

## “FOODIES” AND THEIR TRAVEL PREFERENCES

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This article examines the propensity of Australian food lovers, or “foodies,” to travel both domestically and internationally for food-related experiences. Data are analyzed from a survey of food lovers in Australia, profiling their characteristics, pertinent travel behavior, desired experiences, trip and destination preferences, with special attention given to isolating characteristics and preferences of those who had already traveled for food-related experiences. In the conclusions we make recommendations for destinations seeking to develop food tourism, in effect providing a demand-based planning and marketing approach. A principal conclusion is that they are highly involved with food, think of themselves as gourmets, and they desire a multifaceted holiday. Core experiences include consumption of authentic cuisine, learning about food/beverages and gastronomic traditions, and socializing. These must be augmented through opportunities for broader cultural, natural, touring, and shopping experiences. Recommendations are made for extending this line of research and theory development.

Key words: Foodies; Food tourism; Demand; Destination development; Targeted marketing

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### Introduction

Industry and scholarly interest in food tourism has grown dramatically since the millennium. The tourism industry has awoken to the various ways in which food can be leveraged to attract, enhance satisfaction levels, and augment visitor experiences in destinations. Concomitantly, the academic community has sprung to action to both describe and theorize this emerging phenomenon. Early research in the area suggested that perceived food images of a destination might be as much a detractor as an attraction (Cohen & Avieli, 2004) and that tourists

might have a range of expectations and needs regarding food services (e.g., Kivela & Crotts, 2006). Subsequently, published research has identified a niche market for food tourism (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007), and the propensity for food-oriented travel has been projected to increase (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2011).

Many destinations are now promoting themselves as centers of gastronomy and employing food and beverage products and experiences as attractions. To attract “foodies”—people with a passion for food—to travel specifically because of their special interest requires a much better understanding

of their involvement with food, trip motivation, and travel preferences and patterns. Regardless of natural endowments and investments, a destination cannot hope to attract dedicated, high-yield food tourists without a fundamental understanding of the experiences they want and why these experiences have meanings in their lifestyle.

The purpose of this article is to provide evidence, from the extant research literature and an Australian survey of food lovers (cf. Robinson & Getz, 2014), that can be utilized by destinations in their development of food tourism. Analysis has enabled the conceptualization of the relationship between destination food–tourism experiences and the motivational and conative dimensions of the food tourist. A systematic literature review on food and tourism is presented, and although supply-side research has predominated, there is published material on food lovers and their travel patterns and preferences. Demand-side material is thematically summarized in this article.

Following the literature review, the Australian survey is explained as to its goals, method, and pertinent analysis. This was a wide-ranging, exploratory study covering varying dimensions of involvement with food-related travel patterns and preferences, and personal characteristics of food lovers. In particular, this article examines the patterns and preferences of those food lovers who have already traveled for food-related experiences. Discriminant analyses reveal insights on how their involvement with food differs from those who have not traveled for food-related experiences.

In the conclusions we discuss a conceptual model of the core and augmented experiences desired by food tourists, along with some managerial implications for destinations desiring to develop this market segment. Research priorities are also suggested.

### Literature Review

An extensive literature search employing the Boolean expression “food and tourism,” plus a review of pertinent books, yielded numerous citations that were categorized as being most concerned with supply and demand. Our literature review revealed that supply-side considerations have predominated to date, including the connections between food and culture (e.g., Mykletun & Gyimóthy, 2010), agriculture (e.g., Bélisle, 1983), destination image and

branding (e.g., Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006), development and marketing (e.g., Horng & Tsai, 2010) and even environmentalist themes (Gössling, Garrod, Aall, Hille, & Peeters, 2011). Research and theory building on the demand side, to understand foodies and food tourists, has lagged. This evolution within subfields of tourism is normal, and closely reflects the advancement of wine tourism and other forms of special interest tourism.

Available books on food and tourism have taken anthropological, ethnographic, or philosophical perspectives, or have been oriented toward tourism development. Collectively they do not provide much empirical evidence on the nature of food lovers and food tourists. Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis, and Cambourne (2003) acknowledged that, “there is little published research on how this market is constructed” (p. 62). Their typology of food tourists is intuitive, based on the assumption that a high interest in food (called Gourmet Tourism) generates the fewest number of visitors. They also assumed that highly motivated food tourists seek out restaurants, markets, or wineries and that all, or nearly all, of their activities are food related.

The logical place to begin a demand-side study is with definition and analysis of food lovers—commonly called “foodies”—and then consider what motivates them to travel. Watson, Morgan, and Hemmington (2008) attribute the coining of the term “foodie” to the socialite magazine, *Harpers and Queen*, but its prominence to the humorous paperback *The Official Foodie Handbook* by Barr and Levy (1984), who defined foodies this way:

A Foodie is a person who is very very very interested in food. Foodies are the ones talking about food in any gathering—salivating over restaurants, recipes, radicchio. . . . They don't think they are being trivial—Foodies consider food to be an art, on a level with painting or drama. (p. 6)

Since this phrase came into the common parlance a seemingly unstoppable growth trajectory of food programming in the media has elevated the visibility and social capital of all things culinary (Scholes, 2011). The growth and sustainability of this food media aside, various visible platforms serve to illustrate the sheer magnitude of the foodie phenomenon and hence its potential as a viable market segment for tourism destinations that can provide

various food-related products, attractions, and experiences. Saveur, (2012), an online culinary and culinary travel magazine, attracted 40,000 entrants for its best food blog completion. To further illustrate this popularity, an American study (Liu, Norman, Backman, Cuneo, & Condrasky, 2012) found that there were 26,525 dedicated food groups on the image-sharing social media website, Flickr.com®. Of these groups, nine had at least 5,000 members.

The most directly pertinent and substantial research related to foodies comes from Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) and Edge Research (2006). Their profile of culinary travelers stems from the first-ever, national research study on the culinary travel market in the US. A survey was completed by 2,364 leisure travelers, from which the “culinary traveler” was profiled. This segment (17% of the total leisure travelers) had participated in one or more of: cooking classes; dining out for a memorable experience; visiting farmers markets; gourmet food shopping; attending food festivals; or undertaking some wine tourist activity.

Another large-scale survey, broader in scope than the TIA research, was commissioned by the Canadian Tourism Commission (2003). The Travel Activities and Motivation Survey (TAMS) (Lang Research, Inc., 2001) was completed first in 2001 and repeated in 2007. The 2001 research by Lang Research developed a Cuisine and Wine Interest Index as part of the analysis of both Americans and Canadians. The index consisted of answers to questions about motivations for, and activities during, vacation experiences taken in the previous 2 years. The most notable conclusion of TAMS was that interest in, and travel for wine and food experiences is highly correlated (in North America) with education and income levels. But of course, this applies to tourism in general. Analysis of the 2007 TAMS, conducted by Smith (2010), concentrated on residents and out-of-province visitors to Ontario who reported engaging in at least three of a specified set of food-related activities on a trip in the last 2 years. This segment of food tourists was subdivided into a number of clusters:

- dining (40.2%) (in high-end restaurants or cafes with menus featuring local ingredients);
- celebrating (24.6%) (attending food festivals);
- sampling (16.4%) (winery or brewery visits);
- rural experiences (12.9%) (farm gate sales, picking, farmers’ markets);
- learning (5.7%) (cooking schools, wine classes).

In Australia, Sparks, Roberts, Deery, Davies, and Brown (2005) explored wine and food tourism. The Good Living Tourism project focused on the lifestyle aspects of food and wine tourism. The project comprised several studies including regional case studies and consumer research. Based on focus groups with experienced wine tourists, the researchers identified “enhancement factors” that make a visit to a wine and food region more enjoyable, namely: authenticity of the experience; value for money; service interactions; the setting or surroundings; product offerings; information dissemination; personal growth; and indulgence. Sparks et al. (2005) concluded that “The food and wine tourist is rarely just interested in wine tasting; the total experience is of greatest importance” (p. vi).

Authenticity is an issue for food lovers (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Kuznesof, Tregear, and Moxey (1997) described personal factors influencing demand, while Groves (2001) discussed the cultural awareness and knowledge of consumers as a factor. Personal factors might emerge as an individual connection between the produced and the consumed, which may be based on ethnicity (Johnston & Baumann, 2009) or simply the contemplative process (Beer, 2008) so the food just tastes “right.”

In a study of the food image of France, Italy, and Thailand, Karim and Chi (2010) sought to determine the relationship between a destination’s food image and travelers’ visit intention, as well as relationships between information sources and purchase decisions. The results revealed positive relationships between food image and visit intentions. In general, Italy had the most favorable food image and the highest potential to be visited in the future. Ling, Karim, and Othman (2010) surveyed departing tourists at the Kuala Lumpur airport to measure their image of Malaysian food and the connection to trip satisfaction and future intentions. Food price, rich flavors, availability, good services, and variety were ranked highly. Food added value to their experiences, but more could be done to ensure that visitors learn about Malaysian food culture. Positive image did correlate with overall satisfaction and future intentions.

Quan and Wang (2004) argued that food consumption in tourism can be either the peak touristic experience or the supporting consumer experience, dependent upon specific circumstances. To these researchers peak food experiences are derived from both motivation (novelty seeking) and memorability. Often food is a medium for peak social experiences. This raises the question of whether food lovers are psychologically predisposed to seeking out new tastes and new food–tourism experiences.

Presumably novelty or sensation seeking is similar to neophilia, and the only research available concerns wine tourists. In their study of wine tourists, Galloway, Mitchell, Getz, Crouch, and Onge (2008) determined that

sensation seeking was observed to be significantly related to spending on wine, and wine drinking, as well as to the frequency of visits to wineries and the number of activities engaged in at wineries, the use of the internet as a source of information about wineries, venturing off the beaten track during a visit to a wine region, and the strength of opportunity for learning, stimulation, or indulgence as incentives to visit a wine region. (p. 950)

Gyimóthy and Mykletun (2009) found that food in a tourism context had a “challenging culinary trophy” element with an association of novelty. This might also define the “gastronaut” (see below).

A traditional segmentation approach has been to identify food tourists by their activities (e.g., fine dining, visiting wineries and farms, shopping for food and beverages), then segmenting them on the basis of individual characteristics (lifestyle, attitudes, demographics, income, etc.) and travel habits. Similar to pioneering research on wine tourists, it is easiest to sample foodies where they travel, namely wineries and restaurants, food festivals, or pick-your-own farms. The other approach has been to sample people at home and select for further analysis the travelers who had done specific things related to wine and food (e.g., Ignatov & Smith, 2006).

Paolini (2000) distinguished between “gastronauts” (tourists exclusively dedicated to gastronomic experiences) and “foodtrotters” (wine tourists who want other experiences), in this way referencing a popular description of certain foodies. At [www.gastronauts.net](http://www.gastronauts.net) can be found “the club for adventurous eaters,” who seek out unusual, even bizarre

things to eat. One could also segment foodies according to what, or how, they want to eat. This approach is reflected in numerous websites and blogs devoted to, for example, Italian and various ethnic/racial/geographically delimited cuisines, fast/slow food, cooking on gas or BBQ, fusion, organic, local produce, gluten-free, low-fat, Halal, Kosher, etc.

Croce and Perri (2010) segmented food and wine tourists, although it is unclear whether their categories were derived from empirical work. They named “experts, specialists, connoisseurs, technicians, and aware consumers.” This approach is similar to the Hall et al. (2003) terminology, which described a range of interests or involvement levels from “culinary to gastronomic to gourmet tourism.”

Serious leisure and travel career theories offer additional insights on food tourism. Within Stebbins’ (1982) serious leisure theory highly involved (or committed) amateurs develop “careers” that resemble those of professionals. Their strong interests can lead them to join social worlds of people sharing their interests (Unruh, 1980), and these special interest groups tend to congregate at events of significance (some of which become “iconic” for their high symbolic value) and in places holding special meaning as a form of secular pilgrimage.

One hypothesis arising from this serious leisure and social world perspective is the likely career progression from local-, to national-, and eventually international-level travel for experiences that appeal to lifestyle interests like wine and food. The propensity for wine lovers to travel internationally for wine-specific experiences has already been demonstrated (Brown, Havitz, & Getz, 2006). Similarly, event tourist careers have been revealed in studies of runners (Getz & Andersson, 2010), mountain bikers (Getz & McConnell, 2011), and triathletes (Lamont, Kennelly, & Wilson, 2012). Food lovers might be less interested in competing at events, but the appeal of active learning through food-themed events is likely to be of high importance (Getz & Robinson, 2014). This propensity to travel for food is clearly reflected in top food city lists (e.g., *Top 10 Foodie Cities*: [livability.com/top-10/top-10-foodie-cities](http://livability.com/top-10/top-10-foodie-cities)), and the ever-increasing number of regions and countries promoting themselves as food destinations and featuring food events (e.g., see the guide: *A Taste for Events—How to enhance your event with Scottish food and drink* (The Scottish Government, 2012).

There is considerable evidence of the existence of foodies and their propensity to travel for food-related experiences. Previous research has aimed to describe food lovers and to segment them as a potential tourism market. Some theoretical progress has been made in understanding the travel motivations and desired experiences of food tourists. In this study we sought to add to the literature with practical implications for destination management and marketing purposes, by specifically sampling only food lovers and examining them on involvement, motivation, and travel patterns and preferences. In this article we apply analytical techniques to determine whether there are discriminating involvement factors that can distinguish travelers from the non-travelers within our sample, both domestically and internationally. In the conclusions we employ these findings, plus general conclusions from the literature, to conceptually model the ideal food tourist travel experience.

#### Research Method and Analysis

Our literature review informed the empirical stage, as did a pilot study consisting of interviews with food lovers. In addition to having a general and open discussion about “love of food” and its connection to travel, these interviews provided a testing platform for elements of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in an online format, using the Qualtrics® software platform. A pilot of the survey was administered to a cohort of tourism and hospitality management students. The final survey targeted networks of foodies via self-identified individuals and various media including the mailing lists and newsletters of food and wine clubs, various

professional networks, and readers of online food-related magazines and blogs.

In total, 707 responses were received, but it was a long survey and the drop-out rate was high: 24% of respondents failed to answer the survey’s final question. Only fully completed questionnaires were retained, yielding a total of 541 that have been analyzed, utilizing SPSS® V21. Sections of the instrument pertained to food involvement (using both attitudinal and behavioral measures), motivation and interest in food-related travel (both domestic and international), and personal information.

A large battery of 44 statements concerning involvement was developed by adapting previous wine involvement research (Brown et al., 2006) and by reference to a published food involvement scale that focused on actual eating habits (Bell & Marshall, 2003). Detailed analysis of the involvement items is beyond the scope of this article, and only those items differentiating travelers from non-travelers are mentioned. As well, in this article we do not refer to the general motivational items (pertaining to what motivates them about their involvement with food) as we are focused on the results of their involvement (cf. Robinson & Getz, 2013), being the travel experience.

Statements about food and travel (see Table 1) were adapted from previous research, as cited above. We incorporated elements testing for the existence of travel careers based on the notion that foodies will likely travel more, and farther afield for food-related experiences as their involvement increases. Specific food-related experiences, events, and activities were included. Some of the items pertain to the social dimensions of travel and others to the specific allure of food.

Table 1  
Most Mentioned Desired Food Experience Destinations

Food Destination	Frequency (Valid %, <i>n</i> = 111)	Food-Related Reasons
Italy	47%	Traditional/local/regionalism, lessons/learning, pasta (wine)
France	40%	Culinary heritage/authenticity, techniques, cheeses (wine)
Vietnam	14%	Authentic, freshness, technique, cooking school, street food
South America	12%	Authentic, rustic, spices
Thailand	10%	Authentic/traditional, natural/fresh cuisine, learn to cook
Spain	9%	Tapas, destination restaurants
Australia	27%	Local producers, restaurants (wine)

## Findings and Discussion

### *Profile of Respondents*

Almost all respondents were from Queensland, Australia, and only five were nonnationals. Eighty percent of respondents were female, and this gender imbalance may be consistent with the tendencies of females to respond more to surveys (e.g., Liu et al., 2012; Sparks et al., 2005). Or it might be that females are more interested in food tourism than males (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). Fifty-eight percent of the sample were under 40 years of age. The median age (36–40 years of age) is consistent with the medians of local (36.2) and national statistics (36.9) for Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2010).

Nearly three quarters of the sample were in a relationship and 30% of the sample had dependents. In terms of education, this profile accords with previous research suggesting the affluent and well-educated characteristics of potential food tourists (Canadian Tourism Commission, 2003; TIA and Edge Research, 2006). Exactly 80% of the sample had higher educational, including postgraduate, qualifications. The employment status of the sample was skewed to those active in the workforce, and this reflects in the salary median (\$50–\$60K) being generally higher than the population (\$45,300) as reported in national statistics (ABS, 2010). We provide further demographic details further in our discussion as the inferential data analysis is presented.

Given the self-selection process, it is no surprise that the sample consisted entirely of self-declared food lovers. In addition to the involvement scale, which revealed a portion that can be considered highly involved, a number of food-related social behaviors were also assessed. Over a third, or 34% ( $n = 182$ ), of the sample indicated they regularly purchased or subscribed to a food magazine, which accords with Sparks et al. (2005). Comments indicated some of these magazines were the coffee table “glossies” like *Gourmet Traveller*, but several e-magazine titles were also listed. Additionally, 19% ( $n = 105$ ) participated in food blogs or other food-related online communities and 6% ( $n = 30$ ) belonged to a food club and 11% ( $n = 58$ ) belonged to a wine club. These figures cannot be aggregated as there was overlap in responses. Nonetheless, it is

clear that a sizeable proportion of the sample exhibited food-related leisure behaviors.

### *Food and Travel*

Attention then turned to investigating responses to questions relating to previous and planned travel, both domestically (within Australia) and internationally, for food-related experiences. For the question “In the past 12 months have you traveled within Australia for a food-related experience?” 54% of our sample replied that they had done so. Twenty-six percent ( $n = 141$ ) had done so once, 17% ( $n = 92$ ) had traveled twice, and 11% ( $n = 61$ ) had traveled within Australia for a food-related experience three or more times. Regarding plans for future domestic food tourism, 34% ( $n = 179$ ) responded that they were planning a trip. While it is not possible to categorically state that food was the primary or sole motivating factor for all these reported trips, some comments suggest it is often the case. This direct quotation from a respondent is pertinent: “We’re flying to Melbourne next week for the Good Food and Wine Festival because we heard it’s amazing there. This is our first actual flight for a food experience.” This quotation also demonstrates the power of events in stimulating food tourism.

In response to the question, “In the past 12 months have you traveled internationally for a food-related experience?” 30% of the sample replied that they had done so. Nineteen percent ( $n = 103$ ) had traveled once, 8% ( $n = 41$ ) said twice, and 3% ( $n = 15$ ) had traveled internationally for a food experience three or more times. While it is not possible to categorically state that food was the primary motive for all this travel, some comments certainly suggest so (e.g., “I’ve already traveled a lot for food—most recently Thailand and India”). Regarding plans for future travel for an international food experience, 29% ( $n = 152$ ) were planning a trip. Responses were suggestive of the types of international food-related experiences respondents sought: “My dream is to eat at as many restaurants as possible in the ‘top 50 restaurants in the world’. I have done 5 so far,” and “[I’m] interested in participating in cooking schools in Vietnam.”

This high number of international travelers likely reflects both a high general propensity to travel among Australians, and a high correlation between

being a food lover and international food tourism. Cross-country comparison will be required to verify this latter hypothesis, but it is similar to the correlation between wine lovers and wine tourism detected by Brown et al. (2006) in a Canadian study. A related theoretical question is whether or not involvement with food increases over time, and how a travel career built upon this enduring interest might evolve. Quite possibly an introduction to food tourism domestically, perhaps linked to regional attractions and food-themed events, will lead to a desire for similar international experiences.

Participants were asked to list their top three preferred destinations for food experiences. In all, 246 responses were received for this qualitative question, from 111 respondents. Table 1 summarizes the key findings. Overall, there was a high degree of Euro-centricity apparent in destinations of choice. Italy and France were the two clear preferences, which is identical to that of Canadian wine tourists in the findings of Getz and Brown (2006). Spain and other Mediterranean destinations such as Greece and Morocco registered some choices. Australia's proximity to Asia influenced moderate responses for Thailand and Vietnam, with neighbors Cambodia and Laos also registering. Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong also garnered some support. Surprisingly, nearby New Zealand was not regarded as a preferred food destination by very many, despite its growing viticultural reputation; perhaps overfamiliarity is a factor, or perceived similarity.

As evident in Table 1, there are some themes apparent that may influence destination choice. Authenticity, tradition, and cuisine specific to the country/region arise regularly. Taking lessons, or learning to cook, also seemed to cut across preferred destinations, while naturalness and freshness appeared to be a factor for Southeast Asian destinations. Interestingly, for the European destinations, there is an association with Old World wine-producing countries and, indeed, specific wine-producing regions like Champagne. Twenty-seven percent ( $n = 30$ ) of the valid respondents listed Australian destinations.

#### *Those Who Traveled as Food Tourists*

It makes sense to consider experienced food tourists as a primary target market, but we need to know if they are different from the others in terms of their

involvement. So initially we turned to a battery of items regarding food involvement. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (on a 7-point scale) with statements about their involvement with food (see Table 2). In these questions 1 was labeled *strongly disagree*, 4 was *neutral*, and 7 was *strongly agree*. Statistics derived from this type of noninterval scale must be interpreted carefully, as the intent is not to gain a precise measurement but to distinguish between high and low levels of agreement. Accordingly, high levels of agreement (i.e., means over 5) were given by respondents to seven statements about their level of involvement with food, independent of the travel context. However, it is reasonable to assume that a degree of involvement with food (or any other lifestyle or leisure pursuit) does not automatically generate travel demand, so the data were interrogated to see if evidence of a food-related travel career could be found. To ease the exploration of the data in terms of the relationship between food and travel, the data in response to the two questions relating to the frequency of first, domestic, and second, international, travel were recoded to “yes” and “no” variables. This facilitated the cross-tabulation of the means for the food statements regarding involvement with the four groups generated by the recoding: those that had and had not traveled domestically (within Australia) for food-related experiences and those that had and had not traveled internationally for food-related experiences. Table 2 shows these values and we shall return to a discussion of some of the apparent differences evident.

First, however, we considered the relationship between the sociodemographic characteristics and propensity to travel. The relatively homogeneous sample (i.e., 80% female, highly educated, all food lovers) suggested that differentiation according to sociodemographic variables was not likely to be meaningful. Regardless, we ran a series of frequencies to explore these relationships and these are presented in Tables 3 and 4. It is evident that there was little difference in propensity to travel according to the demographic characteristics of this sample, but there remained the differences in terms of involvement items across the four groups.

Consistent with previously applied methods in the tourism literature (e.g., Fuchs & Reichel, 2011), and given the large number of items in the battery

Table 2  
Food and Travel

Statements About Food	Traveled for Food in Australia		Traveled for Food Internationally	
	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 294)	No ( <i>n</i> = 245)	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 159)	No ( <i>n</i> = 378)
I try not to shop for my food in supermarkets.	3.65 (1.85)	2.93 (1.71)	3.72 (1.86)	3.16 (1.78)
Shopping for produce is one of the most enjoyable things in my life.	4.44 (1.58)	3.82 (1.60)	4.71 (1.42)	3.93 (1.65)
I spare little expense in getting the best produce.	4.51 (1.44)	3.90 (1.49)	4.53 (1.34)	4.11 (1.54)
I only use suppliers I can trust.	4.86 (1.34)	4.31 (1.51)	4.85 (1.42)	4.51 (1.45)
Purchasing organic produce says a lot about me.	3.67 (1.67)	3.14 (1.56)	3.46 (1.68)	3.41 (1.62)
Acquiring food for domestic meals occupies a central role in my life.	4.71 (1.58)	4.22 (1.73)	4.64 (1.53)	4.43 (1.72)
Others value my opinion on where to get good produce.	4.79 (1.47)	4.05 (1.53)	4.92 (1.35)	4.26 (1.58)
The kitchen is my favorite space in my home.	4.77 (1.59)	4.18 (1.62)	4.82 (1.60)	4.37 (1.62)
I feel proud of my knowledge of food and cooking.	5.36 (1.39)	4.47 (1.65)	5.47 (1.40)	4.87 (1.58)
I am considered a real "foodie" by others.	5.00 (1.57)	4.00 (1.75)	5.14 (1.61)	4.29 (1.71)
I cook with local produce whenever possible.	5.35 (1.34)	4.64 (1.64)	5.21 (1.46)	4.95 (1.55)
I hate cooking in unfamiliar kitchens.	3.97 (1.60)	3.96 (1.64)	4.09 (1.60)	3.90 (1.62)
I organize my day so that I can enjoy my meals.	4.75 (1.38)	4.39 (1.55)	4.79 (1.49)	4.49 (1.45)
I like to experiment with food from different cultures.	6.07 (1.05)	5.61 (1.37)	6.23 (0.97)	5.71 (1.29)
A well-equipped kitchen is important to me.	5.88 (1.08)	5.53 (1.19)	6.04 (0.99)	5.59 (1.18)
My friends and I enjoy discussing TV cookery programs.	5.13 (1.57)	4.50 (1.80)	5.36 (1.52)	4.63 (1.74)
I give little thought to planning meals.	2.69 (1.48)	2.94 (1.67)	2.67 (1.57)	2.87 (1.57)
I love cooking for my friends.	5.63 (1.37)	4.97 (1.64)	5.63 (1.42)	5.19 (1.57)
I often cook with my friends.	4.19 (1.69)	3.52 (1.69)	4.29 (1.69)	3.71 (1.71)
My fondest childhood memories are cooking with my family.	4.16 (1.71)	3.66 (1.72)	4.33 (1.81)	3.77 (1.68)
Nothing satisfies me more than eating a splendid meal.	5.83 (1.24)	5.31 (1.49)	5.96 (1.30)	5.46 (1.38)
My cooking skills help express who I am.	5.07 (1.52)	4.44 (1.62)	5.21 (1.57)	4.60 (1.57)
I enjoy spending longer than needed in the kitchen when cooking.	4.53 (1.67)	3.82 (1.78)	4.60 (1.72)	4.04 (1.76)
I use the best cooking equipment in order to prevent kitchen disasters.	4.35 (1.57)	3.69 (1.61)	4.41 (1.60)	3.90 (1.61)
Cooking is one of life's great pleasures.	5.63 (1.31)	4.89 (1.70)	5.74 (1.37)	5.10 (1.58)
Table etiquette says a lot about a person.	5.70 (1.28)	5.55 (1.26)	5.72 (1.31)	5.59 (1.26)
I spend a great deal of my disposable income on dining out.	4.17 (1.69)	3.44 (1.72)	4.47 (1.56)	3.56 (1.74)
My special family occasions are often marked with a truly great meal.	5.88 (1.17)	5.61 (1.25)	6.01 (1.11)	5.65 (1.24)
Sharing memorable dining experiences bonds me with my friends.	5.71 (1.17)	5.40 (1.22)	5.87 (1.11)	5.44 (1.21)
My craving for new food experiences defines who I am.	4.81 (1.40)	4.04 (1.59)	4.86 (1.50)	4.30 (1.52)
I select restaurants to dine in that feature regional produce.	4.64 (1.39)	3.78 (1.48)	4.70 (1.37)	4.06 (1.50)
It's important to me to seek novel food choices.	4.81 (1.40)	4.04 (1.59)	4.99 (1.40)	4.39 (1.39)
I consult people who "know" food about where to eat out.	5.53 (1.32)	4.79 (1.52)	5.43 (1.42)	5.09 (1.47)

Values are mean (SD) by travel group.

of statements, we employed the stepwise discriminant analysis technique. This classified the groups of people who had previously traveled for food experiences versus those who had not (separately analyzing domestic and international) according to the food involvement items (at the SPSS® default cut-off: *F* value for entry = 0.384, *F* value for removal = 0.271). Discriminant analysis revealed that respondents who traveled for food reasons domestically were differentiated most by six items, one of which

showed an inverse relationship (see Table 5). The classification results of the discriminant model indicated 68% correctly classified cases. The validation indicated 67% correctly classified cases.

From the positively loading items in Table 5 we can confidently construct an attitudinal and behavioral profile of the domestic food tourist, with the proviso that we cannot say what proportion of the food lovers in our sample will ultimately manifest their involvement through travel. For domestic food



Table 3  
Domestic Travel Demographics

	Traveled for Food in Australia [ <i>n</i> (%)]	
	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 289)	No ( <i>n</i> = 238)
<b>Age</b>		
Under 30	81 (28)	68 (29)
31–40	76 (26)	73 (31)
41–50	57 (20)	36 (15)
51–60	53 (18)	46 (19)
Over 61	22 (8)	15 (6)
<b>Income</b>		
Under \$40,000	57 (21)	43 (19)
\$40,000–\$59,999	72 (27)	71 (32)
\$60,000–\$79,999	76 (28)	60 (27)
\$80,000–\$119,999	51 (19)	36 (16)
\$120,000 and above	16 (6)	15 (7)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	66 (22)	46 (19)
Female	228 (78)	199 (81)
<b>Relationship status</b>		
Partnered	221 (75)	173 (71)
<b>Dependent children</b>		
No dependent children at home	69 (24)	36 (15)
One or more dependent children at home	220 (76)	302 (85)

Table 4  
International Travel Demographics

	Traveled for Food in Internationally [ <i>n</i> (%)]	
	Yes ( <i>n</i> = 156)	No ( <i>n</i> = 369)
<b>Age</b>		
Under 30	51 (33)	98 (27)
31–40	38 (24)	109 (30)
41–50	26 (17)	67 (18)
51–60	34 (22)	65 (18)
Over 61	7 (5)	30 (8)
<b>Income</b>		
Under \$40,000	30 (21)	70 (20)
\$40,000–\$59,999	37 (26)	106 (30)
\$60,000–\$79,999	40 (28)	95 (27)
\$80,000–\$119,999	29 (20)	58 (17)
\$120,000 and above	8 (6)	22 (6)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	31 (20)	81 (21)
Female	128 (80)	297 (79)
<b>Relationship status</b>		
Partnered	112 (70)	280 (74)
<b>Dependent children</b>		
No dependent children at home	32 (20)	73 (19)
One or more dependent children at home	124 (80)	296 (81)

Table 5  
Domestic Travel Involvement Discriminants

Involvement Dimensions	Standardized Coefficients	Correlation With Discriminant Function
I cook with local produce whenever possible.	0.383	0.513
Sharing memorable dining experiences bonds me with my friends.	-0.351	0.284
I spend a great deal of my disposable income on dining out. <sup>a</sup>	0.318	0.459
It's important to me to seek novel food choices.	0.280	0.662
People know me as a gourmet. <sup>a</sup>	0.427	0.765
I often reminisce about food experiences with family and friends. <sup>a</sup>	0.319	0.601
1 No travel Australia centroid	-0.508	-
2 Traveled Australia centroid	0.424	-

Wilkes Lambda, 0.822;  $\chi^2(6) = 104.465, p < 0.000$ .

<sup>a</sup>These items are significant for both domestic and international food tourists.

tourists, the item with the highest positive standardized coefficient was "People know me as a gourmet," which is a very strong measure of self-identity within the involvement construct. Being a gourmet carries many implications for the types of experiences sought, and implies a very high expectation of quality. Also important is the statement "I spend a great deal of my disposable income on dining out," which is a tangible measure of involvement and suggests that restaurant dining is an important part of being a traveling foodie. "I often reminisce about food experiences with family and friends" reflects both the social dimensions of involvement and the importance of having partners in the food tourism experience. The item "I cook with local produce whenever possible" both reflects the central importance of cooking for foodies and suggests a strong interest in authenticity and quality. Finally,

"It is important to me to seek novel food choices" provides a strong indicator of how novelty-seeking influences food tourism decisions. Contrarily, "Sharing memorable dining experiences bonds me with my friends" loaded negatively. We interpret the result for this negative value cautiously because the correlation with the overall discriminant function was weak and positive (0.284).

The analysis was replicated for those who had traveled internationally (see Table 6). The classification results of the discriminant model indicated 68% correctly classified cases. The validation indicated 67% correctly classified cases. Stepwise discriminant analysis revealed that respondents who had already traveled abroad for food experiences were differentiated most by seven involvements statements. Two of these were inverse relationships, and three were shared with the domestic food tourist.

Table 6  
International Travel Demographics Travel Involvement Discriminants

Involvement Dimensions	Standardized Coefficients	Correlation With Discriminant Function
Shopping for produce is one of the most enjoyable things in my life.	0.449	0.554
Acquiring food for domestic meals occupies a central role in my life.	-0.308	0.143
I spend a great deal of my disposable income on dining out. <sup>a</sup>	0.521	0.607
I consult people who "know" food about where to eat out.	-0.350	0.265
Food experiences prompt me to learn more about other cultures.	0.348	0.582
People know me as a gourmet. <sup>a</sup>	0.291	0.625
I often reminisce about food experiences with family and friends. <sup>a</sup>	0.311	0.603
1 No travel internationally centroid	-0.264	-
2 Traveled internationally centroid	0.627	-

Wilkes Lambda, 0.858;  $\chi^2(7) = 81.679, p < 0.000$ .

<sup>a</sup>These items are significant for both domestic and international food tourists.

The highest (positive) standardized coefficient was for the statement “I spend a great deal of my disposable income on dining out,” which is a behavioral measure of involvement. Interestingly, these people who dine out frequently are also differentiated by the statement “Shopping for produce is one of the most enjoyable things in my life.” Two other positive relationships were for the items “I often reminisce about food experiences with family and friends” and “Food experiences prompt me to learn more about other cultures.” Tying all of these to the positive relationship with the statement “People know me as a gourmet” generates a clearer profile of our international food tourists in terms of involvement. The three items identical to domestic food tourists were: “I spend a great deal of my disposable income on dining out,” “I often reminisce about food experiences with family and friends,” and “people know me as a gourmet.” On the other hand, two statements—“Acquiring food for domestic meals occupies a central role in my life” and “I consult people who ‘know’ food about where to eat out”—returned negative coefficients. Again, however, we interpret this negative value very cautiously, since the correlations (0.143 and 0.265, respectively) with the overall discriminant function were weak and positive. There were few differences, therefore, between those who had traveled domestically or internationally when compared to those food lovers who had not done so. Gender was not a factor, given the dominance of females, and neither age nor income significantly separated the domestic and international food tourists (see Tables 3 and 4). All of them identified with being a gourmet, they all spent lots of money dining out, and reminiscing with loved ones was highly valued. Cultural authenticity and novelty are being pursued, consisting of new foods and local produce. At the heart of their involvement is a love of cooking and foods, not merely eating. Given the similarities, it is reasonable to suggest that our respondents’ love of food leads naturally to domestic and international tourism. Whether this is a progression, as in a travel career, or a reflection of other factors such as stage of life, remains unclear from these data. We are also cautious about not overstating the results as the number of items from the battery of involvement items was large; nonetheless, these results consistently show that there appears a positive correlation

between involvement with food and food-related travel and thus these findings lend themselves to the generation of some marketing and theoretical implications.

### Conclusions

Food tourism is already well established in the highly competitive international tourism marketplace, but it is quite underdeveloped as a field of academic study. The current research adds to our understanding of involvement with food and the connection between being a foodie and travel for food purposes. In this section we discuss both practical implications for destination management and marketing, and more theoretical considerations including research needs.

### *Destination Management and Marketing*

Attracting food tourists is a high priority for many cities and destinations, and this research provides additional insights and theoretical perspectives on foodies and food tourism that can inform both development of appropriate experiences and more precise targeting. What is the ideal food tourism experience for these Australian food tourists? In Figure 1 the core product and augmentations

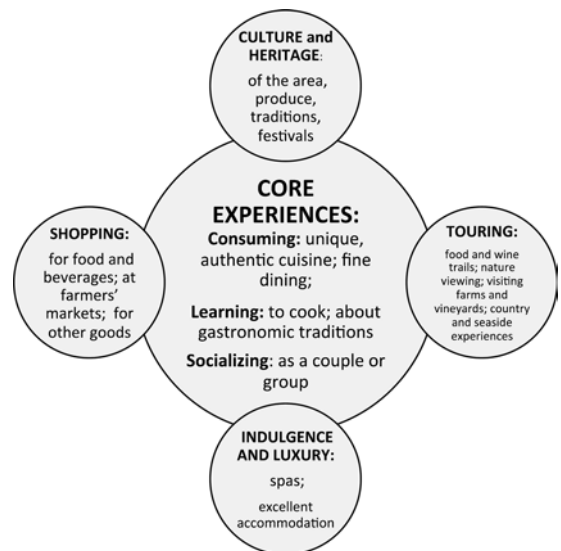


Figure 1. Conceptualizing food travel experiences.

are illustrated. Consumption of food (and suitable beverages) is at the core, but it would be wrong to think that food tourists are mostly interested in the act of eating. For foodies, the eating experience is in equal parts cognitive (learning about culture and cuisine, with authenticity essential), affective (socializing with partners and friends; *communitas* with like-minded foodies), and appropriate activity (especially fine dining and eating, and learning at special events). It must be recalled that the Australian food lovers spent a great deal of time and money shopping for produce, cooking, and eating out. The experienced food tourists in our sample considered themselves to be gourmets, or at least felt good about being known as a gourmet. Reminiscing about the experience is extremely important to them, so there has to be a good story.

We have learned that the food tourism experience must be multidimensional. Since it can be expected that food tourists seek out very specific information about preferred destinations, and might respond to highly targeted messages that convey special food-lover meanings, the lure has to consider what else foodies want from their travel. These augmentations must be part of the communication, and they must be available for the autonomous traveler.

First and foremost are the elements of culture and heritage that go together best with the food experience, including shopping (e.g., farmer's markets; direct from farm or fisher), and cultural events featuring food and other local traditions. Touring in food and wine regions is valued, but there must be access to farms, vineyards, country inns, and distinctive dining experiences. A well-designed food or wine trail (preferably combined) will offer the food tourist much more than sightseeing, and should be thought of as an interpretive tool. Indeed, all aspects of the food tourist experience will be greatly augmented with a variety of interpretive mechanisms—from available group tours to individual learning opportunities. The chef, rather than an attraction (which they sometimes are, but only when readily available), can in this context be considered an interpreter.

Similar to wine lovers, the Australian food tourist wants other shopping and nature-oriented experiences. They are, after all, educated, sophisticated, and experienced travelers. Finally, their preferred destination experience features spas and luxury

accommodation. We can assume they travel by air, but ground transport can vary with circumstances.

If we look at what is readily available to international tourists, there are indeed many products aimed at this segment. There are food experience ocean and river cruises, safaris, and city breaks. Resorts already cater to food and wine lovers. Celebrity chefs attract foodies to cooking classes. Numerous food festivals around the world aim to attract foodies. However, it appears to these researchers that most such products and events do not go far enough in catering to the specific needs of food lovers, and instead make assumptions about what is desired. The frequent absence of interpretation, which is essential to providing learning and culturally authentic experiences, is the most obvious failing.

The food tourists we identified can be reached through produce markets, good restaurants, and gourmet clubs. Messages that will appeal to them should focus on authentic cultural experiences aimed at gourmets, but probably should also stress experiences for couples and families. The kinds of experiences desired will fuel many after-trip stories and long-lasting memories.

### *Research and Theory Building*

This research confirms some aspects of what has already been reported about food tourists, and adds to the available research literature on foodies and food tourists in several important ways. Previously published evidence from major surveys in North America and Australia, while not specifically addressing international food tourism, does point to commonalities in motivation, activities, and desired experiences of food tourists. The current study adds considerable insights as to the links between a love of food, cooking, and both domestic and international travel that can be termed food tourism.

A remaining challenge is to gain greater understanding of actual food tourism experiences, requiring participant observation and other phenomenological methods that investigate the cognitive, affective, and conative (behavioral) dimensions of experience. Experience research can easily be connected back to product development and marketing, but as yet we know little in theoretical terms about what separates food tourism experiences from other travel or leisure experiences, and how food combined with wine,

culture, adventure, or nature creates desirable experiences. This line of research will also pay dividends in generating greater understanding of authenticity from the consumer perspective, which can be translated into branding and marketing implications for suppliers and destinations.

How people become involved as food lovers in the first place is an unanswered question. Several logical starting points would be the influence of family, culture, and the media, but they have yet to be researched. Cooking appears to be an essential and defining attribute of foodies, and this requires some degree of training or participation in the home—or perhaps professional development. A related question is how a food lover might develop a specialized travel career, and its evolution through all the life stages. Will the Australia food lovers who have not traveled start with domestic trips to nearby wine and food regions (of which there are many), and will they eventually progress to international food tourism? Are there essential preconditions pertaining to age and income? Are couples more likely to travel than singles? Clearly much remains to explore in the realm of demand-side research on foodies and food tourism.

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