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Assessment of International Tourists' Perception on Local Foods in Tanzania



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Abstract

Consumption of local food is broadly recognized as an essential part of tourists' experience. Locally distinctive food can be important both as a tourism attraction in itself and in helping to shape the image of a destination. Local food experiences have the potential to contribute considerably to sustainable development, help maintain regional identities and support agricultural diversification. While local foods have the potential to reduce poverty in rural communities, their image and perception to tourists remain largely unexamined. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the way international tourists perceive local food in Tanzania. Data was collected using questionnaires (N = 540) at Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA), which serves tourists who have just completed their visits from the most popular "Northern Circuit" of Tanzania National Parks. The findings show that (74.5%) of the respondents agreed that overall local food was of good quality and (58.5%) agreed that local food was safe to eat. However, respondents felt strongly that the hotels they stayed in did not provide many varieties of local foods (42.3%) or sufficient information about local foods (36.5%).

Background of the Study

Research has shown that local food consumption is broadly recognized to be an essential part of the tourists' experience and can be important both as a tourism attraction in itself and in helping to shape the image of a destination (Boniface, 2003; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall & Sharples, 2008). A number of scholars have recently stressed the potential for local food experiences to contribute considerably to sustainable development, help maintain regional identities and support agricultural diversification (Clark & Chabrel, 2007; Everett & Aitchison, 2008). In recent years, attempts to improve the economic and environmental sustainability of both tourism and agriculture have been linked to the development of "alternative" food networks and a renewed enthusiasm for food products that are perceived to be traditional and local.

Local foods are conceptualized as "authentic" products that symbolize the place and culture of the destination. Similarly, local foods are perceived to have the potential to enhance the visitor experience by connecting consumers to the region and its perceived culture and heritage (Sims, 2009). More specifically, it is recognized that the kind of foods and drinks on offer for tourists can have major implications for the economic, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism destinations, with researchers arguing that a focus on locally sourced products can result in benefits for both hosts and guests (Boniface, 2003; Clark & Chabrel, 2007). It is argued that local food supply can enhance sustainable tourism through encouraging sustainable agricultural practices, supporting local businesses and building a "brand" that can benefit the region by attracting more visitors and investment.

Methodology

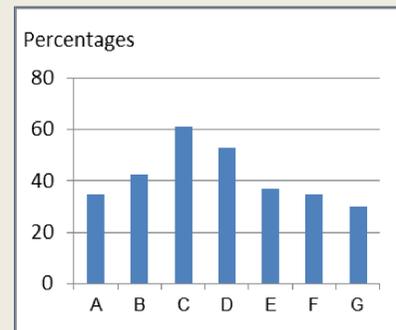
The paper assesses the perceptions of international tourists regarding consumption of locally produced foods that are retailed in tourist hotels in the country. The paper also evaluates to what extent these hotels have formed linkages with the local suppliers in the country. The paper draws from stakeholder theory, Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory and Multiplier effect theory, to gain in depth understanding of the research questions. Data was collected using questionnaires (N = 540) at Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA), which serves tourists who have just completed their visits from the most popular "Northern Circuit" of Tanzania National Parks. Data was analyzed quantitatively using SPSS software.

Objective of the Study

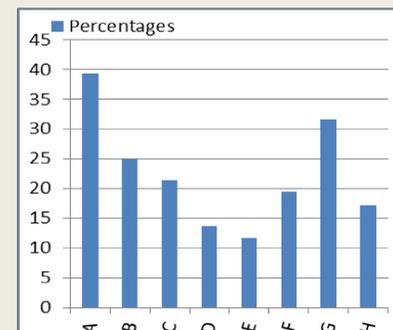
The paper evaluates the perceptions of international tourists concerning consumption of locally produced foods that are retailed in tourist hotels in the country

Results

The findings show that (74.5%) of the respondents agreed that overall local food was of good quality and (58.5%) agreed that local food was safe to eat. However, (42.3%) of the respondents felt strongly that the hotels they stayed in did not provide many varieties of local foods and (36.5%) felt that the hotels they stayed in did not provide sufficient information about local foods. Similarly, (61.5%) of respondents argued that they used local food because they wanted to experience Tanzanian culture and (54.3%) of the respondents felt that they can recommend to friends visiting Tanzania to use local foods.



- A. The hotel I stayed in provided sufficient information about local foods (34.9%)
 - B. The hotel I stayed in provided many varieties of local foods (42.3%)
 - C. I used local foods because I wanted to experience local culture (61.2%)
 - D. I used local foods because I wanted to increase my knowledge about local foods (52.9%)
 - E. I used local foods because I know doing so contributes to poverty reduction (36.8%)
 - F. I used local foods because they may help to conserve the environment (34.6%)
 - G. I used local foods they are produced organically (30%)
- Source: Research data, 2013

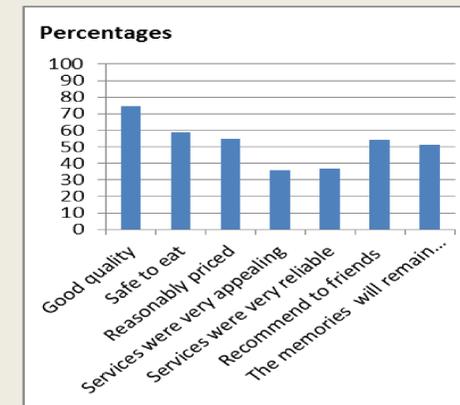


- A. Fear of illness deterred me (39.3%)
 - B. Stories and experiences from friends and relatives discouraged me (25%)
 - C. Unpleasant display prevented me experiencing local foods (21.5%)
 - D. Use of unfamiliar ingredients discouraged me (13.7%)
 - E. Suspicion of being cheated discouraged me (11.8%)
 - F. Difficulty in identifying local foods prevented me (19.4%)
 - G. I wanted to experience local foods but the hotel did not provide (31.6%)
 - H. I wanted to experience local foods but ordering was difficult (17.2%)
- Source: Research data, 2013

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Results



Source: Research data, 2013

Local food-tourism linkages



Source: (UW, 2011)

Table 1: Benefits of local food consumption

Benefits to You	Benefits to Farmers	Benefits to Local Community and Economy	Benefit to Environment
Fresher (tastes better)	Less transport and processing costs	Less pollution from transport, storage, refrigeration energy, etc.	Less greenhouse gases and noise pollution
Healthier (more nutritious-less transport and processing)	Less refrigeration requirement	Local money circulates in the community, supporting local business and employment	Less packaging waste
High quality for a good price	Less storage space and time to process	Greater sense of community cooperation and individual support	Lower pesticide and chemical use for farming
Learning about food directly from farmers	Get feedback directly from customers		
A place to meet and chat with your neighbors	More income for the work performed		Higher awareness of services provided by nature

Source: Fox (2013)

Discussion

A plethora of research exists regarding local food and sustainable tourism. Tourists' consumption of local foods creates a market opportunity that can boost the development of sustainable agriculture, help conserve traditional farming landscapes, assist the local economy, encompass a concern for environment preservation and can help to create an "image" for a particular destination that will help it attract new visitors and boost its economic and social sustainability in the long term (Buller & Morris, 2004). Local foods have the ability to appeal to the visitor's desire for authenticity within the holiday and therefore contribute positively to sustainable tourism (Sims, 2009)

Application

The paper contributes to the wider scientific discussion on local food and sustainable tourism. It uncovers vital information for tourism planners, academicians, policy and decision makers, within the country and elsewhere. Promotion of local food can facilitate local economic development, reduce environmental pollution and promote sustainable tourism development.