

BOOK REVIEW

Food, Agri-Culture and Tourism Linking local gastronomy and rural tourism: interdisciplinary perspectives

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The book: *Food, Agri-Culture and Tourism, on the topic Linking local gastronomy and rural tourism: interdisciplinary perspectives*, of the editors: Ph.D. Katia Laura Sidali and Prof. Achim Spiller from Georg-August University of Göttingen, Department of Agricultural, Economics and Rural Development, and JProf. Dr. Birgit Schulze, from the Institute of Agricultural Economics, Christian-Albrechts-University of Kiel, in Germany represents a fruit of labor of scientists who researched the relation of local food producers, on one hand, and tourism industry, on the other hand with the aim to build a bridge between these two realities.

The book presents the results of best scientific research in this area which were presented at a scientific conference: *Food, Agri-Culture and Tourism*, held in the year 2009 in Göttingen, organized by DIH (Deutsch-Italienische Hochschulzentrum) and DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst) with more than eleven universities and as such the book has an interdisciplinary approach.

Interdisciplinarity is not only a merging of various disciplines, but it is a way to identify and study new topics that the individual disciplines could not focus, describe and interpret. This has been achieved over the past few years in cooperation between Göttingen and Bologna. This cooperation was extended later to other universities in Europe and worldwide. This mobilization of competences and methodologies set the relationship between agriculture and tourism from a new viewpoint. Food, agriculture and tourism are the three areas that are rapidly changing and in this way create new connections by mutual combination, which is discussed in the book.

Culture of food and wine more and more attracts the attention of public and media. Production and consumption of food and wine have become a global phenomenon. There are many aspects of innovation, and one of the most important trends is to link the consumption of food and wine to the place of origin because it is considered that one can enjoy in the food and wine only if it is prepared in the territory where it came from by people from the local community with local foods. Ethno-gastronomy, food and wine tourism and cultural tourism merge in new forms that are difficult dissect.

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Agriculture is still faced with structural problems: young people are leaving rural areas, low profitability and dependence on external finance such as the EU. For this reason, the agricultural sector shows a great interest in tourism, which could help agriculture and change its social role by building, for example, links between schools and the younger generation through programs of education about food and the environment.

New trends in contemporary tourism, accompanied by media attention, tend to independent travels, easily accessible destinations, researching tradition with an emphasis on authentic experiences and sustainable development. These changes in traveling requirements supported a recent increase in vacation on farms, or agro-tourism throughout Europe, in regions that are rich in beautiful landscapes and cultural heritage, which has helped the local producers.

Connected transformation of all these spheres occurred at a time when technology began to dramatically accelerate the tourism communication. Through new technologies the middleman is removed and a direct link between supply and demand is created, which is particularly suitable for vacations in rural areas. It is expected that this type of tourism will continue to develop towards the production of local, organic products that will be sold on commercial markets as well as educational projects for schools. It is assumed that many farmers will not be able to fight with all the new demands, which require the existence of adequate strategies and trainings.

The book consists of three parts:

- the first part, titled: Farm and rural tourism;
- the second part, titled: Food, wine and tourism and
- third part, titled: New avenues of research: online marketing and sensory marketing.

In the first part: *Farm and rural tourism*, Katia L. Sida, from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Georg-August University of Göttingen in the work titled: *A sideways look at farm tourism in Germany and in Italy*, explains the development of rural tourism with the help of an international comparative studies (Italy and Germany). These two countries were chosen because of the complementary nature of their markets for agro-tourism. In Italy, agro-tourism is characterized by high quality and exclusivity because of the inherent connection with gastronomy. In Germany this kind of tourism is popular with only a small number of tourists and, unlike Italy, it is not considered exclusive. The difference between Italian and German markets lies in the fact that there is a well-developed system of quality certification in Germany, which Sida discussed.

Nina Stockebrand, Katia Laura Sida and Achim Spiller from the same department speak on the topic: *Perspectives of emotional communication food for farm operators*, explaining that Germany recognized the great potential of high-quality regional and organic foods as a way of binding tourists to a specific destination. However, the authors argue that due to limited knowledge about entrepreneurship, farm owners might fail. In the literature about marketing and tourism emotional communicative strategies, especially storytelling, are considered to be highly successful but there is no empirical evidence that more extensive information and stories have more success in the marketing of regional tourism. The authors conducted research on a sample of 122 students in order to determine the most appropriate strategy to promote high-quality food. Although literature explains the strongest emotional connection with readers, there is no evidence that this leads to greater purchasing intentions considering that only 30% of respondents were convinced to buy the product after reading the story.

In contrast, high intents to buy the product are achieved with a text that is more appropriate for promotion of regional food as it is not emotional, it does not scare individuals, and yet not too sparse to reduce the attractiveness of the food.

Francesca Regoli, Matteo Vittuari and Andrea Segre from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Engineering, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Bologna, Italy in the work under the title: *Policy options for sustainability - a preliminary appraisal of rural tourism in Romania: the case of Maramureş*, write about transformation of agriculture from only producing food to service providing, which led to the development of new rural development paradigm, which focuses on diversification, rural non-farm economic, local resources and social interactions. Among all the strategies for diversification rural tourism appeared as one of the main drivers of change which contributed greatly to sustainable exploitation of local resources. The aim of their study was to investigate the role and the potential of rural tourism in the county of Maramureş in Romania, focusing on the relationship between the offer of rural housing, territory and strategies for the valorization of local cultural and natural resources (human and territorial capital).

Rossella Bianchi from the Department of Engineering and Management of Agricultural, Livestock and Forestry Systems - PRO.GE.S.A, University of Bari Aldo Moro writes about: *From agricultural to rural: agritourism as a productive option*. Bianchi has focused on the transition from the manufacturing model of development of farms, which were dominant during the 70s in the last century, to the perspective of multi-functional, environmentally sustainable, alternative and locally sustainable production. This model has shaped the rural development policy. First of all, the intention was to sketch out a brief evolutionary history of the manufacturing model farms. After that agro-tourism is identified as product innovation and interesting diversification of production activities. Agro-tourism was analyzed from a multi-functional perspective aimed at preserving the integrity of natural resources, and improving the socio-cultural aspects and eno-gastronomic heritage of the rural territory.

In the second part: Food, wine and tourism, the authors: Maurizio Canavari, Carrie Hufaker, Rossana Mari, Domenico Regazzi and Robert Spadoni from Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Department of Agricultural Economics and Engineering (DEIAgra) and from the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna - Production valorization in the work: *Educational farms in the Emilia-Romagna region: their role in food habit education*, write about educational farms which offer educational tours to visitors so they can learn about the specifics of agriculture, the environment and nutrition. These companies are involved in activities that complement their main business which can bring benefits, both economic and social. The aim of their work was to present an authentic local example of this type of tourism in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, where the educational farms are widespread and supported by the state. Emphasis was placed on the role of such farms in relation to dietary habits. The relationship between the educational functions of the Company and its business strategy is also discussed.

Stefano Buiatti from the Department of Food Science, University of Udine, Italy writes on the subject: *Food and tourism: the role of the 'Slow Food' association*, explaining that tourism is an important economic activity in many countries, especially in Italy where tourism is one of the main economic activities in terms of trade. He states that the traditional tourist activities are necessary, especially those that specialize in culinary tourism, and develop a sense of protection and integration of local natural and cultural resources. Buiatti analyzed the role of intermediaries, focusing on the case of "Slow food". The "Slow Food" association serves to protect the heritage of food by saving endangered species of food through the "Slow

Food Foundation of biodiversity". The author believes that it is important to achieve economic development through gastro-tourism, which can help to conserve natural resources and improve the quality of life of communities in the region, which ensures that local, indigenous food and production methods and not lost in the globalization.

Axel Dreyer and Juliane Müller from Tourism Marketing University of Applied Sciences of Harz in their work: *Opportunities of cooperative marketing using the example of the wine region Saale-Unstrut*, explain what are the possibilities of tourism and viticulture for better marketing of their products, emphasizing the economic benefits for the whole region that can benefit from close cooperation between the two branches. Based on mutual relations of viticulture and tourism many forms of cooperation are explained. Marketing measures resulting from this collaboration are presented from the perspective of providers of tourist services and the owners of the vineyards. The combination of wine and other attractions, such as visiting cultural sites in the Saale-Unstrut-Region, one of the 13 wine-growing regions in Germany, is presented as an ideal example.

Kai Schätzel, Ludwig Arens and Jan Schätzel from Weingut Schätzel and Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Georg-August University of Göttingen write about: *Schätzel Vinery - Tradition 2.0*. The authors in their case study describe how the wineries, by combining tradition and new marketing and production concepts, transformed from secondary activities in the activity of great importance. In the last four years the winery has managed to successfully reposition the business and steer it towards growth, which brought substantial revenues. Measures taken to achieve this goal are described as a concept and in practice so as to serve as a model of best practice in the industry.

In the third part of the book titled: *New avenues of research: online marketing and sensory marketing*, authors Amos Gyau and Randy Stringer from the School of Agriculture, Food and Wine, Disciplines of Agri-Food and Wine Business, The University of Adelaide, Australia in their work: *Institutional isomorphism and adoption of e-marketing in the hospitality industry: a new perspective for research*, explain the factors that influence the behavior of managers in the hospitality industry. The studies that consider these factors have been carried out under the assumption that managers are free and independent in their decision to adopt innovations such as e-marketing without much regard to the effects of external pressure. The authors explain the relatively new conceptual framework for the adaptation of innovations in tourism that is based on the concept of institutional isomorphism. These researchers believe that the adoption of e-marketing decisions by tour operators may be affected, either by individual or by common, important aspects of institutional factors, mainly by institutional isomorphism, which, combined with the traditional factors of adoption of innovation, can enhance the understanding of adoption of operators' behavior.

Matthias Fuchs and Wolfram Höpken from eTourism Competence Center Austria (ECCA), University of Innsbruck, Austria, European Tourism Research Institute (ETOUR), Mid-Sweden University, Sweden and Business Informatics Group, University of Applied Sciences Ravensburg-Weingarten, Germany in their work: *E-Business horizons in the tourism industry - challenges for research and practice* highlight the challenges for the tourism industry, which are caused by new IT and communication technologies (ICTS), by exploring the stylized facts from the past 15 years of web history in tourism and the delineation of the actual level of ICT adoption in tourism. Behavior and structural changes related to ICT in tourism are explained by adopting a multidisciplinary approach. At the end, an innovative application of ICT in the tourism destination guide is described, and the future of researching e-tourism is predicted, emphasizing the connectivity of computers, information and management sciences.

Cristin Santini from the Università Telematica Internazionale - Unitel, Alessio Cavicchi from the University of Macerata, Department of Studies on Economic Development and Maurizio Canavaro from Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Department of Agricultural Economics and Engineering (DEIAgra) talk about: *The Risk™ strategic game of rural tourism: how sensory analysis can help in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage*. In their study they have examined how sensory analysis can be efficiently implemented in order to achieve competitive advantage in rural tourism. Starting from the theoretical framework the authors describe how companies can differentiate their offer through sensory analysis.

Andreas Scharf from the University Of Applied Sciences Of Nordhausen in his work: *Sensory Marketing Research - Identification of the ideal sensory product profile*, explains how the international food and beverage vendors have to answer the question of how their products should be adapted to the sensory preferences of their target groups in different countries. This issue plays an important role in tourism because every year millions of European tourists visit other European countries, and foreigners often differ in their sensory preferences from the local population. The author believes that it is necessary to collect and understand all the sensory attributes and their intensity. Scharf states that research should be conducted in each country to obtain necessary starting points for product differentiation. Only the combination of these data by using multi-variable calibration can provide the necessary information. These sensory attributes, that influence the acceptance by consumers, can be identified for each country market. The increase, reduction and optimization of these features will eventually lead to the “ideal” sensory profile of products whose acceptance by consumers can be assessed. This approach is illustrated by the example of optimization of frozen croquettes for the Italian and German market.

Different interpretations of nature correspond to different needs of individuals; therefore farmers should strive to meet those needs by placing their facilities in a position to meet their goals. Food is a signifier of agrarian culture and a “joyful experience” for body and soul, which forms a bridge between educational and hedonistic functions. The book demonstrates many ways in which farms can build that bridge, alone or together with stakeholders who have a special interest such as the “Slow Food” movement. Italian farmers were the pioneers in providing wine and food specialties of high value to their guests which reflects the deep-rooted tradition in rural areas. In the same way German rural tourism providers whose farms are located in very valuable wine regions have started directing their estates in the direction of the regional landscape. The growing success of the educational farms indicates the strong desire of society to explore the life on the farm, to improve awareness of environmental issues and to be educated by the farmers.

This book argues that rural tourism has, first of all, showed a true example of symbiosis between tourism and food industry. All those who contributed to the creation of this book have advanced knowledge about the complex nature of the relationship between agrarian life and culture, rural tourism sector as well as culinary problems. By reviewing the theory and practice, this book has contributed to the development of a better approach to this interdisciplinary field.