Exploring the potential of street food as a sustainable livelihood tourism strategy for developing destinations

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The fastest growing trend for international travel has been for travel to LDCs (Holden, 2013).

Tourism – central in the strategy for the economic development of LDCs.

Growing recognition that tourism requires more equality among all participants: alternative forms of tourism where less foreign capital and more local people, food and architecture are engaged (Crick, 1989).

Exogenous factors like political instability, economic crisis, natural disasters and the outbreak of diseases (Séraphin, 2014; Hai & Chick, 2011; Ritchie, Dorrell, Miller & Miller, 2004).

Alternative form of tourism (Crick, 1989) (activities involving local people and local food); authentic form of tourism (Thompson, 2014; Wagner, 2015): people, the culture and natural assets are central (e.g. Haiti).
Authenticity - the most important criterion for the development of heritage tourism (Xie & Wall, 2003 in Park, 2014: 62)

BUT: “authenticity often becomes meaningless due to strategically contrived and constructed nature of tourism settings and experiences” (Park: 2014: 60).

Finding a fine line between selling some aspects of a culture and keeping the culture authentic.

A call for the tourism industry to be more ethical in the way it does business (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013)
Street-food (i.e. ready-to-eat-food sold in a street or a public place; Kowalczyk, 2014) can be considered as an authentic way of living and an authentic activity visitors could be involved in.

- Consumed each day by an estimated 2.5 billion people worldwide.
- In Latin America, street food purchases account for up to 30% of urban household spending.
- In Bangkok, 20,000 street food vendors provide city residents with an estimated 40% of their overall food intake.
- In Thailand, a huge percentage of the population depend on this entrepreneurial activity for survival.
- In Ghana, it is estimated that the sector employs over 60,000 people and has an annual turnover of US$100 million, with annual profits in the order of US$24 million.

(Fellow & Hilmi, 2011)
RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

-evaluating the potential of street food as a factor of appeal and sustainable livelihood strategy for developing destinations.

How can street food retain its authenticity in developing countries and be at the same time a profitable activity for the locals?
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Sustainable tourism
- Sustainable food
- Street food
- Entrepreneurship tourism
A destination is considered to be sustainable if the tourism industry does not impact negatively on the environment, on human-environment interactions and local communities; but equally, the industry needs to contribute to cultural exchange between locals and visitors and meeting the economic needs of the populations (Mbaiwa, 2005 in Iniesta-Bonnillo et al, 2016).

Long-term capacity of the industry to remain ‘clean’

Main concern of tourism development for developing nations and indigenous people

Initiatives like Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty Program (ST-EP) initiated by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) were taken to use tourism to reduce poverty and increase net benefits for poor people as part of their 'Pro-Poor Tourism' policy (Holden, 2013).
SUSTAINABLE FOOD

1 - Provides a viable livelihood for farmers, processors and retailers
2 - Supports rural economies and the diversity of rural culture, in particular though an emphasis on local products that keep food miles to a minimum
3 - Use local, seasonally available ingredients as standard
4 - Reduce processed food
5 - Reduce packaging
6 - Support local biodiversity and local resources
7 - Serve insects as food
8 - Ethical by not using endangered species, or species grown in cruel conditions.

Sloan et al. (2013: 170-178)
STREET FOOD

- Noted to be low in cost and presents an attractive alternative to home-cooked food. Street food vending is usually practiced as a family business and in the majority of cases; it is a source of employment for the household members (FAO, 2014).

- A way of living, a component of locals’ life; enables locals and visitors to participate in the same type of activities, engaging in local intangible cultural experience (Cros & McKercher, 2015).

- Facilitating the direct sales of goods and services supplied by the poor to the tourist is an effective mechanism to reduce poverty (Holder, 2013).

- Food safety: greater awareness and preventive measures need to be implemented for coping with risk factors (FAO, 2014).
Michel (2000) claims tourism can fully benefit a destination, only if the locals are fully involved in the planning and development of the industry.

Entrepreneurship in tourism appears to be a serious contender to the involvement of the locals in the tourism sector and in some cases to help them to improve their standard of living.

Micro and small scale enterprises can increase the participation of the poor in the tourism industry (Manyara and Jones, 2005).
Sustainable tourism development in developing destinations not only should remain low cost in terms of investments but should also be part of the daily life of the locals. Street food meets all these criteria:

- Low cost investments
- Quick return on investments
- Local (food) habit
- (Street) food tourism

Source: Bellia et al. (2016)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</th>
<th>Low cost investments</th>
<th>Quick return on investments</th>
<th>(street) food tourism</th>
<th>Local (food) habit</th>
<th>STREET FOOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No negative impact on the environment/human interaction/local communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Daily life of the locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to cultural exchange local-visitors</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting economic needs of the local</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Family business/major source of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term ability to remain clean environmentally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Animal-source ingredient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of policies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Development of business skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Ethical and Support rural economies
- Support local biodiversity/local resources
- Reduce packaging and food processed
- Support local culture
CONCLUSION

(1) Street food corresponds to a tourist demand of authenticity;
(2) It does not impact negatively on locals’ culture but instead it is shared with visitors;
(3) The vendors, who, generally are poor people, benefit directly from this form of tourism related activity;
(4) it represents an add-on activity that is promoted by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), and it is not the main reason why people visit the destination, therefore, it will not impact on the carrying capacity of the destination; and
(5) street food is part of the way of life of local communities; within this context, street food is seen as a ‘related tourism activity’ and not as a form of tourism.