

Book Review

Foodies and Food Tourism, Donald Getz, Richard Robinson, Tommy Andersson and Sanja Vujcic (2014) Oxford: Good Fellow Publishers Ltd

Foodies and Food Tourism considers thoroughly the recent global phenomenon of food tourism, and offers a comprehensive account of what it means to be a foodie. The authors, who are self-confessed foodies, take a demand-side approach to the subject of food tourism, instead of the prevailing supply-side, calling for greater understanding of foodies' involvement with food, their motivation for travelling to specific food places, and their travel preferences and patterns. Therefore, understanding foodies and food tourism experience is a major purpose of this book, which is clear from the outset. The authors' passion and genuine love of and for food is evident through the discussions and attention to detail throughout the book. The rather catchy term 'foodie' or a 'food lover', is defined as a lifestyle that encompasses all aspects of food, from cooking to undertaking travel for new food experiences. Enjoying all aspects of food is what 'foodies' have in common. To travel for the main purpose of enjoying food is what defines 'food tourism'. As recommended by the authors, this book is a particularly suitable resource for students and those who wish to understand planning, developing and marketing experiences to food tourists, with each chapter beginning with a set of learning objectives, and concluding with study questions and additional reading. There are also a number of carefully chosen case studies, research notes and visual aids, together with research data from major surveys and authors' own research findings on food tourism that contribute significantly to this book's practical rather than theoretical applications. The use of chapter markers is highly effective, making the searching process much quicker. The authors deal with the often ambiguous key terms in the introductory chapter by not only providing definitions of 'foodies', 'food tourism', 'food', and other related concepts, but also identifying several dimensions to being a foodie, regarding behaviour, self-identity and social identity, which are further explored in the following chapters. This indicates a far more complex and multi-layered nature of this concept. Starting with a systematic approach on how to study and understand food tourism, the subject is then explored within other fields of study, as well as within the social sciences and humanities with a particular attention to its relationship to food, tourism and hospitality. The inseparability of hospitality from food, evident in the facilitation of social bonding during meals, as well as identity building and host and guest interactions, significantly promote and enable authentic food tourist experiences. Therefore, apart from considering food tourism from the business perspective, as implied by the applied fields of hospitality or tourism management, it can and should be analysed through social and cultural lenses which consider it as a platform for sharing knowledge and expertise by learning from others' experiences, seeking authenticity and food novelties. The nature of being a foodie is critically analysed by drawing on the authors' research findings, and employing the socio-psychological construct of 'ego-involvement', which explains the centrality of food and food-related activities in foodies' lifestyles. The authors remain open, however, to different interpretations and varying perspectives on what the term foodie could mean to others. The emphasis placed on understanding the mindset, motivations to travel and behaviour of foodies is demonstrated in their frequent mention throughout this book. Being a foodie, which implies following a certain lifestyle, is likely to have social implications of belonging and sharing the same interests with other like-minded individuals. This process of association with and existing within the same reality is expressed in being part of the same 'social world'. Actors, events, practices and formal organizations are all elements that contribute to a formation, facilitation of and development of any social world, or in this particular case the 'social worlds' of foodies. The demand-side

approach to food tourism that follows, includes valuable examples and reminders of the marketing mix in relation to accommodating a greater diversity in demand from food tourists. The meaningful insight of co-creation of experiences emerges, in which foodies actively seek and construct their food-related undertakings. Continuing the marketing focus, a number of destinations are presented and discussed as real-world examples of how to effectively develop, attract and promote food tourism in different countries. This leads onto a discussion of the critical importance of food events, and their significance in enabling foodies to gain the experience sought through co-creation. Attention is drawn to organizing and planning such events bearing in mind foodies' demands, their high level of hands-on involvement, as well as a combination of learning, cultural authenticity and aesthetic appreciation. Revealed through research examples and case studies, this chapter can be treated as a guide on successful food event planning and execution, making this textbook valuable to marketing or event development organizations. The theme of food tourists co-creating their experiences together with destinations and suppliers is acknowledged and further explored in the chapter on experience marketing, which is the remaining crucial element in this demand-side approach to food tourism. Once again, the authors advocate understanding consumers' needs, motivations and other antecedents to food tourism, to ensure the creation of successful food destinations that fully capture different demands of food tourists. Concluding with a summary and a concise thematic outline of the main ideas, this textbook makes the reader more knowledgeable about food tourism with practical implications for development and marketing to these food lovers. The very final section focuses on future perspectives, designed for destinations and suppliers who wish to benefit financially from foodies and the food tourism phenomenon. Although a little over-prophetic, this part acknowledges the evolving nature of foodies and food tourists and their changing food preferences. As a result, it regards food and culture as interrelated, and provides considerations for technological advancements, economic trends, and global and country-specific developments. This textbook is highly recommended for all those who wish to get more than just a good overview on food tourism. Although it includes theoretical debates, it does not make use of complex words or jargon, and is written with a clear purpose to increase understanding on food tourism from the demand perspective. At the same time it provides suggestions and implications for destinations, events, suppliers and marketers, turning this textbook into an informative and valuable contribution for students and practitioners alike.