

Developing Culinary Tourism: The Role of Food as a Cultural Heritage in Kenya

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Abstract

Africa's social life centers on food-good wholesome food. The sound of festive drums is all we need to bring out our cooking pots and pans and produce an array of exotic dishes, which Afro-Americans describe as 'soul food'. One key component of the relationship between food and tourism is that of the promotion of traditional foods. In Kenya, tourists mainly come for the wildlife safari and beach tourism attractions which on their own may not be viable options in the long run. Therefore, the tourism industry need to diversify their products and include more cultural tourism based components of which food and drink is a key contender. In Kenya, the promotion of food as a component of its destination attractiveness is in its infancy at both the international and domestic level. The context of this contribution is to underpin such developments using the rationale that in order to maintain and enhance local economic and social vitality, creating back linkages between tourism and food production sectors can add value to an area's economy. This paper using a case study approach and researcher experience will attempt to address the strengths and opportunities of food promotion in Kenya though special references will be made to other countries in Africa. Further, the paper will look at cultural heritage features that are unique to Kenya and how these can be used to promote cultural awareness beyond the famous Big Five phenomena. The role of local communities in promoting culinary tourism as part of cultural heritage development will also be analyzed.

Key words: Culinary, Culture, Food, Kenya, Tourism

1. Introduction

Thousands of years ago, merchants traveled the seven seas, looking for foodstuffs to trade. Spices, wine, fruits and olive oil were the currencies of yore. Today, we unwittingly do much the same. However, modern travelers tend to prefer restaurants and wineries in place of pirate-infested trade routes. Culture is an embodiment of a people's traditions and ways of life and is illustrated in the food, rituals, dances, festivals, sculptures, building designs, religion, dressing and other practises (UNESCO, 2001). According to Nasaa-art, culture is based on the mosaic of places, foods, traditions, art, rituals and experiences of a people. (Nasaa-art, 2004; Wadawi, Bresler & Okech, 2008; 2009). Within this framework, Kenya, being a multi ethnic nation with 42 different communities holds a highly diverse mix of cultures. The interplay between culture and development is both complex and dynamic. Heritage tourism, which is the same as cultural tourism, has often been criticized for converting local cultures and lifestyles into "commodities" for sale to foreign audiences (Nana & Mensah, 2006). In this argument, cultural commoditization contributes to the denigration of social customs, alienation of residents and the creation of homogeneity between places. Communities, whether rural or urban, could be used as agents of development, preservation and sustainability of cultural tourism in Kenya.

Culinary tourism is a subset of agri-tourism that focuses specifically on the search for, and enjoyment of, prepared food and drink. Food tourism is defined as the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region (Hall & Sharples, 2003) and covers a vast number of gastronomic opportunities for tourists (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007) as well as involving numerous economic development schemes. Food tourism has been hailed as a vehicle for regional development, strengthening local production through backward linkages in tourism supply-chain partnerships (Renko, Renko, & Polonijo, 2010; Telfer & Wall, 1996) and is regarded as an important vehicle in delivering sustainable tourism (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Simms, 2009; Everett & Slocum, 2013). Culinary tourism promotes all distinctive and impressive gastronomic experiences, not just those that have earned 4 stars or better. Previously overlooked, culinary tourism is an important new niche that fosters economic and community development and new intercultural insights.

Culinary tourism can be found in rural or urban areas and tourists should be available to visit all year round. As such its potential in development of food safety and security all over Kenya, should be considered. Relevant literature spans the realm of food-based interactions through a variety of subsectors, such as niche tourism, agritourism, culinary tourism, food-based attractions and food-purchase motivations. For example, agritourism (farm tourism) specializes in the incorporation of visits to farms for the purposes of on-site retail purchases, enjoyment and education (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Veeck, Chee, & Veeck, 2006).

Table 1: Types of Food Tourism

Facilities	Events	Activities	Organizations
Building structures	Consumer shows	Consumption	
Food processing facilities	Food and drink shows	Dining at restaurants	Restaurant classifications or certification systems (e.g Michelin, Taste of Scotland)
Wineries/breweries	Cooking equipment (cooking shows)	Picnic utilizing locally grown products	Food/wine classification system (organic)
Farmers markets	Product launches	Purchasing food/beverages	Associations (Slow Food)
Food stores	Festivals	Pick your own operations/u-pick	
Food related museums	Food festivals	Touring	
Restaurants	Wine festivals	Wine regions	
Land uses	Harvest festivals	Agricultural regions	
Farms		City food districts	
Orchards		Educational observation	
Vineyards		Cooking schools	
Urban restaurant districts		Wine tasting/ education	
Routes		Visiting wineries	
Wine routes		Observing chef competitions	
Food routes		Reading food, beverage magazine and book	
Gourmet trails			

Source: Adapted from Smith and Xiao (2008, p. 290).

Culinary tourism, also looks at the practices of exploratory eating or participating in perhaps alien foodways as a way of encountering and consuming other places and cultures (Long, 2004). Food-based attractions may include special events, such as food festivals or cooking holidays (Di Domenico & Miller, 2012; Hall & Sharples, 2008), or the promotion of local food through farmers' markets, enhanced local menu items and the inclusion of locally grown food produce in the hospitality supply chain (Telfer & Wall, 1996; Torres, 2002).

Table 1 reveals the vast array of food tourism opportunities and initiatives makes defining "food tourism" problematic. The table further highlights its eclectic nature from events to facilities, to organizations and activities which can often present a bewildering array of options to regions and businesses who are considering developing a food tourism product. Knowledge and networking are therefore, fundamental in choosing the most appropriate vehicle (Hall & Sharples, 2008), as well as in sustaining and growing the business (Everett & Slocum, 2013). Wine and food routes are very popular in developed countries but is not effectively marketed in Africa even though we have very limited wine growing regions.

Kenya is not a wine growing destination and hence developing local culinary tourism is an aspect that must be developed to encourage cultural heritage promotion in the local communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Why Culinary Tourism?

According to Renko et al., (2010) food, along with other phenomena such as religion, events, festivals, and architecture are considered to be “gray zones” of cultural and heritage tourism. It mostly serves as a catalyst in enhancing the tourists’ experience in certain places. However, the importance of foodstuffs has been recognized by more and more researchers. They focus on the role of food in culture and consider food as not only being a basic necessity for tourist consumption but also an essential element of regional culture that adds value to the image of a destination. Local cuisines represent a core manifestation of a destination’s intangible heritage, and through its consumption, tourists can gain a truly authentic cultural experience (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007; Renko et al., 2010).

Table 2: Cultural Attributes Unique to Kenya

Cultural Attributes	
Local People	Soap Stones
Local Language	Beads and Jewellery
Tales and Legends	Weaving
Dressing	Music and Dance
Cultural Architecture	Food and Drinks
Wood Carvings	Religion

Table 2 identifies some cultural attributes that are unique to Kenya of which food and drink is a crucial component in promoting Kenyan heritage. Below are some reasons why culinary tourism should be considered an important aspect of cultural heritage:

1. Early 100% of tourists dine out when traveling
2. Dining is consistently one of the top 3 favorite tourist activities
3. High correlation between tourists who are interested in wine/cuisine and museums, shows, shopping, music and film festivals
4. Culinary tourists are highly likely to participate in outdoor recreational activities
5. Interest in culinary tourism spans to all age groups
6. Cuisine is the only art form that speaks to all five senses
7. Culinary tourists are explorers
8. Culinary attractions can be available all year round
9. Local cuisine is the number one motivating factor in choosing a destination

Besides pre-existing social and economic ties, regions with particular configurations of natural and cultural capital that allow for the development of geographical indications possess

a competitive advantage in the development of local food tourism. This is because one key motivation for tourism is the opportunity to experience novel cultures and places, and both food and agriculture are dimensions of culture that are easily packaged and sold (Kim, Eves, & Scarles 2009; Long 2001). This link between cuisine and place often assumes the form of geographical indications (Bowen 2010). Proximity to urban areas is also important in developing local food tourism. Consequently, communities will find that where there is some pre-existing tourism infrastructure, local food tourism is easier and more cost-effective to develop (Dougherty, Brown & Green 2013).

2.2 The potential role of food tourism

The contribution of food has largely been ignored in spite of its apparent importance and potential to be the vital driving force of differing cultures and as the key to developing and sustaining tourism. With an ecosystem that is being degraded in Kenya, and which has traditionally been the key attraction that has marketed Kenya as a destination over the years, promotion of an alternative source of tourism marketing is vital. While it is argued that the culinary benefits of tourism contribute much to the destination's economy, it is important to consider the role of culinary tourism and how it can be utilized and further enhanced to contribute to the food security and food safety of the destination.

The argument is that local foods hold much potential to enhance sustainability in tourism, whereby the tourism planner and the entrepreneur should work hand in hand to satisfy the consumer, contribute to the authenticity of the destination, strengthen the economy and to provide the environmentally-friendly infrastructure of the destination. The potential of culinary as a theme to sharpen destination images, and ascertain their uniqueness in comparison to other countries is also paramount. Where the food can be presented as an icon to which they can identify as a common cultural unifying trait, it can provide Kenya with a brand, more powerful than a national dress, and more easily identifiable than a Masai moran. This would not only serve as a marketing tool but would help eradicate the notion that local foods are inferior leading to a net export of culinary skills rather than a net import of the same, which has been the case over the years.

More importantly, development initiatives explicitly seek to deliver benefits for both the tourism and food-related industry sectors by creating and strengthening back linkages. In this way high quality food and beverage products can enhance the overall tourism product and tourism experiences, while at the same time the tourism related spending would provide an economic stimulus, which indirectly will lead to food security. Furthermore, food service as a generator of jobs and income provides social and economic conditions, which empower individuals to gain access to food, either producing food themselves or earning income to buy

food, hence have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable and culturally appropriate foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just.

Food tourism according to Gaztelumendi (2012) is capable of addressing cultural and environmental concerns in a way that is compatible with purely economic arguments. The recent history of global tourism development is littered with nominally sustainable models and manifestly unsustainable actions. The idea is not to create new indiscriminate pressure on culinary heritage, but to leverage it rationally with an eye to sustainability. In light of this argument the major global trends and keys to success that can be observed in the development of food tourism would include:

- It is a growing market
- What food tourists are like?
- The territory as the backbone of gastronomic offerings
- The product as the basis of food tourism
- Cultural heritage
- Tradition and innovation
- Sustainability
- Cooperation

2.3 African Culinary Cuisine

With a range of climates and growing conditions, the ingredients for African cuisine are diverse. However, certain foods are common to many regions. The food of North Africa has been heavily influenced over the centuries by the ingredients brought by traders, invaders and migrants. The Arabs introduced spices such as saffron, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger and cloves. Sweet pastries and other baked foods were brought by the Ottoman Turks. Wheat and its by-product, semolina, were introduced early on. The nomadic Berbers adapted semolina into couscous, one of the main staples of the region. Cattle are regarded as a symbol of wealth across much of Africa. So while farmers may use them for dairy products, often the animals are not used for their meat. Many people in the South and East rely mainly on grains, beans and vegetables, with fish providing protein in coastal, lake or river regions. Ground maize or corn (called 'sweet corn' in the UK) is used as the basis for many meals.

Maize flour is cooked with water to form a stiff porridge as shown in *Picture A* (called *ugali* in Kenya or *nsima* in Southern Africa). This starchy staple is served with green vegetables, sauces or stews.

Picture A



Source: Author

South Africa's food blends the traditions of many cultures and influences. Maize and soured milk were historically key components of the diet. As Europeans arrived, South African cuisine began to include meat dishes such as pies and sausages (*boerewors* in South Africa). Malays and Indians brought curries and spices with strong Arabic influences that can be seen in East African cuisine. For example, steamed rice is served with spices such as saffron, cloves and cinnamon. Indian workers and immigrants also brought their foods with them, such as spiced vegetable curries, lentil soups, chapattis and pickles. Oranges, lemons and limes are frequently used in cooking, while other fruits such as mangoes, papayas and pineapples are eaten for dessert. The cuisine of West Africa tends to rely on heavy starchy foods (known as carbohydrates), which provide energy. Typically, West Africans will give their meals taste with hot spices, dried shrimp and chilli peppers, or sauces such as peanut. The staple grain varies from region to region, but maize/corn (*fufu, foofoo or fougou*) is common in many areas. Rice dishes are also widely eaten in the region, especially across the dry Sahel belt.

Along coastlines, rivers and lakes, fish are an important source of protein. Cattle, goats and sheep are raised (varying by region), though meat is often a luxury for poor families. Many parts of Central Africa have remained true to their traditional foods, perhaps because until the 19th century because there weren't many external influences on the cuisine. Plantains (a variety of banana picked unripe and cooked as a starch) and cassavas continue to form the basis of many meals. Starchy staples are often served with meat, bean or vegetable stews. Meat from livestock can be costly and where they can, families use 'bush meat' from wild animals such as monkey, antelope and wild pigs (our-africa, n.d).

2.4 Food taboos around the world

Fancy a dish of poisonous fugu fish? How about rams' testicle pâté? Sheep's heads and rotting shark are a particular treat. Or if it's an aphrodisiac one seeks—why not try a carefully prepared bull penis?

All of these foods are delicacies on menus around the world. Food taboo is referred to as "prohibitions" to distinguish the deliberate avoidance of a food item for reasons other than simple dislike from food preferences. The continent of Africa, because of its size, presents an enormous variety of food taboos. In the mid-west state of Nigeria frequent coconut milk and liver is taboo for children, because it is believed that "the milk renders them unintelligent,

whereas the liver causes abscesses in their lungs". In some parts, pregnant women avoid snails or consume porcupine as that is thought to cause a delay in labour. Men have fewer food taboos to observe, but nevertheless some also exist. Snail consumption may weaken a warrior's strength and to kill and eat some legendary animals that have helped a particular tribe in the past during intertribal warfare is totally forbidden (Meyer-Rochow, 2009).

The humble hamburger, a mainstay of U.S. cuisine, is a forbidden food for Hindus. Pork is off the menu for many Jews and Muslims. More than 1,400 species of protein-packed insects are part of African, Asian, Australian, and Latin American cuisine, but one would be hard pressed to find these creepy crawlies at a U.S. restaurant (at least intentionally). In New York rats are considered filthy creatures that consume human garbage, carry disease, and live in the sewers with human waste—eating one would be unthinkable. But in the West African nation of Togo, rats live a more wholesome existence in the forests and are sold in the village markets.

2.5 Sheep's Head and Rotting Shark

Food symbolizes many aspects of everyday culture and is a vehicle for social relations. In February the people of Iceland celebrate an old tradition called Thorrablot—a festival of feasts. The feast is comprised of some unusual delicacies: rams' testicles, sheep's heads, and rotting shark. Although these dishes strike most outsiders as vile, for Icelanders the feasts are potent ways to preserve their Viking heritage.

Many foods are considered delicacies, not for their taste, but for their medicinal effects. In East Asian markets not only can just about every creature be found—domestic, wild, and endangered—but almost every body part also makes it to the supermarket shelf. According to numerous legends, organs have special properties that can be transferred if eaten. Supposedly, the penises of many animals endow the consumers with healthy sex lives, rooster testicles help women stay young, and monkey brains cure neurological ailments. In China the penis of a bull is considered a potent aphrodisiac—the natural version of Viagra. Many older people, from both industrialized and developing nations, remember eating the testicles, cheeks, lungs, kidneys, hearts, and livers of animals. The broad repertoire of edible animal parts emerged from a subsistence culture in which nothing was wasted. This still applies to many countries around the world where people struggle to get enough to eat. Americans have become distant from the source of their food. Animals are rarely served whole, and innards are not considered worth marketing and have faded from the inventory of edible foods.

2.6 Adults, Babies, and Fetuses

Not all delicacies have deep cultural roots. Some have emerged relatively recently as cultures have merged and hybridized. In India the children of European and Indian unions were rejected by both parent cultures and formed their own Anglo-Indian community with

unique customs and distinctive culinary traditions. One dish that reflects this departure from both parent cultures is kutti pi—an animal fetus. Kutti pi, reviled by most Indians and Europeans, is considered a delicacy both because it is rare—it is only available if a pregnant animal happens to be killed that day—and because of its medicinal properties. Many Anglo-Indians believe it is healthful for pregnant women and also beneficial for people with tuberculosis or back pain. Eating a fetus, however, triggers a note of discord for many people. "It's taboo, it violates our sense of order and propriety. Most people eat animals that have been born. Veal horrifies many people because it is eating a baby animal—eating a fetus goes beyond (National Geographic, 2004).

3. Methodology

This paper utilizes a case study approach highlighting relevant literature related to culinary tourism as well as personal experiences in Kenya. The aim is to discuss the role of traditional food and drink in Kenya economy.

3.1 Research Questions

1. What is the role of food tourism as part of cultural heritage and on the economy?
2. Why is culinary tourism important?
3. What are the potential roles of food tourism in the African culinary cuisine?
4. Why are branding and the use of local language in menus significant?

3.2 Study Area

Figure 1: Map of Kenya.



Source: www.intellect.com (30th March 2014)

Kenya, officially the Republic of Kenya, is a sovereign state in the African Great Lakes region of East Africa, with Nairobi as its capital and largest city. Kenya lies on the equator with the Indian Ocean to the south-east, Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the north-west, Ethiopia to the north and Somalia to the north-east. Kenya covers 581,309 km² (224,445 sq mi) and has a population of about 44 million as of July 2012. Kenya

is now divided into 47 semi-autonomous counties, governed by elected governors. Tourism, flowers, tea and coffee are its top foreign exchange earners.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Food and Culture in Kenya

The symbolic connection between food and alcohol is readily acknowledged in numerous disciplines including psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Pettigrew & Charters, 2006). Both products are deeply imbued with cultural meaning and as a result are heavily involved in ceremonial and mundane rituals alike (Douglas, 1987; Wallendorf, 1993). They are key elements in much social interaction and have an important social function as a mechanism for determining and communicating group membership and exclusion (Heath, 1987; Barr, 1995). Consumption patterns relating to both food and alcohol are reported to demonstrate distinct relationships with demographic variables such as gender, age, and social class (Levy, 1981, 1986; Fiske, Hodge & Turner, 1987), indicating the extent to which consumption is socially and culturally influenced. The notion of food playing a critical role in the cultural experience in various tourist destinations provides a great opportunity for Kenya. This dimension further enhances the vital linkage between tourism and the country's agriculture, which is the mainstay of the economy at 23% of GDP (Wadawi, et al., 2008; 2009).

In Kenya there are 42 ethnic tribes and each tribe prepares food differently and has different core meals pertinent to their respective tribe. For example, people coming from Lake Victoria side of the country tend to eat more fish related products and as such will have more fish delicacies in their menus. Communities from the central region tend to eat a mixture of beans, maize and potatoes. The western part of the nation have a lot more vegetables and chicken as their delicacies. These types of dishes are also served when an important visitor comes into the community. Some of the ingredients may appear similar but the way it is prepared varies greatly not only in Kenya but across the African Continent. The food production also varies a lot in traditional African communities where food production is predominantly done using pots cooked over three stones and firewood and in some cases earth or clay stoves. With regards to food service, some communities eat by hand and others often use banana leaves or one big plate where everybody sits around the mat or table and dip from one bowl. It is a far cry from the western expensive china and silver ware type of service.

4.2 The role of branding and local language in menus

Many restaurants catering to the foreign tourists have adopted the local lingua to keep up with the branding and make them unique in terms of their menu offering. It sometimes proves to be a challenge for most tourists as many of them would prefer to have some delicacies and brands that they may be accustomed to from their countries such as McDonalds, KFC,

Wendy's, TGI Fridays etc which are mostly fast foods and not healthy in most instances. Destinations are therefore competing to try and keep up with demand and as a result the few tourists who will patronise the local restaurants and café's would have to be tourists who are deliberate and intentional in consuming the cultural food albeit some may be a little hesitant due to stomach ailments if they are not used to.

Table 3: Local terminologies and service branding

Brand name	Brand meaning
Kirinyaga grill	Roof Top Restaurant
Wataalamu Restaurant	Executive Restaurant
Simba Grill	Lions Restaurant
Café Mandhari	Spice Café
Msafiri Bar	Travellers' Bar
Maisha Fitness club	Fitness Centre for Life and Health
Amaica Restaurant	Three stones for cooking
Aguch Kisumo	Kisumu Pot
Milele Hotel	Forever Hotel

It is notable that while hotels and restaurants in Kenya (*Table 3*) don't use local language widely for branding services and facilities, the guests find excitement in the usage of these terminologies as it makes them learn and experience the local language.

Table 4: Local Menu

Kiswahili	English Meaning
Nyama/mbuzi/kuku choma	Grilled cow/goat/chicken meat
Samaki kaanga	Fried Tilapia Fish
Chapati	Flatbread
Maharagwe	Beans
Sukuma Wiki	Collard green/kale
Ugali	Maize meal
Bhajia	Sliced potatoes in spicy butter
Samosa	Fried beef patty stuffed with ground beef
Matumbo	Intestines
Pulao	Spiced rice

Table 4 shows some of the common local delicacies which are served in restaurants mentioned in table 3. Aromatic spices from the East such as cinnamon and cloves found their way in Swahili culture as well as sweet potatoes, yam and cassava that are generally served as breakfast accompaniment to tea. Items such as 'Matumbo' (intestines) might not necessarily appeal to foreign tourists though it is a popular dish with the locals. In most cultures we may view 'other' as different from us if they are doing or eating something that is not acceptable to the norm commonly known as *food taboos*. That is why we have organic and inorganic foods, vegetarian and non-vegetarian and even then we still have classifications on what should be consumed as part of food that will be acceptable to internal wiring 'one man's trash is another

man's treasure' kind of thinking. Another strong cultural influence in Kenya came from Indians who brought with them the delights of chai and the art of making chapatti and samosas.

Picture B



Source: Author

Picture C



Source: Author

Preparation and presentation of food also vary and where most cultures in the West would prefer fine dining with cutlery, most local foods are sometimes served and eaten by hand and communally from one plate. For example, **Picture B and C** both have fish in them but differ in the way it is served and consumed by the tourists. Picture B reflects a typical traditional meal that is served in most communities and eaten by hand with 'ugali' (maize meal) while picture C would be served to tourists because of the French fries that accompanies it.

Table 5: Local Drinks

Kiswahili	English Meaning
Chai	Tea
Kahawa	Coffee
Mnazi	Coconut
Maziwa Lala	Buttermilk
Maziwa	Milk

Drinks are a very important part of culinary tourism. Most developed nations have developed popular wine and beer routes which are a common denominator in food service in most fine dining restaurants. However, in Africa special drinks like palm wine in West Africa will be served during ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and child naming celebrations. Drinks such as wine however, is not very common in many homes in Kenya partly due to the Christian religion influence. Many homes will serve juice, water, milk or sparkling fizzy drinks at meals, weddings and funerals. **Table 5** shows a very limited variety of local drinks that are served in restaurants in Kenya. These are complimented with hard liquor such as beer, whiskey, wine, champagne etc in many restaurants. Tea is one of Kenya's foreign exchange earners yet limited promotion and marketing is being done to showcase tea and coffee as local drinks. Most of us are familiar with distinct neighbourhoods such as Little India; Little Italy;

and China Town and perhaps Kenya would incorporate Little Kenya to promote traditional food and drink to the tourists. Also the development of tea routes/ tea tasting have successfully been introduced in countries such as Mauritius. This would be a useful model for Kenya to develop in tea and coffee growing regions and promote a variety of flavours. During cultural shows for instance, food history, tales and legends centred on ethnic foods could be told to the tourists.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has attempted to look at the importance of food and drink in promoting cultural heritage and indeed its contribution to the tourism industry as a whole. The diversity in culture should be viewed as a strength in marketing of food tourism in Kenya. Beyond the Big Five, culinary tourism could play a pivotal role in the development and management of cultural heritage tourism.

The impact of food tourism is enormous and can improve the overall economy of any country. Tourists are more inclined to continue demanding for more traditional foods as this allows the access to cultural and historical heritage of the various cultures to make it more authentic. Some destinations have taken the sustainability concept to a whole new level and have begun offering health orientated food and drink to today's consumer who is educated, wealthy, has travelled more extensively, lives longer, and is concerned about health and the environment. As a result, food and drink has become more important and have a higher priority amongst certain social groupings. Whichever the case, food must be a quality product taking into consideration the health concerns. This paper further reveals that culinary identity and heritage can be expanded and exploited within the development of cultural heritage tourism framework because it is evident that food is an important element in the construction of a distinct regional identity. Different cultural communities in Kenya should be proud to showcase their delicacies and tourists should be willing to try be cuisines.

Some establishments fail to promote the local cuisine but rather come with fancy terms to satisfy the Western tourist and thereby fail in the integral and important aspect of increasing demand and consumption of authentic cultural heritage. As most cuisine are branded by nationality such as French, Italian or Spanish, the opportunity still exists for Kenya to create a positive and successful relationship between food, culture and the destination. Some suggestions would be as follows:

- Fund food and drink activities from every community to encourage the development and promotion of local cuisine
- Hotels and restaurants could include more local menu variety of African/Kenyan dishes in local dialect

- Initiate food and drink shows and competitions around the country for the younger generation to appreciate their cultural heritage
- Create tea/coffee trails, tales and taste routes in various regions

Future research would include investigating the overall economic empowerment that food brings to the country. Also the impacts of cultural nights and food festivals that are of international standards should be looked into. The issue of health and hygiene conditions in food preparation and management is also vital. The interest of foreign tourists' preference of local dishes as opposed to the Western style dishes in the menu could be analysed critically in order to remain competitive.

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