


Review

An Insight into Gastronomic Tourism through the Literature Published between 2012 and 2022

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Abstract: As tourism became more accessible, the number of visitors to various destinations increased, and that led to mass tourism. In the few last decades, new types of tourism started to emerge in response to the mass tourism offer which was oversaturated. People started to want ‘something different’, and that created new trends and niches in tourism. One of these new niches is food tourism. In this article, our main research purpose is to identify the state of the research carried out on the topic of gastronomic tourism, mainly between 2012 and 2022, as well as on the correlated topic of sustainable gastronomic tourism, and consider the impact they can have on a destination. We are also answering a few research questions including *who are the food tourists*, *where do they go for food tourism* and *what do they do while traveling*. The main research method used was desk review, and the papers taken into consideration for this analysis were mostly published between 2012 and 2022. The novelty of this paper lies in the result of indicating the state of the literature review regarding food tourism, and where is it heading. The research is significant not only because our results answer research questions, which give an insight into gastronomic tourism, but they offer a precise overview in this field with a focus on sustainability, and on gastronomy as a way to revive cultural heritage.

Keywords: food tourism; sustainable gastronomic tourism; literature review; food tourist profile



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1. Introduction

Food is one of the basic needs of every being [1,2] and it is easy to make a tourism product out of it, as it is also one of the main components of a touristic package. As mass tourism alone can no longer satisfy the ‘new visitor’s requests’, the focus had to be switched to what else a destination can offer tourists. For example, people need more reasons to visit a city than just a sightseeing tour, which they might be able to do in just one day. Therefore, some destinations, especially those with an already well-known cuisine, started to use their local gastronomy in their branding. At the same time, it was very easy to create a touristic product from something that a destination already has—food culture—and is already one of the main components of a touristic package.

Food, gastronomic or culinary tourism all refer to the same type of tourism which is defined by some authors as the type of tourism for which the main reason for travelling is food [3]. Whereas, others define it as ‘a journey, in regions rich in gastronomic resources, to generate recreational experiences or have entertainment purposes, which include: visits to primary or secondary producers of gastronomic products, gastronomical festivals, fairs, events, cooking demonstrations, food tastings or any activity related to food’ [3,4].

Some authors refer to gastronomy in a more poetic way, such as ‘the art of cooking and good eating’ [5], while others claim that it is the bridge which brings together culture and food. A more artistic approach to define gastronomy was taken by Gillespie and Cousins [6] where they define gastronomy as ‘the art and science of cooking, eating and drinking as a pleasure using different senses’.

The World Food Travel Association, instead, adopted a short and concise definition for food/gastronomic tourism: ‘the act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place’ [7].

The term culinary tourism was introduced for the first time by Lucie Long, a professor from Ohio State University in the USA [8], while studies on the relationship between tourism and food were found from as far back as the 1980s [9,10]. So far, the literature on this type of tourism was divided into two main perspectives: supply and demand [11,12].

The reason why there are three terms referring to the same type of tourism is related to language and cultural differences. For example, in the European countries where Romance Languages are spoken, people refer to it as gastronomic tourism because the term ‘food tourism’ (generally used in the USA) is considered too basic and general; therefore they use a more elevated term for it [7]. Those countries (by coincidence or not) are, at the same time, some of the most developed in terms of gastronomic tourism, and have a very rich offer. Some authors even refer to this type of tourism as ‘tasting tourism’ [13]. Any of the terms used for food tourism, by default, refer as well to beverages; therefore, it includes activities which are related to beverage consumption, production, etc. Some authors consider food tourism as a part of cultural tourism because food and drinks are part of local cultures [14].

As we have already mentioned, food is one of the most important components of a touristic package. According to the World Tourism Organization’s 2012 report, tourists spend about 30% of a trip’s budget on food.

But who are these tourists? We will define them in the simplest way. According to the World Food Tourism Association, a food or culinary traveler is a traveler who participates in food or beverage experiences (above and beyond standard dining out). According to the same source, 53% of leisure travelers are also food travelers [7].

Given that even leisure travelers are food travelers, that leads us to think that besides dining out, half of these visitors also engage in other types of activities related to food tourism. Food tourism includes a wide range of experiences including food tours, cooking classes, wine tasting, brewery tours, marketing experiences, cooking contests, food festivals, visits to producers, farms, factories, and gardens, and most recently, cooking holidays [15] etc.

In order to have gastronomic tourism in a destination, there are specific stakeholders that need to take part in the whole process, from branding the destination to promoting it and offering tourists the final products.

The World Food Travel Association (WFTA) identifies a total of 23 food tourism industry stakeholders who ideally have to collaborate in order to call their destination a gastronomic one (Figure 1). The stakeholders are divided between the major sectors, these are as follows: travel and hospitality—here we are talking about everything that might have contact with the traveler, from finding out about the destination to the accommodation and transportation (culinary activities, DMOs, tour operators, tourist guides, tourist boards); food and beverage sector (farms markets producers and makers, cooking classes and schools, food and beverage events, retail and grocery, restaurants, bars, cafes, distributors/importers/exporters); and finally, the third category which is not defined but includes important stakeholders such as the government, academia, media, technology platforms, trade groups, NGOs, suppliers and also the consumers [7].

Indeed, if all of the stakeholders collaborated, one destination would be very likely to be successful in the gastronomic tourism field. Nevertheless, for destinations which are beginning to brand themselves as culinary spots, if actions are taken by at least a few of these stakeholders, from each category, this would be enough to make an impact.



Figure 1. Food tourism industry stakeholders (adapted from WFTA, 2022 [7]).

In this study, through the literature review of papers published mostly between 2012 and 2022, we aim to identify the state of food tourism research, and the main issues addressed so far in this field; these include authors' interests regarding the topic, along with gaps in the literature, and what other scholars have focused on instead. We also address and aim to find out the following: *what is the impact of sustainable gastronomic tourism on a destination* and *what are the tendencies of future research on food tourism*.

Along with the main purpose of this research, our objectives are to answer the following research questions:

1. Who are food tourists and what is their motivation?
2. Which activities do food tourists practice, and where do they go?
3. Is there a sustainable approach to gastronomic tourism, and what is the impact of this on the destination?

2. Materials and Methods

Given that our research is a literature review paper, we aim for it to be the first step in performing broader future research, as other authors also consider literature reviews [16].

The method we used in order to conduct our study was desk research, namely a systematic literature review. We followed the process for this type of review in the manner described by Saur-Amaral [17].

The first step we took in writing this paper was thinking of the concepts we should discuss so we could, thus, plan the review. At this stage, we also focused on the keywords we should use to find the most relevant results for our search. First of all, we chose to review studies on gastronomic tourism in general and what kind of activities it involves, in order to have a better understanding of the research field. The second topic we focused on were the motivations that led tourists to practice this type of tourism, and the food tourist's profile. The next publications we studied were examples of gastronomic tourism destinations, which are known as 'hot-spots' at the moment, and which elements they use to brand the destination. The last and most important concept that we decided to research

was sustainable gastronomic tourism. Through all of the researched topics, we aimed to answer the six research questions listed in the introduction chapter.

The keywords used for the above-mentioned topics were: ‘gastronomic/food/culinary tourism’ (to define what food tourism is, and get a general idea about the concept). These were chosen because we believe the terms, although different, refer to the same concept, and are at the same time comprehensive. ‘Food motivation in tourism/food tourist profile’, were the keywords used for the studies which gave us an image of food tourists and their motivations. We chose these keywords to lead us to specific studies on tourists’ behaviors and traits that we could then use to describe food tourists. ‘Gastronomic tourism destinations/gastronomic destinations/popular tourist destinations’ were used in order to depict articles which were focused on food tourism destinations. We believe these terms are suitable as they can give us answers on where food tourists go; we included the last broader term here because, after an intensive search, we did not find many specific studies that answered our question. The last set of keywords used is ‘sustainable food tourism/sustainable gastronomic tourism’. We chose these terms because they include both the sustainability concept as a whole, as well as food tourism.

The next step we took was conducting the review through identifying the relevant papers resulting from the keyword searches, selecting the studies, assessing the quality of these, and extracting the required information. The main database used was Science Direct, followed by Web of Science, Emerald, Sage Journals, MDPI, and other databases less known but, at the same time, useful for our research (Table 1). Most of the analyzed papers were published in online journals which eased access to them.

Table 1. Articles selected for review based on keywords searched between 13 and 17 March 2022.

Source/Selected Results	Keyword			
	Gastronomic/Food/Culinary Tourism	Food Motivation in Tourism/Food Tourist Profile	Gastronomic Tourism Destinations/Gastronomic Destinations/Popular Tourist Destinations	Sustainable Food Tourism/Sustainable Gastronomic Tourism
Web of Science	7125	454	935	1072
Selected	5	12	8	15
Science Direct	18,983	7691	5578	12,600
Selected	4	11	7	9
Total	9	23	15	25
Other sources *	4	5	2	5

* Other sources—relevant sources we found on other websites such as Emerald, SAGE journals, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, etc.

At this stage of our research, we were careful to select the relevant sources only, in order to focus on these and reduce time reading off-topic articles. We implemented that through two main steps: a first read of the article to check if it was relevant, and setting filters to our search. A ‘first read of the article’ means that we took another three-step backwards approach, as follows: we read the abstract and if it was not clear whether the paper was relevant, we read the introduction as well; if that was not convincing, we read the entire paper. The selection process of the publications to review included qualitative criteria, such as the date published, the keywords used by the authors, the conclusions they made, etc. All of the selected articles were thoroughly read in order to select the required information and ideas. We read a total of 98 publications and reports (with web sources excluded) before the relevant ones were selected.

The only filter we applied besides keywords was the time frame. We tried to focus on recent research (2012–2022) to make our literature review helpful and of use to anyone interested in reading it. We selected, initially, research papers published in the past five years (2017–2022) in order to have our information up to date. However, we then extended the time range to ten years (2012–2022). A few earlier publications were included as well because they were considered relevant for the general context of food tourism, and for definitions.

Therefore, at the time the sources were collected (between 13 and 17 March 2022), we found the following publications from the last ten years by keywords:

- Gastronomic tourism/food tourism/culinary tourism—9 publications selected;
- Food motivation in tourism/motivation in food tourism/food tourist profile—23 publications selected;
- Gastronomic tourism destinations/gastronomic destinations/popular tourist destinations—15 publications selected;
- Sustainable food tourism/sustainable gastronomic tourism—24 publications selected.

The above-selected articles were mainly from the Science Direct database and were gathered between the given dates. The final set of articles analyzed for each topic also included relevant sources that we were led to by reading other publications.

The above-selected articles were mainly from the Science Direct database and were gathered between the given dates. The final set of articles analyzed for each topic also included relevant sources that we were led to by reading other publications.

We have analyzed a total of 87 publications, from which 13 were on the general topic of food/gastronomic tourism and activities; 28 papers were on the motivations for gastronomic tourism and the tourist's profile; 17 publications were on the hot-spot destinations and what they use to promote themselves in this field; and 29 publications were reviewed regarding sustainable gastronomic tourism.

The final and most laborious step of our research consisted of reporting/transferring the knowledge [18]. This step, as per the systematic review type, is comprised of two types of reports: the descriptive one, and the thematic one [17]. We chose to focus more on the thematic part and limit the descriptive part to Table 1, which presents the number of articles selected by keywords and database found to be relevant for our research.

The themes resulting from our report are the ones addressed throughout the research, but generally publications found on gastronomic tourism focus on gastronomic tourism in general; wine tourism was one of the most popular themes; sustainable development through gastronomic tourism; food production in some major tourism destinations; tourism production and consumption; segments of food tourists; perceived value of gastronomy by tourists; local gastronomy used for destination marketing; gastronomic routes; the visitor's motivation; heritage tourism; and sustainable development of the rural territory and economy. Most of the selected studies were from research in Europe, Asia, and Australia, with some significant findings from South and North America as well.

3. Results

3.1. *Who Are the Food Tourists and What Is Their Motivation?*

Now that we have an idea, from our introduction, about what gastronomic tourism is, we will try to understand the motivations for choosing it over other types of tourism.

As mentioned before, food is one of the three main components of a tourist package, and at the same time it is indispensable. Of course everyone can bring food from home, and can also travel with their own means, or sleep in their own tent—that would be a self-made tourist package. However, even in this simple example, tourists can still enjoy some of the local cuisine.

As we all might have already noticed, generally there are two types of tourists: firstly, those who enjoy food and would never miss a chance to taste something new; and secondly, at the opposite end, we have the tourists who are too concerned or afraid of trying something new because they have never experienced it before and, at the same time, they are not driven by curiosity, and fear different food. The second category are also known as 'survivors' [19] or, as labeled by other authors, as having 'primitive motivation' [20]. In the paper 'What do tourists eat and why? Towards a sociology of gastronomy and tourism' [21], the author states that tourists' first thought about consuming food is because of necessity, since food is one of the basic needs.

The tourists less interested in gastronomy will try the local foods only to satisfy their needs, but the ones who are interested in discovering the destination through its cuisine,

according to studies, have two main distinctions; they are willing to allocate a larger share of the total trip's budget to food [22], and they are more demanding. Usually, the average tourist spends about 30% of their budget on food [4] or even 40% [23,24].

According to the World Food Travel Association [25] the difference between food tourists and other types of tourists is that they have a specific amount of funds for experiencing the cuisine while at the destination.

In the book 'Tourism and Gastronomy' [26], the author identifies four categories of motivation for the gastronomic tourist: physical, cultural, interpersonal, and lastly prestige and status. The first one is very simple to understand; it is the human need for nourishment. The second motivation refers to discovering the destination through the cuisine [22] and its flavors. The third motivation has deep roots in many cultures, and it is about bringing people together through food—socializing, taking a break, hanging out or however you want to call it. In many cultures, all over the world, food has the role of uniting people in the same place or even sharing the same dish. The last motivation consists of gaining status and prestige through the food experiences of one individual, not only because of the social role of these experiences, but also due to the knowledge one gains in this field. The same five motivations are encouraged by other authors such as Tikkanen [27].

Many authors also categorize food tourists based on how much they are spending at the destination for gastronomic purposes: 'highbrows' who are involved in plenty of activities, and 'lowbrows' who participate in a narrow range of experiences [12]. Another category is based on the interest they have in gastronomy: little interest in gastronomy but higher interest in other attractions at the destination versus those who really seek to know and taste the destination [28,29]. Thirdly, they can be categorized by the level of experience they have as tourists in this category: experiencers, enjoyers, and survivors [19].

Another approach is taken by the World Food Travel Association, which defines a psycho-culinary profile of the food tourist after analyzing 11,235 individuals from over 100 countries. They break down the profiles into 13 categories: trendy, social, veggie, budget, innovative, gourmet, ambiance, eclectic, localist, adventurer, authentic, novice, and organic [7].

According to Nicoletti et al. [22], there are three important traits of the food tourist: firstly, 'older tourists have a better attitude towards local cuisine'; secondly, those who have a greater interest in gastronomy also have a higher education level; thirdly, a higher interest in gastronomy leads to a higher economic impact.

The study of Robinson and Getz [30] reveals four categories of food tourists based on the model of gastronomy–tourism lifestyles: recreational, existential, diversionary, and experimental. Other authors, such as Croce and Perri [31], divide food tourists into categories based on their knowledge level in this field, from experts to aware consumers. Previous research, focused on North America in the early 2000s, emphasizes their higher-than-average income, as well as the fact that the most inclined individuals to undertake food tourism are women. Conversely, Prieto Delgadillo and Triana Valiente [32] mention that most of food tourists are couples with high culture. Some studies go even further stating that food tourists are typically professionals aged between 30 and 50 years old [33].

Other studies focus on the motivation of the tourists who visit food markets. On this note, Dimitrovski and Crespi-Vallbona [34] mention four determinants: interacting with local producers and vendors, sensory appeal, local food experience, and healthy eating concerns. In the paper 'Food Markets: A Motivation-Based Segmentation of Tourists' [35], the authors have concluded the following as the main reasons why tourists visit food markets: eating and drinking; new eating/drinking experiences; fame and reputation of the market; for business or work; to spend time with others; as a leisure option; good quality; disconnecting from daily life; to do new things; and networking.

On the same note, Park, Reisinger, and Kang [36] identified seven reasons why gastronomic food tourists choose to participate in food and wine festivals. In addition to the motivations mentioned in the paper of Castillo-Canalejo et al. [35], the first authors also added that the tourists want to get to know celebrity chefs and wine experts. Another

two segments were used by Smith and Costello [37] to differentiate culinary visitors: food focusers, and event seekers.

We also found other answers to why food tourists consume local delicacies at the destination. Kim, Eves, and Scarles [38] found nine motivations: exciting experiences, to escape from routine, achieving knowledge, health concerns, authenticity, togetherness, physical environment, sensory appeal, and prestige. Many of those were also studied by other authors later on. In the research of Andersson et al. [39], the authors limit the motivations to three main categories: sensory, cultural, and social (all three related to the experiences of tourists).

To summarize all of the above cited motivations, we believe that we can simply say those are heterogeneous, and are based on the tourist's approach to the gastronomic part of their trip [40].

3.2. *Revealing the Research on Gastronomic Tourism Hot Spots*

We are all used to associating countries, or even continents, with food or things that we know. For instance, when we think of rice, most of us think of Asia; when we think of spices, we think of the Middle East; the term of fast food takes us to North America; fish dishes bring us to the Northern countries. This is how our minds work, based on associations and experiences. Following the same lead, we associate countries with different dishes [19]: for example, we link France to cheese and croissants; Italy to pasta, pizza and wines; Japan to sushi; Mexico to tacos; Morocco to tajines; Turkey to baklava; Czech Republic to beer, etc. If the food associated to a destination is strategically marketed, it can attract tourists to that specific place [41].

All these unique associations link cuisine with traditions and cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, nowadays food from the other side of the world can be just one click away, but we have all heard expats complaining, rather than praising, the restaurants that serve their specific cuisine in other countries. Of course, nothing tastes like home. However, this is the reason why food has become a motivation for travel, and is one of the main factors that influences the final decision on the travel destination [42]. The local cuisine is now an important asset for marketing a destination [31,43,44].

In the most recognized gastronomic tourism destinations, there are also regions with a very specific cuisine that they are known for. Take for instance Italy, each region of the country has a specific cuisine and even though you can find pasta and pizza served all over the country, some cities/regions are known for having the most authentic version of a dish. Napoli (Campania region) is known best for pizza in terms of cuisine, Bologna (in Emilia Romagna) is known for spaghetti Bolognese and lasagna, Lazio is best known for carbonara [45], while Toscana is famous for its wines and Lombardy for risotto. All of these dishes are influenced by many factors, such as the geography of the place, the history, the ethnicity of its people, cuisine labels and recipes, and lastly, the dominant flavors [46]. The same could apply to every country. In the paper by Yayla and Aktaş [46], they mapped Turkey based on the region's specific flavors and identified 15 separate regions.

Other authors claim as well that 'Turkish cuisine is among the most popular global cuisines, enjoying a solid reputation alongside Chinese, Thai, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indian, Greek, French and Italian cuisines' [44,47].

Spain, for example, is the second most visited country [48] and gastronomy is among the top three tourist products the nation has to offer.

According to Horng and Tsai [49], Thailand, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Singapore position their culinary resources the same way the countries with a rich and very well-known gastronomy do, such as France, Italy, and Spain. Other destinations have also started focusing more on gastronomy in their marketing strategy (Australia, Canada, and Hong Kong). The same applies for the Catalonia region in Spain.

Another way we can easily tell what the main food tourism destinations are, is simply by looking around us. For a long time in big and small cities, there have been establishments serving food from different cuisines. The most common cuisine you find in restaurants in

medium and large cities, also represent the most popular food tourism destinations (for example Italian cuisine might be the easiest one to spot, French, Spanish, Chinese, Mexican, Korean, Japanese, Turkish, Lebanese, Indian, etc.).

A more recent way of finding the most popular food destinations is through the guides and certifications that a country's restaurants receive. If we were to name the most popular gastronomic tourism destinations according to the number of Michelin starred restaurants (from one to three stars), we can name them as follows (as of 3 October 2022): France—621 restaurants, Japan—424, Italy—369, Germany—320, Spain—225, USA—212, UK—171, Switzerland—110, Hong Kong—71, and Singapore—52 complete the top countries [50]. There are indeed countries with a globally recognized cuisine which the guide has not reached yet.

Food tourism destinations can be defined in many ways. For example, if they have dishes or methods of preparing or serving them that are on UNESCO's intangible heritage list. You can also identify them by the most popular restaurants in a country outside of the domestic cuisine; by the main products they export; by authentic products or national dishes, etc.

If we were to name a few countries with a rich gastronomic offering, based on the intangible gastronomic heritage recognized by UNESCO [51], those would be (from the most recent recognized to the first ones): Senegal for Ceebu Jën; hawker culture in Singapore; Il-Ftira in Malta; knowledge, know-how and practices pertaining to the production and consumption of couscous in Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia; the art of Neapolitan 'Pizzaiuolo' in Italy; dolma making and sharing tradition, which is a marker of cultural identity in Azerbaijan; nsima, a culinary tradition of Malawi; flatbread making and sharing culture: lavash, katyrma, jupka, yufka in Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye; oshi palav in Tajikistan; palov culture and tradition in Uzbekistan; the Arabic coffee in United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar; the tradition of kimchi-making in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; argan, practices and know-how concerning the argan tree in Morocco; lavash, the preparation, meaning and appearance of traditional bread as an expression of culture in Armenia; ancient Georgian traditional qvevri wine-making method in Georgia; kimjang, making and sharing kimchi in the Republic of Korea; Turkish coffee culture and tradition in Türkiye; ceremonial Keşkek tradition in Türkiye; gastronomic meals of the French; traditional Mexican cuisine—ancestral, ongoing community culture, the Michoacán paradigm; among many other traditions, customs, and methods of harvesting, celebrating the harvest season, etc.

The most visited countries are also associated with what they produce, be it wine (Italy, Portugal, New Zealand), champagne, cheese (France, Italy, Spain), pastries (France), beer (Germany, Czech Republic), bourbon whiskey (USA), olive oil (Spain, Greece), etc. These products are usually also the most common souvenirs tourists bring home. Authors underline the fact that the destinations most likely to get recognition for gastronomic tourism are those that already have iconic dishes and ingredients known for their authenticity [52].

Given all these ways we can recognize a gastronomic destination, we think the most popular destinations are the ones whose DMOs include the cuisine in their marketing strategy. Thus, making it known for what they already have, be it dishes, products, traditions linked to food, or methods of producing food, natural resources, etc.

3.3. Sustainable Gastronomic Tourism

We are all familiar so far with the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) adopted by the United Nations members in 2015 for the 2030 agenda. In order to achieve all these goals, the tourism industry must participate, without choice, to make this happen. Each of the 17 goals [53] can also relate to tourism, from the way the energy is used in this industry or the issues the human resources may face, to the innovation and the 'zero hunger' goal. Tourism is believed to have a great impact especially on the last mentioned goal, the inclusive and sustainable economic growth goal, sustainable consumption and production, and on the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources goal [54]. Food

tourism can be linked, especially, to responsible consumption and production objectives, but also indirectly has a great impact on helping achieve the zero-hunger goal [55].

A cuisine is something every culture and place has because we need food to survive. Of course, the resources of a place depend on many circumstances, especially the geographic conditions, the climate, the history, the religion, ethnic groups, etc. [56]. The dishes and cuisine can vary from region to region or even from household to household, based on the traditions each family/community has developed with time. Therefore, we believe that in terms of cuisine, every single place has something to offer if marketed the right way.

Since food is a basic human need, it is always there, and it is easy to make it appealing in order for it to become a product of gastronomic tourism. 'Food and gastronomy are increasingly recognized as determinant elements for the sustainable development of places' [57].

The sustainable resources a place could use for gastronomic tourism are plentiful: from locally produced goods, to the original recipes and old family traditions linked to cuisine; harvesting ceremonies or celebrations (as an example, Thanksgiving in the USA or Chuseok in South Korea); different seasons of the year (planting, harvesting); processing raw products (to make wine, spirits, cheese, pickles, jams); visits to farms, fields, cellars; craft workshops, etc. Authors emphasize that in order to be sustainable, these resources not only have to be attractive, but also need to strengthen the connection between the place and the people [58,59].

A gastronomic tourism destination is considered sustainable if local resources and traditional expertise are at its core [60]. This can include, as stated above, foods produced locally, the land, the livestock, the human resources, the methods, practices and traditional ways of cooking, and cultivating or producing foods and goods.

Authors point out that food and gastronomy are indeed essential elements used to promote a destination because they include other different branding elements. These could be products, practices, customs of preparing and consuming the food, origins, preparation methods, serving the dishes, the places where they are served, sensory elements, etc. [61]. Branding a destination as a sustainable gastronomic tourism spot also helps preserve the local traditions and culture [62]; it strengthens the identity and feeling of belonging to a place, and protects the culinary heritage [61]. As stated by du Rand and Heath [63], gastronomic tourism indeed has its roots 'in agriculture, culture and tourism'.

The pandemic particularly affected the travel industry, and this time unlike with any other crises, the tourism growth of seven years was stopped within weeks [64,65]. The worst effects were felt in the communities which over-relied on tourism as their main income source [66].

With globalization effects and the economic crisis following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many families and individuals who live in the urban space tended to go 'back to origins', meaning the rural space. According to the World Tourism Organization [67], the major trend in tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic, was to look for experiences in isolated rural spaces, and resorts with less tourists and fresh air. Hidden gems were hunted for by tourists and, immediately after the COVID-19 restrictions were loosened, crowds of tourists started to invade those places. We see this trend as a major opportunity for farmers and local communities [68], who could easily build a gastronomic experience right on the farm, field, or in their own garden. Some authors [69–72] see the post pandemic effects on tourism as a chance to redirect tourism to a 'more resilient and regenerative path'. Others also suggest that this could be an opportunity to have a better perspective on food tourism, from a social and ecological justice point of view [73]. This would imply using the local resources, and the knowledge locals have to promote, to take pride in their heritage and make a living out of it. This practice would also have a less significant impact on the environment due to less pollution (from transportation of goods), as the tourists get their products/experiences from local sources [74].

In the guide released by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [58], the authors stressed that in order to have sustainable practices, people (farmers,

shepherds, etc.) need to remain in the fields. This does not necessarily mean living in the same way they did decades ago, but using their knowledge and adapting it to more sustainable practices and technologies to ease their work. At the same time, food tourists (especially those who live in an urban environment) are fascinated to see where the dishes that they are served with come from, how are they prepared, and maybe even how to engage in the process. Food tourism can be used as a tool to protect the local/regional identity [75].

Authors such as Wondirad, Kebete, and Li [76] have found that ‘proper planning development and management of culinary tourism promotes the social and economic revitalization of destinations’. It also stimulates entrepreneurship among the locals [50], and the need for innovation [77].

In the paper by Serra-Cantallops, Ramón-Cardona and Vachiano [78], they focused on the way wine tourism could lead to sustainability in the mass tourism of the Balearic Islands in Spain. Other authors also stress that wine tourism has led to sustainable development of rural areas [79,80]. In the research of Coroş, Pop and Popa [81], they also give examples of regions in Romania that were sustainably developed through wine tourism. Another study which focuses, this time, on food and wine pairing to promote sustainable tourism is led by Serra-Cantallops et al. [78]. The authors state that pairing food and wine helps sectoral integration, thus increasing the demand for raw products, and with that come job opportunities for locals.

As many of the recent publications on the sustainable gastronomic tourism topic involve wine tourism, we discovered that in most of the destinations where wine is used to promote food tourism, the area is included in famous wine routes [82]. There are 30 different wine routes in Spain alone (as of 2021). It was stated by Díaz Armas [83] that in the areas with mass tourism, wine routes can ‘revitalize’ the land. They are also considered to promote the local products, foods, and cultural values [84].

For example, in Mexico, another route that has been promoted, besides the many diverse dishes around the country, is the route of tequila [85]. This includes landscapes, visits to the agave fields, and getting to know the whole process until the drink is ready to serve. The same applies for pisco (a type of brandy) in Chile [86].

Using the local resources in tourism is a ‘key tool to promote local agricultural landscape protection, as well as to prevent higher prices, save water and energy, invest responsibly in local enterprises, recruit locally, encourage local supplier prosperity, involve host communities, etc.’ [87,88].

The authors of ‘Gastronomic routes in the state of Meta: A proposal of tourist sustainability’ [32] also state that gastronomic routes are a viable way to achieve sustainability and social, economic, and cultural growth.

We can easily state that there is far more literature on the topic of sustainable gastronomic tourism than other elements researched, especially on wine or other certain product routes. Most of the publications refer to specific case studies carried out in various regions/countries. Thus, we can conclude that sustainability is trendy in the tourism sector as well, namely food tourism.

These concerns regarding sustainable ways to develop places and communities make us think the world is considering the right resources to use, which takes into consideration the future generations as well. Gastronomic tourism stimulates the integration of both public and private sectors, and improves the overall quality of life of the population where this type of tourism is practiced [32].

4. Discussion

Food tourism is an emerging niche as a subsegment of cultural tourism. In the introduction, we clarified what food tourism is, and that it can be referred to as culinary and gastronomic tourism as well. Some authors stated that we can even name it ‘tasting tourism’. All of these terms refer to visits which have food as their main motivation. This is often times difficult to measure because unless we question the tourists, there is no way of

finding out if they went to a specific destination just for the food, or if the food was one of the main factors along with others. Instead, if they went to a specific destination (e.g., a city) and then went to a traditional restaurant in that city, it is clear that they went to taste the local food. However, this also cannot give 100% clear results on whether the guests in that restaurant are tourists because anyone can dine there for any reason. Therefore, now that we know what the motivation of food tourists is, in order to ascertain who they are, we believe statistics would be of great help. If questionnaires were applied in the destinations where tourists usually travel, we could discover what their main attraction factor is, and thus decisions could be made in order to promote a destination in one way or another.

The results found on the food tourist's profile topic allow us to summarize that the food tourist is an individual who has a great interest in food and culture; has a higher-than-average income and education; is interested in experiences; values the local cuisine, and thus can have an economic impact on the community visited; is more demanding and has higher expectations; while some authors suggested that they are usually women or couples, and that they are aged between 30 and 50 years old. This is general data found in studies at a global level, but research on specific locations should be carried out in order to find out who the food tourists are in those places. We believe that food tourists have general traits, but at the same time also have some distinctions based on the destination they visit. For example, being a food tourist in Paris or any other 'expensive' city, is not the same as being a food tourist in Mumbai or Hanoi, which are obviously very rich gastronomic destinations, but in a very different economic setting. With the examples given above, we believe that food tourism can be practiced on a low budget as well, not only by individuals with higher-than-average incomes.

Regarding gastronomic tourism destinations, this was the most difficult part of our research due to the lack of publications on this exact topic. Most of the research found is related to case studies on specific destinations, but very few authors have talked generally about the most sought-after food tourism hot spots. In this research, we gave examples of the most popular gastronomic destinations based on a few criteria such as the most popular cuisines around the world (concluding that the home country's cuisine is popular itself, and therefore is a culinary destination); the countries that have dishes, preparation methods, or traditions related to food recognized as intangible heritage by UNESCO; destinations with the most recognized restaurants by the Michelin Guide; based on the products a country exports or what they are recognized for; etc. As there are a lack of studies on this exact topic, we believe that scientific research should be carried out in order to broaden the knowledge in this new field, and also bring novelty to current publications.

The sustainable gastronomic tourism research brought the most results, and also the most relevant ones. This leads us to think that not only researchers but the whole world is acknowledging the importance of sustainability in each part of our lives. Authors have mostly highlighted in their studies how gastronomic tourism and food resources could help local communities, the benefits of gastronomic tourism, how a mass tourism destination can be revitalized by attracting tourists through food and wine and, most importantly, how the heritage of a community can be kept alive through food tourism. It was also emphasized that gastronomic tourism has its roots in agriculture, and a destination is considered sustainable if the local resources and traditional expertise are at its core. For a destination to be sustainable, in essence, it has to strengthen the bond between the place and the people, and to protect the identity of the community. In this chapter of our research, we also found and mentioned various examples of good practice, in terms of sustainable gastronomic tourism. In most cases, the destinations focused on the local resources (food, people, methods) in order to value their land, and also created gastronomic routes (cheese, wine, brandy, tequila, etc.). Through these routes, they have attracted sophisticated tourists who delight themselves with the best products and experiences and pay back the local community, not only economically but also through helping keep their traditions alive, and making them proud of who they are and what they have of value.

5. Conclusions

This literature review focused on four main topics concerning gastronomic tourism: what is gastronomic tourism (addressed in the introduction) and what is the state of research on this subject; who is the food tourist and what do they do while traveling; what are the best-known destinations for culinary tourism; and what is a sustainable approach to gastronomic tourism. We took into consideration the most recent publications in this field (from 2012 to 2022), but we also found valuable sources published earlier on when the literature on culinary tourism was still scarce.

Our findings and results differ from other literature reviews on this topic because not only do we give an idea of what gastronomic tourism is, but we also focus on a few more updated topics which could be of use to the reader. We researched popular gastronomic tourism destinations so that the reader (whomever it might concern, from scholars, to business owners, to local community and entrepreneurs) would have a reference for their future studies/gastronomic tourism development plans. We also focused on who is the food tourist, in order to know which members of the public this sector is addressing, and we have put together a series of characteristics they share. Lastly, we addressed sustainable gastronomic tourism, and most of the papers reviewed covered this topic.

Finding many publications related to sustainable gastronomic tourism leads us to state that this is one of the trendiest topics, with great effects in practice. This also means that the world is far more concerned nowadays with sustainability issues, especially as an alternative to mass tourism. A major part of the publications reviewed for sustainable gastronomic tourism were built on the principle that sustainable gastronomic tourism is an option to revitalize communities, spaces, and saturated old tourist destinations.

Not surprisingly, we found out that most of the studies carried out on gastronomic tourism were focused on areas and countries which have been known for their cuisine for a long time: Europe (mainly Spain, Portugal, France and Italy), Asia (Republic of Korea, Thailand, Singapore, China), and South America (Chile, Colombia, Peru). Only a few of them referred to destinations in Africa as a main study topic.

We have also noticed that these studies are focusing on consumer behavior, niche products (enotourism, cheese tourism, oleotourism, alcoholic beverage routes, etc.), and most of them were specific to a region or city. Additionally, we found a shortage of publications on examples of gastronomic tourism destinations which were/are popular at the moment, and we realize the topic either has not been addressed enough, or the keywords used do not include destination names.

Through this review, we can shape the profile of a food tourist, where they would go, why, and what they would do once at the destination.

We also highlighted that gastronomic tourism is not only about drinking and eating. It is about getting to know the local culture, community, and people. Gastronomy means culture and heritage, and has the 'power' to link tourists with locals through food.

The limitations we had while doing this research were due to time and the large number of initial sources found. Given that this paper is a literature review, we needed to read the papers in order to decide if they could be used in our research or not.

We have been focusing on providing clear, on-point information, so that our research is easy to read for everyone. Therefore, we did not want to extend this research to include more pages, even though there were three other topics we were planning to address in the beginning.

As for possible further research on this issue, we think it is important to address the impact gastronomic tourism could have on the local communities, and on specific ways to implement sustainable gastronomic tourism solutions. Additionally, we recommend studying examples of good practices, and how destinations all over the world managed to revive their heritage through gastronomic tourism.

In terms of definitions, more in depth data are needed in order to shape the gastronomic tourist's profile (such as how much they spend in a destination, age, gender, income, education level, etc.).

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