

# Food tourism in a time of globalisation of cultures

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**Abstract.** The current phenomenon of globalisation has influenced many aspects of human life, including food production and consumption. With an emerging homogenisation of cuisine methods and tastes among countries, the search for authentic food is becoming a triggering factor in international tourism. The aim of this research is to analyse how globalisation has contributed to food tourism development, by analysing also the profile of gastronomic tourists and the role played by local food in destination attractiveness. The data collection was conducted through a survey that was administered to the clients of five different restaurants. The findings underline the important contribution of globalisation to gastronomic tourism development, and the growing nature of this phenomenon. The results identify local food, and its authenticity, as an important tourist attraction, able to modify the visitor's image of a destination. Through a cluster analysis it was also possible to identify the "foodies" market segment in the North East of Italy. The research helps to further reinforce the existing theoretical framework, by also providing a general overview of the correlation between globalisation, food tourism, and authenticity.

**Key words.** Globalisation, food tourism, authenticity, consumer behaviour.

**1. Introduction.** Today's society is growing very rapidly, and most Western and Eastern metropolitan areas are defined as melting pots where

people belonging to different cultures, races and religions live in and share common spaces, with shops, industries, restaurants and other types

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of commercial activity run by non-native individuals. Most common business activities run by immigrants are restaurants, and this can be easily detected in the majority of urban areas. In fact, there are many, for example, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican and Italian restaurants contributing towards the gastronomic offer of the world's cities. The growth and success of such businesses is also fostered by the importance that gastronomy has rapidly gained in the last decades. Indeed, globalisation has increased people's awareness of other cultures and has prompted their desire to explore the world in search of authentic experiences that could reveal untouched cultural traits of the destinations visited. Gastronomy counts as both a cultural and a traditional trait, and is one of the most prominent cultural activities in tourism. According to data from the Observatory on Wine Tourism and Census (2013), food and wine tourism in Italy has shown a growth rate of + 12% per year, resisting the economic crisis and becoming increasingly international. Furthermore, 23% of European tour operators and 43% of those in the US have food and wine tourism destinations in their catalogues (ISNART 2010).

Despite recognising the growth of globalisation and the increasing interest among consumers in gastronomic activities and authenticity, little research has linked the three concepts to evaluate the influence that they exert on tourism. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to investigate how globalisation influences and contributes to the development of

gastronomic tourism as a way to experience authenticity; it also aims to understand if local traditional food is a driver of international tourism and an aspect of destination attraction.

**2. Food globalisation.** The term globalisation is widely used, however, it remains 'one of today's most controversial issues' (Hjalager 2007). Globalisation has been studied in different disciplines and from different perspectives. In general, this concept can be defined as an integration of economies, societies, and civilisations (Hjalager 2007; Ukpere, Slabbert 2009; Wihelmina, Joost, Georgeand, Guido 2010). It can also, as identified by Scholte (2008), be seen as a form of internationalisation (underlying the importance of transactions and interdependence between countries), liberalisation (reducing the barriers and restrictions to the movement of resources between countries), universalisation (the process of homogenisation), and westernisation (the imposition of western culture on all other cultures). Despite the concept of globalisation having been introduced only recently, it is an old phenomenon that has changed over the years due to its mutable nature. In 2006 Friedman, following his view of a flat world, identified three main eras through which globalisation has evolved. The first era, called 'Globalisation 1.0', ran from 1492 till 1800, and saw country globalisation as its prime mover. The second era, given the name "Globalisation 2.0", ran from 1800 till 2000, and was considered the big multinational companies'

period. Indeed, its dynamic force was company globalisation. The current era of globalisation is called “Globalisation 3.0”, and nowadays the main dynamic force concerns the empowerment of individuals’ collaboration and competition from all parts of the world (Friedeman 2006, 9-11; Wilhelmina et al. 2010).

The current phenomenon of globalisation has influenced many aspects of human life, including food production and consumption (Lang 1999; Wilhelmina et al. 2010; Mak et al. 2012). It is the development of new ways of preserving food that has triggered the globalisation of food (Kwo 2017). This also includes the adoption of standardised packaging and preservation techniques. Additionally, the development of new technologies that allow more efficient and effective communication, information and transport speed have further supported the globalised production and consumption of food (Lang 1999; Reiser 2003; Mak et al. 2012). Within the globalised context, food is seen as a commodity like any other market item (O’Kane 2016) and its consumption is converging in international preferences towards a more homogeneous demand (Traill 1997). As a consequence, cooking methods and tastes are also facing a process of homogenisation between countries. Ritzer (1995) defined this phenomenon as McDonaldisation (cited in Mak et al. 2012; Richards 2002; Hjalager 2002; Hall, Mitchell 2002). Its name clearly expresses the concept behind it: that globalisation is primarily a reflection of the McDonalds business philoso-

phy. In other words, having the same product, service, taste, atmosphere, and experience across the globe. Similarly, Ritzer, Hughes (1995) define globalisation as a “Coca-Colarisation” process that destroys the territorial integrity of a culture by homogenising it. The technical innovation that has contributed to food globalisation and, thus, to the McDonaldisation of society is the supermarket. Thanks to this type of business, new food can be found on the market very easily and at very cheap prices, making it accessible to all customers. Furthermore, according to Richards (2002), tourism contributes to the global expansion of international food offerings by increasing the demand for exotic foods that visitors may have encountered during their trips. The wide variety of foods to which customers are exposed, help create a cultural mixing and a consequent loss of culinary traditions. Globalisation can further significantly affect a place’s local gastronomic identity and image (Fox 2007; Harrington 2005; Mark et al. 2012) by also causing a commoditisation of food culture (Cohen 1988). This may be seen as a threat to those destinations that utilise their local cuisine and gastronomic products as a form of tourist attraction or as a major means of creating a differentiated image versus competitors.

Globalisation is usually seen as a negative aspect of today’s society, but in reality, it also has positive effects on food consumption. In fact, it is generally recognised that globalisation increases the diversity and availability of food and culinary supplies (Kennedy et al. 2004, cited in Mak et

al. 2012). Furthermore, according to Presenza et al. (2017), the possibility to easily acquire a considerable number of exotic ingredients and learn the cuisines of other countries, helps simulate culinary competition among chefs. This competition leads to the innovation of cooking techniques and the creation of new dishes. Ample research (e.g. Brich, McPhee, Shoba, Pirok, Steinberg 1987; Pliner 1982) has underscored the fact that exposure to certain foods tends to increase preference and demand, but also that repeated exposure can increase familiarity with such foods. Mark et al. (2012) also underlined this concept and further discussed how increasing exposure potentially reduces the perceived risk associated with different cultural culinary habits. The authors explained the concept by presenting a study that demonstrated how British tourists who visit sushi bars in their home country on a regular basis, have an increased exposure to and familiarity with the different options of Japanese sushi and sashimi, and are more likely to consume sashimi when travelling to Japan.

The above case offers a positive example of food globalisation. However, concurrent to this phenomenon, we have seen the emergence of a new trend in recent decades when gastronomy is linked to tourism: an increasing interest among many consumers in local food (Miroso, Lawson 2012; Björk, Kauppinen-Räsänen 2016). There is a celebration of the local over the global (Lang 1999) and researchers are starting to talk about a new phenomenon called “glocalisa-

tion”. Specifically, this means being local but acting globally. Evidence of this phenomenon is also to be found in a study conducted in Ghana by Wilhelmina et al. in 2010. Their findings revealed that “glocal food” in Ghana is emerging strongly, and that its growth represents, from many different perspectives, a major opportunity for the country, creating employment (2010, Handerson 2009) for locals in both the tourism and agricultural sectors. Despite the general meaning given by many scholars to “glocalisation”, according to Kwon (2017) it does not only represent the celebration of local food at a global level. The author refers to it as the process through which ethnic food is adapted to better suit the tastes and preferences of international customers, turning the discussion towards issues of authenticity.

### **3. Food tourism and authenticity.**

Food is seen as one of the most important and essential components of the tourist experience, and food consumption has been identified as a central driver of memorable experiences (e.g. Lashley, Morrison, Randall 2003, cited in Robinson, Getz 2016; Chi, Chua, Othman, Ab Karim 2013; Ottenbacher, Harrington 2013; Folgado-Fernández, Hernández-Mogollón, Duarte 2017; Handerson 2009). It is thus an important factor in destination marketing development (Quan, Wang 2004), exerting a positive influence on how tourists experience a destination (Wolf 2006, cited in Robinson, Getz 2016; Kivela, Crotts 2006; Ottenbacher, Harrington 2013).

Indeed, gastronomic tourism offers an important tool to destinations, because if correctly managed, gastronomy could constitute the main reason for travel to that destination (Qan, Wang 2004; Ottenbacher, Harrington 2013; Chi et al. 2013; López-Guzmán, Sánchez-Cañizares 2012).

Gastronomy constitutes a part of the cultural, social, environmental, sustainable and economic history of a destination and, as a consequence, also constitutes a medium for expressing local heritage. As a matter of fact, destinations are increasingly using food as both a means to differentiate themselves and as a sustainable competitive advantage. Indeed, tourist food choices and preferences are recognised as important forces driving the local sourcing and production of food. Tourist demands for food have an immediate effect on the offerings of tourism hospitality businesses, so affecting the food imported for tourists, the local agriculture, and the origin of foods used in order to attract tourist attention (Telfer, Wall 2000; Mak et al. 2012; Torres 2002, 2003).

Another rather important yet under-appreciated factor of gastronomy, is that through food consumption, a transfer of knowledge and information about people, culture, traditions and place identity takes place (Ignatov, Smith 2006; Jiménez-Beltrán et al. 2016). Nowadays, most customers are in a continuous search for the authentic, and the same concept can be applied to gastronomy tourists. In fact, authenticity is considered one of the factors that contributes to the building of a destination's image (Özdemir,

Seyitoğlu 2017). The authenticity concept is strictly related to the cultural one. As a consequence, the more a local food is linked to the culture of a place, the more it is considered authentic. For this reason, gastronomic tourism is subject to a higher or lower degree of development according to the level of connection between food and culture (Riley 2005; Jiménez-Beltrán et al. 2016). Local and regional foods represent an immensely important and effective tool for destinations aiming to improve their competitive position. The promotion of a destination through its own gastronomy, therefore, involves clearly presenting its culinary resources linked to an easily recognisable cuisine that is also able to satisfy travellers' tastes.

Authenticity has always been considered an important aspect of tourism consumption, a reason for visiting the destination. It holds similar importance in the purchase of gastronomic products. In fact, as reported by Richards (2002), over 75% of tourists who purchase gastronomic products confirmed that authenticity was an "important" or "very important" driver of their purchasing decision. In a society with a homogenised culinary culture and a high level of food illiteracy, authenticity has become an even more common request of tourists, and consequently necessary for destinations if they are to stay competitive. With regard to this need, gastronomic tourism represents an important opportunity, because through local food, tourists are able to explore the local heritage and feel more involved in the local culture. A study conducted at a

Zimbabwean destination, underscores the fact that using authentic local ingredients and cooking processes in their cultural context, helps create a peak experience for tourists (Mkono et al. 2013; Özdemir, Seyitoğlu 2017). There are many ways to experience local food, and one of them is through food events (Robinson, Clifford 2012). Tourist “satisfaction with food consumption depends largely on their perception of experiencing an acceptable level of authenticity” (Özdemir, Seyitoğlu 2017). Satisfaction in the tourist experience is a crucial element for destinations, as it is one of the main indicators of loyalty (Chi, Qu 2008). In order to find a method that manages to enhance the perceived authenticity of dishes, and consequently tourist satisfaction, a study was conducted on a range of food festivals that highlighted five strategies: 1) associating dishes with a specific place in order to help enhance the authenticity; 2) the use of words also commonly used in local dialect to describe the dish, so attributing a sense of localness to the product; 3) associating dishes with historical local personalities, either real or fictional; 4) using “naturalised” local ingredients; 5) linking foods to miscellaneous historical or functional events (Hughes 1995; Robinson, Clifford 2012). Food events also constitute ways for the local community to revitalise and empower their traditions through food and drink. From this perspective, however, the presence of tourists can represent a threat to this aim. In fact, there are many cases where local dishes are adapted to tourists’ tastes, in order to

attract them and keep them loyal to the destination. An example is “Paella”, a Spanish traditional dish from the region of Valencia, which become iconic around the world and is used in Spain’s advertising campaigns. Due to its success, it is now possible to try this dish in every Spanish region, but the traditional integrity of “paella” was compromised. In fact, different versions were created in order to suit tourists’ tastes and based on chefs’ interpretations (Ravenscroft, van Westerning 2002). Another typical modification of a local food is the reduction in the number of spices traditionally used in Eastern cuisine (Cohen, Avieli 2004) in order to meet Western tastes. Furthermore, to satisfy the same objective of meeting tourist demand, not only are dishes modified but so too are their names. In high-end restaurants, particularly, the “original” name is generally substituted with a more sophisticated and elegant one (Cohen, Avieli 2004).

Taste is used by tourists as a tool for identifying authenticity but, in reality, they are unable to recognise it, as their tastes differ from local ones (Cohen, Avieli 2004). In such cases, tourists are experiencing a form of “customised authenticity” (Wang 2007) and, according to the post-modern approach, consumers cannot experience the “authenticity of the original” because globalisation and cultural evolution prevent it (Wang, 1999). Considering the “taste adaptation” strategy adopted by many restaurants and destinations, it should be noted that while this destroys the “effective” authenticity of the prod-



uct, it does not affect the perception that tourists have of it. Consequently, by following the concept of existential authenticity, it could be confirmed that even if a dish is adapted to tourists' tastes the experience may still be considered authentic by tourists. The concept of culture "manipulation" introduces another concept developed by Goffman in 1973 and also argued by MacCannell in 1973 and 1976; this is the issue of 'staged authenticity' (cited in Lau 2010; Mura 2015; Wang 1999; Cohen 1988; Pearce, Moscardo 1986). Goffman introduces the concept of front and back stage. In the author's imaginary, every culture has a front and a back stage: the front stage is what is shown to others (especially tourists), while the backstage is "real" life, i.e. how people really behave in daily life. By analysing this concept, MacCannell has confirmed that the front stage is inauthentic, as locals perform and show what tourists expect to see; as a consequence, authenticity may only be experienced back stage. Following this concept, tourists may never have the possibility to experience true authenticity, not just because they may only experience the front stage, but also because their presence influences the behaviour of locals.

**4. Foodies.** Those tourists for which gastronomy constitutes the peak experience have been classified as "food enthusiasts" (Robinson & Getz, 2016) or "foodies" (Getz, Robinson 2014). These names are used to express and represent a passion for food. In other words, "foodies" are those tourists

passionate about food and for whom it constitutes the main reason for travelling. This segment is generally represented by young, mostly female, more affluent, and better educated travellers. They are motivated by unique experiences, including a destination's environmental and cultural elements, and participate in a range of food-related experiences that include cooking classes, dining out, visiting farmers' markets, gourmet food shopping, and attending food festivals (Robinson, Getz 2016).

Similar characteristics were also identified by López-Guzmán, and Sánchez-Cañizares (2012), and Folgado-Fernández et al. (2017), but in these two cases an additional element emerged. Researchers also highlighted that the age range of food tourists lies between around 30 and 50 years old. Furthermore, it was generally found that many 'foodies' are currently, or were in the past, involved in the tourism sector, specifically in the hospitality industry (Getz et al. 2015). Robinson and Getz (2016) also identified four dimensions that help differentiate between food enthusiasts and non-food enthusiasts. These four dimensions are: food-related identity, food quality, social bonding, and food consciousness. Firstly, food lovers are continuously searching for experiences that may confirm their identity, by putting food at the centre of their travel experience and allowing them to learn more. Secondly, for this type of tourist, food quality relates to authenticity, health and safety, and being particularly aware of a food's provenience and preparation tech-

niques. Thirdly, for this type of traveler dining is a pleasure, and they aim to share their experiences with others that have the same interest. And finally, this type of tourist is particularly concerned about sustainability, seeking to preserve resources, respect traditions and help the regional economy. All four of these dimensions, if well integrated, help to define a typical “foodie” profile. “Food enthusiasts” are also classified by marketing approach and can be divided into three main categories: dynamic foodies, active foodies, and passive foodies. The first category comprises those who are more involved in food. They are very well-informed about all food-related opportunities at their destination, because for them the gastronomic experience is essential. Active foodies are less informed and their gastronomic experience is usually limited to contacts with the local cuisine in a local context. The last category comprises people who love food, but who do not travel for gastronomic purposes (Getz et al. 2015). Foodies are searching for unforgettable and unique gastronomic experiences, and this leads them to visit farms, markets, gourmet food shops, to undertake wine and food tourism activities, and attend food festivals.

**5. Methodology.** The specific objectives of this research are 1) to analyse how globalisation influences and contributes to the development of gastronomic tourism as a way to experience authenticity; 2) to determine if traditional food is a driver of international tourism and a destination attraction;

3) to identify the “foodies” market segment in the surveyed sample of North-eastern Italian consumers, and to compare its characteristics with those identified in the literature (e.g. Robinson, Getz 2016).

To do so, data were collected in South Tyrol, in North-East Italy (in the town of Bolzano-Bozen and in the village Egna-Neumarkt). A paper questionnaire was distributed to the clients of five different restaurants. Due to the region’s bilingualism, the questionnaire was offered in both Italian and German. To obtain a sample that would most accurately reflect the local population, the restaurants used for data collection offered different types of cuisine, representing different tastes and habits. Two restaurants offered a typical South Tyrolean cuisine, one offered a typical southern Italian cuisine, while the remaining two restaurants were ethnic in nature (one Japanese, the other Mexican).

The paper questionnaire was handed to clients at the end of the meal. Each client received their own copy and were asked to respond individually. The sample was non-probabilistic as participants were chosen randomly from among the clients that had visited the restaurants during the data collection period. About 50 questionnaires were collected at each restaurant during the month of April 2018, providing a total of 261 valid questionnaires.

The questionnaire was divided into four main sections for a total of twenty-six questions, and where possible a 5-point Likert Scale was employed.



**6. Results.** The sample was composed of 54.2% males and 45.8% females, with an average age of 38 years. Half of the respondents (49.2%) were unmarried and were generally well-educated, with 36.8% of them holding a high school diploma, 23.3% a bachelor degree, and 12% a master's degree or further specialisation. In terms of employment status, the sample comprised primarily employees (37.9%), workers (18.8%), and self-employed individuals (18.4%), while the remainder (25%) was split between occasional or contract workers, retirees, housewives, students, the unemployed, and entrepreneurs. About half of the sample (47.6%) claimed to work or have worked in one or more tourism-, hospitality-, restaurant-, or event-related activity. Interestingly, 90.8% of respondents consider themselves as gastronomy lovers. Furthermore, the majority of respondents are regular customers: 56.4% of the sample had visited the restaurant five or more times, 10.1% had visited the restaurant four times, 9.3% three times, 7.8% twice, and 16.3% were dining at the surveyed restaurant for the first time.

*6.1. Restaurant preferences and habits.* Gastronomy tourists are generally highly involved in culinary-related activities and are particularly concerned about food quality, provenience, tradition and other associated factors. For this reason, customers were asked to indicate how frequently they usually visited generic and/or ethnic restaurants, for different daily occasions. Customers were also asked to express the degree of importance they per-

sonally assign to different factors in choosing a restaurant. In general, on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always) for both generic and ethnic restaurants, respondents dined at the restaurant for leisure dinners (3.53 generic; 2.93 ethnic) followed by leisure lunches (2.39 generic; 1.98 ethnic) and lunch breaks (2.20 generic; 1.81 ethnic).

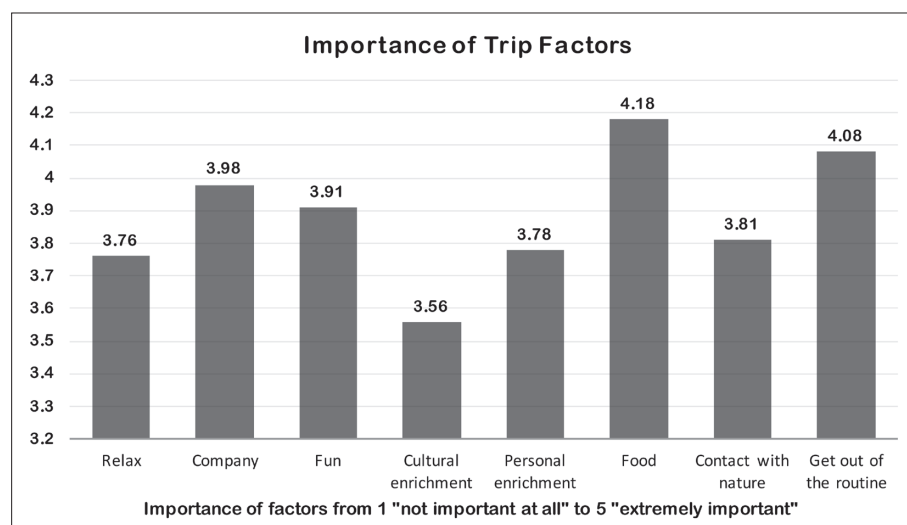
On a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important), the factors that motivated customers the most to dine at a restaurant were: food quality (4.45), the possibility to spend time with friends and partners (4.10), and the atmosphere (3.96). The least important factor was that customers usually did not cook (2.43). Table 1 shows the mean for each factor included in the questionnaire.

*6.2. Trip types and characteristics.* The interviewed sample travelled mainly domestically (3.3, where 5 = always and 1 = never) and organised their travels independently (3.15). The second most frequent destination was Europe (2.93), followed by North America and/or Australia (1.77), South America and/or Asia (1.62), and Africa (1.44). At the same time, adventure trips and trips organised by tour operators or travel agencies were not that frequent. Graph 1 shows how important several factors were for customers' trips. The most important factor was represented by food with a mean of 4.18, a desire to get out of one's routine (4.08), company (3.98), fun (3.91), the possibility to get in touch with nature (3.81), personal enrichment (3.78), relaxation (3.76), and finally cultural enrichment (3.56).

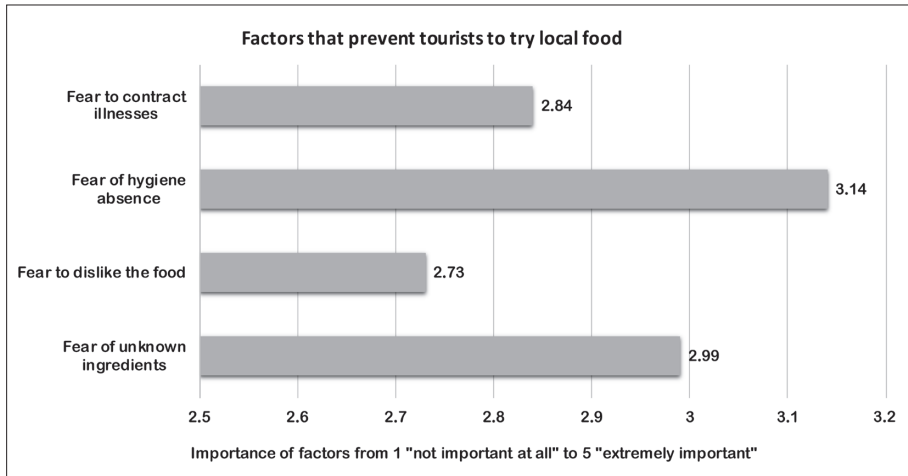
Table 1. Important factors in choosing a restaurant.

	<i>Mean</i>
Food quality	4.45
Tradition	3.61
Local ingredients	3.72
Curiosity	3.57
Friends and Partner	4.10
Party	3.77
New experiences	3.57
Usually I do not cook	2.43
Restaurant appearance	3.58
Dishes appearance	3.77
Ample menu offered	3.70
Price	3.25
Service speed	3.54
Atmosphere	3.96
Reviews	2.84
Other's Suggestions	3.29

Note: [1 = not at all important; 5 = extremely important].



Graph 1. Trip important factors.



Graph 2. Preventive factors.

**6.3. Gastronomy tourism.** Gastronomy tourists are defined as travellers visiting a destination for gastronomic purposes. For this reason, clients were asked to indicate (on a Likert scale from 1 = never to 5 = always) the frequency with which they usually go to different types of restaurants while travelling. Restaurants where tourists go most often, are those where only locals go (3.33), followed by restaurants where both locals and tourists go (2.99), globally well-known ethnic restaurants (2.47), big restaurant chains with an international gastronomic offer (2.30), and restaurants with a typical culinary offer typical of the tourist's home country (2.27). The desire of clients to visit countries was also investigated. Across the entire sample, 12.2% claimed to usually travel to countries where the food of ethnic restaurants originated. A quarter of clients (25.6%) affirmed confirmed to have done it this at least

once, while the majority (40.90%) expressed a desire to undertake this activity. On the other hand, 13.4% were not particularly interested in it while only 7.9% expressed strong disagreement. With regard to these percentages, 19.50% of the entire sample claimed to have visited a country due to a particular interest in its food, while 80.5% have never done so. Japan (19%) emerged as the most visited destination, followed by Italy (13%), India (8%) and Thailand (8%). During their trips, food tourists usually engage in gastronomic activities. In our sample, only 4.30% had done so at least once, the majority having undertaken the activity in Italy (25%), followed by Japan (17%). Gastronomy may be considered an attractive factor for a destination, but at the same time, it can also represent a motive for not visiting a certain country. Our sample could generally be considered open-

minded; in fact, 94.10% of respondents had never avoided exploring a country because of its food. On the other hand, 5.90% claimed to have done so, quoting among those countries listed, China as the most avoided one (16%), followed by Germany, United Kingdom, and India all at 11%.

In general, our sample emerges as being open to other cultures: 63.60% always try local food when on holiday, while 14.60% had tried it, but only those dishes they knew about before travelling to the destination. In contrast, 4.30% preferred international cuisine and 2.80% strongly disagreed with trying typical local cuisine. Furthermore, 50.20% of the entire sample were not prevented by anything when trying local cuisine, while 49.80% were. The factor that most prevented tourists from trying local food was a fear of poor hygiene (3.14), followed by a fear of unknown ingredients (2.99), a fear of contracting illnesses (2.84), and a fear of not liking local dishes (2.73).

*6.4. Globalisation, authenticity, and destination attractiveness.* In order to test the influence of globalisation and its contribution to gastronomy tourism, a descriptive analysis based on two different Likert scales (on frequency from 1 = never to 5 = always; and on agreement from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was conducted. In general, respondents tried to reproduce at home the ethnic foods they had tried on their trips (2.69), and in their home country buy food products that belonged to other gastronomic cultures (2.98). Further-

more, the sample agreed that the presence of ethnic restaurants has contributed to increasing their interest in other cultures (3.28). Similarly, the sample agreed that the presence of ethnic ingredients in supermarkets offered the possibility to also reproduce ethnic dishes at home (3.26) and that the presence of these ethnic products was modifying their cooking styles.

As seen in the literature review, authenticity plays an important role in gastronomic tourism; to detect customers' relations with authenticity, descriptive analyses were conducted based on two Likert scales. When visiting a destination, respondents bought local gastronomic products not only in restaurants but also in local supermarkets, markets and small shops (3.07). In addition, respondents generally believed that the food served in the ethnic restaurants of the surveyed town respected the original country's traditions (3.15) and that the use of the original language in naming dishes denoted authenticity (3.46). Nevertheless, there was no particular consensus on the preference of authenticity of local food over personal taste (2.71).

Past research has demonstrated that local food is a factor of destination attractiveness. In this study, too, respondents stated that good food contributed to improving the image of a destination (3.59), and they would revisit a destination if the local food were considered good (3.52).

*6.5. The Foodies profile.* 'Foodies' bear specific characteristics and, in order to identify them, it was necessary to classify the customers into

Table 2. Comparison of K-mean clustering analysis.

	<i>Five clusters</i>	<i>Four clusters</i>	<i>Three clusters</i>
Cluster 1	39 (16.183%)	22 (9.129%)	35 (14.523%)
Cluster 2	23 (9.544%)	80 (33.195%)	114 (47.303%)
Cluster 3	50 (20.747%)	68 (28.216%)	92 (38.174%)
Cluster 4	66 (27.386%)	71 (29.461%)	
Cluster 5	63 (26.141%)		

groups. In this research, k-mean clustering analysis was employed. Variables used in this analysis included: the frequency with which respondents visited different restaurant types while travelling; the frequency of purchasing local food products at visited destinations; the contribution made by the presence of ethnic restaurants to increasing interest in other cultures; and customers' desire to visit other countries to try their food and their general attitude towards ethnic food. By looking at the dendrogram it was possible to observe the presence of different clusters; however, in order to find the most appropriate division that would include at least twenty-five components per group (minimum required number per cluster due to the small sample size), several analyses were conducted, revealing the  $k = 3$  results to be the most explicative grouping of the sample (see Tab. 2).

Furthermore, analysis of the ANOVA table (Tab. 3) showed that all factors taken into consideration for the clustering were statistically significant at  $p = 0.000$ .

From the cluster analysis, three different client types emerged. Cluster number 1, representing 14.52%

of the sample, comprised people for whom food was not an important holiday element and were named "leisure diners". Cluster number 2 represented the majority of the sample (47.30%) and comprised lovers of ethnic and local foods and were therefore named "foodies". Cluster 3 represented 38.17% of the sample and was composed of those who liked all types of cuisine; they were named "general gastronomy lovers". To understand where differences between the clusters existed, a Tukey HSD test was conducted on the same variables employed in the cluster analysis and therefore in the ANOVA table. The Tukey test findings show that, generally, cluster 2 "foodies" distinguish themselves most from the other two groups.

As presented in the literature review, "foodies" have a specific socio-demographic profile and their general aim is to visit countries with specific gastronomic offerings. In order to detect this profile, chi-square analyses were conducted. A significant relationship emerged between the clusters and visiting a destination for its food ( $\chi^2 = 8.747$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ), with the resultant number of "foodies" travel-

Table 3. Summaries of the ANOVA table, and the means of the three clusters for each of the statements.

<i>Statement</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Deviation</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Types of restaurants they go to during trips: Restaurants where only locals go	Cluster 1	2.94	1.268	13.367	0.000
	Cluster 2	3.12	0.802		
	Cluster 3	3.70	0.880		
	Total	3.32	0.956		
Types of restaurants they go to during trips: Restaurants where locals, but also tourists go	Cluster 1	2.44	1.076	8.921	0.000
	Cluster 2	3.06	0.628		
	Cluster 3	3.09	0.856		
	Total	2.99	0.821		
Types of restaurants they go to during trips: Globally well-known ethnic restaurants	Cluster 1	1.91	1.058	7.061	0.001
	Cluster 2	2.48	0.823		
	Cluster 3	2.62	1.001		
	Total	2.45	0.954		
Types of restaurants they go to during trips: Big restaurant chains with international cooking	Cluster 1	2.50	1.136	10.278	0.000
	Cluster 2	2.54	0.948		
	Cluster 3	1.96	0.860		
	Total	2.31	0.981		
Types of restaurants they go to during trips: Restaurants with a gastronomical offer of my home country	Cluster 1	3.28	1.224	20.435	0.000
	Cluster 2	2.24	0.902		
	Cluster 3	1.91	1.128		
	Total	2.26	1.127		
Buy local food products at the destination	Cluster 1	2.06	0.982	56.140	0.000
	Cluster 2	2.86	0.855		
	Cluster 3	3.78	0.804		
	Total	3.11	1.039		
Try to reproduce at home local dishes tried during the trip	Cluster 1	1.56	0.982	97.315	0.000
	Cluster 2	2.28	0.795		
	Cluster 3	3.59	0.792		
	Total	2.69	1.114		
Buy products or ingredients of different cultures in their home country	Cluster 1	1.38	0.492	188.275	0.000
	Cluster 2	2.59	0.735		
	Cluster 3	3.94	0.709		
	Total	2.95	1.129		



<i>Statement</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Deviation</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Increase interest in other cultures due to the presence of ethnic restaurants	Cluster 1	1.69	0.821	85.889	0.000
	Cluster 2	3.22	0.906		
	Cluster 3	3.89	0.694		
	Total	3.27	1.078		
The possibility to reproduce food of other countries thanks to the presence of ethnic ingredients in supermarkets	Cluster 1	1.50	0.622	143.816	0.000
	Cluster 2	3.20	0.755		
	Cluster 3	3.94	0.660		
	Total	3.26	1.051		
The presence of ethnic ingredients has modified cooking styles	Cluster 1	1.38	0.609	160.646	0.000
	Cluster 2	2.77	0.777		
	Cluster 3	3.98	0.734		
	Total	3.05	1.143		
The food of the ethnic restaurants respects the tradition of the country of origin	Cluster 1	2.53	1.016	8.764	0.000
	Cluster 2	3.18	0.884		
	Cluster 3	3.29	0.864		
	Total	3.13	0.925		
Local food has to respect my tastes more than local ones	Cluster 1	2.88	1.185	6.124	0.003
	Cluster 2	2.90	0.942		
	Cluster 3	2.39	1.168		
	Total	2.70	1.093		
Go back to a destination if the food is extremely good	Cluster 1	2.66	0.937	24.974	0.000
	Cluster 2	3.47	0.856		
	Cluster 3	3.81	0.652		
	Total	3.49	0.874		
A dish that is given a name in the original language is authentic	Cluster 1	3.00	0.984	5.163	0.006
	Cluster 2	3.52	0.899		
	Cluster 3	3.53	0.767		
	Total	3.45	0.878		
Extremely good food could change a destination's image	Cluster 1	2.56	0.878	39.489	0.000
	Cluster 2	3.52	0.823		
	Cluster 3	3.99	0.695		
	Total	3.57	0.905		

ling to a destination because of an interest in its food, being higher than expected. However, none of the clusters specifically avoids visiting a destination because of its food ( $p > 0.05$ ), and none of the clusters specifically travels with the aim to participate in gastronomic activities ( $a < 0.05$ ), underlying an equal importance of gastronomic activities for all clusters.

Scholars have identified a specific socio-demographic profile of foodies. They are mostly female, well-educated, more affluent (Robinson, Getz 2016), with an average age range between 30 and 50 years old (López-Guzmán, Sánchez-Cañizares 2012; Folgado-Fernández et al. 2017), and generally involved in the tourism, especially hospitality, sector (Getz et al. 2015). In our analysis, gender emerges as having a significant relationship to the clusters ( $\chi^2 = 10.223$ , sig. = 0.006), with foodies counting more women than predicted. Age range also emerges as significant ( $\chi^2 = 21.235$ , sig. = 0.000), with a high proportion of foodies being between 30 and 50 years of age. In past studies, educational level has also emerged as an important variable in defining the foodie profile. To conduct such an analysis, we created a dummy variable with 3 values: value 1 = lower qualification level (no qualification, elementary school, secondary school, and vocational school), value 2 = middle qualification level (high school diplomas), and value 3 = high qualification level (bachelor degree, master's degree or further qualification). Educational level, too, was shown to be dependent on the clusters ( $\chi^2 = 30.064$ , sig. = 0.000),

with foodies accounting for a higher percentage of high-level qualifications than expected. Contrary to previous studies, 'professional condition' and 'working sector' do not appear to have a significant relationship to the clusters (sig.  $> 0.05$ ) and in our research do not define the foodie profile.

**7. Discussion and conclusions.** The aim of this research was to analyse how globalisation has influenced and contributed to the development of gastronomic tourism as a way to experience authenticity, to understand if local traditional food is a driver of international tourism and a factor of destination attraction, and to identify foodies and their characteristics in the North-East of Italy. As highlighted in the literature review, globalisation has contributed to an increasing contact and exchange of goods between countries, thanks also to the development of the global market.

Concurrently, scholars have identified a new and growing trend called gastronomy tourism. This phenomenon should be considered a possible result of globalisation, which has local traditional food as its main point of focus. Gastronomy tourism involves travellers visiting destinations to try local cuisines and participate in gastronomy-related activities. This phenomenon has transformed local food into an important factor of destination attractiveness. Based on these theoretical concepts, a survey was designed in order to analyse consumers' attitudes towards gastronomy tourism, globalisation, authenticity in food tourism, local food attractive-

ness, as well as detect foodie characteristics in North-Eastern Italians.

In our analysis, consumers visited both generic and ethnic restaurants mainly for pleasure dinners. Generally, ethnic restaurants are not considered for daily life moments like lunch breaks, or for important occasions such as business lunches or dinners. This is probably because those activities are still considered, in some ways, external to the local culture. Furthermore, food quality, and not price, is considered the most important factor when choosing a restaurant. With an increasing awareness of healthier lifestyles, this factor is likely to become even more essential in the near future. Also, the possibility to spend time with friends and partners, in a restaurant atmosphere, occupy two important roles in clients' minds. These factors are very important from a food tourism point of view. In fact, atmosphere and relationships are the two main elements of the food experience that could influence a destination's image and perceived authenticity. Consequently, the data confirm that destinations, in order to use food tourism as a tourist attraction, have to concentrate not only on food, but also on those other two fundamental components.

With regards to dining habits while travelling, respondents generally preferred to dine in restaurants visited only by locals or in restaurants where locals are present.

These results denote an interest in other cultures and a decrease in general cultural prejudice. Despite these results, it should be borne in

mind that there still exists a proportion of consumers who prefer ethnic restaurant chains, restaurants with an international cuisine, and those with a gastronomic offering typical of their home country. These factors indicate that even if customers appear more open-minded nowadays and curious about new experiences, they still try to recreate, even partially, their usual environment at their destination, which would correlate with Cohen's (1972) "environmental bubble" concept. A significant portion of the sample had visited at least once the country represented by the food of the ethnic restaurant involved in the data collection. This implies that gastronomic tourism also exists in the North-East of Italy. What is even more interesting to note, is that more than a third of the sample expressed a desire to do so in the future. This result is extremely relevant as it indicates that gastronomic tourism is not only currently present, but represents a growing trend that is expected to increase in the future. Although a significant percentage claimed to have tried local food in its original context, quite a small percentage (19.5%) confirmed having visited a country solely for its gastronomic offerings. This result indicates a small presence of "dynamic foodies" (Getz, Anderson, Vujicic, Robinson 2015). As explained in the literature review, 'dynamic foodies' represent the category of tourists with a high degree of involvement in food, who are informed about gastronomic offerings at their destination. Within this segment, Japan emerged as the country most visited for its food. This

result underscores the contribution that globalisation has made to gastronomic tourism. In fact, in the last two decades an increasing number of Japanese restaurants or those that offer a typical Japanese cuisine have opened around the world. This Japanese importance is also confirmed in gastronomic activities. To further support the concept that consumers are now more open-minded, further analysis was conducted: 94.1% of the entire sample had never avoided visiting a country because of its food, and 63.6% confirmed having always tried local food. The main reason preventing tourists from trying local cuisine, is the fear of low hygiene standards and the fear of unknown ingredients in the food. These data highlighted how prejudices still exist between cultures, and that this probably stems from the common perception that other cultures, such as those in the East, are less hygiene-aware than Westerners.

Globalisation has influenced and contributed to the development of gastronomic tourism. In fact, respondents generally agreed that the presence of ethnic restaurants has contributed to increasing their interest in other cultures, and that globalisation, through the availability of ethnic ingredients in supermarkets, has changed their cooking styles, by giving them the possibility to reproduce ethnic foods at home. This is confirmed also by the fact that customers sometimes try to reproduce local foods that they have experienced on their trips, by purchasing exotic ingredients at supermarkets.

Our research has confirmed that consumers search for authentic food products while travelling and buy local food products not only at restaurants but also at specialised shops. Despite this, results show a lack of strong disagreement with the fact that local food should reflect personal tastes more than local ones. In the literature review, the importance of perceived authenticity was explained, and some possible strategies for increasing it were presented. In particular, the survey tried to verify the effectiveness of the strategy proposed by Hughes in 1995 and then repurposed by Robinson and Clifford in 2012. Through the analysis of the data, this strategy was generally confirmed, as customers were either “neutral towards” or “in agreement with” the fact that a dish called by its original name or in the local language is authentic.

In the literature, food has been identified as a means of attracting tourists and as a way for improving a destination’s image. These concepts are further confirmed in this research, with respondents agreeing that good food motivates revisits to the destination and contributes to a change in the destination’s image. This is of particular relevance for those destinations – for example, ones in developing counties – that do not yet have visibility or adequate infrastructures for tourists. In fact, in the majority of cases, these destinations remain unexplored and for this reason food should constitute an immediate and alternative element of attraction.

*Foodie characteristics and their socio-demographic profile.* In the literature review, foodies (Getz & Robinson, 2014) or 'food enthusiasts' (Robinson & Getz, 2016) were defined as the tourist category for whom gastronomy constitutes the peak experience and the main reason for travelling. Through the k-mean clustering analysis, the sample was divided into three main groups, of which foodies represented the largest group. In our research, foodies also distinguished themselves by highlighting a particular interest in food and, specifically, what they perceived as authentic. In fact, they usually go to restaurants where only locals or both locals and tourists go; they buy local food products at specialised shops while on holiday, and also ethnic ingredients at home. Foodies try to reproduce local foods at home and visit countries with gastronomic offerings that respect local culture and culinary

traditions. The survey results also confirmed the typical foodies profile identified in previous research. In North-East Italy, too, foodies are most often between 30 and 50 years of age, with a majority of female and well-educated components.

This research has demonstrated the interconnection between globalisation, the search for authenticity, and tourism. Nevertheless, it has some limitations which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. First of all, the sample was limited to only one region in North-East Italy. Secondly, the sample was based on only 261 valid questionnaires. Future research should focus on expanding the sample and the area of data collection. Furthermore, future research projects should expand on the cultural differences between consumers' attitudes and behaviours towards food and gastronomic tourism.

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