
LOCAL GASTRONOMY AND TOURIST BEHAVIOR: RESEARCH ON DOMESTIC TOURISM IN GREECE

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ABSTRACT

The Greek culinary history spans over 4,000 years and is based on quality and fresh products produced in the country and largely characterize the components of the Mediterranean Diet. Greek food beyond taste has a distinct philosophy. The gathering around the table in any dining area is a social aggregation. The gastronomy is part of the tourism product of a region and can enrich and enhance the travel experience of tourists and create a memory that endures.

This paper explores specific issues to relating the behavior of Greek tourists towards gastronomy during their stay in tourist destinations in Greece. The results of primary research showed that Greek tourists during their trips often purchase local products, taste local flavors and are interested in learning recipes of the local cuisine when they visit a destination. Tourists totally agree that tasting food and drinks in a destination helps to create a memory that endures and that they deliberately dine in restaurants offering local cuisine, but do not usually look for information about gastronomy in the travel destination before travelling.

Tourists agree that local cuisine is an important part of the culture of the region and that the taste experience is important to the overall experience of the journey. According to the gastronomic services in tourism destinations, tourists are interested mainly in

traditional restaurants, the local products, the local cuisine, but at the same time a significant percentage of tourists order in restaurants flavors and dishes that are familiar to them. The fact that female travelers were more positive towards local gastronomy than males constitutes an interesting approach.

Differentiation of Greek tourism products through traditional and creative cuisine can create a quality gourmet product portfolio. Appropriate promotion and networks development can lead to overall satisfaction of tourists to travel and can become an incentive of tourist attraction. Therefore an appropriate network and promotion program must be developed.

Key words: Local Gastronomy, Food, Tourism, Behavior, Greece

1. INTRODUCTION

Greek culinary history spans over 4,000 years and is based on quality and fresh products produced in the country and largely characterize the components of the Mediterranean Diet. Greek food beyond taste has a distinct philosophy. The gathering around the table in any dining area is a social aggregation. In ancient Greece, the Athenians believed that the time of dining is an occasion to take food for the spirit as well as the body. Dining is an opportunity for a social event, for communication between members at the table and meals usually last some time.

In recent years, food Tourism has grown considerably and has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism. Both destinations and tourism companies are aware of the importance of gastronomy in order to diversify tourism and stimulate local, regional and national economic development (UNWTO, 2012).

The study of food, eating, and culinary institutions became a burgeoning subfield of sociological and anthropological research in recent years (Erik Cohen & Nir Avieli, 2004). In the tourism world there are influential destinations whose brand image is connected, with varying levels of intensity, to gastronomic values. By way of example, it is possible to give a non-exhaustive list that includes, among others, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Portugal, USA, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, Chile, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, Bali, China or Singapore. It is significant, for example, that the Mediterranean diet of Spain, Greece, Italy and Morocco was included in UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in November 2010. Javier Blanco Herranz 2012.

Local food can have an important role to play in sustainable tourism as a result of its ability to satisfy a complex range of demands and especially for tourists' demands for iconic products that appear to say something about a region's place and culture (Sims, 2010). Based on these perspectives it can be argued that local and regional food is a feature that can add value to a destination (Telfer & Wall, 1996; Handszuh, 2000), and furthermore may contribute to the sustainable competitiveness of a destination (Crouch&Ritchie, 1999). From the preceding perspectives it is apparent that food tourism has considerable potential to enhance visitor experiences and to contribute to the branding and competitive marketing of destinations. It is, however, important to insure that the authentic cuisine of a region and marketable local and regional foods are approached with a delicate balance. Gerrie E. Du Rand, Ernie Heath & Nic Alberts (2003).

The present paper will help to identify the characteristics and behavior of domestic tourists in Greece towards local gastronomy, in the tourist destination during their trip.

2. GASTRONOMY AND TOURISM

Gastronomy is the art of selecting, preparing, serving and enjoying tasty food. Through the centuries gastronomy proved to have a greater cultural influence compared to Linguistics or other effects. Today the world can be divided into specific culinary regions, dominated by separate Cuisines using common cooking practices. In Europe there are two different food cultures, the "south" rich in local dishes and the "north" which is more functional and seeks to meet the basic need for food using recognized brands. However, the "northern" consumers are becoming increasingly receptive to quality local products. (Parrott et al. 2002).

Regarding the demand for gastronomy, figures and indications show an upward trend. According to related research (Mintel, 2009), in recent years an increasing number of tourists are becoming increasingly involved with gastronomy on their trips. Gastronomy attracts tourists with a special interest in food. These are known as Gastro-tourist (Robinson et al. 2011). Gastronomy as a tourist product includes a mixture of products, services and activities that highlight the typical products and dishes of a place, the talent and creativity of those who prepare and the uniqueness and tradition of the place, so they offer visitors a comprehensive and memorable travel -culinary experience. Offering tasty cuisine composes enjoyable experience, part of the cultural identity of a place and thus an important source of satisfaction for any tourist, whether or not he has any special interest in gastronomy.

The relationship between gastronomy and tourism is quite complex, since food is included in the travel experience in different ways. Gastronomy helps in upgrading the tourist product and travel experience. Gastronomy enhances tourist satisfaction in their chosen destination even though it was not exclusive to their travel motivation (SETE, 2009). The production of well-known local products can be an incentive in attracting tourists, creating pleasant associations between the product and the place (Parrott et al. 2002). The consumption of local products which are considered as 'authentic' and qualitative is a means of developing rural areas. The advantages of such initiatives can be the improvement of the economic and technical infrastructure, and the improvement of the characteristics of the human and social capital. The development of local products means even development of associated enterprises and thus improvement of many sectors of the local economy and while enhancing development (Lamprianidis, 2003). Consumers are interested in knowing the origin of products and the method of production, because in this way they ensure their health and safety, and the safety of their children. The shift to 'pure' products arises from nostalgia for the past which was dominated by traditional production methods (Ilbery et al. 1998).

As for the gastronomic tourism experience, it can be defined as the evaluation carried out by the tourist on a number of attributes (attractiveness of the food and environment, quality of service), after a stay in a tourist destination where the tourist engaged in an activity related to gastronomy. The tourist's perceived value of a particular destination or establishment is therefore multidimensional (Javier Blanco Herranz, 2012). Consumer demands for foods perceived to be "traditional" and "local" can also be viewed as linked to a quest for authenticity. Debates about the meaning and validity of authenticity have played a central role in the tourism literature with Taylor claiming that "there are at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it" (Taylor, 2001, p. 8). Taylor (2001) sees the tourist's desire for authenticity as a result of a world where people feel they have become alienated from nature, and where everyday life is viewed as increasingly inauthentic. Thus, local food can be an asset to integrated tourism development as a result of its ability to symbolize place and culture, provide amoral "feel-good" factor associated with its consumption and enable visitors to experience a sense of connection to their destination – both during and after their visit. (Rebecca Sims, 2009) However, local food can also contribute to the experience of existential authenticity. As described by Wang (1999), existential authenticity is about identity formation and the chance to experience a more intense feeling of connection with ourselves and the world around us.

3. Greek gastronomy portfolio

Greek cuisine has four secrets: good quality fresh ingredients, correct use of flavorings (herbs) and spices, the famous Greek olive oil and simplicity. The climate conditions of the country favors the natural development of the cultivation of local products, keeping the aroma, the flavor, and the nutrients of the products. The most familiar elements of Greek gastronomy are the Mediterranean Diet, the Greek breakfast, the Greek Salad, but also many local traditional products.

3.1 The Greek Breakfast

The “Greek Breakfast” program is designed by the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels which has been in operation since 2010 and whose aim is to enrich the breakfast offered in Greek hotels with pure and unique Greek products as well as with traditional local dishes from every region of Greece. The aim of the “Greek Breakfast” program is to give Greek hotel guests the chance to know the gastronomic wealth of our country and taste at breakfast the innumerable Greek products and dishes which are at the heart of the Mediterranean Diet. The Mediterranean Diet is not just a modern dietary trend but is according to UNESCO the “intangible cultural heritage of mankind” (Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 2010)

The Greek breakfast is based in simple combinations of foods, the use of more natural raw materials as much as possible and cooked lightly wholesome dishes. The common dishes served in the Greek breakfast are pancakes, Trahanas^[1], Greek brioche, sheep yoghurt, local cheeses, different types of bread and other dishes depending on the geographical region. Bread and olive oil are two of the basic ingredients in the cycle of time which come from the past of our Greek land and are still to this day a part of our dietary foundation. This is the reason why wheat and olive were chosen literally and symbolically, to capture in the form of a seal, the communicative image of the program “Greek Breakfast” (h2concept, 2013).

3.2 Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is a way of eating which is followed by the people of the Mediterranean countries. This diet came from the inhabitants of Crete and southern Italy in the 60s. Specifically, the Mediterranean diet includes fiber (vegetables, fruits, potatoes,

legumes, bread, cereals, nuts), dairy products (cheese, yogurt) in small quantities, minimally processed foods, rare red meat, small amounts of fish and poultry, and olive oil. The objective of the Mediterranean diet is the consumption of a small quantity of saturated fats, as opposed to higher consumption of fiber, carbohydrate, and monounsaturated fatty acids in general.

The benefits of the Mediterranean diet may be the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers and diabetes. Moreover the Mediterranean diet contributes to human longevity. Other benefits are that it contribute to eating a small amount of daily calories, stimulates the body and helps good bowel function. The Mediterranean diet combined with exercise can be a source of health and beauty (Marazioti lina, 2008).

3.3. The Greek country salad

The Greek country salad is known abroad as Greek salad. The salad is a symbol of Mediterranean cuisine and products of high nutritional value. One of the key ingredients of this salad is the feta-cheese. The consumption of Greek salad can be a complete meal especially in the summer, because it contains a lot of raw vegetables, the feta cheese and the oil witch has essential fatty acids.

3.4. Greek traditional products

In modern international cuisine there are several traditional Greek products, which are characteristic of Greek cuisine. In 1992 according to the regulation 2081/92, the European Union first adopted the system for the protection of geographical indications and the designations of origin of agricultural products and foodstuffs and according to the regulation 2082/92 the rules on the certificates of specific character for agricultural products and foodstuffs. Many Greek product are geographical indicated, or with a designations of origin. Especially Greece has 88 products with Protected Designation of Origin which are 27 olive oils, 20 different cheeses, 23 vegetables and pulses, 10 different olive varieties, varieties of honey, the traditional avgotaraho of Mesolonghi (salted flat-head mullet fish roe), the Cretan rusks, sweet beverages such as the Naxos citron drink and the kumquat liqueur from Corfu, the "Tomataki Santorinis" (cherry-tomato of Santorini), the Kozani crocus, the tangerines and mastic from Chios (Ministry of RD&F, 2014).

4. Research field and characteristics of the participants

The purpose of the research was to study the behavior of domestic tourists in relation to gastronomy and to provide suggestions for the development of culinary tourism and tourist satisfaction. Specifically, the main research objective was to identify specific information concerning the behavior of Greek tourists interested in the local gastronomy. Another research target was the identification of the activities that involved tourists interested in local gastronomy. Additionally the possible relationship between gastronomy and travel experience was investigated.

The survey was conducted in the spring of 2013 mainly in the Athens area and gathered a total of 141 exploitable questionnaires. Requirements for the completion of the questionnaire were to be a resident of Greece, to be over 18 years old and take at least one trip per year (be active in tourism). More females (61.7%) replied to the questionnaire compared to males (38.3%). The largest age group of the sample was the age group 27-36 year olds at a rate of 46.1%. The age group 37-46 year olds represents a rate of 27.66%, while the age group of 47-56 year olds accounted for 16.31%. The age groups 18 to 26 (4.96%), 57 to 66 (4.26%) and finally the age group of over 67 (0.71%) gathered smaller percentages.

Table 1: Age groups of the participants in the survey

Age Group	Percentage
18-26	9.96
27-36	46.10
37-46	27.66
47-56	16.31
57-66	4.26
Over 67	0.71

Regarding the marital status of the respondents, the majority were married with children (43.26%), while the unmarried accounted for 41.13%. The professional profile of respondents involved mainly "Employees in the private sector" (52.48%). Second most frequent profession was "public servants" at a rate of 30.5%, while the unemployed accounted for 6.38%, professionals and entrepreneurs for 5.68%, students for 1.42% and the "other" profession for 3.55%.

The majority of the sample was with a high school degree at a rate of 31.21%. A large percentage of respondents were technical school graduates (23.4%). The secondary school graduates represented 21.28%, and a significant percentage of 18.44% were postgraduates. Finally the respondents with basic education represented 5.67% of the sample.

Referring to companionship, the majority of respondents stated that they travel with a partner / spouse or friend at a rate of 48.23%. About 38.3% travels "with the family". A small percentage responded that they usually travel "with a group of friends" (11.35%), while a very small percentage of 2.13% expressed they travel usually alone. The fact that no one replied that they usually travel with organized groups (package tour) within Greece, was very interesting.

These results are similar to two relevant studies (TIA, 2007 & Mintel, 2009), according to which the Gastro-tourist is mostly in the group of 30 to 50 year olds and to a lesser extent in the age group of 51 to 64 year olds. This kind of tourist has mostly higher professional status, a higher income and education and loves adventure and culture. The Gastro-tourists are experienced tourists and spend an adequate amount of money on culinary activities.

5. Results presentation

The main results of the investigation in relation to the search fields are presented in this chapter. To the question about the "Participation on the local lifestyle in the tourist destination" (Integration with the locals, the local music or dance) the majority of respondents replied "very likely" at a rate of 52.48%, 18.44% of the sample chose "Almost likely". "Neutral" appears 4.89%. The fact that the females responded positively at a rate of 62.1% compared to 37.0% of the males (table 1), was remarkable.

Table 2: Participation on the local lifestyle in the tourist destination

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' responses	Responses of females
Very likely	52.48	37.0	62.1
Likely	18.44	22.2	16.1
Neutral	14.89	22.2	10.3
Almost unlikely	7.80	9.3	6.9
Unlikely	6.38	9.3	4.6
Total	99.99	100	100

During the stay at the tourist destination, the possibility to visit historical and cultural sites at a rate of 66.7%, to go Tracking or Hiking at a rate of 50.3% and to attend shows, concerts etc. at a rate of 48.2% is “very likely” (table 3).

Table 3: Activities during the stay in the destination place

Answer	Visiting of historical and cultural sites	Tracking or Hiking	Attendance of Shows, Concerts etc.
Very likely	66.67	50.35	48.23
Likely	19.15	10.64	20.57
Neutral	6.38	17.73	9.22
Almost unlikely	2.84	8.51	11.36
Unlikely	4.96	12.77	10.64

Total	100	100	100.02
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However engaging in activities connected with gastronomy garnered low rates. To the question “if they consider it possible to participate in culinary activities such as cooking classes, exhibitions, visits to production sites and other culinary events, 41.8% considers it “unlikely”. And to this question the involvement of females in culinary activities was far greater than that of males (table 4).

Table 4: Participation in culinary activities

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males’ answers	Females’ answers
Very likely	19.86	11.1	25.3
Likely	9.93	13.0	8.0
Neutral	10.64	11.1	10.3
Almost unlikely	17.73	25.9	12.6
Unlikely	41.84	38.9	43.7
Total	99,99	100	100

To special question concerning the preference for breakfast, the respondents were given three different options (a) the European - Continental breakfast, (b) the American breakfast and (c) the Greek breakfast with local dishes (table 5).

68.79% of the sample expresses a preference for the Greek breakfast with local dishes. About 19.15% shows a preference for the Continental breakfast, despite the fact that the American breakfast contains additional dishes compared to the European breakfast. The American breakfast seems to be preferred by only 12.06% of the sample.

Table 5: Breakfast preferences

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Greek Breakfast	68.79	70.4	67.8
Continental Breakfast	19.15	13.0	23.0
American Breakfast	12.06	16.7	9.2

When asked if during their stay respondent experienced local food and wine, the answer "very likely" reached the impressive figure of 71.63%. The answer "almost likely" to try some local flavours in the visited place was 17.73%. The smallest percentage frequency displays the option "not likely" with just 1.42% (table 6).

Table 6: Tasting local wine and food flavours

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Very likely	71.63	68.5	73.6
Almost Likely	17.73	18.5	17.2
Neutral	6.38	7.4	5.7
Almost unlikely	2.84	1.9	3.4

Unlikely	1.42	3.7	0.0
Total	100	100	100

The answer for the chance to visit the local market at the place of destination (table 7), garnered exactly the same percentage as the previous question (71.63%). Of interest is also that the male response to this question was very high (70.4%).

Table 7: Possibility to visit the local market

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Very likely	71.63	70.4	72.4
Likely	16.31	11.1	19.5
Neutral	6.38	11.1	3.4
Almost unlikely	2.13	5.6	0.0
Unlikely	3.55	1.9	4.6
Total	100	100.1	99.9

To the statement "When I travel I often buy food for the home", 39% responded that they "Totally agree". The female response at a rate of 47.1%, was much greater compared to the male response (25.9%).

Table 8: When I travel often buy food for home

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Totally agree	39.01	25.9	47.1
Agree	22.7	24.1	21.8
Neither agree nor disagree	14.18	20.4	10.3
Disagree	7.09	9.3	5.7
Totally disagree	17.02	20.4	14.9
Total	100	100.1	99.9

To collect information about the gastronomy of the tourist destination before the trip is very likely only for the 25.2% of the participants. On the contrary for 33.3% it is unlikely. The females are more prepared compared to the males regarding the gastronomy at the destination (Table 9).

Table 9: Collecting information about the gastronomy in the tourist destination

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Very likely	25.23	18.5	29.9
Likely	13.48	14.8	12.6
Neutral	14.89	18.5	12.6

Almost unlikely	12.77	13.0	12.6
Unlikely	33.3	35.2	32.2
Total	100	100	100

Information about the recipes of the local cuisine shows to stimulates the interest of 42.55% of the sample who totally agree and another 26.95% “agree” to learn recipes of the local cuisine.

Table 10: I like to learn recipes of the local cuisine when I visit a destination

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males’ answers	Females’ answers
Totally agree	42.55	31.5	49.4
Agree	26.95	35.2	21.8
Neither agree nor disagree	11.35	11.1	11.5
Disagree	7.8	11.1	5.7
Totally disagree	11.35	11.1	11.5
Total	100	100	100

The answers to the question of whether the testing of food and beverages helps to create memories of the place of destination were impressive. The majority of respondents (54.61%) totally agree and another 20.57% agree. The responses of the females were higher compared to the responses of the male population of the research (table 11).

Table 11: Tasting foods and beverages in a destination helps to create a memory that endures in time

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Totally agree	54.61	50.0	57.5
Agree	20.57	18.5	21.8
Neither agree nor disagree	9.22	13.0	6.9
Disagree	9.93	9.3	10.3
Totally disagree	5.67	9.3	3.4
Total	100	100	100

The response to the next question about “whether they would visit a restaurant with local flavours on purpose” was also positive. About 49.6% totally agree and another 22% agree. The two figures combined give approximately 72% while the responses of females accumulate to 86% (table 12).

Table 12: Visit on purpose restaurants offering local flavours

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Totally agree	49.65	37.0	57.5
Agree	21.99	27.8	18.4

Neither agree nor disagree	14.89	18.5	12.6
Disagree	6.38	5.6	6.9
Totally disagree	7.09	11.1	4.6
Total	100	100	100

The responses to the question "Do you believe that it is better to order flavours that are familiar in the travel destination" was particularly interesting. About 28.4% totally agree and another 14.2% agree. The fact that the males agree at a rate of 35.2% and the females at a much greater rate i.e.47.1% was also interesting (table 13).

Table 13: 'I think it's better to order something that is familiar to me in a restaurant'

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males' answers	Females' answers
Totally agree	28.37	20.4	33.3
Agree	14.18	14.8	13.8
Neither agree nor disagree	18.44	27.8	12.6
Disagree	12.77	9.3	14.9
Totally disagree	26.24	27.8	25.3
Total	100	100	100

The question that brought the largest percentage agreement at a rate of 75.2% was if tourists believe that local flavours are an important part of the culture of the region. In female responses the rate of “totally agree” and “agree” accumulated to 93%.

Table 14: ‘I believe that local flavours are an important part of the culture of the region’

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males’ answers	Females’ answers
Totally agree	75.16	66.7	80.5
Agree	15.6	20.4	12.6
Neither agree nor disagree	7.09	9.3	5.7
Disagree	0.71	1.9	0
Totally disagree	1.42	1.9	1.1
Total	100	100	100

The question whether the respondent believe that the dining experience is important for the satisfaction of the journey, 50.3% replied that they “Totally agree”. In addition, it is worth noting that 21.3% agree that taste satisfaction relates substantially to the overall impression of the trip.

Table 15: “The dining experience is important for the satisfaction of the journey”

Answer	Percentage of responses	Males’ answers	Females’ answers
Totally agree	50.35	44.4	54.0
Agree	21.28	20.4	21.8

Neither agree nor disagree	13.48	20.4	9.2
Disagree	5.67	3.7	6.9
Totally disagree	9.22	11.1	8.0
Total	100	100	100

Regarding the question whether gastronomy upgrades the overall travel experience, 29.08% responded “Very much” and another 46.8% responded “much”.

Table 16: The gastronomy upgrades the overall travel experience

Answer	Percentage of responses
Very much	29.08
Much	46.81
Neither much nor little	17.02
A Little	4.26
Not at All	2.84
Total	100

Finally those who believe that gastronomy upgrades their travel experience, to an extent of “very” and “very much” replied to the next question of how this is achieved. The opinion that dominates at a rate of 51.4% is that through the local flavors they get to know the history, tradition and culture of the destination. High percentage holds the view that by simply enjoying new flavors (35.51%) and 12.15% consider that the travel experience is upgraded, because they have the opportunity to taste fresh ingredients.

Table 17: How gastronomy upgrade the travel experience

By:	Percentage of responses
Knowing the history, tradition and culture of the destination.	51,4
Enjoying new flavors	35,51
Tasting fresh ingredients	12,15
Other	0,93

6. Conclusions

The results of the survey showed a considerable interest of domestic tourists for gastronomy, which confirms the figures from the Global report on Food Tourism from UNWTO (2012). During their stay the Greek tourists at a rate of 89.4% are likely or very likely to taste local food and wine, to visit the local market and to buy foods for the home. On the contrary, only 25.2% of the travelers are very likely to collect information about the gastronomy in the tourist destination before the trip.

Tourists are interested in culture and history of the destination and are very likely to visit historical and cultural attractions (66.7%), to attend performances (theatre, concert) to go hiking or trekking, but also to experience the local character of a destination and the local way of life by contacting the local population and experiencing the local music and dance. On the contrary, engaging in activities connected with gastronomy, such as participation in exhibitions, cooking classes, visits to production sites and other culinary events, is considered as unlikely at a rate of 41.8%.

During their stay tourists will intentionally visit a restaurant with local flavors at a rate of 71.6% and will be interested in the recipes of the local cuisine of the particular destination at a rate of 69.5%.

Tourists believe at a rate of 75.2%, that the local flavors are an important part of the culture of the region. It should be noted that this figure was the highest in the entire investigation. But at the same time a significant number of tourists (at a rate of 42.5%) agrees that it is better to order something that is familiar in a local restaurant. This statement is very interesting, because in the sociology of food, the dimension of familiarity and strangeness implicitly underlies Fischler's (1988) distinction between the "neophobic" and "neophylic" tendencies in taste. According to Fischler, both tendencies may be found among individuals. They dislike or suspect new and hence unfamiliar foodstuffs and dishes. Or they tend to search for novel and strange food. But even those who search for new culinary experiences may be repelled by the local culinary situation and reluctant or unable to partake of the food served in local culinary establishments. (Cohen & Avieli, 2004)

Regarding breakfast, respondents indicated to prefer to a very large percent (68.8%) the Greek breakfast with local dishes, compared to the Continental (European) breakfast and the American breakfast. Tasting local foods and beverages helps to create memories of the tourist destination, according to the majority of respondents at a rate of 75.18 (accumulating "totally agree" and "agree"), which is also confirmed by other studies (& Telfer Wall, 1996? Handszuh, 2000).

Finally it should be noted that the local gastronomy upgrades the overall travel experience, at a rate of 29.08% (Very much) and 46.8% (much), since through the local flavors the tourist get to know the history, the tradition and the culture of the destination, enjoy new tastes and have the opportunity to taste fresh ingredients.

The fact that the female population of the research was more positive to the local gastronomy, to the local events, to contacts with the local community, local products and markets, in obtaining food recipes, but also in the search for information concerning the local gastronomy was an interesting result of the study.

7. Suggestions for the gastronomic tourism development

The possible strategies that can contribute to establishing a gastronomic destination are in order of importance: the coverage of all local dishes from the mass media, the availability of sufficient funds for the development and promotion of tourism gastronomy, the promotion of high quality restaurants, the development of local dishes as a special attraction of the destination, the creation of an image and marketing strategy of local

dishes, the production of flyers to highlight the role of local dishes, the organization of regional food festivals, food exports of local products, the organization of exhibitions, developing special food and wine routes and the organization of special gourmet events (Hall, 2003).

According to WTO (2012) as for gastronomic tourism products that exist in their Destination, the organizations consulted underlined in the first place the importance of food events (expressed by 79% of respondents). This is followed by gastronomic routes and cooking classes and workshops, with 62% answering affirmatively, food fairs featuring local products (59%) and visits to markets and producers (53%). Having less weight among gastronomic tourism product offerings are museums (cited by only 12% of respondents), and presentations with 6% of positive answers. About 68% of the organizations consulted carry out marketing activities or promotion based on Food Tourism. The marketing and promotional tools most used by these entities are: organizing events (91%), producing brochures and advertising (82%) and dedicated websites on food tourism (78%). At a lower level are promotional tools such as tourism guides (61%), blogs (43%), and familiarization trips for journalists and tour operators (13%). And lastly, only 4% of the organizations surveyed said they used social networks for the promotion of food tourism.

According to the literature review and the primary research, the suggestions for the development of gastronomic tourism especially in Greece are:

- ü Upgrading the gourmet services offered in the various destinations in Greece.
- ü Upgrading the gastronomic portfolio, which requires a wide range of activities such as the networking among the various stakeholders in tourism, the connection of local food with the culture, the society and the environment, the connection of the gastronomy with other tourist activities and also the connection with other forms of tourism.
- ü The design and implementation of a communication plan which will promote the culinary tourism and the quality of food and beverages offered in Greece.
- ü The introduction of Greek breakfast in hotels and accommodation.
- ü Professionalism in the tourism process and a qualitative gastronomic portfolio.
- ü The implication of quality assurance programs and price controlling for the Greek gastronomy.

ü Establishment of farmlands and production sites such as wineries and breweries, open for tourist excursions.

ü Further research about tourist needs and to define the way that these can be met.

In conclusion the diversification and enrichment of the tourist product of Greece can be achieved through gastronomy, which will provide quality and competitive advantage over other tourist destinations.

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^[1]Trahana, is a hard, sun-dried grain product made by combining cracked wheat, bulgur, or flour with buttermilk or yogurt, which makes the “sour” kind, or with whole milk, to make the “sweet” kind (Kochilas Diana, 2013).