

Gastronomy Tourism : A comparative study of Two French Regions : Brittany and La Martinique

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Introduction

The increase in popularity of world food and world travel have inspired researchers to study the relations between food and tourism, the role of food as a tourist attraction (Hall (2003), Hjalager and Richards (2002), Joppe (2003), Cohen (1996), Wood (2001), Bessièrè (1998)...and also the limits of its attraction (Cohen and Aveili, 2004). For tourists, the satisfaction of nutritional needs is increasingly becoming a culinary-gastronomic experience (Meler and Cerovic, 2003) with some tourists such as those originating from Hong Kong quoting sampling local food as their most important activity (Law et Al, 2004). Images of food are used by tourism destinations as markers of their cultural identity (Fronchet, 2003) and food has been shown to have good potential to enhance sustainability of tourism destinations (du Rand, 2003). In these ways and for certain destinations and market segments, food and local gastronomy play a role in adding value to a destination at a time when competitive advantage is increasingly important.

The purpose of this paper is to compare the gastronomy tourism offer across two French regions, Brittany is the North West of France and the island of La Martinique, a French overseas region and to make recommendations for strengthening the gastronomy tourism offer in these two areas.

France is a leading tourism destination and is recognised worldwide as having a strong food culture. The French tourism authorities promote French gastronomy as a key feature of the French travel experience.

The importance of regional gastronomy tourism is also increasingly recognised in France and regional tourism boards are progressively structuring their gastronomy tourism offer around their regional specialities.

Brittany has been recognised by French food critics as France's second gastronomy region. Also, it is highly successful tourism region both for French and overseas tourists.

La Martinique is renowned in France for its gastronomy specialities which include rum , bananas and accras. This island region is dependent on tourism and is struggling against Caribbean competitors that offer lower prices. It therefore needs to develop its competitive advantages.

Literature Review

Gastronomy and Food Tourism

The term gastronomy has been defined in many ways and is evolving over time. It used to describe sophisticated dishes prepared for the nobility but there are now much wider and even differing definitions. As Scarpato (2000) shows, the original definition of gastronomy has broadened in recent years and the concept now refers to “reflective eating and cooking as well as food preparation, production and presentation in general, maintaining the association with excellence.” Also, the growth of cultural practices related to food has meant that the concept of gastronomy

has begun to encompass cultural practices also and Scapato argues that we can now talk about 'gastronomic culture'.

As tourists have to eat and generally at least partially partake in local food experiences, gastronomy has always implicitly been part of the tourism experience. What has changed in recent years is the recognition of gastronomy tourism as a valued asset and an integrate part of the tourism offer. Even if it has its limits because some tourists are not attracted by local food (Cohen and Avieli, 2004), it represents a competitive advantage for some destinations and in relation to certain tourism segments. This has lead to the development and promotion of many gastronomy tourism products such as short breaks, food fairs and wine routes. Gastronomy tourism is still a new research field and the main research findings from the English literature are grouped together in two key books, namely 'Food Tourism Around the world, Development, Management and Markets' by C. Michael Hall et Al. (2003) and "Tourism and Gastronomy" by A.M. Hjalager and G. Richards (2002). In France, research on the relationships between gastronomy and tourism have been publish by the sociologist Jean-Pierre Poulain (2000) and a study of regional positioning and food images by Isabelle Frochet (2003). Michael Hall et Al (2003) find that tourism and food production are increasingly seen as having potential as sources of economic diversification in rural areas where traditional sources of income such as agriculture are no longer sufficient. Local products can be sold on farms and local culinary specialities feature on restaurant menus. In the same book, Steven Boyne and Derek Hall emphasis the role of the local community and especially the business community in contributing to the sustainable development of food tourism initiatives.

Wood (2001) further insists on the role these new economic ventures can have on encouraging community pride and reinforcing local identity. Food tourism clearly plays a social role both in facilitating the promotion of local culture and helping to sustain this cultural tradition.

The WTO (2004) withholds that sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. Regional gastronomy being closely associated with regional culture, it is in this last socio-cultural aspect of tourism that food can play a role in sustainable development of tourism destinations. In Hjalager and Richards 'Gastronomy and Tourism', Scarpato describes sustainable gastronomy as being about producing environmentally sensitive food and preparing it with the aim of nourishing both mind and body. In a chapter entitled 'Sustainable gastronomy as a tourist product', she critically evaluates three cases of gastronomy tourism and concludes that gastronomy research can make a significant contribution to community policies on sustainable development.

Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to engage in exploratory research comparing the gastronomy tourism offer across two French regions, Brittany in the North West of mainland France and the island of La Martinique, a French overseas region . the comparison will lead to recommendations for strengthening the gastronomy tourism offer in these two areas.

The gastronomy tourism offer in Brittany and La Martinique will be explored through a case study of each region whereby a pre-established typology of

gastronomy tourism will be applied to evaluate the extent to which gastronomy tourism is significant at the destination. The typology used has been developed by Anne Mette Hjalager (2002) and is based on a hierarchical model of the gastronomy tourism value chain, starting with the first order, indigenous development of gastronomy tourism and finishing with fourth order, diagonal development which includes enhancing knowledge of the gastronomy experience and creating 'intelligent' gastronomy clusters in the economy. Suggestions will be made for improving the gastronomy tourism offer in each area.

The Hjalager Typology of Gastronomy Tourism :

This hierarchical model defines four orders or levels of gastronomy tourism, reflecting increasing sophistication and complexity in the food value chains, namely:

First Order: Indigenous development. The building up of gastronomy tourism within the existing economic structures, collaborative networks and knowledge base.

In order one gastronomy tourism development we assume that the resources already exists but that the market has expanded due to tourists. Examples include regional food production and restaurants. Ways in which destinations can capitalise on these indigenous developments include the following ideas:

Including gastronomic aspects in promotional materials of the region/country

Making promotional campaigns for particular products, connected to a region or season

Introducing food trade marks with regional features/names etc

Creating tourism appeal for existing food fairs and events

Planning new restaurants in an urban/resort development

Second Order : Horizontal development. This expands the vision of the first order to include an improvement of product quality, not only because tourists are critical but also because higher quality is assumed to create higher revenue. New institutions in charge of tasks not previously defined in the production system will be established, mainly in the area of marketing, quality control and other business services.

Examples include :

Implementing and Marketing Quality Standards

Certification and branding of food providers and restaurants, based on various criteria and values.

Reinventing, Modernizing and commodifying historical food traditions

Third order: Vertical development. Developing and adding analogous services elements to the material provision of food. Creating new types of linkages and collaborations, integrating food in other economic activities.

Examples include :

Opening up Production Plants and sites for tourism.

Establishing and marketing food and wine routes.

Establishing visitor centres, museums etc.

Creating events based on food and tourism

Cooking classes and cooking holidays

Fourth order : Diagonal development. Enhancing the knowledge base of the Gastronomy experience and creating intelligence. Examples include:

Training for gastronomy tourism, food science and tourism professionals

Research and development.

Media centres

Demonstration Projects.

Findings for Brittany

First order criteria:

Firstly, gastronomy is extensively included in promotional materials for the region, especially the website and brochures. Also, tourists benefit from some seasonal promotions of regional produce. (artichokes, cider). Regional features are introduced into food trade marks, notably under the 'Produit en Bretagne' and 'Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée' labels. We can deduce that private planning takes tourism into consideration as a market opportunity in that restaurants are overrepresented in tourism areas as compared with non-tourism areas. Indeed, restaurants in coastal areas are highly dependent on the influx of tourists in the high season. Also, factory outlets such as the 'La Trinitaine' biscuit shop in 'La Trinité sur Mer' benefit consciously and significantly from the tourism market. Hypermarkets also promote regional food products widely in the tourism season with promotional stands for products such as 'Les Galettes Bretonnes' biscuits which are packaged in attractive boxes, decorated with pictures inspired by regional culture such as Breton dancing or Gauguin paintings. Some events link tourism and food in Brittany. One large-scale event that illustrates this is the Celtic music festival in Lorient. The festival covers a broad spectrum, from intimate gigs to large-scale events with fireworks and giant screens. An exhibition of contemporary art of Celtic origin is also on show. At the event, visitors can taste

regional produce from Brittany and other celtic regions such as *crêpes*, sausage *galettes*, hot *andouilles* with potatoes and suckling pig cooked on a spit. There are numerous food events that are much more local in scope such as the 'Fête de la Confiture' in la Chapelle Fougeretz, or the Chestnut festival in Redon.

All of the first order criteria can therefore be said to be satisfied to a certain extent.

The second order development of gastronomy tourism expands from the first order to include an improvement of food quality. (Hjalager, 2002),

If we examine the second order gastronomy tourism development criteria we can note that Brittany satisfies the relevant criteria.

Brittany's 'L'authentique Plateau de Fruit de Mer' (authentic seafood platter) project is a perfect example. Quality standards are set down in association with the tourism board and independent food critics. The tourism board promotes the restaurants that adhere to these quality standards through a promotional booklet. This initiative leads to the implementation and marketing of quality standards and to the certification and branding of food providers. Indeed, the restaurants that implement and maintain the relevant quality standards carry a logo stating 'Fruits de Mer Frais Bretons' (Fresh Breton Seafood). Another example of certification leading to tourism promotion is that of quality certified products being promoted through tourism brochures. For example, the 'Le Cornouaille' cider which carries an AOC certification is promoted in the 'Restaurant du Terroir' brochure which is widely distributed by the regional tourism board.

Where 'reinventing, modernising and commodifying food traditions' is concerned, in Brittany traditions are widely maintained and the need to reinvent them seems

perhaps less necessary than in other destinations. However, it is clear that they are modernised and commodified to suit today's demand . For example, one of the specialities of the prestigious 'La Closerie de Kerdrain' restaurant in Auray is 'Sablés Bretons rafraichis de fraises à l'angélique du jardin'. Here, traditional Breton butter biscuits and strawberries serve as the basis for a sophisticated dessert. Brittany can be said to generally satisfy all these second-order criteria.

Hjalager's third order criteria go further to introduce other peripheral activities around the food experience.

Where third-order gastronomic experiences are concerned, it is important to note that contrary to standard norms in many countries, the majority of museums in France do not provide restaurant facilities for tourists. In fact, the vast majority of French museums have no commercial outlets whatsoever. This is because culture and commerce do not mix easily in France, there is a feeling that they should be experienced separately. While food has therefore been kept out of museums, it is increasingly welcomed an integral part of cultural events and activities.

A few production sites such as the 'Craquelin de St. Malo' site are open to tourist but these initiatives are very limited.

A different style of event linking tourism and food is the competition run by the regional tourism board in association with the 'Authentique Plateau de Fruit de Mer' promotion. Tourists can enter a competition by sending the coupon in the brochure to the tourism board and if they win they go to a restaurant as a mystery guest, thereby checking the quality of the seafood served.

A key third-order gastronomic food experience in Brittany is promoted under the label 'Bienvenue à la ferme' . These farm holidays emphasise what they refer to as the

'real food with flavour' feature of the holiday in their promotion. Also, the brochure which is translated in four languages regularly carries a cover page photograph with a food theme, thus reinforcing this message.

No marketing of food routes has been discovered in Brittany during the course of this research. A map is included in the 'L'authentique plateau de fruit de mer' brochure, but it is clearly for just information and not organised as a route.

No cooking holidays are offered in Brittany but farm holidays organised for groups of children occasionally include cooking in the available activities. For example, in the Côte d'Armor region, the Charles family teach children how to make cream and bread during the farm holiday. Another initiative in Rennes is the 'cercle Culinaire' (cooking circle) , financed by the Milk information centre (CIDIL) that has an extensive year round programme of cooking activities for all age groups. This is essentially a local activity rather than a tourism one.

Brittany can be said to take some initiatives within all the third-order criteria.

Limited initiatives are taken where the fourth order criteria is concerned but they are underway all the same.

Where gastronomy training is concerned, Brittany has several restaurant training colleges but does not offer specific courses for tourism professionals. It is worth noting that the Rennes International School of Business offers a specialised management option in 'Catering Food/ Hospitality and Tourism'. The companies that supports this initiative largely recognise the advantages of combining tourism sector competencies with restaurant sector competencies.

Brittany's capital city Rennes also hosts a third level college for food engineers who are often employed as graduates by local food industries.

Research and development linked to tourism and gastronomy is very limited in Brittany but several papers have been written by researchers at the Ecole de Commerce, often in partnership with members of a food interest club called 'Le Banquet'. Where the media is concerned, the regional tourism board and Produit en Bretagne both advertise on national television.

Findings for La Martinique

First Order: Indigenous development.

Gastronomy initiatives are well represented in tourism promotional materials for La Martinique. The official tourism board French website (www.martiniquetourism.com) contains a link to gastronomy on its opening page which illustrates that it is considered important to visitors as an attraction. The content of this section is however disappointing as it limits itself to some photographs of typical dishes and information on restaurants. The gastronomy events are included under the events section. The English version of the website contains a direct link from the opening page to two relevant sections, one on 'culinary magic' and the other dedicated entirely to rum.

The official tourism brochure presents the island as the island of fruit, illustrated with a photograph of a bowl of exotic fruit. Several advertising campaigns for example on TV screens in French airport departure lounges and on board flights to La Martinique use food images with photographs of grilled fish and creole rice for example.

Martinician rum has won many prizes and this has contributed to the Tourism Board's decision to communicate on the islands gastronomy offer, for example on the tourism boards DVD.

Exotic foods are central to advertising campaigns during the October-February season which is the high tourism season in La Martinique.

The excellent reputation of its prize-winning rum and its range of 12 different brands has led to the development of the 'Rhum de Martinique' label. Also, the banana producers union is actively fighting strong competition and has developed a logo with the inscription 'Banane de Guadeloupe et Martinique. Rien ne peut le battre' (Guadeloupe and Martinique Banana. Nothing can beat it.) This appeal is strengthened through TV advertising which uses Martinican athletes as spokespeople.

La Martinique is host to numerous food events. Tourism appeal for food fairs and events is created during festivals such as the Banana Festival which is organised by the town of Sainte-Marie and Rum Parties organised by the Saint-James distillery. Every village hosts an agricultural fair once a year where local food produce is displayed. Also, the tourism office website advertises many gastronomy events such as the Sainte Marie gastronomy week. The largest event is the 'Tour des Yoles' in August which attracts thousands of tourists to the sites it tours.

New resort development has opened up opportunities for new restaurants while more traditional food is offered in more rural areas where the home made aspect of the food is emphasised by managers. One interesting project is an icecream shop called 'Kay Man Tinette' in the city of Basse-Pointe which stresses that the product is made by a local grand-mother. Some initiatives to offer meals in homes such as Chez Mally have also been taken and are advertised on the English version of the web-site.

This analysis can conclude that La Martinique largely satisfies the first order criteria as a gastronomy destination.

Second Order : Horizontal development.

The high quality of Martinican rum means it has an “appellation contrôlée” label and has won many international prizes such as the 2006 French Agricultural gold medal. Also, Martinique’s banana industry has developed its own brand and logo. However the tourism board is not involved in these initiatives. Interestingly, the Martinique banana website promotes tourism to the island whereas in Brittany, it is the tourism board that promotes food services.

The regional tourism board in la Martinique (ARDTM) is directly involved in restaurant promotion through the publication of a key restaurant guide called the Ti Gourmet which promotes almost 500 eating establishments. The island’s restaurant union also sought cooperation with tourism authorities when it published its restaurant and recipe guide book called ‘Délices de la Martinique’ which led to this book being edited by the tourism Minister and prefaced by the commercial director of Air Liberté. These initiatives illustrate the recognition of gastronomy as a significant feature of the tourism offer.

Martinican food reflects a local blend of African, French and Hindu food through dishes such as ‘Colombo de poulet’ or ‘gratin de banana aux lardons’ and local chefs often creatively rethink and redesign traditional dishes. In this way, traditions are reinvented with tourists in mind.

Through these examples, we can see that la Martinique satisfies second order criteria.

Third order: Vertical development.

An example of a food production site that is open to tourists in La Martinique is 'La Ferme Perrine', a farm where visitors can spend time watching the production process, can participate in work at the farm and taste the food products. A farm shop is available for tourists to purchase food souvenirs and tourists can see how creole black pudding is made. Traditional know-how is valued in promotional materials, including the Ti-Gourmet guide book as an asset of this venture.

Where marketing food routes is concerned, no initiatives have been taken so far in La Martinique.

Visitor centres with food interest, on the other hand, are provided within the tourism offer. These include the Rum Museum, the Banana Museum and the Sugar cane Museum as well as visits of former colonial rum production sites. Tours of these sites are designed to educate and inform tourists regarding local history and production methods and sales outlets at these places promote local food products.

Where food and tourism events are concerned, these are very numerous throughout the year and most especially during the Summer holidays. Furthermore, festival with themes around food products such as bananas, rum, pineapple, shrimps etc. are visited by thousands of people each year. The Crab dish competition 'Concours du Crabe d'Or' takes place each Easter to elect the best 'matoutou' traditional crab dish. All these events create interest for local gastronomy among tourists and pride among the islanders.

No initiatives for the promotion of cooking classes to tourists have been taken in La Martinique.

Generally, this analysis shows that the island satisfies several third order criteria and leave scope for potential new tourism products.

Fourth order:

The Martinique tourism board has set up a hotel school in La Martinique and also a tourism technical college. These initiatives indicate the desire to improve quality standards and train managers for the islands tourism companies.

Work currently being carried out by Vincent Vermignon on Gastronomy tourism in La Martinique for his MA thesis indicates an increasing recognition of gastronomy as a real tourism asset and competitive advantage for the island.

The table below classifies the gastronomy tourism initiatives identified at the two destinations according to their place on Hjalager's model.

FIRST ORDER	BRITTANY	MARTINIQUE
GASTRONOMY IN PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS	RESTAURANTS, PRODUCTS EXTENSIVELY INCLUDED IN PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS	CONSISTENT PROMOTION OF GASTRONOMY BUT WEBSITE LESS DETAILED
CAMPAIGNS FOR PRODUCTS	SEASONAL PROMOTIONS OF PRODUCTS	EXTENSIVE PROMOTION OF PRODUCTS
REGIONAL FOOD TRADE MARKS	'PRODUIT EN BRETAGNE LABEL' APPELLATION D'ORIGINE CONTROLEE	'RHUM DE MARTINIQUE' AND 'BANANE DE GUAD. ET MARTINIQUE'
OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW RESTAURANTS	STRONG	STRONG
TOURISM APPEAL FOR EVENTS	SOME TOURISM PROMOTION OF GASTRONOMY EVENTS	STRONG TOURISM PROMOTION OF GASTRONOMY EVENTS

SECOND ORDER	BRITTANY	MARTINIQUE
IMPLEMENTING AND MARKETING QUALITY STANDARDS	PROMOTION OF RESTAURANTS AND PRODUCTS THAT ADHERE TO QUALITY STANDARDS	WEAK

CERTIFICATION AND BRANDING OF FOOD PROVIDERS AND RESTAURANTS	FRESH BRETON SEAFOOD CERTIFICATION AOC CIDER	TOURISM BOARD RESTAURANT BROCHURE AND SUPPORT FOR RESTAURANT AND FOOD PROMOTIONS
REINVENTING, MODERNISING AND COMMODYFING HISTORICAL FOOD TRADITIONS	NEW RESTAURANT DISHES BASED ON TRADITION	EMPHASISE ON TRADITIONAL QUALITIES, NEW DISHES BASED ON VARIED CULTURAL INFLUENCES

THIRD ORDER	BRITTANY	MARTINIQUE
OPENING PRODUCTION SITES TO TOURISTS	FARM HOLIDAYS FEW PRODUCTION SITES	FARM VISITS, TASTING EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTION SITE TOURS
ESTABLISHING AND MARKETING FOOD AND WINE ROUTES	NO	NO
ESTABLISHING VISITOR CENTRES, MUSEUMS etc	NO	SEVERAL FOOD MUSEUMS
CREATING EVENTS BASED ON FOOD AND TOURISM	SEAFOOD PLATTER COMPETITION CELTIC MUSIC FESTIVAL	NUMEROUS FOOD FESTIVALS ALL YEAR ROUND
COOKING CLASSES AND COOKING HOLIDAYS	OCCASIONALLY ON FARM HOLIDAYS	NO

FOURTH ORDER	BRITTANY	MARTINIQUE
ENHANCING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF THE GASTRONOMY EXPERIENCE	SEVERAL RESEARCH PROJECTS	MA THESIS RESEARCH PROJECT
CREATING INTELLIGENCE	SEVERAL HOTEL AND TOURISM COLLEGE AND QUALIFICATIONS	HOTEL COLLEGE TOURISM COLLEGE

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of both la Martinique and Brittany, we can confirm that both destinations are taking initiatives relating to each of the levels of Hjalager's model. With regard to the first order, the Brittany tourism board can be said to communicate more than la Martinique on its gastronomy tourism, through its website and promotional brochures. The fact that Brittany's tourism board has decided to make gastronomy its key promotional theme in 2007 confirms this advance. On the other hand, food products are widely promoted by la Martinique. The fact that tourism is promoted by the Martinician banana website and that food products are sold at many tourism sites indicate that the food producers are highly aware of the value of tourists as customers, more so than in Brittany where joint promotions between food producers and the tourism board are rare even though regional brands and quality labels are strong in each case.

At both destinations, tourism development has opened opportunities for restaurants to develop and this has benefited smaller outlets particularly in La Martinique. Further initiatives could be made with the tourism board in Brittany to encourage the development of restaurants in more rural areas with a view to supporting sustainable tourism.

Where events are concerned, La Martinique tourism board seems to have a better appreciation of the tourism value of these events whereas in Brittany, food events tend often to target only the local and regional populations.

Where the second order criteria is concerned, Brittany is definitely more advanced with regard to implementing and marketing quality standards. It also takes initiatives with regard to certification of restaurants which is not the case so far in La Martinique. Both regions however show creativity in their ability to reinvent traditional dishes based on varied cultural influences.

Where third order criteria are concerned, La Martinique shows a more entrepreneurial spirit with regard to creating tourism services around its gastronomy assets. These include several food museums, farm visits and educational tours of production sites and numerous food festivals that are actively promoted to tourists. Brittany on the other hand offers rare but existing cookery holidays. Surprisingly, neither destination offers gastronomy routes and there would seem to be clear potential to do so at both destinations.

Some fourth order initiatives have been taken at both destinations which allows us to conclude that the significance of gastronomy as a tourism asset will get increasing attention in both regions.

Conclusions :

Gastronomy tourism is often taken somewhat for granted but this analysis allows us to evaluate the degree to which it is integrated into the tourism offer in two French regions, La Martinique and Brittany. Several main areas where future efforts could be focused have been identified.

Firstly, gastronomy needs to be fully recognised as a cultural and tourism resource. It could be much more present in cultural centres, museums and holiday programmes in Brittany and could be taken a step further in la Martinique through the implementation of quality standards to ensure that food services standards are kept high in the same way as for food product standards.

In both destinations, tourism food routes are clearly lacking and there seems to be real potential for cookery holidays, especially given the strong growth in interest for gourmet cookery courses in Europe. In general, more joint tourism-gastronomy events would be welcome.

Gastronomy tourism is already making a contribution to sustainable tourism and this contribution can increase by further initiatives such as food and wine routes, farm holidays with a food theme and farm cookery holidays for example. The success of such initiatives depend on what Martin and Williams (2003) refer to as the 'rural idyll' of a high quality environment and agricultural lands and therefore work in partnership with sustainable tourism initiatives.

The other key point is that gastronomy tourism requires a more strategic approach and a shared vision involving local communities, producers and organisations responsible for tourism promotions. This point is argued by Vernon et al (2004) who underpin the role of food suppliers in sustainable tourism and argue that successful implementation of sustainable tourism requires cooperation by a wide range of different stakeholders including restaurants and food suppliers.

Research in this field helps further understanding of the current gastronomy tourism offer and highlights area for improvement.

A second more quantitative research project is underway to identify the relative importance of gastronomy as a criteria for choosing Brittany and La Martinique as

holiday destinations. This will provide information regarding the profile of tourists who are interested in specific types of gastronomy 'attractions' in each region and should help construct a more targeted offer in the future.

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