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Holiday Food and Wellbeing.

A study of tourists' relations to food

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Abstract

Food consumption on holidays is closely interlinked with issues on wellbeing in that some tourists consume food for the sensory stimulation and the health enhancing qualities it provides and other tourists are concerned with the social bonding that preparing and sharing a meal with others entails. In addition, if wellbeing is interpreted as insight and personal growth, food may provide wellbeing in terms of the cultural knowledge and with that personal insight into own cultural ways it may facilitate. Hence individually and socially oriented types of wellbeing seem to be at stake in relation to tourists' consumption of food. The qualitative study, upon which this paper draws, demonstrates that tourists' relations to food fall into and across these individual and social categories of wellbeing, and hence a complex picture of tourists' food relations materialise, which the existing literature has not so far acknowledged. For instance seeking sensory stimulation through a large variety of food experiences - from gourmet dinners to street meals - is favoured by some tourists, whereas the family togetherness that sharing a meal facilitates is the primary value of holiday food for others. Hence the paper discusses various complexities of tourists' relations to food in the context of wellbeing and points to implications for future research.

Key Words: Holiday food, food tourists, wellbeing, hybrid consumer patterns