correctly. Furthermore, constructive feedback received from the thesis supervisor was very helpful and sufficient to provide a clear guide at every stage.

The amount of new information learnt regarding local cuisine and its impact on both the travellers and the destinations was remarkable. It was during the research process that the author was exposed to the current literature revealing how tourists are becoming more and more interested in traveling specifically in search for authentic local cuisine experiences. The learning process became very interesting and rewarding on a personal level as the culinary tourism phenomenon unfolded. Although the process took longer than initially planned, it was important and useful for this kind of study to take enough time to reassess the findings where it was seen necessary.

Generally, this research was conducted according to the research plan, the only set back the author faced was the inability to get the views from the relevant authorities such as the Zambia Tourism Agency as initially planned due to unforeseen circumstances. Therefore, for future research on a similar topic, the author would recommend that both the relevant authorities and the stakeholders could be engaging to get their views regarding culinary tourism and how feasible it may be in Zambia.

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Appendix 1. Observation Table

No.	Description	Online sources
1	Adventure like a foodie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.tourism-review.com/local-cuisine-adventure-on-vacations-news13345 • https://www.hiltongrandvacations.com/en/plan-your-vacation/vacation-ideas/adventure-like-a-foodie-with-these-6-culinary-experiences
2	Connect with the locals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.ottsworld.com/blogs/eat-with-locals-travel/ • https://roamscapes.com/experience-loca-culture-traveling/
3	Exploring local cuisines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://medium.com/@hussaineri/the-role-of-food-in-travel-exploring-local-cuisines-on-vacation-196c2a5aaf0e
4	Recent food travel trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.foodandwine.com/travel-trends-2023-food-drink-6834645
5	Foodies on vacation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.facebook.com/foodieonvacation/ • https://www.facebook.com/TravelForFoodHUB/
6	Taste local cuisine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.holdinghandsnature.com/2023/10/09/exploring-local-cuisine-when-and-why-you-should-try-local-food-during-your-travels/
7	Eating like a local	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/27/travel/how-to-actually-eat-like-a-local-while-traveling.html • https://backpackertravel.org/food-drinks/tips-for-eating-local-food-when-you-travel/
8	Travellers' choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.tripadvisor.com/TravelersChoice-ThingsToDo-cFood
9	Local cuisine reviews on vacation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.tripadvisor.in/ShowTopic-g1-i32200-k8354769-Local_Food_When_You_Travel-Food_and_Travel.html • https://www.quora.com/When-you-re-on-holiday-do-you-like-to-eat-the-local-food-or-do-you-prefer-to-find-tourist-restaurants • https://www.facebook.com/groups/541108569267853/