



Culinary tourism as a driver of regional economic development and socio-cultural revitalization: Evidence from Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Culinary tourism becomes increasingly influential in shaping visitors' decision-making and holiday experience on top of providing significant socio-cultural and economic benefits. This study examines the contributions of culinary tourism to the socio-economic development and cultural revitalization of tourism destinations using Porter's value chain theory. The study adopts a qualitative research approach with an exploratory design and collects data from 71 purposively selected informants. Research findings reveal that the proper planning, development, and management of culinary tourism promotes the economic development and socio-cultural revitalization of destinations by strengthening inter-sectorial linkages and empowering local communities. The existence of diverse agricultural products coupled with unique gastronomic heritage does not only improve the experience of visitors but also extend their length of stay. The provision of authentic culinary products also enables to manifest local culture and thereby portray a positive destination image. Several challenges including maintaining a consistent partnership between local gastronomic ingredient suppliers and the hospitality service providers hamper the successful development of culinary tourism in Amhara National Regional State. By adopting and extending the classic Porter's value chain theory, this study makes substantive theoretical contributions and practical implications about the multifaceted roles of culinary tourism in agriculturally reliant destinations. Conclusions and implications are also discussed along with study limitations and opportunities for further research.

1. Introduction

Culinary tourism is a food-motivated travel where the consumption of cuisine is the main motivation (Choe & Kim, 2018; de la Barre & Brouder, 2013; Lee et al., 2015). It is the act of traveling for a taste of a place in order to get a sense of place (World Food Travel Association, 2019). As its Latin origin *Culina* implies, culinary tourism predominantly focuses on food-related activities of visitors outside their usual place of residence (de la Barre & Brouder, 2013; Moira et al., 2017). According to

Ellis et al. (2018), food tourism is a medium through which tourists interact and understand the cultural anthropology of communities and the place they are visiting. Food tourism is an amalgamated sector comprising various components such as cooking classes, farm land visits, and touring picturesque vineyards (World Food Travel Association, 2020). Currently, food tourism is steadily growing and progressively attracts attention both from food and tourism companies and tourism and hospitality research (de Albuquerque Meneguel et al., 2019; Ellis et al., 2018; Nummedal & Hall, 2006; World Food Travel Association,

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2020). Literature suggests that numerous tourist destinations attempt to offer food and beverage as major destination products to meet the growing culinary desires and interests of travelers (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Dinis et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2015). As a core element within the cultural tourism sphere, culinary tourism is highly influenced by geographic locations, environmental features and socio-cultural fabrics of destinations (de Albuquerque Meneguel et al., 2019; Garibaldi & Pozzi, 2018; Getz et al., 2014; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Mei et al., 2017).

In addition to providing the opportunity to elucidate their culture and identity (Ellis et al., 2018; Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017; Hsu et al., 2018; Long, 2004), culinary tourism also benefits communities from a steadily increasing tourist mobility, with the growing demand of experiencing foreign (exotic) delicacies at the heart of visitors' holiday experience (de Albuquerque Meneguel et al., 2019; Nummedal & Hall, 2006; Timothy & Ron, 2013; World Food Travel Association, 2020). Consequently, from a visitor experience vantage point, culinary tourism elicits increased local gastronomic interest and promotes slow tourism in rural and urban areas alike (de la Barre & Brouder, 2013). From a broader perspective, the role of culinary tourism is particularly instrumental in complementing and synergizing the tourism system as a whole (de la Barre & Brouder, 2013; Lee et al., 2015; Moira et al., 2017). Therefore, culinary tourism is indispensable to solidify the tourism value chain and thereby boost the positive local impacts of tourism (Choe & Kim, 2018; de Albuquerque Meneguel et al., 2019; S; Mei et al., 2017; mith & Xiao, 2008).

The underlining concept of culinary tourism is also entangled with the principles of slow tourism via slow food (Slow Tourism, 2013; World Food Travel Association, 2019). In contrast to the fast-paced dining practices, slow food largely focuses on consuming local cuisines and promoting sustainability principles in the food production and distribution system (Adeyinka-Oji & Khoo-Lattimore, 2013; Tommy et al., 2017). Slowing down rapid visitors' mobility using different sustainable modes of transportation such as bicycles, canoes, or even foot, slow tourism enables tourists to gain a more in-depth and authentic experience (Cristina et al., 2012; Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Lee et al., 2015). The core principles and values of slow tourism fundamentally rely on promoting 'the virtues of the slow and the authentic against an increasingly fast and artificial consumer society' (Losada & Mota, 2019, p. 141). In this respect, through establishing a proper bond between culinary tourism and slow tourism, as a form of tourism practice that opposes globalized consumption practices with speed (Chen & Huang, 2019), tourism destinations perhaps reap multiple benefits from culinary tourism and its wider value chain.

Culinary tourism gains sweeping international appeal as an important niche market in the tourism and hospitality sector (Cankul & Demir, 2018; Ellis et al., 2018; Okumus et al., 2018; Wolf, 2006). In the wake of extensively spreading globalization and McDonaldization, destinations continue to pay special attention to culinary tourism, as a tool to protect regional and local identity in addition to its substantial economic implications (Chen & Huang, 2019; Ellis et al., 2018; Okumus et al., 2018). Despite growing attention on the global scale, however, in the context of emerging destinations academic research on the subject remains sparse (Mahony, 2007; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2002; Timothy & Ron, 2013). This was evident from the bibliometric analysis of food and gastronomy research in tourism and hospitality conducted by Okumus et al. (2018) justifying the need for further empirical research to support the successful development of culinary tourism in developing countries (Chen & Huang, 2019; Gonca Guzel-Sahin, 2015; Riley & Love, 2000; Sims, 2010).

Similarly, despite, Amhara National Regional State is rich in gastronomic supplies and culinary traditions, food tourism is not properly developed yet. The available culinary potentials have never been also accurately identified, properly inventoried, and supported by scientific research and thereby drive the sustainable development goals through creating employment opportunities for women and youths. Existing tourism research conducted in the region mainly focused on

various other aspects overlooking the importance of culinary tourism. Several studies related to tourism are conducted in the context of Amhara National Regional State among which opportunities of tourism development (Endalkachew et al., 2018), ecotourism development (Sefrin, 2012), the role of community empowerment for sustainable tourism development (Alubele, 2011) and visitor management and sustainable destination management (Kebete & Wondirad, 2019) can be mentioned. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, thus far, there has not been any scientific research that examines the topic of culinary tourism in relation to slow tourism and tourism value chain in the region. Consequently, in the context of Amhara National Regional State, culinary tourism remains an overlooked research area. In fact, in the case of the Amhara nation, dining goes beyond just consuming gourmet culinary products. As one of the most hospitable nations of the country, the Amhara communities use their delicacies to express respect, care, and affection towards their guests. Sharing food from the same plate (see Fig. 6) is also a common practice that signifies togetherness, friendship, and the strength of social bonds within the society.

Paradoxically, shorter length of visitor stay is one of the chronic challenges in the region, requiring the integration of culinary tourism with slow tourism to mitigate this problem. Subsequently, conducting a systematic research to better understand the critical links between culinary tourism and slow tourism using Porter (2001) value chain theory is extremely important to overcome the above-mentioned challenge. Academic research on culinary tourism is also vital to protect the demise of authentic traditional cuisines in the face of rapid globalization. The current study is, therefore, conducted to bridge the existing research gap. Specifically, this research aims to:

- 1) examine the connections between culinary tourism and visitor length of stay
- 2) investigate the culinary tourism value chain and its expandability
- 3) explore how culinary tourism can be developed in benign with slow tourism to augment its multitier effect throughout the entire food tourism value chain and
- 4) provide a new framework for the proper development of culinary tourism value chain in Amhara National Regional State.

In the forthcoming sections, the study critically reviews existing literature related to culinary tourism and discusses the theory that guides the research. Then methodological issues are addressed followed by results and discussion. The study concludes by summarizing the findings and discussing its implications along with the limitations and opportunities for future research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The complementary nature of culinary tourism

Food tourism draws broader attention and emerges as a major research frontier in the field of hospitality and tourism (Ellis et al., 2018). The World Food Tourism Association (2020) classifies the historical evolution of food tourism into three phases (2001–2011, 2012–2018, and 2018–present). In the first phase (2001–2011) food tourism was understood as the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, while in its second stage (2012–2018), food tourism started to grow in parallel with mainstream tourism promoted by social media and television cooking shows. In the third stage (2018–present), food tourism started to be recognized as a composite industry comprising the full range of experiences including cooking classes and visiting farmlands (World Food Travel Association, 2020). As a result, currently, food becomes one of the main motivations of tourists in choosing their holiday destinations (Rita et al., 2019; World Food Travel Association, 2020).

Inherently, culinary tourism has a complementary nature to other economic activities and tourism segments (Richards, 2002;

Sanchez-Canizares & Lopez- Guzman, 2012; Tommy et al., 2017). Culinary tourism products are often intertwined with other tourism activities such as festivals and events, conference tourism, agritourism, and nature and culture-based tourism (Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Wolf, 2006). Therefore, gastronomy is at the heart of every tourism activity in tourist destinations (Degarege & Lovelock, 2019; Wolf, 2006). Especially for tourists who consider culture as their major motivation, culinary tourism provides the opportunity to experience more and learn local culture through local cuisines (Andersson et al., 2017; Chen & Huang, 2019; Ellis et al., 2018; Sohn & Yuan, 2013). This is because destinations' cuisine is part and parcel of societies' cultural heritage (Chen & Huang, 2019; Dinis et al., 2019; Rinald, 2017; Timothy, 2016). As an element of communities' unique cultural heritage, destination management organizations (DMOs) often integrate culinary tourism with destinations' art, music, festivals, and events to augment its multifarious effects (Lee et al., 2015; Suintikul, 2019).

Culinary tourism also links culture and nature (see Fig. 1) as it blends agricultural products provided by nature with local gastronomy (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Chen & Huang, 2019; GoncaGuzel-Sahin, 2015; Quan & Wang, 2004; Timothy, 2016; Tommy et al., 2017) enabling tourists to experience destinations' gastronomy regardless of the type of tourism they are pursuing.

As a manifestation of culture, culinary tourism constitutes the core of cultural tourism (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016). Culinary tourism is also interwoven with agritourism since the agricultural sector is the supplier of culinary ingredients (Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Sidali et al., 2015; Timothy, 2016; Wolf, 2006). Even though it is taken for granted as a necessity instead of a leisure activity (Chen & Huang, 2019; Stone et al., 2019), the consumption of local food creates an authentic tourist experience (Choe & Kim, 2018; Yeoman, 2008). In order to make the dining experience of visitors more memorable and delightful, adding value through high-quality product and service as well as the integration of food consumption with other tourism activities through the value chain concept is profoundly important (Dinis et al., 2019; Porter, 2001, 2008; Stone et al., 2019; Wright, 1987). According to Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Development (2012), Agyeiwaah et al. (2019), and Rinald (2017), culinary tourism shapes visitors' overall experience and contributes to the development of the tourism sector in destinations by promoting slow tourism and creating broader local understanding.

2.2. Augmenting the impacts of culinary tourism through slow tourism

Slow tourism is a concept that advocates a slow movement of visitors for a holistic and better destination experience and sustainable tourism development. Therefore, the introduction of the concept has a motive to tackle challenges that arise from the fast pace of contemporary tourism practices. Its origin can be traced back to the late 1980s and 1990s when

destinations started to advocate for slow food and slow cities as a social movement (Rinald, 2017). From the travel and tourism stance, slow refers to a visitor movement of reduced pace that allows visitors to better understand, explore, and gain deeper experience of local food, culture and nature (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2015; Richards, 2002). As a reaction to the repercussions of rapid tourism, slow tourism intends to explore and boost authentic and robust visitor experience (Dickinson & Robbins, 2010a; Moira et al., 2017), and it is much more than a movement or transport between places (de la Barre & Brouder, 2013; Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Rinald, 2017; World Food Travel Association, 2017). Hence, slow tourism does not only extend visitor length of stay in tourist destinations but also increases the economic impacts of tourism and mitigates its overall emission level as well as meaningfully enhances visitors' experience.

With regards to augmenting tourism's overall effect, culinary tourism is considered as one of the most feasible niche tourism segments that can be integrated with slow tourism (Moira et al., 2017; Richards, 2002). Such a blend, in turn, enables tourists to experience authentic dining culture of host communities by creating real and vital connections with local people, places, culture, food, heritage and the natural environment (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019; Dinis et al., 2019; Ellis et al., 2018). To this end, Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010) suggested three fundamental pillars that enhance the development of slow tourism. These are (1) appropriate speed, which refers to the time required to visit a tourist area that needs to be appropriate and determined according to the available resources within a destination. To create a meaningful experience within tourism destinations, tourists' movement needs to be properly managed. This enables tourists to spend adequate time and grasp relevant information about the destination(s) they visit. (2) customizing visitors' behavior in terms of speed - this underlines that in slow tourism, understanding tourists' personal preference is enormously important to better serve them within the time allotted to visit a given tourist area, and (3) the pursuit of quality over quantity, which highlights the need to develop slow tourism considering quality instead of focusing more on quantity.

2.3. Culinary tourism and its multiplier effect

Culinary tourism stimulates local food production both in terms of quality and quantity which makes positive contributions to local economic development (Chi et al., 2013; Dinis et al., 2019; Iorio & Corsale, 2010; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Nwokorie, 2015). A study conducted in Indonesia by Telfer (2000) demonstrated that in addition to creating market opportunities for finished agricultural products, culinary tourism provides the opportunity to gain additional income through expanding itself into the overall agrotourism value chain. Furthermore, as a vehicle to fuel the creation of new tourism products, culinary tourism encourages innovation and stimulates local entrepreneurship (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Suintikul, 2019).

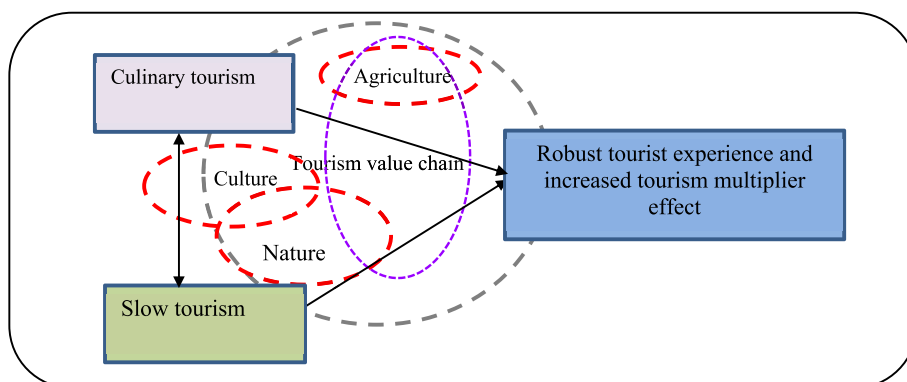


Fig. 1. The complementary nature of culinary tourism value chain.

Since culinary tourism encourages visitors to spend a longer period of time in the place of visit, destinations significantly benefit from its multiplier effect due to increased transactions between hosts and guests (Mathouraparsad & Maurin, 2017). As GoncaGuzel-Sahin (2015) and Lee et al. (2015) discussed, in addition to its contribution in the tourism value chain, culinary tourism brings several advantages for tourist destinations such as (1) fostering rural development as it is integrative in its nature and less affected by seasonality problems, (2) strong marketing and destination branding opportunities, and (3) contributing to the conservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage. Culinary tourism also offers new possibilities for destinations by improving their image and diversifying their attraction scope (López-Guzmán et al., 2011; Suntikul, 2019). In a nutshell, the concept of multiplier effect in tourism assumes that all segments within destinations' economy are interconnected leading to more transactions and financial circulations and thereby maximized outputs. Increased demand for a product in tourism as a result of improved destination image also positively impacts the national economy in terms of production, income, and employment (Iorio & Corsale, 2010; Mathouraparsad & Maurin, 2017).

2.4. Theory guiding the study

Theory explains how and why a phenomenon operates (Lengkeek & Jacobsen, 2016) by formulating relationships among the underlying principles of a phenomenon observed (McCool, 1995). As a conceptual representation of a phenomenon, theory serves as a tool to guide inquiries, deepen conceptual underpinning, and drive subsequent analyses (Babbie, 2010; Lengkeek & Jacobsen, 2016). As Flake and Rose (2005) suggested, adopting and integrating theory from more matured disciplines is customary to develop a deeper and broader understanding of a phenomenon in less explored fields of studies and in disciplines that lack strong theoretical foundations such as tourism. Against this backdrop, the current study employs Porter (2001) value chain theory as a systematic set of interrelated concepts to further examine culinary tourism and its attributes (see Fig. 2). The adoption of Porter (2001) value chain theory guides the study and helps to explicate the culinary tourism value chain by dichotomizing the fundamental elements in the culinary tourism value chain (Babbie, 2010; Bricker & Donohoe, 2015). Given culinary tourism is a phenomenon that cannot be developed and managed by a single entity, the use of value chain theory is both suitable

and profoundly important.

In contrast to the supply chain theory, value chain theory properly addresses interactions among producers, intermediaries, and consumers and focuses more on boosting the capacities of each actor to produce robust outcomes through synergy (Ensign, 2001; Porter, 2001). It strives to investigate discrete activities in the planning, producing, marketing, delivering and supporting connections among the various components in the entire culinary tourism cycle to increase the value of the local culinary sector in tourist destinations (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Dinis et al., 2019; Porter, 2001). Porter (2001) value chain analysis also seeks to identify how synergy can be created and boosted among different segments of the sector to demonstrate what can be achieved as a whole in contrast to the sum of its parts. In the culinary tourism setting where several actors are involved, a systematic analysis of all actors' roles and responsibilities in the entire cycle is essential to detect problems that deter the functionality of a system and capitalize on competitive advantages (Porter, 2001). Thus, Porter (2001) value chain theory is pertinent to further analyze culinary tourism as it considers numerous actors responsible for the production, distribution, provision, and consumption of gastronomic products.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research context

This study is conducted in Amhara National Regional State (ANRS). ANRS is one of the 10 autonomous regional states in Ethiopia. The region is endowed with a wide array of historical, cultural, religious, and natural tourism resources (Endalkachew et al., 2018; Kebede & Wondirad, 2019). ANRS is bordered with Sudan to the west and northwest, and in other directions by other regions of Ethiopia - Tigray to the north, Afar to the east, Benshangul Gumez to the west and southwest, and Oromia to the south (see Fig. 3). Data collection took place in three major tourist destinations of the region namely Bahir Dar (the regional Capital), Gondar, and Lalibela, and their surroundings. The sites were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the study such as location, visitor accessibility, infrastructural development, and the current state of visitor flows and culinary tourism practices and prospects. All of the data collection sites are accessible both by air and road transportations.

Bahir Dar is the capital city of the regional state. It hosted nearly 300,000 international tourists in 2017 as one of the leading tourist destinations in Ethiopia (Amhara National Regional State Culture & Tourism Bureau, 2017). On the other hand, Gondar is a city that has served as a capital to the medieval Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia for about 250 years. Around 130,000 tourists visited the city in 2017. Lalibela is well-known for its rock-hewn monolithic churches and is considered as the second Jerusalem. As the holiest city and a center of gravity for religious tourism in Ethiopia, Lalibela attracted 205,144 international tourists in 2017.

3.2. Research approach

Because of the scarcity of prior research related to culinary tourism in ANRS, this study adopts a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2013). Since the qualitative research approach permits the collection of data using various methods (Roshan & Deeptee, 2009), the researchers have decided to employ a qualitative research and better understand the research questions formulated. Okumus et al. (2018) highlighted that the existing food and gastronomy research in tourism and hospitality is dominated by a quantitative research approach calling for more qualitative research in future studies.

Furthermore, in order to explore the values and motivations behind tourists' food choices and experiences and key informants' understanding related to culinary tourism practices and initiatives in the study area, a qualitative approach using semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were chosen. Such interviews help to reveal

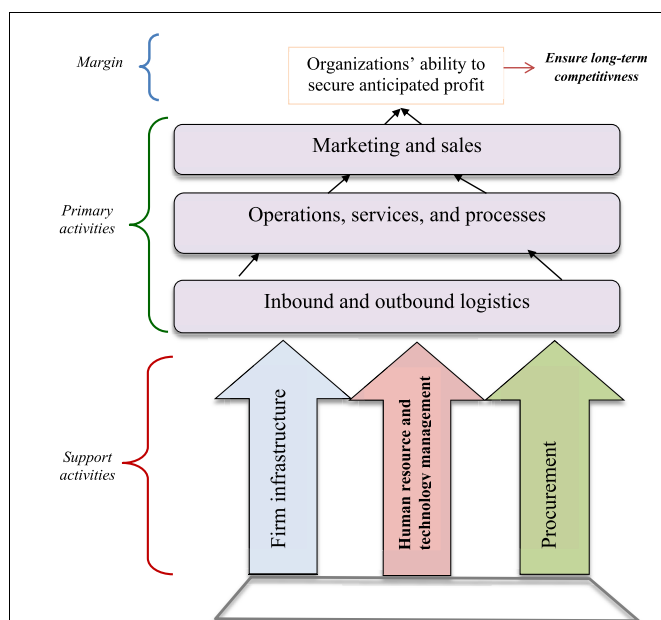


Fig. 2. Value chain theory (after Porter, 2001).

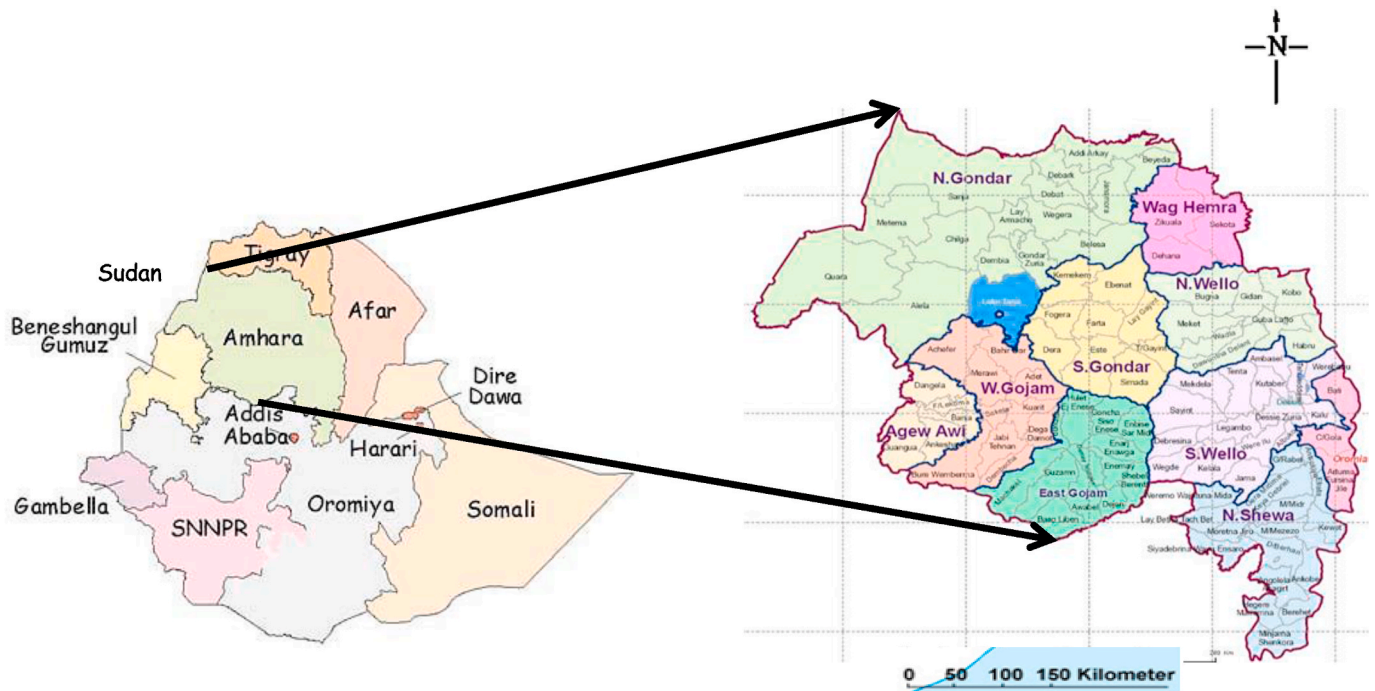


Fig. 3. Map of Amhara national regional state (Getahun et al., 2016).

detailed, in-depth beliefs and feelings held by individual suppliers and consumers yet cannot be extracted via quantitative surveys (Tracy, 2010). Representatives of local food and beverage producers, some purposively selected restaurant chefs, tourists, tourism business operators (tour operators and travel agents), experts at regional government

tourism bureau, and academicians were recruited to participate in the research. The researchers endeavored to ensure the relevance of in-depth interview questions and focus group discussion guides. Both the in-depth interview questions and focus group discussion guides were carefully designed in line with the core principles of Porter (1985) value

Table 1
Demographic profile of research participants.

No.	Categories of participants	Code	Specific data collection sites									Total
			Bahir Dar			Gondar			Lalibela			
			Age	Sex	YE	Age	Sex	YE	Age	Sex	YE	
1	Academicians	AC	AC ₁ = 21-30	M	5	AC ₄ = 21-30	F	4	AC ₇ = 21-30	M	4	7
			AC ₂ = 31-40	M	6	AC ₅ = 21-30	F	5				
			AC ₃ = 41-50	M	10	AC ₆ = 31-40	M	8				
2	Chefs in traditional restaurants	CH	CH ₁ = 50 ⁺	F	11	CH ₆ = 41-50	M	9	CH ₁₀ = 41-50	M	8	11
			CH ₂ = 41-50	F	7	CH ₇ = 31-40	F	7	CH ₁₁ = 31-40	M	6	
			CH ₃ = 21-30	M	4	CH ₈ = 50 ⁺	M	10				
			CH ₄ = 31-40	M	6	CH ₉ = 21-30	M	5				
			CH ₅ = 50 ⁺	M	9							
3	Local food and beverage producers	FB	FB ₁ = 21-30	F	4	FB ₅ = 41-50	F	7	FB ₉ = 21-30	M	5	10
			FB ₂ = 41-50	M	6	FB ₆ = 21-30	F	4	FB ₁₀ = 41-50	F	7	
			FB ₃ = 21-30	M	5	FB ₇ = 41-50	M	10				
			FB ₄ = 31-40	F	7	FB ₈ = 41-50	F	6				
4	Tourism business operators	TO	TO ₁ = 41-50	M	9	TO ₃ = 41-50	F	8	TO ₅ = 31-40	M	5	5
			TO ₂ = 31-40	M	6	TO ₄ = 21-30	M	3				
5	Tourism experts (government office)	TE	TE ₁ = 31-40	M	8	TE ₃ = 21-30	M	4	TE ₄ = 31-40	F	7	4
			TE ₂ = 21-30	F	5							
6	Tourists	T	T ₁ = 41-50	M	7	T ₈ = 31-40	F	6	T ₁₅ = 21-30	M	4	22
			T ₂ = 50 ⁺	M	12	T ₉ = 50 ⁺	F	10	T ₁₆ = 31-40	F	8	
			T ₃ = 21-30	F	3	T ₁₀ = 31-40	F	8	T ₁₇ = 31-40	M	7	
			T ₄ = 41-50	M	7	T ₁₁ = 21-30	M	4	T ₁₈ = 21-30	F	5	
			T ₅ = 21-30	F	4	T ₁₂ = 21-30	F	3	T ₁₉ = 41-50	M	10	
			T ₆ = 21-30	F	5	T ₁₃ = 41-50	M	6	T ₂₀ = 41-50	M	12	
			T ₇ = 41-50	M	8	T ₁₄ = 50 ⁺	M	11	T ₂₁ = 31-40	F	6	
7	Focus group participants	FGP	FGP ₁ = 31-40	M	6	FGP ₆ = 41-50	F	7	FGP ₉ = 31-40	F	7	12
			FGP ₂ = 41-50	M	9	FGP ₇ = 50 ⁺	M	13	FGP ₁₀ = 31-40	F	6	
			FGP ₃ = 21-30	F	5	FGP ₈ = 21-30	F	4	FGP ₁₁ = 41-50	M	9	
			FGP ₄ = 41-50	F	4				FGP ₁₂ = 41-50	F	8	
			FGP ₅ = 41-50	M	8							
Total number of participants											71	

Note: YE = Years of experience.

chain theory and thorough pretests were conducted using relevant informants to verify content clarity. We also sought prior expert reviews to make sure that interview questions are suitable to serve their intended purpose.

71 purposively selected key informants - Bahir Dar (28), Gondar (24), and Lalibela (19) participated in this study. We adhered to the concept of theoretical saturation to determine the final number of participants (Charmaz, 2014). In-depth interviews took 50 min on average while focus group discussions took approximately 90 min and we used both English and Amharic as languages of communication. To maintain consistency, the researchers themselves executed all the data collection, translation, and transcription. The researchers also conducted focus group discussions in each data collection site to triangulate in-depth interviews data by recruiting 12 participants from hotel and tourism service providing institutions (see Table 1).

As Fig. 4 shows, 56% of participants are male while the rest 44% are female. 59% of participants have professional experience spanning from six to ten years whereas 32% of them have one to five years of experience. As far as age is concerned, 33% of participants belong to the age category of 41–50, while 31% of them belong to the 21–30 age category. Finally, the 31–40 age category comprises 25% of participants while the 50+ category consists of only 11% of the entire participants. Tourists constitute 31% of the entire participants and they mainly come from Europe followed by North America and Asia.

3.3. Data analysis

The researchers employ content analysis as a method of data analysis in line with Dimache et al. (2017), Wondirad (2017), Wondirad, Tolckach, and King (2019) and Wondirad, Tolckach and King (2020). First, the data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, organized, and polished for subsequent coding. Then, we carefully executed coding with the help of QDA Miner qualitative data analysis software version 5.0.28. As can be seen in Fig. 5, we identified lower-level concepts via open coding, classified similar concepts into sub-categories using axial coding and eventually integrated and collapsed sub-categories into major themes to build the higher-level theoretical abstraction known as major themes through selective coding (Kebete & Wondirad, 2019; Merriam, 2009; Pandit, 1996; Strauss, 1987). The researchers executed an iterative data analysis moving back and forth between theory, raw data, and emerging themes to ensure the trustworthiness and consistency of research findings (Tracy, 2010; Wondirad, 2020). Moreover, method triangulation, interviewer

triangulation, and confirmatory audit together serve to increase the credibility of the research findings (Creswell, 2013; Wondirad et al., 2020).

4. Results and discussions

In the light of continuously growing global hospitality and tourism sector, culinary tourism becomes one of the core tourism products that help to enhance tourist experience and consolidate the overall performances of tourist destinations (Brownlie et al., 2005; Walter, 2017). In most instances, gastronomic related heritages are the reflections of communities' cultural, social, and economic history (McKercher et al., 2008; Sims, 2009). As such, gastronomy mirrors societies' lifestyle and solidifies local cultures and economies in tourist destinations as a participant from a tour operating company also underlines (Dinis et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2009). Culinary tourism practices are also strongly related to local culture providing multiple advantages to destinations as repeatedly indicated by research participants (Grigorova et al., 2016; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Kock, 2013). On the one hand, culinary tourism optimizes tourists' experience through extending their length of stay (Choe & Kim, 2018; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016) and, on the other hand, it improves the socio-cultural and economic well-being of local communities (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019; Grigorova et al., 2016). Literature (e.g. Hall et al., 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Ji et al., 2016) highlighted that culinary tourism in tourist destinations serves as a springboard in accompanying other tourism activities. A proper integration between food tourism and other tourism products, however, requires constant improvement to provide greater values and memorable holiday experience to visitors (Wondirad & Agyeiwaah, 2016). Therefore, culinary tourism adds value to destinations image (Choe & Kim, 2018; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016) and contributes to the socio-economic advancement of tourist destinations (Kock, 2013; Sims, 2010). In the forthcoming sections, the study discusses its major findings in reconciliation with relevant and up-to-date literature.

4.1. Culinary tourism and tourist length of stay

Several factors such as weather conditions, the attractiveness of the natural environment and cultural heritage, availability and diversity of cultural events, the safety and security of destinations, the quality of local cuisines and hospitability of local communities among others determine visitors' desire to experience tourism destinations (Moira et al., 2017; Rita et al., 2019). According to a tourism expert (TE₃, June

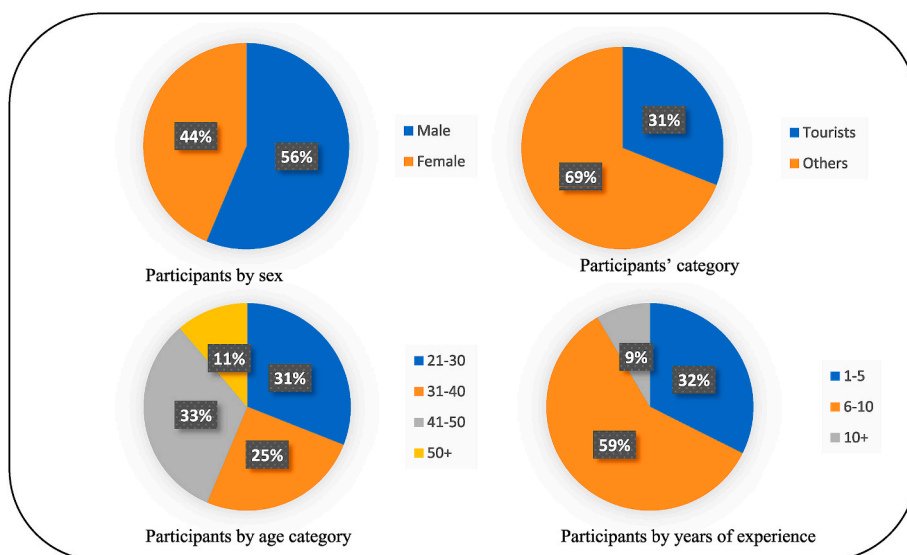


Fig. 4. Demographic profiles of participants.

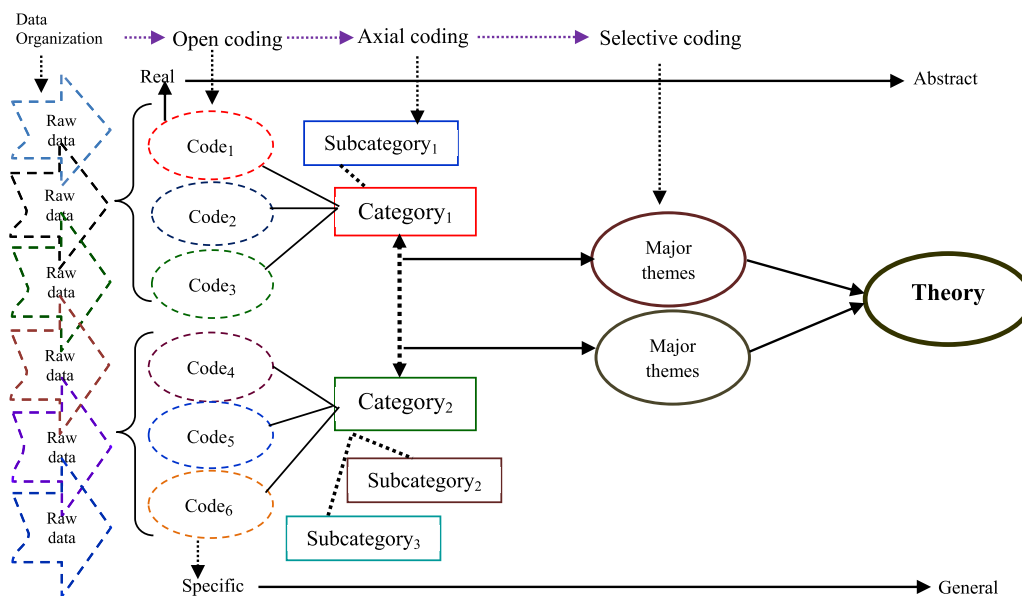


Fig. 5. Stages of inductive analysis (after Kebete & Wondirad, 2019).



Fig. 6. Typical vegetarian cuisine of the Amhara nation.

2019) who works in the government tourism office, the presence of diverse culinary products does not only shape and improve tourist experience but also determine their length of stay. This is in line with the concept of slow tourism that advocates a slow pace of travel where food is one of the tools to slowdown visitors' mobility (Mathouraparsad & Maurin, 2017). Recent studies indicate that 81% of leisure travelers would like to learn about the gastronomy of a destination during their holiday and they also believe that they better understand local culture through local cuisines (World Food Travel Association, 2019). Culinary tourism does not only discourage the spread of McDonaldisation but also promotes the consumption of locally produced cuisines which, in turn, substantially fosters the multiplier and trickle-down effects of tourism within the local economy (Gonca Guzel-Shain, 2015). Food tourism strongly relies on the use of locally produced culinary supplies signifying its crucial pro-poor and value chain impacts (Timothy & Ron, 2013; Tommy et al., 2017). As participants of the focus group discussions explain, tourists' length of stay was significantly improved (see Table 2) as a result of visitors' interest in experiencing authentic local cuisines (FGD, May 2019). Some scholars, especially Hall (2012) and Timothy (2016) pointed out that slow tourism that features authentic local and cultural events, where food and beverage are part of it, extends visitors' overall stay. Expert analysts also suggested food tourism as an effective

tool to educate visitors about the destination culture by conducting a local food market tour and cooking demonstrations (World Food Travel Association, 2019). Therefore, by blending the concept of culinary tourism with slow tourism it is possible both to enhance visitor experience and elongate their stay (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Hannam et al., 2014). Li and Cai (2012) and Stone et al. (2019) also underlined that slow tourism in tourist receiving areas cannot be materialized in the absence of a well-established culinary tourism sector. Similarly, research participants in the current study accentuate the inextricable link and complementarity between slow tourism and food tourism that supports what literature emphasizes as the following excerpt from a focus group participant who works in the tour operation business underscores:

Providing culinary products to tourists are advantageous both to strengthen slow tourism and to enhance visitors' experience. Visitors can get the opportunity to communicate with the local people, know the local culture, and co-create value to enrich their experience. Therefore, culinary tourism needs to be well-tailored in line with slow tourism to contribute to the sustainable development of tourist destinations in the region. Given the ingredients for culinary products are procured from the agriculture sector, culinary tourism also

Table 2

Summary of major themes extracted from qualitative data (In-depth interviews, focus group discussions and personal observations).

Culinary tourism and tourist length of stay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Culinary tourism products improve tourist experience. — Authenticity is vital in culinary tourism. — Shorter length of visitor stay is a chronic challenge in ANRS. — A link between slow tourism and culinary tourism is identified. — More effort is needed to integrate culinary tourism with slow tourism. — Tourism business operators give inadequate attention to culinary tourism and related activities. — Food waste and sub-standard quality in supplies are challenges of food tourism in ANRS.
Culinary tourism multiplier effect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Culinary tourism links local agriculture with the tourism and hospitality sectors. — Culinary tourism creates a multiplier effect and thereby contributes to local economic development. — The linkage between culinary tourism and other tourism and non-tourism economic activities shall be strengthened.
Culinary tourism value chain underpinnings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Farmers play an indispensable role in the culinary tourism value chain. — Proper management intervention from the government is substantial in the culinary tourism value chain. — Culinary tourism value chain has been hindered by several factors. — The study formulates a comprehensive culinary tourism value chain framework to boost the positive impacts of food tourism (see Fig. 8).

creates a supply chain in tourism destinations and supports communities, especially those who rely on agriculture (TO₂, June 2019).

As a chef (CH₁, July 2019) who works in one of the star-rated hotels in Bahir Dar city expresses that there are abundant agricultural products and a wide variety of spices and herbs that are supplied by local farmers. According to an expert in gastronomy tourism (TE₄, March 2019), various herbs found in the region have medicinal values. Therefore, besides being a flavoring agent in preparing local dishes, spices, and herbs are instrumental to improve consumers' health too (Opara & Chohan, 2014). Hence, utilizing the available culinary tourism potentials demands more effort to properly develop and integrate the sector with slow tourism concepts as research participants persistently highlight.

It is also imperative to underline the fact that in destinations particularly those experiencing an influx of tourists, culinary tourism might create a stress on the local food supply chain and triggers the commercialization of food heritage. However, due to its current tourism development stage which corresponds to the involvement phase of Butler, 1980 tourist area life cycle model (Kebete & Wondirad, 2019), such a challenge is not a serious concern yet in ANRS. Another issue that was raised from chefs in relation to the negative impacts of culinary tourism was food wastage. Given most of the international tourists are unfamiliar with local cuisines, it was mentioned that there were instances where consumers wasted food despite they pay for it. The researchers inquire through a follow-up question about the remedy for such a problem and proper communication with consumers for value co-creation (Ellis et al., 2018), and formulating effective food recollection channels were suggested as possible remedies. Designing detailed menus in multiple languages can also be helpful to advance communication and thereby enhance value co-creation. Furthermore, challenges such as a lack of adequate and consistent local organic food supplies in terms of variety, quantity, and quality due to poor production capacity, and inefficient value chain between the agriculture and the tourism sectors are hampering the success of culinary tourism in the region. Inadequate entrepreneurial and innovative efforts, poor technological utilization in the production, processing, storage and marketing of food items, and lack of well-trained human power in the field are also some of the major constraints that impede the successful development of culinary tourism in ANRS.

Nevertheless, despite such shortcomings, tourists have emphasized consuming local food as one of their best experiences in the region, and

in contrast to their prior expectation, their actual perception was much better which leads to an improved destination image as the following extract demonstrates.

Frankly speaking, I even do not know much about Ethiopia and my understanding of the Ethiopian cuisine was limited. Given I come from a developed country and there are no international chain restaurants in the region, I had a concern about what to eat during my holiday. However, I have enjoyed the authentic and delicious Ethiopian cuisine and I will keep eating in the future too (T₆, June 2019).

Thus, providing meaningful engagement with the host communities in addition to delicious cuisines, culinary tourism creates a remarkable memory for tourists (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2015). This promotes slow tourism in ANRS tourist destinations and thereby supports local socio-economic development and fosters socio-cultural revitalization (Boyne et al., 2003).

4.2. Further strengthening slow tourism through proper management of culinary tourism

Currently, the development and management of culinary tourism occupy a central position in the global tourism and hospitality sector. As food symbolizes ethnicity, tradition, cultural identity, and belief systems (Ellis et al., 2018), culinary tourism management efforts seek to underline the importance of authenticity (Sims, 2009; Smith & Xiao, 2008), value co-creation (Ellis et al., 2018), and multi-stakeholder engagement (Ellis et al., 2018; Kline et al., 2015; Sims, 2010). A proper synchronization of tourist perspectives and expectations through performance, inquiry, and involvement in the culinary production process enables to co-create value which, in turn, creates a memorable culinary experience. Since culinary tourism discourages the consumption of fast-food yet promotes the consumption of locally produced cuisines (Gonca Guzel-Shain, 2015), it corresponds to the fundamental principles of slow tourism.

Lumsdon and McGrath (2011) characterized slow tourism using four core principles namely (1) slowness and the value of time, (2) locality and activities in a destination, (3) mode of transport and travel experience, and (4) environmental consciousness. The aforementioned elements have dual benefits of deepening tourist experience and reducing the carbon footprint. In concomitant with, Lumsdon and McGrath's (2011) elaboration, the findings of our study also unfold four essential elements that boost slow tourism initiatives including (1) state of psychological stability: regardless of the diversity of tourism attractions, the essence of being calm and stable is key for tourists in slow tourism especially for those who seek deeper experience (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Peeters & Landré, 2012; Stone et al., 2019; Timothy, 2016). As a result, in the case of organized package tours, which are the case in many instances, creating a relaxing vibe in contrast to a rushed and tense atmosphere is profoundly important. (2) authenticity in cultural performances within the destination and tourist immersion in local activities including participating in cooking sessions, food tasting and visiting farmlands: slow tourism naturally admires locality and authenticity and promotes local activities including participating in cooking experiences and events unique to destinations (Chen & Huang, 2019; Lee et al., 2015; Pratt et al., 2020; Tommy et al., 2017). As noted by Ellis et al. (2018), food is part of cultural experience and, thus, the importance of authenticity is vital. (3) the use of public transportation as a major mode of transportation in the region: even though some of the tourists were concerned about safety issues in relation to the use of public transportation, experts suggest that the use of local transportation enhances host-guest interaction in addition to slowing down the fast tourist mobility (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Ji et al., 2016). (4) the role of environmental purity and weather conditions: especially in the context of developing destinations tourists have high expectation of enjoying a clean environment and pleasing weather (Bogale & Wondirad, 2019; de

Albuquerque et al., 2019). Since ANRS is dominated by agrarian society, protecting the ecological balance in the region brings multifaceted benefits such as maintaining a conducive climate for tourism activities and ensuring a sustained supply of locally produced food items. The blending of culinary tourism with slow tourism appears crucial particularly in ANRS due to the region's socio-cultural, economic, and geo-demographic attributes. The region is bestowed with diverse agro-climatic zones conducive to produce high-quality food supplies. Moreover, as recent studies have verified (e.g. Endalkachew et al., 2018; Kebete & Wondirad, 2019), shorter visitor stay severely affects the tourism sector in the region. Since the region is endowed with diverse world-class tourist attractions, yet faced with numerous socio-economic challenges including unemployment, poverty, and poor inter-sectoral linkage, fusing culinary tourism with slow tourism perhaps helps to mitigate these challenges (Moira et al., 2017; Richards, 2002). Therefore, the implications of slow tourism to emerging destinations such as ANRS are twofold. On the one hand, it helps to reduce visitors' carbon emissions by encouraging tourists to stay in specific destinations and promoting the use of environmentally-friendly transportation alternatives such as bicycles, foot, and other traditional modes of transport (Rinald, 2017; Sanchez-Canizares & Lopez-Guzman, 2012). On the other hand, it helps to increase the multiplier effects of tourism by triggering more economic transactions and thereby strengthening the tourism value chain (Moira et al., 2017). In conclusion, as a growing segment of tourism that makes substantial contributions to local economic development and poverty reduction, culinary tourism inspires visitors to stay longer in destinations and thereby increases tourist expenditure in the local economy (Andersson et al., 2017; Nwokorie, 2015).

4.3. Multiplier effects of culinary tourism within the local economy

The concept of tourism multiplier refers to a circulation of tourism revenue within destinations' overall economy (Cooper et al., 2005; Mathouraparsad & Maurin, 2017). As a form of niche tourism, culinary tourism stimulates travel to tourist destinations which, in turn, emboldens other economic and social sectors (Timothy, 2016; Therkelsen, 2016). As explored by Rita et al. (2019), tasting local food and sight-seeing are the most attractive destination activities among the US and the UK Millennials. Moreover, a study conducted by World Food Travel Association in (2019) suggested that food was more important for 59% of leisure travelers during their holiday. Given the current international travel and tourism market is significantly patronized and will continue to be patronized by Millennials and post-Millennials (Business Insider, 2019; Clark, 2017), it is worthy to note that food tourism will remain to be one of the top tourist attractions in the future (World Food Travel Association, 2020). In light of that, in the current global tourism market, there is a steady increase in the number of food tour companies, food and beverage focused events, and food and beverage focused marketing efforts (World Food Travel Association, 2020).

The multiplier effect of food tourism is substantial as tourists spend nearly half of their budget on food and beverage while traveling (Okumus et al., 2018). According to Tsai and Wang (2017), tourists spend approximately 40% of their budget on food. Moreover, as Andersson et al. (2017) noted, an average tourist in Sweden spends 20–30% of the total travel expenditure on food consumption while around 20% of Danish tourists have visited tourist destinations where food was the main motivation to travel. Whenever tourist service providing institutions create a linkage between the culinary sector and destinations' attractions, the overall impacts of tourism in the area improve significantly (Brownlie et al., 2005; Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016). This is in part because food tourism facilitates inter-sectoral linkage and thereby creates synergy in the entire economy (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Ji et al., 2016; Tamene & Wondirad, 2019; Wolf, 2006). The role of culinary tourism in creating a multiplier effect in the local economy is also well understood by the majority of research participants in the current study

as the following quote from an expert who represents the government highlights:

Despite it needs further scientific research, I understand that culinary-related tourism adds more to the region's economic development through its multiplier effect. In my view, that is mainly due to its backward and forward linkages with other local economic sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and trade. As a result, in the context of Amhara National Regional State, culinary tourism connects agriculture, which is the main economic activity of communities in the region, with the broader tourism sector in the region creating a multiplier effect in the local economy (TE₂, April 2019).

Overall, with its limitations, the culinary sector has been contributing to the local economy. Given food tourism stimulates other economic activities and revitalizes cultural heritages of tourist destinations (Chen & Huang, 2019; Fields, 2002; Goolaup & Mossberg, 2017; Minihan, 2014), ANRS should take advantage of its available potentials (Mei et al., 2017). That demands actors in the tourism and hospitality sector to work coherently and improve the performance of the culinary sector in the region by strengthening its linkages with other pertinent sectors. In this regard, Ellis et al. (2018) underlined the significance of multi-stakeholder involvement to successfully develop and manage food tourism. Tourists often seek authentic local cuisines that depict outstanding quality. Accordingly, food and beverage providing establishments should maintain authenticity and improve the quality of local cuisines. That, in turn, is vital to brand the region since in major tourist destinations food is often regarded as one of the core elements of the tourism product offers as a hallmark of regional and ethnic identity (Therkelsen, 2016; Timothy, 2016). By thoroughly consulting research findings with relevant literature, the researchers have proposed a new framework to illustrate the multiplier effects of culinary tourism in tourist destinations (see Fig. 7).

All the benefits of culinary tourism highlighted in Fig. 7 have been recurrently stated by research participants and we succinctly summarized them to formulate a culinary tourism multiplier effect framework. As can be seen in Fig. 7, the proper management of culinary tourism strengthens local agricultural production by encouraging farmers to produce more and increases the market value of local products and thereby improves the livelihood of farmers in the food tourism value chain (Mete & Acuner, 2014; Sims, 2010). Moreover, as a labor-intensive sector, culinary tourism stimulates local entrepreneurship since communities participate in preparing and selling local food and beverage (Lopez-Guzman et al., 2014; Mahfud et al., 2018). Improved regional production of local food ingredients, in turn, provides culinary businesses with the opportunity to obtain local food supplies at a reasonable cost (Chen & Huang, 2019; Ron & Timothy, 2013; Tregear et al., 2007). Subsequently, culinary tourism integrates local economic activities and helps to mitigate challenges related to economic leakage in tourism (Kidane & Berhe, 2017; Roy et al., 2017). Economic leakage in tourism refers to the outflow of tourism income from the local economy, because of the importation of human capital and/or other physical goods and services to satisfy the needs of the tourism sector (Endre & Douglas, 2012; Fateme, 2012).

Findings of the current study disclosed that cultural restaurants and other food outlets providing culinary products obtain locally produced ingredients both from distributors and directly from producers. That injects fresh money into the local economy and further encourages both the consumption and production of goods and services (Mbaiwa, 2005; Rinald, 2017). Part of the income which is collected as tax from the culinary tourism sector is reinvested in other public institutions such as health, education, transportation, and other infrastructural development activities in the region (FGD, May 2019). This is in line with what Boesen et al. (2017) and Kivela and Crofts (2006) discussed culinary tourism as a crucial factor for the development and improvement of infrastructural facilities in emerging destinations. Another essential

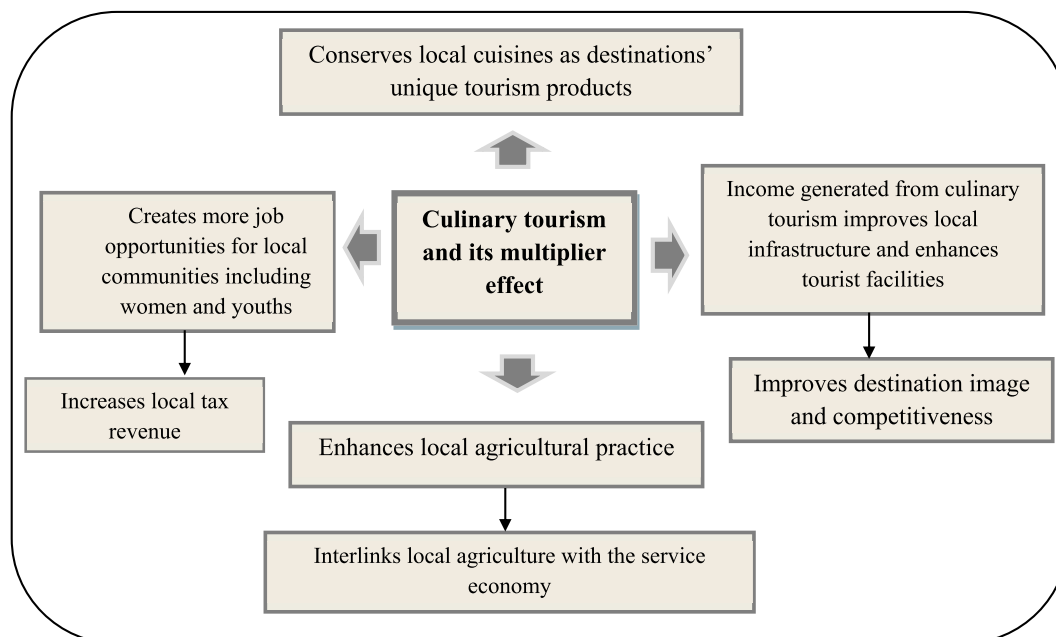


Fig. 7. Proposed culinary tourism multiplier effect framework.

element of culinary tourism activity is its inclusiveness of local communities by creating access to the market given they produce quality food supplies (Dinis et al., 2019; Sa'nchez-Cañizaresa & Lo'pez-Guzma, 2012). Therefore, empowering and building the capacities of local farmers is critical in the region to boost their participation in the culinary tourism business (TO₄, February 2019). Eventually, the regional economic improvement coupled with a reliable culinary tourism value chain improves communities' livelihood on the one hand and revitalizes their unique culture and social conditions on the other hand (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019; Cooper et al., 2005; Gonca; Guzel-Sahin, 2015; Iorio & Corsale, 2010; Pratt, 2015; Therkelsen, 2016).

As far as the importance of the involvement of communities in improving the multiplier effects of culinary tourism is concerned, the following quote from an academician working in a public university echoes the opinion of the majority:

In my opinion, culinary tourism requires a strong involvement of communities. As ANRS has outstanding potentials for the development of culinary tourism, communities living in the region shall focus on properly exploiting the untapped culinary potential. Hence, the realm of culinary tourism multiplier effect is partly determined by the activities of local communities as owners of most agricultural land and other culinary resources such as authentic traditional cuisines, recipes and the art of cooking (AC₁, June 2019).

Since producing a high-quality culinary supply requires fertile soil in a clean ecosystem, stakeholders in the agricultural sector are expected to play a pivotal role in ensuring environmental protection and ecological rehabilitation (Green & Dougherty, 2008; Kline et al., 2015; Sims, 2010). Furthermore, the production and consumption of local products in the culinary tourism sector is paramount to reduce carbon footprint (Brownlie et al., 2005; Mathouraparsad & Maurin, 2017; Omar et al., 2015; Testa et al., 2019). By using locally produced food ingredients, it is possible to eliminate emission that might stem from the importation of food supplies abroad or other regions of the country (Adeyinka-Oji & Khoo-Lattimore, 2013; Asadzadeh & Mousavi, 2017; Everett & Slocum, 2013). Expert participants in the current study also suggest that culinary tourism activities in ANRS shall take sustainability issues into account and accurately reflect the cultural values of the region in the culinary sector. As noted by Sims (2010), culinary tourism contributes to the sustainable development of tourism destinations since culinary tourists,

to a larger extent desire to experience authentic food in a clean and pleasing ecosystem. Based on the outcomes of this study, the researchers underline that the region's food and beverage products contribute to the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability by promoting environmentally friendly agricultural practices and generating complementary income. Since there is an inextricable connection between food and environment, culinary tourism development projects need to emphasize locally grown food produces by implementing sustainable farming methods (Testa et al., 2019). This further supports local tourism businesses by attracting more visitors and tourism investment in the region that boosts the overall multiplier effects of culinary tourism (Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Rinald, 2017; Sims, 2009).

4.4. Culinary tourism and its value chain

Value Chain Analysis (VCA) examines companies' overall business performances to understand how value can be created and added to products and services in order to secure a competitive advantage (Porter, 2001; Zamora, 2016). It intends to explicate the dynamics of complex linkages within a network, wherein both value creation and value addition occur concurrently in a system that involves suppliers, distributors, partners, and collaborators (Roy et al., 2017; Walter, 2017; Zamora, 2016). Similarly, within a complex network of activities in food tourism, key actors can identify opportunities and exploit those opportunities to ensure greater participation and thereby augment the economic benefits through business expansion, job creation, and minimization of economic leakage (Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Lee & Yang, 2000; Nwokorie, 2015; Walter, 2017). In view of this, a tourism academician based in Gondar (AC₄, July 2019) underlines the importance of consolidating local tourism stakeholder engagement in the culinary tourism value chain by highlighting the sector's capacity in enhancing the livelihoods of numerous players in the value chain (Dinis et al., 2019; Ellis et al., 2018; Ndivo & Cantoni, 2015). Research findings uncover that culinary tourism creates the opportunity to directly connect farmers with food and beverage service producers and providers (see Fig. 8). Therefore, the implementation of the value chain concept calls for both the private and public sectors to work hand in hand and create a supply chain of sustainable culinary tourism product that benefits both the destination and its actors (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Boesen et al., 2017; Ndivo & Cantoni, 2015; Smith & Xiao, 2008). Furthermore,

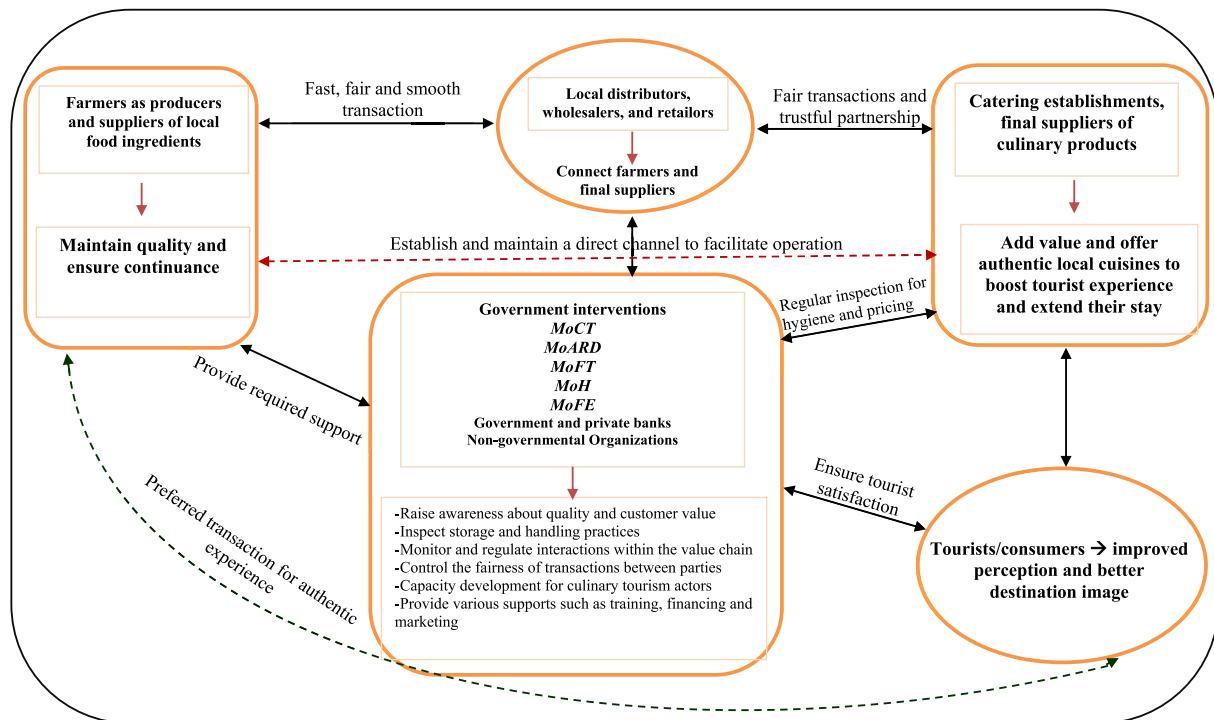


Fig. 8. Proposed culinary tourism value chain framework. **Note:** MoCT = Ministry of Culture and Tourism, MoARD = Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, MoFT = Ministry of Finance and Trade, MoH = Ministry of Health, MoFE = Ministry of Forest and Environment.

the active participation of local communities in the culinary tourism value chain brings multifaceted benefits as the following excerpt from a local food and beverage producer illuminates:

As you may also know, local communities are predominantly producers of agricultural products to the local market in ANRS. Wholesalers/retailers receive a considerable amount of food supplies from local farmers and then distribute those supplies to large hotels and restaurants for further production where value addition takes place. Hotels and restaurants strive to create and add extra values to traditional dishes where most of them are peculiar to the region (FB₁, March 2019).

In addition, as a chef noted, currently, the hospitality and catering institutions that operate in ANRS attempt to improve the quality of their offers by implementing mechanisms such as proper and safe storage, seasoning, and thorough food productions to satisfy consumers (CH₃, June 2019). This reconfirms the concept of Porter (2001) inbound logistics that entails appropriate steps that need to be executed such as procuring, transporting, storing, and handling of raw materials as essential pillars in order to add value. However, as findings unveil, currently the culinary tourism value chain in ANRS is struggling from recurrent challenges as a research participant from a tour operation company communicates as follows:

Even though the raw materials needed for culinary tourism are available, most of the time, there is limited interaction among catering institutions and producers. That affects the direct transaction between producers and final suppliers [catering establishments]. Therefore, to create a profound culinary tourism value chain, the interaction mechanisms between culinary input suppliers and catering businesses should be restructured to serve its purpose efficiently (TO₃, May 2019).

This strengthens what the World Food Travel Association (2017) and Andersson et al. (2017) and Boesen et al. (2017) discussed about the importance of augmenting visitor expenditure and developing strong value chain among tourism stakeholders to nurture a broader and

integrated regional development. Porter's value chain theory fundamentally intends to advance value-addition efforts within a company for a stronger and wider development perspective by integrating crucial elements within a system (Drost et al., 2011). Based on the findings of the current study, the authors have developed a new and comprehensive culinary tourism value chain framework in the context of agrarian communities that aims to properly link up the supply and demand in food tourism and thereby scale up the manifold benefits of this untapped tourism niche in developing destinations (see Fig. 8).

As Fig. 8 illustrates, from the supply side, the culinary tourism value chain starts with local farmers who produce food supplies and provide the products to the local market. The framework shows that using culinary tourism, destinations can diversify and improve the overall development of the rural economy (Ellis et al., 2018; Mitchell & Shannon, 2018). Since agriculture is a volatile sector sensitive to environmental and climatic changes, maintaining consistent production is a challenge (Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Mei et al., 2017; Timothy, 2016; World Food Travel Association, 2017). As this research highlights, the culinary tourism value chain can be impacted by determinant actors, both private and public, in the system where back and forth interactions are customary (Everett & Slocum, 2013; Lee et al., 2015; Tommy et al., 2017). As part of the bundle of culinary tourism offers, farmlands and various food events can also attract tourists' attention and boost their experience (Sims, 2010; Walter, 2017).

Distributors and wholesalers are the second key actors in the culinary value chain who purchase agricultural products in bulk from producers for a resell to final culinary product providers and suppliers. As final stakeholders on the supply side, hotels, restaurants, and local food and beverage providers are prominent and they serve as a bridge between supply and demand. Tourists, the end-users of culinary tourism products, are the main actors of the culinary tourism value chain who critically determine the very existence of the value chain itself. In a similar vein, customers take the center point in Porter (2001) value chain theory. As indicated in Fig. 8, at the heart of this proposed culinary value chain framework are the indispensable roles of various government organs with diverse functions substantial to the establishment,

maintenance, and solidification of the culinary tourism value chain. Results of the current study further evidence that the ultimate goal of culinary tourism is to satisfy tourists' culinary demand and foster the value of local agricultural and food products and thereby enhance the living standards of local communities (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019). Value creation boosts the virtues of products and services which positions destinations in a competitive edge.

Even though inadequate, star hotels in the study areas also try to delight international tourists who expect authentic local culinary products (Andersson et al., 2017; Lejarraja & Walkenhorst, 2007; Therkelsen, 2016). In general, culinary tourism functions through a complex network of actors where diverse interests, requirements, and challenges prevail (Mei et al., 2017; Molz, 2007). To that end, a proper tourism product value chain approach is contemplated in this study as a blueprint to integrate, synchronize and thereby create synergy among different actors and their respective interests for the development of effective culinary tourism (Ndivo & Cantoni, 2015; Tommy et al., 2017). Within this complex network that comprises diverse interests, trust and steadfast partnerships are regarded as critical elements to ensure successful food tourism development (Ellis et al., 2018; Roy et al., 2017). As the culinary tourism value chain in the current study was examined using Porter's value chain theory, a comprehensive chain of food tourism events that occur in the sector from the production and procurement of food supplies to the delivery of finished culinary products as well as post-consumption impacts are demonstrated (Dinis et al., 2019).

Since a lacuna of scientific research in culinary tourism exists in the current literature, especially in the context of developing destinations, this study aims to fill the gap by compressively examining the overarching roles of culinary tourism through involving a wide range of culinary tourism stakeholders. It is also a pioneer to adopt Porter's value chain theory as a pertinent theoretical lens to understand the role of culinary tourism in regional economic development and to meaningfully establish a connection between culinary tourism and slow tourism to enhance consumers' experience and boost the overall positive impacts of food tourism within the broader tourism value chain.

Moreover, as part of its theoretical contributions, this study has developed two pertinent and new frameworks (culinary tourism multiplier effect and culinary tourism value chain frameworks, see Figs. 7 and 8) for relevant culinary tourism stakeholders that can serve as foundations to expand the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts of culinary tourism. We have developed these frameworks using data that are carefully extracted from a wide range of research participants through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and personal observations. Furthermore, since culinary tourism research is in its infancy in emerging destinations, the current study can serve as a cornerstone to spark more similar research in the future.

5. Conclusion and implications

In the contemporary global tourism and hospitality sector, food plays no longer a supportive role. Instead, it occupies a central position both in determining tourist decision-making to travel and holiday experience. Furthermore, food tourism interlinks the economic, social, cultural, and environmental elements of destinations and provides unique opportunities both for tourists and host communities. This study examines how culinary tourism initiatives contribute to the economic development and socio-cultural revitalization of developing destinations. The research also investigates the roles of culinary tourism in improving tourists' length of stay, culinary tourism value chain and its expandability, the link between culinary tourism and slow tourism, and the multiplier effects of culinary tourism. Furthermore, the role of culinary tourism in reducing visitors' carbon emission by slowing down the fast pace of visitors is investigated. Currently, climate change becomes a grave challenge to the tourism sector since it increasingly affects the sector's core attributes such as the length and quality of tourist seasons and environmental attributes (Fyall, 2020). As findings of the current study

unveil, gastronomy constitutes essential tourism experience regardless of the purposes of travel to a given destination. One of the unique features of food tourism is its availability throughout the year, unlike other types of tourism such as cultural and traditional events that take place in specific seasons.

The current study also substantiates that culinary tourism stimulates socio-economic activities in ANRS through maintaining its distinctiveness and helps to reimagine the region. The existence of natural and cultural sites coupled with authentic gastronomic products is a competitive advantage to the region. Since the length of visitor stay in the region is quite short presently, culinary tourism should be properly blended as an integral part of the region's tourism product offer to slow down the fast movement of tourists. Slow tourism enables visitors to have a meaningful stay at tourist destinations through the consumption of authentic local food and beverage products in addition to improving the region's economic development (Tommy et al., 2017). Destinations can take advantage of the unique features of culinary tourism that involves cooking classes, farmland visits, and local food festivals, to extend visitors' stay and enhance their experience. To better integrate slow tourism with culinary tourism, pertinent strategies and plans should be formulated cohesively in consultation with key actors in the broader tourism sector. Even though catering establishments emphasize on local culinary products, tour operators in the region usually give inadequate attention to local food tasting, gastronomic events, and food-related festivals. That contributes to the underperformance of food tourism in the region which, in turn, creates a fragmented tourist experience and reduced visitor length of stay. The regional tourism bureau needs to carefully outline standards about culinary tourism and service quality that need to be practiced by culinary tourism actors. A continuous inspection to ensure whether tour companies and hospitality service providers sincerely follow with such standards is also fundamental.

A successful culinary tourism value chain predominantly relies on the supply of consistent local agricultural products. Therefore, as findings of the present study unravel, food tourism cannot be realized if local farmers are left behind in the food value chain (Ageyiwaah et al., 2019; Sandbrook, 2010b; Stone et al., 2019). In this respect, local land administrative bodies should provide a clear and appropriate land-use policy to local farmers and assist them in providing necessary support to boost productivity (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). Farmers should also give sufficient attention to produce and provide fresh and quality food supplies to food processing establishments. During production and transportation, farmers also need to take maximum care to reduce wastage. Hotels, restaurants, and other catering establishments need to add value and provide authentic cuisines to final consumers since they play an indispensable role in the culinary tourism value chain (Ensign, 2001; Porter, 2001; Sims, 2010). Tour operators and travel agents shall also provide adequate information about local gastronomic products and integrate food tourism in their itineraries. Designating a culinary zone in each tourist site is also instrumental since it helps to spread the economic effects of tourism and help to elongate visitors' stay.

Through its value chain, culinary tourism integrates tourism with other economic sectors and thereby creates a multiplier effect. By providing various culinary related experiences, food tourism ignites tourist spending which, in turn, stimulates local economic activities and improves livelihood in rural destinations. In doing so, culinary tourism contributes toward ensuring one of the Millennium Development Goals, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (Roy et al., 2017; Sims, 2010). Moreover, culinary tourism is viewed as an engine in generating job opportunities for the local people including women and youths (Dinis et al., 2019; Grigorova et al., 2016).

Findings of the current study contribute to the body of knowledge as far as culinary tourism development and its value chain are concerned especially in emerging destinations where agriculture is the main economic practice. The study also explicates the nexus between culinary tourism and slow tourism and finally formulates comprehensive culinary tourism multiplier effect and culinary tourism value chain

frameworks relevant to key culinary tourism stakeholders. These frameworks are among the theoretical contributions of the study and they can also be employed in other similar destinations particularly where agriculture is the main economic stay. If these frameworks are properly implemented, culinary tourism does not only improve destinations' economic conditions but also revitalizes the socio-cultural values and thereby help to reimage tourist destinations.

6. Limitation and opportunities for future research

Due to factors that are beyond control, the current study is subject to some limitations that we acknowledge. The absence of prior scientific research and limited secondary data about culinary tourism specific to the study area was a limitation since data triangulation could further enhance the trustworthiness of research findings. However, the researchers have taken a maximum possible care to ensure data reliability by collecting primary data in three major tourist destinations of the region from a relatively large number of key tourism and hospitality stakeholders (Wondirad, 2018). Furthermore, the researchers rigorously analyzed and examined primary data gathered by engaging other researchers (peer debriefing) as a form of triangulation, carefully documented and utilized comprehensive data extracted from participants through in-depth analysis assisted with QDA Miner qualitative data analysis software, version 5.0.28 (Grossoehme, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Noble & Smith, 2015). In light of these limitations, we, therefore, suggest that future studies shall employ a sequential mixed method research approach to comprehensively examine the culinary tourism value chain, its expandability, benefits, and long-term development challenges in the context of agriculture reliant tourist destinations.

Authors' declaration

The authors would like to confirm that this manuscript or its part has never been published before or is not in consideration for publication by other journals and we also do not have any potential conflict to disclose.

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