

Book review

Foodies and Food Tourism

By Donald Getz, Richard Robinson,
Tommy Andersson and Sanja Vujicic
Goodfellow Publishers

2014

Review DOI

10.1108/JTF-07-2015-0041

Food is an experience savoured by all tourists. It is estimated that 25 per cent of tourism expenditure is attributable to food products and services. *Foodies and Food Tourism* provides a comprehensive overview of the “foodie” phenomenon as a contemporary niche market within tourism. Its focus is on the demand side, the consumer perspective, with its distinct trip motivations, identifications, preferences and benefits sought. Food and beverages are not just an attraction but have matured into a highly sought after experience as part of a more diversified travel experience portfolio. After all, it is the memorable experiences that are sought and food has always played an important part in travel memories. This book succeeds in offering comprehensive evidence based and theory based overview of the phenomenon of food tourism and how it can be comprehended, developed and marketed within different destinations. It is designed as an undergraduate text for students in hospitality, tourism and events with learning objectives, questions and summaries highlighted throughout the text, and also as a reference guide for practitioners across the industry.

The best features of *Foodies and Food Tourism* are the theoretical frameworks presented and the illustrations through international case studies, such as Australia, Scotland, Ireland and Denmark. The book includes a chapter on food events which highlights the increasing importance of food-related events within destination marketing and development and how to design food

events for foodies. Good linkages with the wider academic literature are achieved throughout the book keeping the reader engaged in latest research developments. A major theme that is emerging in the discussion is the increasing interest of food enthusiasts for authentic, local, ethical and slow food experiences based on direct connection with the food producers as an alternative to more commercialised food experiences. This in itself presents a bit of a conundrum which is not entirely resolved, in that the book takes a consumer approach but also hints at anti-consumerist tendencies having small-scale, home-made and community-centred at their heart. Branding, service cultures of hotels and resorts and hallmark events can be difficult to reconcile with a tendency towards seeking an alternative to capitalistic attitudes and foodies looking for serendipity instead of being sold a marketed food experience.

The book provides a thorough introduction explaining and defining the different terminologies and concepts used as well as the different perspectives that underpin the study of *Foodies and Food Tourism*. There are sections in the book on philosophy and hospitality studies but these appear rather slim compared to the other sections. Food is fundamental to how we grow up, not just as nourishment but also as a metaphor for socialising, family events and childhood memories. Social bonding as an important motivation and outcome of food experiences is theorised throughout the book but a more wide-ranging discussion of commensality or the social group practice of eating together common to all cultures would have benefited the underpinning of what food means to people. It becomes apparent that the most involved foodies have an above average income, are higher educated and are usually travelling alone or as couples without children and the book is

© Heike A. Schänzel. Published in the *Journal of Tourism Futures*. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

mainly geared towards these more individual and independent travellers. Yet, it seems a lost opportunity to not at least discuss the potentials of families and their children as the foodies of the future. It was estimated in the book that about a third of the food tourism market is made up of families with children and increasingly events and food providers are doing their best to entice the growing sophisticated palates of their youngest visitors. Socialising and sharing good food within the extended family is not to be underestimated as one of the core experiences and memorable events on holiday as parents increasingly pass on their passions for food onto their children. As rightly listed in the book, families with foodie lifestyles should grow in number and importance and deserve more attention.

The implication of *Foodies and Food Tourism* is that this niche market will continue to grow and become more diverse in terms of scale, markets and product and service offerings with an emphasis towards more quality and sustainability leading to the desired outcomes of memorable experiences. Health and ethical concerns will increasingly dominate the debate having an influence on food fads, vegetarianism and other practices abstaining from certain food groups. Food choices based on religious beliefs are absent despite their increasing importance in global food tourism, such as halal. Omnivorism as a practice of sampling more diverse food offerings instead will lead to more adventurous travel experiences. Food inclusion and food exclusion then illustrate the complexity of what food enthusiasts are looking for and how food tourism can cater to their preferences and needs in the future. The book acknowledges that its focus is on Europe, Australia/New Zealand and the English-speaking world. Future

research efforts need to be directed towards the emerging markets of Asia and South America and the increasing global spread of people involved in food and food tourism.

Foodies and Food Tourism makes a comprehensive text and reference book for anyone interested in food based on empirical research combined with theoretical concepts. The book gives important pointers and highlights trends for the future while acknowledging that food tourism has to be considered a luxury market with an increasing pressure on finite resources. Food production and food tourism will need to respond and evolve with changes in food preferences, migration, resource scarcity, climate change, migration, technology and economic and social developments. I would buy the book because it offers a much needed demand side perspective complementing the largely supply-side publications on this topic. Consumer and tourist behaviour is notoriously difficult to capture and my criticism reflect partly my interests in social environments and families and should not detract from the significant contribution this book makes in promoting the growing phenomenon of food tourism. The book finishes with a quote by Jamie Oliver and I like to offer an alternative Jamie Oliver quote based on the notions of togetherness and social meal experiences:

If you can eat with mates or friends or family, I mean, it's such a brilliant thing isn't it? If you feel really rubbish and you have a nice bit of food it makes you feel good, you know?

Heike A. Schänzel

Senior Lecturer at School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand