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STRATEGISING FOR CULINARY TOURISM (CT) SUCCESS

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INTRODUCTION

Culinary or food is inextricably linked with culture, as it contributes to the birth of numerous cuisines. When tourists travel to a new place, they often wish to be immersed in the local experience, and cuisine is an integral part of the experience. Sampling authentic local dishes allows visitors to be fully immersed in the destination's culture and traditions. For those embarking on a culinary tourism (CT) adventure, they look forward to experiencing a delicious fusion of flavours and cultures. As the world's demand for gastronomic adventures keeps growing, most businesses feel that success in this profession requires mastering the art of strategy. Culinary tourism, also known as food tourism or gastronomy tourism, is seen as a way of exploring a destination through its food and beverage offerings. This type of tourism focuses on authentic local foods, usually characterised by visits to markets, street food stalls, and traditional restaurants to experience regional specialities (Long, 2014). Culinary tourism offers a mouthwatering assortment of experiences, especially for tourists, from enjoying gourmet dining at high-star-rated restaurants to relishing unusual street delicacies in vibrant markets.

Culinary tourism has been extensively studied in neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Indonesia (Kattiyapornpong et al., 2021; Wijaya et al., 2021). However, this field of research remains limited in Malaysia. Therefore, studying local food attributes and contents is crucial to fill in the gaps in the marketing aspects and, simultaneously, aid the hospitality and tourism providers in understanding the needs and wants of the tourists regarding the local cuisine (Sanip et al., 2022). In this paper, we explore the crucial tactics or strategies that lead to the success of culinary tourism, revealing the fundamental components for a gratifying and rewarding culinary journey. Successful tactics or strategies can provide tourists with a memorable and authentic experience, considerably increasing destination appeal and visitor satisfaction. These tactics and strategies also encourage local culture and food, which can spill into economic growth and sustainability in the community.

SUCCESS STRATEGIES

These are some possible strategies for achieving success in culinary tourism:

i) Highlighting Local and Authentic Cuisine

Promoting local specialties and traditional cooking methods will enhance culinary tourism by offering authentic experiences. Examples of activities include tasting traditional dishes made with old recipes and immersing tourists in the region's culture, history, and heritage (Graham, 2020). Farm-to-table dining ensures fresh and high-quality ingredients, linking tourists with the local agricultural roots. Additionally, sharing stories and historical lessons about local dishes will add to the experience and significance of local dishes, and the personal stories of chefs and producers add depth to the culinary journey (Di-Clemente et al., 2020).

ii) Promotion Strategy

In today's digital age, online platforms and reviews significantly influence travel decisions. Thus, developing promotional tactics that include monitoring web presence, encouraging positive reviews, and communicating with travellers via social media can be a powerful move. Positive online buzz can greatly impact a destination's culinary tourism success, enticing additional visitors. To cultivate and sustain culinary tourism, promotion strategies such as destinations' official websites and social media play an overwhelmingly critical part in territorial rivalry, as they market their tangible and intangible resources to become appealing and competitive in culinary tourism (Scorrano et al., 2023).

iii) Enhancement of Tourism-Gastronomy-Agriculture Cooperation

To build a framework for diversification and commercial collaboration, a new strategy must be developed to link the three sectors of tourism, gastronomy, and agriculture successfully. This cooperation represents a new level of intersectoral cooperation between agriculture, gastronomy, and tourism. Through this approach, it views farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs as food suppliers to local hotels and restaurants. Rural regions are where food production is initiated and where local foods are elaborated (Di-Clemente et al., 2020). Culinary tourism has emerged as a new avenue for local producers to connect with diverse consumers (Fanelli, 2019), and this strategic collaboration can bring new perspectives and prospects for successful business expansion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, implementing these tactics can dramatically increase the success of culinary tourism while promoting industry sustainability. By actively pursuing these techniques, places and businesses can effectively attract more visitors, improve their culinary experiences, and ultimately contribute to the long-term viability of culinary tourism. Furthermore, including sustainable practices in these initiatives guarantees that the industry flourishes commercially and respects and safeguards the cultural and environmental elements contributing to its appeal. Thus, by prioritising these activities, stakeholders may set the groundwork for a vibrant and resilient culinary tourism industry that benefits travellers and local communities.

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