



AN ASSESSMENT OF PROMOTING CULINARY TOURISM IN GHANA

Sanful, R. E.¹, Commey, V.², Okech, R. N.³, and Kissi, M.⁴

¹*Department of Hospitality Management, School of Applied Sciences and Technology, Cape Coast Technical University, Ghana.*

²*Department of Hotel Catering and Institutional Management, Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology, Kumasi Technical University, Ghana.*

³*Tourism Studies, School of Arts and Social Science Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada.*

⁴*Department of Tourism Management, Cape Coast Technical University, Ghana.*

¹rita.sanful@cctu.edu.gh

²vida.commey@kstu.edu.gh

³rnokech@gmail.com

⁴michael.kissi@cctu.edu.gh

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Ghana's tourism and hospitality industry has been extensively researched over the past five decades, primarily focusing on culture and heritage tourism, nature and economic tourism, marketing, and service quality. The aim is to assess the potential of culinary tourism as a powerful tool for creating sustainable livelihood empowerment channels, offering a beacon of hope for the future.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study was conducted with a rigorous qualitative research design and desk review approach, ensuring a comprehensive topic exploration. Published data and literature on the food tourism prospects of eight regions in Ghana were analysed. The gathered data was then subjected to content analysis, a common technique in qualitative research.

Research Limitation: The findings derived from the desk review may not be generalisable to other contexts, populations, or geographic areas due to the reliance on specific literature that may not capture all perspectives.

Findings: The study exposes the stark reality that the culinary tourism market in Ghana, despite its significant potential, remains underdeveloped. This underscores the crucial need for strategic interventions and the active participation of all stakeholders in the industry's development.

Practical Implication: From a practical point of view, the Ghana Tourism Authority must show greater interest in developing the sector by organising regional and national food festivals annually. This effort must be publicised internationally to attract tourists interested in exploring Ghana's culinary diversity.

Social Implication: Culinary tourism promotes sustainable food production and consumption practices by emphasising local, seasonal, and environmentally friendly ingredients. This reduces tourism's carbon footprint and supports responsible consumption patterns.

Originality/Value: This study has revealed a significant research gap with practical implications. Thus, narratives on the potential of culinary tourism across eight regions in Ghana have known to have been provided practical actions towards enhancing culinary tourism in Ghana.

Keywords: Culinary. diversity. hospitality. promoting. tourism



INTRODUCTION

Food, gastronomy and culinary tourism is one of the facets of tourism that is increasingly becoming famous across the globe (Stone et al., 2018). Unlike nature tourism, which is distinctively distributed across different geographical regions, food tourism has become one of the branches of world tourism that seem evenly distributed across world cultures (Everett, 2016). The food facets of cultures across the globe offer a unique tourism experience to tourists with a unique interest in food and drink (Hall & Sharples, 2003). Researchers are increasingly developing a vast interest in food tourism, considering its potential for livelihood improvement, development and sustainability of world foods, among others. Hashim et al. (2017) defined culinary or food tourism as the facet of tourism and hospitality that captures the desire of tourists to explore world foods distinct from what is known to them. Food has been an essential facet of world cultures. Aside from being integral to basic human needs, certain food cultures have attracted tourists' interest over the past five decades. Stone and Migacz (2016) found that most leisure and wander travellers and explorers often seek to actively participate in food and beverage cultures that are peculiar to destinations and host countries. This suggests that food tourism is not just a niche market of the tourism and hospitality industry but also a significant subset which can be explored to enhance the socio-economic development of host destinations (Okumus et al., 2007).

In support of the above, Urry and Larsen (2011) stressed that culinary tourism may be a comprehensive way to understand cultural differences. They argue that culinary tourists utilise their senses of taste, smell, touch, and vision to experience a different culture's cuisine and food products, not simply as observers but as participants in a different culture. Gone are the days when travellers solely focused on sightseeing and accommodation. Today, people are increasingly drawn to exploring the culinary delights of different destinations. From street food markets to Michelin-starred restaurants, travellers intentionally immerse themselves in the local food culture, seeking unique gastronomic experiences. Stone and Migacz's (2016) study highlights the growing importance of food as a motivator for travel. As we stated earlier, it goes beyond simply satisfying hunger; it becomes an avenue for cultural exploration, social interaction, and personal enrichment. Travellers now prioritise discovering authentic flavours, traditional cooking techniques, and indigenous ingredients as they embark on culinary adventures. This shift in mindset opens up new business opportunities within the food industry (Wondirad et al., 2021). Restaurants can cater to the preferences of these discerning travellers by showcasing local specialities or delicacies or curated tasting menus that showcase regional cuisine. Food tours and cooking classes have also gained popularity as they provide immersive experiences that allow visitors to learn about local traditions while honing their culinary skills (Apak & Guerbuez, 2023).

The research conducted by Stone and Migacz (2016) emphasises this phenomenon, shedding light on how food and beverage travel has evolved from being considered a niche to becoming a mainstream activity embraced by leisure travellers worldwide. The food and drinks available to tourists significantly impact the overall sustainability of tourism destinations. It is widely recognised that the type of foods and beverages offered can have significant implications for a



destination's economic, cultural, and environmental aspects. From an economic perspective, offering local and traditional cuisine can boost the local economy by supporting local farmers, producers, and businesses. This not only creates job opportunities but also helps in preserving cultural heritage.

Despite the narratives from other regions projecting the socio-economic values of food tourism, literature on knowledge and awareness of developing food tourism markets in Ghana is still lacking (Preko et al., 2023). Tourism and hospitality in Ghana have received numerous research attention over the past five decades (Mensah et al., 2011; Addison-Akotoye et al., 2024). Nonetheless, most of the research has focused on culture and heritage tourism, nature and economic tourism, marketing, and service quality, with little interest in food tourism. Ghana is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in West Africa. Hence possessing great potential in food or culinary tourism. The Northern belt of the country has diverse food that has the potential to attract tourists with a unique interest in culinary tourism (Frempong et al., 2023). The middle and southern zones of the country also have varieties of foods and drinks that can be developed to enhance the livelihoods of communities (Koomson & Churchill, 2021). Unfortunately, no research has been conducted in this context to assess host communities' awareness and knowledge level on developing food tourism to create sustainable livelihood empowerment channels.

The promotion of food tourism largely depends on host communities since they are the primary custodians of traditional foods and drinks. Hence, it becomes imperative for the potential of food tourism in Ghana to open the dialogue for national policy development on food tourism. Additionally, promoting food tourism through awareness and knowledge expansion can enhance Ghana's unique cultural identity. By offering authentic culinary experiences, tourists can immerse themselves in the local culture and traditions. This enriches their travel experience and encourages respect for diverse cultures. Furthermore, the environmental impact of food choices cannot be ignored. Tourism destinations must prioritise the sustainable production and promotion of indigenous foods as part of the global drive to preserve cultural diversity and biodiversity. This benefits local populations and ensures economic returns by promoting indigenous cuisine and food crops to tourists.

THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

Culinary tourism has been part of the tourism and hospitality research over the past three decades. Indeed, its potential in Ghana has been highlighted within the gastronomy tourism model or theory framework. As espoused by (McKercher et al., 2008), the theory's underlying assumption is that certain facets of tourists are attracted to culturally inclined destinations. Thus, food, a major cultural component, becomes a central attraction point for tourists, hence the need to promote and develop culinary tourism. Ghana is ethnically fragmented, thereby providing enormous opportunities for culinary tourism. According to Cohen and Avieli (2004), destinations can integrate the uniqueness of local foods into their tourism and hospitality products and services to offer different experiences to culturally inclined tourists. Some tourists develop adaptation to local foods. This is particularly evident among international tourists interchanging cultures. Therefore,



the uniqueness and simplicity of culinary tourism make it one of the vibrant sectors that can propel socio-economic development. Food, in its way, serves as a reflection of culture. Hence, tourists seeking a unique sense of feeling, customs, and cultures develop a strong taste for and attachment to gastronomy tourism. Culinary or gastronomy tourism has received research attention from different perspectives. For instance, Komilova et al. (2021) assessed the socio-economic aspect of gastronomy tourism in Hungary.

According to Komilova et al. (2021), the value of food tourism in Hungary was estimated at 150 million US dollars in 2018. More than 200,000 people generated direct income from the sector. Komilova et al. (2021) observed that gastronomy tourism is increasingly becoming popular in Hungary; hence, host destinations and cities are aware of the tastes and preferences of tourists regarding food and drink in Hungary. Ndlovu and Ojong (2018) also examined the impact of food tourism in South Africa. Ndlovu and Ojong (2018) observed a similar trend in South Africa, where food tourism is hugely developed and patronised. According to Ndlovu and Ojong (2018), food tourism accounts for nearly 9% of South Africa's tourism and hospitality industry. Food tourism is a central income-earning channel for 300,000 individuals in urban South Africa. Awareness and knowledge level on food tourism in South Africa was more pronounced in urban areas than rural areas. Residents in rural host destinations in South Africa were unaware of and interested in food tourism. Hence, the availability of food tourism services in rural communities in South Africa is relatively low. In an early study, Hall and Gössling (2016) focused on food tourism and regional development. Hall and Gössling (2016) observed that food tourism was more pronounced in Asia than in all other regions. According to Hall and Gössling (2016), food tourism is more pronounced in Europe and America than in Africa. Although Africa has the highest development potential, the market seems underdeveloped. Hall and Gössling (2016) observed that most African societies consider traditional foods and drinks sacred; hence, the commodification of traditional foods and drinks is relatively low in Africa (Shilongo, 2020). Moreover, awareness and knowledge levels regarding developing food and drink to suit tourists' preferences are deficient in Africa (Hall & Gössling, 2016). According to Saaka et al. (2017), eating out is gaining popularity in Ghana. People are observed attending events and then indulging in foods prepared to highlight various cultures. There are local television shows that highlight food and travel. These are efforts of the hospitality sector to promote food and travel. This sector of the economy has much promise and, with the proper management and development, could be very significant for the nation. It possesses the ability to transform and elevate the Ghanaian economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study relied on desk review as its approach; hence, it became plausible to adopt a qualitative research design. This approach is criticised as subjective. Nonetheless, it allowed the study to develop extensive knowledge of the research issues by applying different strands of secondary data from various articles and industry reports. As already mentioned, the study had no intention of developing knowledge on the research issues through the application of primary data. Thus, content and systematic desk review became plausible by comparing the variations and similarities



in research findings, reports and articles related to the study. Essentially, applying qualitative research design enabled the study to arrive at insightful knowledge inherent in the existing literature on culinary tourism in Ghana. The study was based on desk review; hence, secondary data was used to form the findings and conclusion of the study. Various literature on the research themes were sourced from online academic repositories, authoritative websites and online reports on culinary tourism. Some of the notable online repositories that were relied upon in this study included the Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), Google Scholar, Sage, Emerald, Jstor, Francis and Taylor, etc. The internet is vast; hence, the study streamlined the research objectives by breaking them into themes and sub-themes for easy search. The research themes were searched from various academic repositories. The search results were then grouped into themes later developed into thematic tables. The search strategy helped the study perform an extensive desk review by focusing on the similarities and differences in the narratives that relate to each of the study's primary objectives. In order to streamline the search, “Boolean operators” are used in combination with terms as commands “AND”, “IN”, and “OR”, as recommended by Pazhaniraja et al. (2020). For example, culinary AND tourism OR food tourism. This strategy is used to attract related literature. Most of the search is limited to the Ghanaian context since the study broadly seeks to rely on literature from Ghana. Using multiple databases and academic repositories enables the study to develop sufficient insight into the research objectives, which leads to robust research findings. Table 1 shows the data extraction of the literature used in the study.

Table 1: Systematic Literature

Description	Information
Keywords: Tourism, food tourism, culinary tourism, gastronomy tourism	
28 papers reviewed between 2005 and 2023	
2005-2010	5 papers reviewed
2011-2015	7 papers reviewed
2016-2020	9 papers reviewed
2021-2023	7 papers reviewed

Categorisation of papers

The literature was divided into two categories based on the study's objectives. This section focuses on awareness and promotion of culinary tourism in Ghana. The second objective focused on its socio-economic impacts. Table 2 shows the categorisation of the papers.



Table 2: Categorisation of papers

Focus of paper	Number of papers	Percentage (%)
Promotion and awareness of culinary tourism in Ghana.	13	56.52
Socio-economic impacts of culinary tourism in Ghana.	10	43.48
Total	23	100

Data Analysis

The gathered data was then subjected to content analysis, a common technique in qualitative research. This involves carefully reading the documents to identify patterns, themes, and critical concepts. As the content was reviewed, specific themes or categories relevant to the study were identified. As the content was reviewed, specific themes or categories relevant to the study were identified. The researcher manually or with the help of qualitative analysis software coded text sections corresponding to these themes. This process allowed for grouping similar ideas and comparing different documents based on their treatment of the topics.

Quality Assurance

The study adopted the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) framework to perform the quality assurance check for the literature used in the study (Long et al., 2020). The CASP created a checklist with grading scores for each piece of literature. The scoring was based on context (country of origin), journal of publication (impact factor of the journal), year of publication, the title of the paper, method(s) of paper and key findings of the paper. Studies that scored 8 to 10 points per the CASP checklist were ranked as high in quality evaluation. Literatures that scored between 5 and 7 were ranked as medium, while those between 4 and 0 were ranked as low.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of the findings.

Types of Culinary Tourism in Ghana

This section presents the results of the types of culinary tourism in Ghana.

Food Safaris: The Ghana Food Movement offers "food safaris" that deeply dive into Ghanaian food culture and cuisine (Ghana Food Movement, 2024). These safaris allow tourists to explore different culinary destinations, taste local dishes, and learn about the history and traditions behind them.

Cooking Classes: Many cooking schools and culinary centres in Ghana offer classes where tourists can learn to cook traditional Ghanaian dishes (Easy Track Ghana, 2024; TripAdvisor,



2024, Viator, 2024). These classes provide hands-on experience, teaching tourists how to prepare popular dishes like jollof rice, waakye, and banku.

Market Visits: Culinary tourists can visit local markets in Ghana to experience the vibrant atmosphere and discover a wide variety of fresh produce, spices, and ingredients (Kim et al., 2020). This provides an opportunity to interact with local vendors, learn about traditional cooking techniques, and observe how ingredients are sourced for Ghanaian cuisine.

Restaurant and Street Food Tours: Culinary tours often include visits to traditional restaurants and street food vendors, allowing tourists to sample a wide range of local dishes (Ghana Food Movement, 2024). These tours offer a chance to taste authentic Ghanaian flavours, explore different regional cuisines, and understand the diversity of Ghanaian food culture.

Food Festivals: Ghana hosts various food festivals yearly, celebrating the country's culinary heritage. These festivals showcase local dishes, traditional food preparation methods, and cultural performances (Nani, 2023; Okech & Timothy, 2023). Food festival attendees can indulge in a wide array of Ghanaian delicacies and experience the vibrant atmosphere of these events.

Culinary tourism in Ghana (Table 3) offers a range of experiences for food enthusiasts, from hands-on cooking classes to immersive market visits and food festivals. These activities provide an opportunity to taste Ghana's delicious flavours and learn about the country's rich culinary traditions and cultural heritage.

Table 3: Types of Culinary in Ghana

Region	Food	Drinks
Ashanti	Yam Ampesi, Cocoyam Ampesi, Plantain Ampesi, Yam/cocoyam/plantain Oto, fufu with peanut soup, Palmtree soup, abunubunu, light soup, snail and bush meat.	Akpeteshie and Palm Wine
Brong Ahafo	Yam Ampesi, Cocoyam Ampesi, Plantain Ampesi, Yam/cocoyam/plantain Oto, fufu with peanut soup, Palmtree soup, abunubunu, light soup, snail and bush meat.	Akpeteshie and Palm Wine
Central	Fante dorkunu (kenkey) with gravy and fried fish, fufu with Palmtree soup, tatale, Ampesi (yam, cocoyam or plantain).	Corn drink locally called Ahe/Ahay, cocoa drink, palm wine coconut juice



Eastern	Plantains, Yams, Cassava, Cocoyam, Garden Eggs, Peanuts, Snails, Kontomire, Plantain/ Yam Oto, Koko with Koose (fried beans cakes)	Akpeteshie and Palm Wine
Greater Accra	Kenkey and pepper with fried fish, Banku with peanut soup and okro soup, fried plantain with beans stew (red-red), Omo Tuo (rice ball), fried yam with turkey tail locally called Chofi.	Palm Wine, Corn Drink (Asana)
Northern	Tuo Zaafi, rice ball with groundnut soup, green leaf soup, beans cake (koose), Tubaani, koko or millet porridge.	Pito (locally brewed beer from millet), Toasted millet locally called Zom Koom, Fula, Asana
Western	Akyeke and avocado, Plantains, Yams, Cassava, Cocoyam, Garden Eggs, Peanuts, Snails, Kontomire, Plantain/ Yam Oto	Akpeteshie, Palm Wine, coconut juice
Volta	Abolo with shrimps, Akple with okro soup, Akple with pepper and one-man thousand, Banku with pepper/okro soup, gari and beans with fried plantain	Akpeteshie and Palm Wine

Desk Review (2024)

Discussion

Ghana's indigenous culinary tourism industry has grown significantly, attracting domestic and international tourists eager to experience the country's rich food culture (Amoako et al., 2021). This increase in culinary tourism has positively impacted the local economy, creating job opportunities for local farmers, producers, and restaurant owners. Furthermore, indigenous culinary tourism has the potential to preserve traditional food knowledge and practices, promoting cultural heritage and pride among local communities. Additionally, culinary tourism contributes to sustainable agriculture and promotes the use of locally sourced ingredients, reducing carbon emissions associated with long-distance transportation of food. Tourists' food preferences could serve as valuable input for farmers and food retailers in destinations, districts, nations, and regions where tourism plays a significant role in national development. Understanding what types of food tourists prefer can help farmers and food retailers tailor their offerings to meet the demands of visitors. In the case of Ghana, a country known for its vibrant culture and diverse cuisine, catering to tourists' food preferences can positively impact the local economy. By identifying popular dishes or ingredients among tourists, farmers can focus on cultivating those crops or raising livestock in high demand. This ensures a steady income for farmers and promotes sustainable agriculture practices. Similarly, food retailers can stock their shelves with products that align with tourists' preferences. This could include featuring local delicacies and traditional dishes popular



among visitors. By doing so, they create an immersive culinary experience for tourists while supporting local producers and suppliers.

Furthermore, understanding tourists' food preferences can help policymakers and tourism boards develop strategies to promote gastronomic tourism. By highlighting Ghana's unique flavours and culinary traditions, they can attract more visitors interested in exploring the country's rich food culture. Recognising tourists' food preferences as a valuable input for farmers and food retailers in destinations like Ghana is crucial for sustainable economic growth. By catering to these preferences, stakeholders can create opportunities for local businesses while providing an authentic culinary experience for tourists. Through collaboration between various stakeholders – from farmers to restaurant owners – Ghana can position itself as a culinary destination that delights domestic and international tourists. Culinary tourism in Ghana is growing in popularity and recognition as the country offers a rich and diverse culinary experience (Kyei-Baffuor, 2023; Baah et al., 2020). With its welcoming cultural heritage, beautiful nature, and incredible food diversity, Ghana is steadily gaining recognition as a promising culinary destination (Amuquandoh & Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Kyei-Baffuor, 2023; Baah et al., 2020).

The local cuisine in Ghana includes delicious dishes such as waakye (rice and beans dish served with shito, a hot pepper sauce), jollof rice, banku (fermented cornmeal), and fufu (pounded yam or cassava with plantain served with soup) (Amuquandoh, & Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Travel Food Atlas, 2022). Tourists visiting Ghana can immerse themselves in the local food scene through various culinary tours and activities. TripAdvisor offers a list of Ghana's best food and drink tours, where tourists can explore and taste the local cuisine. These tours often include visits to local markets, street food vendors, and traditional restaurants, providing an authentic Ghanaian culinary experience. Culinary tourism plays a vital role in Ghana's national development. It promotes interest in local dishes and helps boost the local economy by creating opportunities for local farmers, food producers, and hospitality businesses (Amuquandoh, & Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Vuksanović et al., 2024). A study conducted in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana examined the relevance of food tourism in national development and identified factors influencing participation in food tourism (Saaka et al., 2017). The study highlights the potential of culinary tourism in Ghana to showcase and preserve local food traditions while attracting visitors from around the world (Saaka et al., 2017). To summarise, culinary tourism in Ghana is on the rise, offering tourists a diverse and flavorful culinary experience. From traditional dishes to street food and local markets, Ghana provides a rich food culture for culinary enthusiasts (Amuquandoh, & Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Kyei-Baffuor, 2023; Baah et al., 2020).

Food Safety Concerns

Food safety is an essential consideration for culinary tourism in Ghana. The quality and safety of the food served to tourists play a significant role in their overall experience and satisfaction. Fortunately, Ghana has tried to address food safety concerns in the culinary tourism sector. Ghana's National Food Safety Policy (NFSP) is a comprehensive framework to ensure food safety and



quality (Trip Advisor, 2024). The NFSP outlines the vision, mission, objectives, strategies, and actions for food safety in Ghana, guiding various stakeholders (Trip Advisor, 2024). The Ministry of Health signed and launched the NFSP in July 2022, highlighting the commitment to prioritise food safety in the country (Trip Advisor, 2024). Culinary tourism in Ghana has been gaining attention, with increasing interest from international travellers (Reinstein, 2023). The culinary tours, often called "food safaris," allow tourists to explore and experience Ghana's local cuisine and culture (Baah et al., 2020, p. 2311). However, the heightened interest in culinary tourism also necessitates focusing on food safety to ensure that the food offered during these tours meets the necessary standards (Cifci et al., 2021). To support food safety in culinary tourism, it is crucial for stakeholders involved in the industry, such as Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) and the Traditional Caterers Association of Ghana (TCAG), to enforce and educate vendors on food safety and hygiene practices (Adongo et al., 2015).

Periodic training and supervision can help maintain food safety standards and reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses in the culinary tourism sector (Adongo et al., 2015). By implementing and adhering to the National Food Safety Policy, conducting regular inspections, providing training to vendors, and enforcing food safety regulations, Ghana can ensure that its culinary tourism sector maintains high standards of food safety (Trip Advisor, 2024; Adongo et al., 2015). This, in turn, will help enhance tourists' overall experience and promote Ghana as a safe and desirable culinary tourism destination.

Social-cultural Impacts of Indigenous Tourism

Ghana's indigenous cuisine represents an untapped opportunity for social-cultural tourism that highlights the country's ethnic and regional diversity while also educating visitors about Ghanaian agriculture, culture and history through the lens of food. Thoughtfully developed food tourism initiatives could help preserve and promote Ghana's traditional culinary heritage while generating economic benefits from visitor spending (Quan-Baffour, 2023). Ghana's indigenous cuisine offers a unique opportunity for culinary tourism. Ghanaian food is flavourful, diverse and representative of the country's rich cultural heritage. Ghanaian cuisine varies across regions and ethnic groups, incorporating influences from its West African neighbours and European colonisers.

Ghanaian food tourism could highlight food preparation and consumption's social and cultural aspects. Traditional Ghanaian dishes are often communal, prepared and shared within families and communities. Meals are seen as opportunities for social gathering and connection. Tourists interested in the authentic Ghanaian experience could participate in cooking classes and food festivals showcasing indigenous ingredients and preparation techniques. They could visit local markets to learn about staple crops and fresh produce integral to Ghanaian cuisine. Many indigenous Ghanaian dishes use locally sourced ingredients like yams, cassava, plantains,



cocoyam and okra. Traditional soups and stews incorporate protein sources like fish, mutton and chicken. Indigenous spices like ginger, garlic and chilli peppers are used liberally to create distinctive flavours. Tourism initiatives could educate visitors on traditional agricultural practices and the role of certain foods in Ghanaian culture and ceremonies. Ghana's ethnic diversity is reflected in regional culinary variations, with the Fante, Ga, Ewe and other groups having distinct culinary traditions. Tourists interested in an immersive cultural experience could visit homes and participate in meals with local families to sample regional specialities and learn about their cultural significance. Food tours led by local chefs and food historians could provide a deeper context for indigenous Ghanaian cuisine, including its evolution and relationship to its history.

Economic impacts

Indigenous culinary tourism, featuring dishes and ingredients from Ghana's local communities, can potentially provide significant economic benefits for the country. Tourism centred on indigenous Ghanaian cuisine could help boost hospitality industry revenues while empowering local small businesses and farmers (Abdullah et al., 2023). Ghana's diverse traditional foods, utilising locally grown ingredients, offer tourists a unique cultural experience highlighting the country's history and customs. With proper promotion, indigenous culinary tourism could attract more visitors interested in authentic food experiences beyond standard hotel buffets. This could translate into increased restaurant spending, cooking classes, and food tours showcasing indigenous Ghanaian dishes. Many ingredients for traditional Ghanaian cuisine come from smallholder farmers, particularly women (Dzanku et al., 2021). By featuring these foods in culinary tourism, there is an opportunity to create stronger market linkages that benefit small-scale producers. Tourism operators could establish procurement systems that purchase ingredients directly from farmers, guaranteeing them a fair price and a stable market for their crops. This would provide smallholder farmers with a reliable source of additional income. Culinary tourism centred on indigenous Ghanaian dishes could also support the growth of small businesses run by chefs, caterers and tour operators specialising in indigenous cuisine. These enterprises are locally owned and operated, so tourism revenues would likely remain within communities. As the sector expands, more jobs could be created for cooks, tour guides, and others working in culinary tourism. Overall, by showcasing Ghana's rich indigenous cuisine, culinary tourism can bring in new revenues, strengthen value chains that benefit smallholder farmers and businesses, and generate employment - providing significant economic benefits that extend beyond the hospitality industry into local communities across Ghana. With proper planning and promotion, Ghana's native culinary heritage could become a significant draw for culturally interested tourists seeking an authentic Ghanaian experience.

Environmental Impacts

The promotion of indigenous culinary tourism in Ghana has the potential to provide economic benefits through job creation and revenue generation for rural communities. However, it is vital to



consider the potential environmental impacts and ways to mitigate them. One impact is the increased demand for agricultural produce used in traditional Ghanaian dishes. This could lead to overexploitation of natural resources if not managed sustainably. Methods such as agroforestry, crop rotation, and organic farming should be encouraged to preserve soil fertility and biodiversity (Fahad et al., 2022). Supply chains must also be improved to reduce food waste. Another concern is the generation of additional waste from tourism facilities and activities. Proper waste management systems need to be in place to collect and dispose of waste in an environmentally friendly manner. Options like composting organic waste and recycling plastic and glass containers should be utilised. Energy and water conservation practices within restaurants and hotels can help minimise environmental footprint.

Promoting culinary tourism also provides an opportunity to educate visitors about Ghana's culture and environment. Tourists can be made aware of Indigenous farming and fishing practices with low ecological impact. Their purchasing choices can support local producers who prioritise sustainability. In this regard, indigenous culinary tourism can boost Ghana's economy if developed responsibly with consideration for environmental sustainability. Adopting sustainable agricultural practices, improving waste management infrastructure, educating tourists, and involving local communities are necessary to mitigate potential negative impacts and maximise benefits for Ghana. With a holistic approach that balances economic, social and environmental goals, culinary tourism can contribute to Ghana's long-term prosperity.

CONCLUSION

Culinary tourism has the potential to significantly contribute to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings and overall economic and social development. By promoting local cuisine and its unique culinary richness, Ghana can attract more tourists and create job opportunities in various related sectors, making culinary tourism a significant revenue earner for the region. While residents and host communities across major tourism hubs in Ghana are more aware of culinary tourism, the sector remains underdeveloped. The study demonstrated that tourists are interested in locally prepared foods and drinks and the preparatory methods. This implies that the sector has an existing market that can start as a niche and progressively expand. As the industry continues to grow, it will play a significant role in showcasing the culture and diversity of the area, attracting more visitors and driving economic growth. From a practical point of view, the Ghana Tourism Authority must show greater interest in developing the sector by organising regional and national food festivals annually. This effort must be publicised in the international market to attract international tourists interested in exploring Ghana's culinary diversity. Indeed, this study has revealed a significant research gap with practical implications. Thus, narratives on the awareness level of culinary tourism across eight regions in Ghana have now been provided to guide practical actions towards enhancing culinary tourism in Ghana.



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