

Food tourism and the search for authenticity: a literature review

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Abstract

Food and drink is an important element of the overall tourist experience accounting for 35% of overall visitor spend (Failte Ireland, 2018, p.9). Moreover, local food provides a channel for tourists who are looking for an authentic experience.

In 2018, Failte Ireland published the *Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023* to highlight the need to develop the food and drink experiences that Ireland offers. The report further emphasises the importance of providing tourists with an authentic food experience. However, with the widespread use of the term “authenticity”, its ambiguity and limitations have become exposed (Wang, 1999). Consequently, this paper aims to address the question of authenticity and how the concept relates to local food.

A review of literature is undertaken, to clarify the various debates surrounding authenticity and determines that the concept can be segmented into different three strands, namely; objective, constructive and existential. Subsequently, the paper develops an understanding of authenticity in relation to local food tourism. The paper concludes that by understanding the various strands of authenticity tourist stakeholders, food producers and destination marketers can add value to the tourist experience. Furthermore, local food production, can encourage the involvement of residents, strengthening culture and identity and, in some cases, becoming the basis for effective destination marketing (Ferrari and Gilli, 2015). Thus, benefiting the region by attracting more visitors and investment (Sims, 2009). Additionally, by using the three strands of authenticity, different local food products and experiences could be developed appealing to tourists differing perceptions of authenticity.

1. Introduction

Narrowly defined food tourism can be described as a form of travel where the primary motivation is to experience the food or drink of a place (Hall and Mitchell, 2005; Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Sims, 2009). It is an experiential trip where the tourist actively takes part in the food experience, rather than just observing (Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez- Canizares, 2012). This can involve visiting food or beverage producers, food fairs, farmer's markets or partaking in food related activities linked to a particular culture (Hall et al., 2003). Everett and Aitchison (2000) expand on this definition by adding that food is acknowledged by tourists as more than sustenance and is in fact a cultural artefact which can be enjoyed in a myriad of locations. It can be considered part of a local culture, used in tourism promotion and a potential component of local agricultural and economic development (Tikkannen, 2007).

Food and drink is an important element of the overall tourist experience accounting for 35% of overall visitor spend (Failte Ireland, 2018, p.9). Moreover, local food provides a channel for tourists who are looking for an authentic experience (Mak et al., 2012). In 2018, Failte Ireland published the Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023 to highlight the need to develop the food and drink experiences that Ireland offers. The report further emphasises the importance of providing tourists with an authentic food experience. Local food provides a way for a destination to showcase culture and traditions, which in turn can fulfil a tourist's search for authenticity (O'Riordan and Ward, 2014) adding value to the tourist experience.

Additionally, from a local community viewpoint, developing local food products can also represent a profitable economic opportunity (O'Riordan and Ward, 2014). It allows for the creation of jobs and a way of preserving traditional crafts. Moreover, authentic local food can be developed as a means for destination branding, therefore attracting more visitors and investment to an area (Sims, 2012).

The interpretation of tourism as a quest for authenticity as proposed by MacCannel (1973) has been the subject of many debates in tourism literature (Cohen, 1988; Chhabra et al., 2003; Heitmann, 2011; O'Riordan and Ward, 2014). However, with the widespread use of the concept of authenticity, its ambiguity and limitations have become exposed (Wang, 1999).

In view of this, this paper begins by examining the various debates surrounding the concept of authenticity. Subsequently, the paper develops an understanding of the concept in relation to local food tourism.

2. Authenticity

The term ‘authenticity’ originates from the Greek word ‘authentēs’ meaning originator or creator (Oxford dictionary, 2018). By definition something that is authentic is considered real and genuine as opposed to imaginary or fake (Gilmore and Pine, 2007). A wide range of attempts have been made in an effort to define the concept. As a result, ‘there are at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it’ (Taylor, 2008, p.8). However, despite the numerous definitions of the concept, common themes are recognised, with authenticity associated with history, tradition, heritage, culture and locality (Du Rand and Heath, 2006; Özdemir and Seyitoğlu, 2017).

According to Trilling (1972), the original use of the term ‘authenticity’ in a tourism context was in museums, where experts wanted to determine if objects were genuine or what they claimed to be. As Reisinger and Steiner (2006) stated, tourism scholars extended this museum-linked usage to products such as festivals, dress, housing and even food. Sharpley (1994), contends that authenticity in tourism refers to traditional culture and its origin in the sense of the genuine, the real and the unique.

In tourism, the concept of authenticity has been examined from three different perspectives namely; objectivist, constructivist and existential (Ebster & Guist, 2005). The following section proceeds to describe these differing perspectives in more detail.

2.1 The concept of authenticity in tourism

2.1.1 Objective authenticity

Traditionally there is one key debate on authenticity found in tourism literature; namely that between Boorstin’s (1964) understanding of authenticity versus MacCannell’s (1973) interpretation of the concept (Heitmann, 2011). Taking what they both deemed as the superficiality and inauthenticity of modern life as a starting point, they argue that tourists are influenced by ‘a contrived and illusory modern society’ which has resulted in a standardisation of tourism products across the world (Heitmann, 2011, p.46). As a consequence, Boorstin (1964), in his seminal article *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, claims that tourists do not experience reality but thrive on pseudo-events often isolated from the locals. He deemed that tourism providers in conjunction with the media help reinforce these contrived ideas and together produce an illusion to the tourist which is often far from authentic. Boorstin (1961) further argues that it is a traveller, as distinct from a tourist, who seeks out the authentic.

Conversely, MacCannell (1973) disagrees with Boorstin's account arguing that there is no distinction between traveller and tourist. Instead, MacCannell likened the tourist to a pilgrim on a quest for authenticity (Urry, 2005). However, unlike the pilgrim who pays homage to one sacred place, the tourist pays homage to an array of attractions and experiences. He notes that:

Anything is potentially an attraction, it simply awaits one person to take the trouble to point it out to another, that it is simply noteworthy (MacCannell, 1973, p.192).

Today, perspectives such as those presented by Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973) are criticised for theorising authenticity as an objective concept based upon "a static understanding of place and culture" (Sims, 2009, p.324) and do not capture the complexity of the tourist experience (Wang, 1999). By contrast, researchers argue that all cultures change and resultantly there are no examples of a pure society on which the concepts of authenticity can be based (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Germann Molz, 2004).

2.1.2 Constructed authenticity

Expanding on his idea that tourists are in constant search for authenticity, MacCannell (1999), developed the term 'staged authenticity' based on Goffman's (1959) structural division of social establishments into what he terms back and front regions. A place where tourists strive to move from front to back regions in their quest for authenticity. Zerva (2015, p. 517) describes the two poles of MacCannell's continuum:

The front represents the "scenery", a managed setting characterized by surface and visibility, where tourists (audience) meet the hosts (performers) ... The backstage is the region closed to outsiders (audience), and where the other lives comfortably, its reality in secrecy and intimacy.

In the same vein, Chhabra (2010) identifies the terms 'negotiated' and 'constructed' authenticity, believing that some tourist experiences are modified to meet the expectations of the tourist. This view is similar to an earlier study by Fields (2002) who suggests that to meet certain preconceived expectations of the tourist many larger resorts are constructing authentic or traditional foods. As such, dishes not traditional to a place are supplied. To illustrate his point, Fields (2002) uses the example of the Valencian dish of paella which is now served all over Spain as tourists perceive it as a national Spanish dish.

Thus, it is argued that objective authenticity depends on whether something can be proved authentic or not, while constructive authenticity focuses on the way attractions are 'staged' for tourists (Sims, 2009). However, Wang (1999), contends that objective and constructivist

accounts of authenticity are limited and instead contends that there is a need to develop an “existential” understanding of authenticity, and rather focus on the response a particular tourism experience generates in the tourist.

2.1.3 Existential authenticity

Wang (1999) has extended the discussion on authenticity by arguing for a third type of authenticity which he refers to as existential authenticity. Wang (1999) reasons that objective and constructive authenticity are limited as they relate to the nature of the attraction being visited. Wang (1999, p.355) further contends that existential authenticity becomes:

... a projection of tourists' own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images, and consciousness onto toured objects.

Therefore, an understanding of authenticity as an existential phenomenon attached to constructions of personal identity then emerges as Sims (2009, p. 324) describes:

Existential authenticity ... describes the way in which tourists, by participating in holiday activities, can construct their identity to experience a more authentic sense of self.

Wang (1999) further suggests two dimensions of the concept; intrapersonal and interpersonal. Firstly, intrapersonal authenticity consists of two dimensions. Primarily it involves sensations for instance, relaxation and recreation. Secondly, intrapersonal authenticity consists of ‘self-making’, that is where individuals on holiday can act spontaneously, in line with their true feelings and authentic self (Wang, 1999). Interpersonal authenticity is the second dimension of existential authenticity. Similar to intrapersonal authenticity, it is divided into two components; family ties and communities.

Using both concepts, Wang (1999, p.364) explains that tourists are not just seeking an authentic, or a ‘true’ self. Further adding that the tourist also searches for an ‘authenticity among and between their fellow travellers’. Thus, the existentially authentic tourism experience is not only a result of seeing sights of socially constructed importance (MacCannell 1999) but it is also about collectively performing and experiencing the journey (Rickly-Boyd, 2012).

The three concepts of authenticity are summarised in Table 2.3 as follows.

Table 2.3: The three concepts of authenticity

Object related authenticity	Activity related authenticity
<p><i>Objective authenticity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether something can be conveyed and interpreted as authentic or not (Wang, 1999). Where the tourist has an understanding of a place and culture, it can be expressed in a tangible form and often represents a heritage or natural place (O’ Donovan, et al., 2015). 	<p><i>Existential authenticity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of authenticity that the tourist has developed themselves as a response to a tourism experience (Sims, 2009). • The tourist using their own set of values and beliefs, activity seeks what they determine to be a real experience (O’ Donovan, et al., 2015).
<p><i>Constructive authenticity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projected on to objects or places by tourists, who using ‘beliefs, perspectives, or powers’ construct their own interpretation of authenticity (Wang, 1999, p356). • It is expressed as a perception or the narrative of a place (O’ Donovan, et al., 2015). 	

(Developed and adapted by researcher from Wang 2000, p.49)

In summary, authenticity is not a fixed attribute and is often negotiated among a variety of shareholders (Yang & Wall, 2009). This implies that the concept is multifaceted and in a constant state of flux (McKercher and Du Cros, 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that each tourists has their own unique interpretation of authenticity (Chhabra, 2008, 2012; Rickly-Boyd, 2012).

2.2 Tourist perceptions of authenticity

Literature shows that tourists are seeking an authentic experience, but how do tourists determine that their experience is authentic? Exactly what is authentic is almost always open to interpretation. Accordingly, understanding the cues that signal authenticity to tourists is important. Perceived authenticity can depend on personal factors such as the cultural awareness and knowledge of a tourist.

Johnston and Baumann (2007) suggest that there are four factors used to frame a food or cuisine as authentic in the tourist’s mind, namely; geographic specificity; simplicity; personal

connections and historicism. Geographical references relate to the cultural origins of the food and its provenance. Simplicity symbolises the ideas of traditional and handmade, sometimes with connotations of rusticity. Personal connections refer to ‘food with a face’, that is a celebrity chef or a family tradition. Finally, historicism connotes tradition.

In addition to personal traits, other studies (Jang et al, 2012; Ram et al, 2016) suggest that where food is consumed or produced embodies authenticity. While Youn and Kim (2017), suggest that unfamiliar ingredients, unique food names and stories about the food origins help form tourists’ perceptions of authenticity.

The perception of authenticity can play an essential role within tourism in two ways. Firstly, it can enhance the tourist experience by connecting the tourist with the heritage of a destination (Sims, 2009). Secondly, it is an essential element for experiencing the culture of a place (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). In the same vein, Fields (2002) suggests that experiencing authentic local food while on holiday and satisfies those tourists seeking a cultural experience. Thus, authentic local food can become an important attraction and a motivating factor for travel (Quan and Wang, 2004).

4. Local Food

Research shows that there is an ongoing movement in food related behaviour that encompasses consumers interest in local food (Bjork and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Hjalager and Richards, 2012). This growing interest in local food products has been explained by Pearson et al. (2011) who contends that individuals are influenced by issues related to the environment, ethics, sustainability and a desire to support local food networks. Furthermore, local food is recognised by tourists as authentic, simple and traditional (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2013; Sims, 2009; Miroso and Lawson, 2012). Local products are also perceived as healthier (Pearson et al., 2011) with fewer chemicals required in their preservation as warehousing and transport time is shorter (Miroso and Lawson, 2012). Additionally, local food products are often produced without additives and involve a high degree of manual work. This artisanal character is often viewed as creative (Sidali et al., 2013).

Despite the growing interest, there is no universally accepted definition of the term local food (Pearson et al., 2011) with many studies focusing on the ambiguity that surrounds it (Morris and Buller, 2003).

4.1 Issues with defining local food

In part local food is a geographical concept and is predominately related to the distance between producers and consumers (Hingley et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 2011). However, definitions using geographical proximity can be subjective and often consumers are left deciding themselves what constitutes regional or local food (GRACE Communications Foundations, 2014). Some local products are often sold beyond the area of production, so using a concept of a bounded region could be considered a weak interpretation of the term (Watts et al., 2005). In a study carried out by Dunne and Wright (2017, p.8), which explored Irish consumers attitudes to local and artisan products, it was found that 63.8% of respondents consider local food to mean food made in Ireland. While 22.3% believe that local food means produced ‘within close proximity to where they live’.

In some instances, local food is defined with reference to political boundaries. For example, within The European Union, each member state was advised to provide a definition for the term local, as used within their own local market. To this end, The Department of Health introduced into Irish Law a definition for retail establishments selling local food. The law defines local as;

Food directly supplied by the manufacturer to the final consumer or to retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer, where the retail establishment is within 100km (Department of Health, 2016).

As seen from the above definitions local food products are an amalgamation of a number of aspects including; tradition, geography, culture and heritage (Du Rand and Heath, 2006). As Rinaladi, (2016) contends these aspects are also related to authenticity.

5 Authenticity and its role in local food consumption

Studies show that an increasing number of tourists are travelling to destinations seeking foods and food experiences considered traditional or local (Okumus et al., 2007). This pursuit can also be viewed as a search for authenticity (Gilmore and Pine, 2007; Sims, 2009). Similarly, Fáilte Ireland stress that the authenticity of food offerings is a vital component of the visitor experience (Fáilte Ireland, 2013). Taylor (2001) suggests that the tourists’ increase desire for authenticity arises from a world where everyday life is viewed as inauthentic. Taylor (2001, p.10) observes that:

Authenticity is valuable only where there is a perceived inauthenticity ... the modern consciousness is instilled with a simultaneous feeling of lack and desire erupting from a sense of loss felt within our world of mass culture.

The origin of food is a fundamental aspect of authenticity (Rand, et al. 2006) and studies show that tourists have a growing interest in food provenance (Hall and Sharples, 2003). As such it can be argued that the use of local food products in places of consumption can increase the perceived authenticity of the food experience (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016).

Studies show that the link between authenticity and food is important to many consumers. Beverland (2005, p. 1003), in his study regarding luxury wine, maintains that authenticity is 'one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing'. DeSoucey (2010) maintains that authenticity and tradition can be a way of protecting food producers against imports from abroad.

However, the term 'authentic food' remains disputed. The contested nature of authenticity in relation to food has led to a rapid development of EU regulations linking food and food traditions to designated places of origin. The European Commission (2007, p.5) maintains that this link helps 'share the common goal of furthering authenticity'. These regions are based on the concept that geographic conditions give food and drink a unique character (Spielmann and Charters, 2013). As a consequence, certain foods and culinary traditions are now protected and guaranteed. Such initiatives are frequently used in relation to wine with Application d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) used in France, and Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) used in Italy.

Further legislation set out by the EU to protect food authenticity includes:

- PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) for products with a strong link to the defined geographical area where they are produced.
- PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) for agricultural products and foods linked to a geographical area where at least one production step has taken place.
- Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG) emphasise traditional composition and mode of production of products (proven usage on the domestic market for at least 25 years), (The European Commission, 2007),

These regulations ensure products cannot be separated from their geographical origin. In this way the authenticity of a product is protected for both the producer and the consumer/tourist (Spielmann and Charters, 2013).

However, the appropriateness of the term authenticity in relation to food has been questioned by some researchers, especially regarding its frequent and indiscriminate use in the promotion of restaurants and food products (Jackson, 2013). In an early essay on culinary authenticity, Appadurai (1986) expressed his doubts over whether the term should be used in relation to food. He argues that authenticity denotes a norm or what ought to be. Appadurai, (1986, p. 25) further queries the source of these norms, by questioning;

Who is the authoritative voice? The professional cook? The average consumer? The gourmand? The housewife? If it is an imposed norm, who is its privileged voice: the connoisseur of exotic food? The tourist? The ordinary participants in a neighbouring cuisine? The cultivated eater from a distant one?

A further point that Appadurai (1986) makes is that the term does not account for the inevitable evolution which occurs with cultures and their cuisine.

Further research suggests that labelling a food as authentic can increase its status (Freedman and Jurafsky, 2012) and often such food commands a premium price. However, as highlighted by Bourdieu (1984) and De Vault (1994) it is often the lower socio-economic groups who are more likely to cook food based on tradition.

In a similar way, it is suggested the tourists' presence, in a restaurant for example, negates the authenticity of a place. Thus, paradoxically as Heldke (2005, p. 390) points out the tourists' 'discovery of a truly authentic restaurant contains the very seed of the destruction of its authenticity'.

5.1 Authenticity and local food as a motivating factor for travel

Local food can provide an authentic experience in two ways. Firstly, it offers both a geographical component, i.e. locality. Secondly, it addresses the culture and traditions of the local community (Hillel, et al., 2013). As such destination providers can offer

... products and experiences that faithfully communicate an intimate link between food, place and community' (Hillel, et al., 2013, p.202)

Studies show that authentic local food is a critical tourism resource (Henderson, 2009; Quan and Wang, 2004) with studies highlighting that local food can be an attraction in its own right

(Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014; Henderson, 2009; Hjalager and Richards, 2002; Kim, et al., 2009).

Additionally, studies show that local food can be a significant motivating factor in destination choice (Cohen and Alvieli, 2004; Hall and Mitchell, 2003). In fact, certain segments of tourists may choose a region simply based on the local food it serves and the anticipated food experiences they can partake in (Urry, 1990).

6. The concept of authenticity and local food

O' Donovan, et al., (2015) contend that local food can be an amalgamation of objective, constructive and existential authenticity, as foods which are authentic to an area afford the opportunity for the tourist to absorb and experience a culture and engage with its people. Drawing on this concept, the following section will detail the three strands of authenticity and local food.

6.1 Objective authenticity and local food

Objective authenticity consists of a static understanding of place and culture (Sims, 2009), conveyed and interpreted as true and honest in nature (Wang, 1999). In this case the tourist is simply a passive observer (O' Donovan, et al., 2015). Objective authenticity is based on originality and the genuineness of objects and sites, verified by experts (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010). Thus, objective authenticity only exists after a tangible evaluation with reference to certain criteria (Ebster and Guist, 2005). For example, the European Union's 'Quality Schemes for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs' (EU Reg 1151, 2012) policy which protects food and traditional production methods in particular those linked to their geographical origin. This legislation is further underpinned by a number of scientific and analytical methods including evidence of place of origin. Moreover, this legislation protects the unique and distinctive qualities in food products, which in turn can be used to promote the authentic nature of such a food. Ireland has a number of foodstuffs protected under this legislation as highlighted in Table 2 which follows.

Table 2: Irish foods afforded protection under European Union’s ‘Quality Schemes for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs

Food Product	Protection status	Year
Clare Island Salmon	Protected Geographical Indication	1999
Connemara Hill Lamb	Protected Geographical Indication	2017
Imokilly Regato	Protected Designation of Origin	1999
Oriel Sea Minerals	Protected Designation of Origin	2016
Oriel Sea Salt	Protected Designation of Origin	2016
Waterford Blaa	Protected Geographical Indication	2013

(European Commission, ‘Agriculture and Rural development’, available: <http://ec.europa.eu>)

6.3 Constructed Authenticity and food

Constructed authenticity refers to an approach where tourists judge how authentic something is based on their own experiences (Wang, 1999) and as such is a subjectively social construction (Ebster and Guist, 2005). Thus, this results in ‘various versions of authenticities regarding the same object’ (Wang, 1999, p. 352). Additionally, this form of authenticity can be ‘constructed’ or ‘staged’ for the benefit of tourists (Sims, 2009). Similar to objective authenticity the tourist is a passive observer, only occasionally interacting with a place and its culture (O’ Donovan, et al., 2015).

To illustrate this point, Chhabra (2011) identifies the terms constructed and negotiated authenticity. Explaining that an authentic experience can be altered to suit a tourist. For instance, this could be as simple as changing an ingredient to suit a tourist’s palate or changing a production method to be more efficient (Cohen and Avieli, 2004).

Additionally, Johnson and Baumann (2007, p.179) emphasise that ‘certain qualities are framed to create the perception of authenticity’, and as such authenticity is a social construction. It is suggested that creation by hand and the local setting both add to the social construction of authenticity. They, identify four qualities pertaining to food that are used to frame a food as authentic; geographic specificity, simplicity, personal connections and historicism. Geographic references relate to provenance which can donate cultural and ethnic origin. Simplicity embodies concepts of handmade or traditional and rusticity. Personal

connotations denote 'food with a face' i.e. a celebrity chef, or a food's connection to a creative talent or family artisanal tradition. Historicism refers to food traditions and the test of time, as opposed to a trend (Johnson and Baumann, 2007).

Research has found that the authenticity of a restaurant setting can increase tourist satisfaction (Jang et al. 2012). Further research highlights the importance of authenticity of restaurants employees, décor, music and costume as well as food and drink (Ebster and Guist, 2005).

6.4 Existential authenticity and food

Existential authenticity relies on personal experiences and perceptions (Rickly-Boyd, 2013; Wang, 1999). It is based on the idea of the authentic self. That is

... being in touch with one's inner self, knowing one's self, having a sense of one's own identity and then living in accord with one's sense of oneself (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006: p. 300).

In this context the tourist develops an understanding of authenticity in response to previous experiences (Cohen, 2010; Sims, 2009). Unlike objective and constructive authenticity, with existential authenticity the tourist takes an active part in affirming authenticity based on past experiences (O' Donovan, et al., 2015).

Studies show that in the case of ethnic restaurants tourist believe not only what they taste but also what they see. Thus, the ethnic costumes, the decoration of the restaurants may define for the tourist whether the restaurant is authentic or not (Peterson, 2005).

A further example is St. Tola Irish Goats Cheese in Clare. The company appeals to a tourist's sense of existential authenticity by offering natural local products, tastings and workshops. The tourist experiences the milking of the goats on an Irish farm; participates in the cheese making process and finally leaves with cheese which they have produced.

7. Conclusion

The literature revealed that authenticity consists of three strands; objective, constructive and existential. Objective authenticity refers to the 'genuineness' of objects visited by tourists (Wang, 1999). Constructive authenticity is said to be the result of social construction; that is something is authentic if the tourist believes it to be (Chhabra, 2010). Whereas, existential

authenticity is based on an understanding that the tourist has developed themselves as a response to a tourism experience (Sims, 2009). The evidence presented in this paper suggests that local food can be an amalgamation of all three strands (O'Donovan, et al., 2015)

The research has also shown that, tourists are increasingly searching for an authentic experience, “something real from someone genuine, not a fake from some phony” (Gilmore and Pine, 2007, p.1).

Yet, there are no universally accepted definitions of authenticity and locality, with both terms open to interpretation. Nevertheless, tourists are seeking typical signs of place that accord with their perceptions (Sims, 1999, Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). The literature suggests that local authentic food can connect the tourist with a place and people of their destination (Sims, 2008). Thus, local authentic food can become an important attraction in its own right, and a motivating factor for destination choice (Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014).

7.1 Implications

The main aim of this study was to provide an understanding of the concept of authenticity and its relationship with tourism and local food. This study shows that local food can appeal to tourists seeking an authentic experience or a cultural experience. Thus, authentic local food can become a motivating factor for travel and an important attraction in its own right (Quan and Wang (2004).

From the point of view of a destination, it is possible to use the tourist's desire for authenticity to encourage the development of products and services. Local food production, can encourage the involvement of residents, strengthening culture and identity and, in some cases, becoming the basis for effective destination marketing (Ferrari and Gilli, 2015). Thus, benefiting the region by attracting more visitors and investment (Sims, 2009). Additionally, by using the three strands of authenticity, different local food products and experiences could be developed appealing to tourists differing perceptions of authenticity.

7.2 Future research

Future research should further investigate the personal dimensions of authentic local food consumption. Pursuing a quantitative approach, incorporating authenticity scales from tourism literature (see for example; Camus, 2004; Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Sidali et al., 2014)

would advance knowledge in this area. Additionally, an in-depth qualitative approach could be pursued to determine tourist perceptions of food authenticity and locality in an Irish context.

Moreover, the issue of authenticity and locality from a food provider's perspective is an intriguing one which could be usefully explored in further research. It would be interesting to understand how they attempt to manage and understand the three strands of authenticity and whether these are an encumbrance or an asset to their business.

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