

Do Local Food Provisions Affect Tourists' Selection Preferences? A case in the Greek Hotel Industry

Ilias Kourkoutas

Solicitor

Dr. George Blanas

TEI of Thessaly, Larissa, Greece

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to explore if and how local food provisions from a Greek hotel affect tourists' hotel selection preferences. More specifically, aims to identify if the introduction of local food in a hotel's menu establish it as the most preferred hotel choice option. Also, it is included an approach of measuring tourists' willingness to pay a price premium for enjoying local food in a Greek hotel. Moreover, this research examines which is the most effective way of introducing local food in a hotel's menu in order to be captured the highest possible price premium from tourists.

The responses of 172 foreign tourists who visit Greece for leisure purposes in a questionnaire survey were analyzed by using descriptive statistics in SPSS.

The findings in general, reveal an extremely positive tourists' attitude towards a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food. Age, marital status, number of children, income, duration of travel, season of trips, destination of trips, hotel rating, perceived quality and past behavior are factors that influence tourists' willingness to pay a price premium for enjoying local food in a Greek hotel. The multivariate findings are expected to inspire efficient methods for capturing the highest possible price premium from tourists.

Keywords: Tourists, Greek, Hotel, Selection, Local food, Price premium

JEL Classification: D12, D22, M21, M31, P42, P46

Introduction

Greece is considered as a desired travel destination for tourists of many different nationalities across the world. Greece seem to be the ideal place for vacation as according to World Travel and Tourism Council's yearly tourism report for Greece (WTTC, 2015), a percentage of 94,1% of total tourism spending came from leisure tourists and only a 5,9% from business tourists. Moreover, the total contribution of travel and tourism to Greek economy was 29,4 billion Euros which represent a percentage of 17,3% of Greek Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The majority of both local and foreign tourists in Greece prefer Greek hotels instead of other accommodation facilities for their staying during traveling (ELSTAT, 2014). So in a competitive national and international environment, Greek hotels have to intensively contribute to the maintenance and eventually the raise of touristic movement across Greece. To achieve this goal, Greek Hotels have to focus on the quality and the value of their provided services to their customers which are according to McDougall and Levesque (2000) the key drivers for customers' satisfaction. Greek hotels are operating in the world's largest industry (Arrifin and Maghzi, 2012) with intense internal and external competition from similar touristic destinations such as

Turkey (ICAP, 2015). This, in relation with the endogenous limitations of Greek hotels which came from a rapid thus haphazard development without long term political and entrepreneurial vision (Papageorgiou, 2008), points the need for Greek hotels to differentiate their service in order to gain a competitive advantage. The beneficial effect of differentiation in the hotel industry is highlighted from Becerra et al. (2013) in their research for Spanish hotels which are strong European competitors for Greek hotels due to the similarities of the two countries (Cohen and Avieli, 2004). To cope with heavy competition and to gain a competitive advantage, hospitality companies have to focus on the improvement of their service quality (Ingram and Daskalakis, 1999).

Mak et al. (2012) highlight the importance for tourism sector to develop an effective interrelation with tourists' food consumption and hospitality choice. The aim of this research is to investigate the possibility of an effective combination of two important areas of travel and tourism sector, the accommodation industry (hotels) and the food industry (local food) and to measure if this can have a beneficial effect to Greek hotels' effort of gaining a competitive advantage. Each year, tourists from across the world come to Greece mostly for holidays and hoteliers put an effort to satisfy them by providing food adjusted to their national cuisines (Cohen and Avieli, 2004). The globalization of touristic movement and the effort of Greek hotels to adjust their menus in order to satisfy their customers' usual culinary habits can be a barrier to the utilization of local food as a source of touristic attraction. This had as a result the ignorance or even the removal of local food from Greek hotels' menu which is a valuable asset that can differentiate a hotel from its competitors (Mak, Lumbers and Eves, 2012).

The consumption of national and local food during travelling is recognized both as a vital function for physical sustenance and as an agreeable pastime and even a mean of pleasure (Henderson, 2009). This comes in line with the newly adopted general tension to anticipate the eating outside of home not only as a vital necessity but also and mainly as an important leisure activity (Rezende and Silva, 2012). Besides if nowadays there is a strong probability for tourists to choose a destination exclusively because of its local food (Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen, 2014), there is a need to investigate if the introduction of local food in Greek hotels can be a crucial factor for tourists' hotel choice. This research's primary objective is first to reveal if the introduction of local food in a hotel's menu established is as the most preferred option. Secondly there is an effort to be identified the price premium that tourists are willing to pay in order to consume local food during their stay in a hotel. The secondary objective of this research is to highlight from a developed by Kim and Eves (2012) motives scale for consuming local food, the most crucial motives for tourists to prefer a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food. Lastly there is an effort for this research to uncover possible barriers that can negatively influence travelers' willingness to consume local food in a Greek hotel.

Literature Review

Hotel Choice

Tourists' behavior towards the choice of a hotel is based on a plethora of criteria that influence their decision (Yavas and Babakus, 2005). For example, Ingram and Daskalakis (1999) argue that prime factors in booking a holiday hotel is the provision of comfortable bedrooms, facilities for children, attractive public areas, bars and restaurants. Ariffin (2013), state that the expectation of authenticity in personal services, the comfort and probably a warm welcome increase customers' satisfaction and therefore can be proved important factors in travelers' hotel choice evaluation process. Customers evaluate these criteria and choose a hotel that has the attributes which fulfill the most or the most important criteria they have set for their staying. Tourists tend to search for a hotel that provides cognitive (e.g. price, food service) but also affective (e.g. excitement) or sensory (e.g. overall atmosphere) attributes which can satisfy utilitarian needs and provide functional benefits or value (Kim and Perdue, 2013).

Local Food in a Hotel's Menu

For a hospitality business the most important objective is the maximization of its profits (Becerra et al., 2013). The purpose of this research is to demonstrate if and how this can be achieved through the use of local food. Considering local food, a possible mission for a hotel can be the establishment of a local food oriented branding strategy which can attract new customers and increase their loyalty (Ekinici et al, 2011). The importance of food provision to tourists is often mentioned in literature and tourism in many researches has been proved strongly related with food consumption (Guzman and Canizares, 2012). The strong relationship between food and tourism is supported by a wide range of terms such as cuisine tourism, food tourism, gourmet tourism, gastronomy tourism and culinary tourism (Guzman and Canizares, 2012). Besides, recent evidences seem to confirm the existence of a strong consumer demand for locally produced food (Campbell et al., 2014).). So, Greek hotels by introducing local food in their menu will be able to offer their customers fresher, higher quality local produce and emphasize in the locality of their menu which for restaurants has been proved a profitable policy (Sharma et al., 2014).

Price Premium

It has been supported that the unique characteristics of local food that cause food differentiation in relation with consumers' perception of its higher quality, increase consumers' willingness to pay for it (Campbell et al., 2014). More specifically, consumers usually perceive local food to be of higher quality because they consider it as more fresh, more nutritious and of better taste and therefore accept as justified a higher price for it (Campbell et al., 2014). Of course consumers who are eager to taste local food and are willing to pay a price premium they expect that its value would be precisely adjusted to the percentage of this price premium (Miroso and Lawson, 2012). On the other hand, even if customers have the same opinion of the quality ranking of a product they are not sharing the same willingness to pay for quality improvements of this product due to their differences in

other decision influencing factors such as income (Becerra et al., 2013). This research presents an approach of measuring hotel customers' willingness to pay a price premium for consuming local food and therefore their price consciousness in the inclusion of local food to total room price.

Willingness to Pay (WTP) Construct for Local Food

In hospitality research literature there is a recognizable knowledge gap considering the relationship between local food and consumers' willingness to pay for tasting it (Campbell et al., 2014). In order to measure the price premium that tourists are willing to pay for consuming local food and staying in a Greek hotel that provides it, this research use the construct willingness to pay (WTP) for staying in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food in comparison to a hypothetical price of a similar hotel that serves conventional equivalent food products as Campbell et al. (2014) propose. Willis et al. (2013), by the use of a similar construct, were able to demonstrate that average households in South Carolina are willing to pay 11,68% more for locally grown produce in relation to non-locally grown. In this research the questions that serve the purpose of measurement tourists' willingness to pay for consuming local food and for staying in a Greek hotel that provides it, were developed based on the work of Skuras and Vakrou (2002). More specifically participants were asked to point an acceptable for them absolute price varying from 100€ to 160€ per night for staying in a Greek hotel that provides exclusively local food as an answer to a hypothetical scenario in which a price of 100€ was assumed as a room price of an otherwise similar hotel that serves globalized-conventional food.

Theoretical Background

Research Model RESEARCH MODEL

This research concentrates on the critical attributes as Rhee and Yang (2015) propose which are supported by the literature and seem to influence both hotel choice and local food consumption. In addition the researcher attempted a categorization based on the work of Mak et al. (2012), Kim et al. (2009) and Campbell et al. (2014). More specifically, Mak et al. (2012), in their research about the factors that influence tourists' food consumption constructed a model that divides these factors to three main categories: tourist's factors, food in the destination factors and destination environment factors. Furthermore they conclude that cultural/religious influence, socio-demographic factors, motivational factors, food related personality traits and exposure effect/past experience, influence tourists' food consumption as it is presented to their complete model below (figure 1).

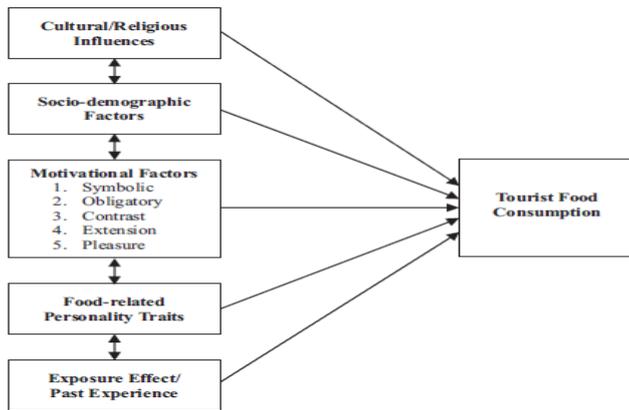


Figure 1: Model of Tourist Food Consumption (Mak et al., 2012)

Kim et al. (2009) investigate the interrelations between the demographic, motivational and psychological factors that influence local food consumption in a destination and demonstrate a model for measuring the influence that each factor has to local food consumption at a destination as it is presented below (figure 2).

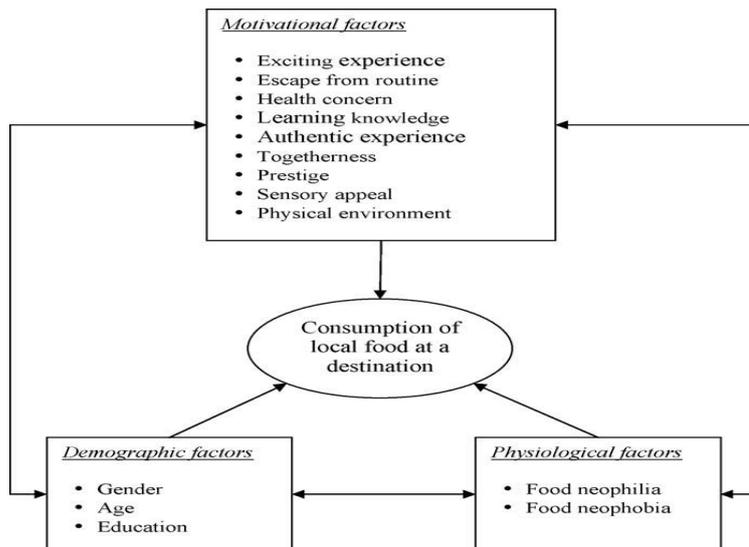


Figure 2: Model of Local Food Consumption at a destination (Kim et al., 2009)

Moreover, Campbell et al. (2014) in their research for factors that influence local food consumption and willingness to pay a price premium for it, highlight the importance of specific local food attributes at the form of product involvement and perceived product information on consumers' decision to favor it against conventional food. The model of Campbell et al. is presented below (figure 3).

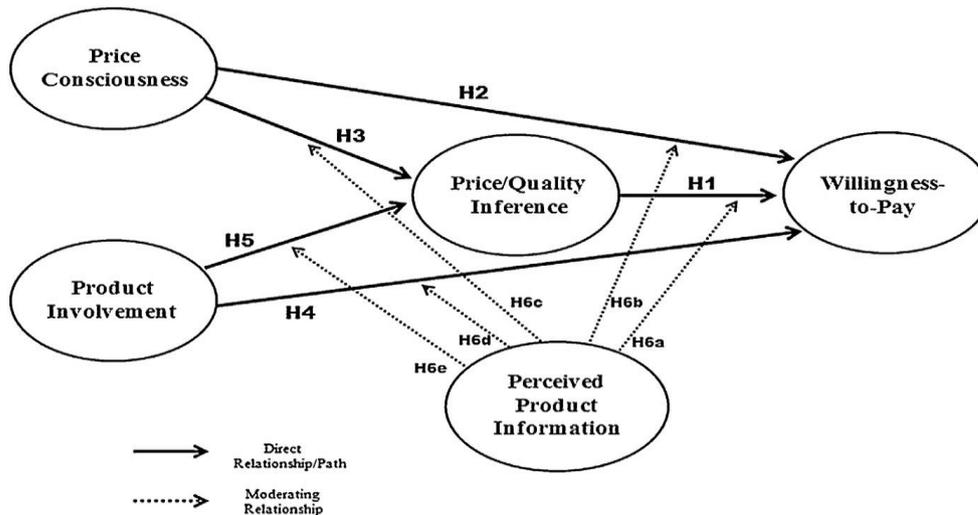


Figure 3: Model of factors that influence Local Food Consumption (Campbell et al., 2014)

This research is an approach of incorporating elements of the above presented models while adding others based on the literature in order to develop a reliable model. The model that was developed for this research is presented in the appendix (figure 4).

Factors that can influence tourists' hotel decision process grouped into 4 categories: Socio-demographic factors, Travel factors, Local food factors and Personal factors. Motivational factors and barriers that influence local food consumption in a hotel are also included but are examined separately in this research.

Factors that Influence Tourist's Decisions

Socio-demographic factors as Mak et al. (2012) argue assist in the development of the tourists' profile and include Nationality, Age, Religion, Gender, Marital status, Number of children, Education level and income.

Travel factors are consisted of four attributes: Duration of trips, Season of trips, Travel destination and Usual hotel choice

Local food factors include five attributes related with local food characteristics as Campbell et al. (2014) propose: Local food quality, Local food oriented meals, Local food category, Local food serving type and Perception of the term local food.

Personal factors include only the existence of a Preexistent positive attitude towards tasting local food at a trip destination. For identifying the effect of the above factors were designed 16 hypotheses to be tested as are presented below.

H1: Tourists willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on their nationality.

H2: Age has a direct and positive influence to tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food.

H3: Tourists willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on their gender.

H4: Marriage participants are more willing to choose a hotel that serves exclusively local food in its menu and to pay a higher price premium for it.

H5: Participants with more children are more willing to choose a hotel that serves exclusively local food in its menu and to pay a higher price premium for it.

H6: The education level of the participants has a direct and positive relationship with their willingness to pay a price premium for tasting local food in a hotel that serves it.

H7a: The personal income of the participants has a direct and positive relationship with their willingness to pay a price premium for staying in a hotel that serves exclusively local food.

H7b: The family income of the participants has a direct and positive relationship with their willingness to pay a price premium for staying in a hotel that serves exclusively local food.

H8: Tourists willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on the duration of their trips.

H9: Tourists willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on the season of their trips.

H10: Tourists willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on the destination of their trips.

H11: Tourists who prefer higher class hotels in star rating system are more willing to choose a hotel that provides exclusively local food in its menu and to pay a higher price premium for it.

H12: Participants who are more likely to consume local food during their trips are more willing to pay a higher price premium for staying in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food.

H13: Tourists who believe that Greek local food is of higher quality than globalized are more willing to choose a hotel that provides local food in its menu and to pay a higher price premium for it.

H14: Tourists willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on differences on their level of desire to consume local food in a specific included in total room price meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner).

H15: Tourists willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on differences on their level of desire to consume a specific local food product.

H16a: Tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food varies depending on their geographical definition of local food.

H16b: Tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food varies depending on their distance definition of local food.

Motivational Factors

There are a number of factors that motivates travelers to consume food and in this research there is an effort to identify travelers' main motives to consume local food. As Bjork and Kauppinen-Raisanen (2014) argue, with the use of local food and its higher quality even an ordinary meal can transform to an extraordinary culinary-gastronomic experience. The possibility of gaining new and unique experiences from a travel destination with a local food oriented attitude is considered as a major motive for tourists to choose a destination which will cover their expectations (Robinson and Getz, 2014).

This research used a motives' scale, developed by Kim and Eves (2012) who conclude in a number of motives which are the most significant to the orientation of consumers' behavior towards local food.

Inhibitory Factors-Barriers

The introduction of local food in a Greek hotel's menu is a differentiated strategy based on the provision of differentiated and of higher quality food products. This strategy however can be less effective considering a number of barriers that exists in literature and can influence negatively tourists' willingness to pay a price premium in order to consume differentiated food.

Research Method

Sample and Procedure

In this survey the respondents were approached inside the Greek airport with the most tourists' arrivals and departures according to Hellenic Statistic Service, "Eleutherios Venizelos" airport of Athens, during the last week of May 2015 and asked to answer to a questionnaire in English language. It was the opportunity to contact with foreign travelers (Alonso and O'Neill, 2010) the main reason for choosing the above airport in Athens. Tourists were randomly selected every approximately 10 minutes in combination with an effort to respect a balance between socio-demographic groups (strata), adjusted to the only reliable available data concerning tourists that visit Greece from Hellenic Statistical Service. A total summary of 450 tourists were approached and only the 172 questionnaires were usable for further analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Firstly, by using SPSS and frequency tests this research examine the effect that local food provisions had to tourists' hotel selection preferences based on the work of Guzman and Canizares (2012) who used frequencies to investigate culinary tourism in Cordoba. Secondly, a large number of independent sample t-tests and ANOVA tests were conducted to identify if there is a significant difference between the following socio-demographic, travel, local food and personal factors that affects tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food in its included to room price meals. This approach was inspired from the study of Arrifin and Maghzi (2012) who investigate with a number of independent t-tests and ANOVA differences between socio-demographic groups considering their level of expectations towards hotel hospitality. Thirdly, it is examined by using independent samples t-tests the moderating effect of Greek local food attributes on tourists willingness to pay between groups in which revealed significant price premium differences as Campbell et al. (2014) propose . Lastly, it is presented a statistical analysis for tourists' motives and barriers for preferring or not to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food.

Results

A percentage of 77,9% of the participants pointed that they agree or strongly agree that a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food in its included to room price would be for them the most preferred

hotel choice option. On the other hand only a percentage of 5,3% strongly disagree or disagree with the above statement.

Considering the influence of each factor to tourists' choices and testing the above mentioned hypothesis, a synopsis of the findings is presented below.

Differences that can derive from different nationality of tourists could not be tested in this research due to a limited number of other than British nationalities in the sample.

Age has a direct and positive influence to tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food. So, H2 is confirmed.

Religion has no significant influence on tourists WTP for staying in a Greek hotel that serves local food.

Gender has no significant influence on tourists WTP. So, hypothesis H3 has to be rejected.

Marriage participants are more willing to choose a hotel that serves exclusively local food in its menu and to pay a higher price premium for it. Thus, hypothesis H4 is confirmed. Participants with more children are willing pay a higher price premium in order to stay in a hotel that serves exclusively local food in its menu. So, hypothesis H5 is confirmed.

Education level of the participants doesn't influence their willingness to pay a price premium for tasting local food in a hotel that serves it. So H6 must be rejected.

Personal income of the participants has a direct and positive relationship with their willingness to pay a price premium for staying in a hotel that serves exclusively local food. Thus, hypothesis H7a is confirmed.

Family income of the participants has a direct and positive relationship with their willingness to pay a price premium for staying in a hotel that serves exclusively local food. Thus, hypothesis H7b is confirmed.

Tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on the duration of their trips. So, hypothesis H8 is confirmed.

Tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on the season of their trips. So, hypothesis H9 is confirmed.

Tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on the destination of their trips. So, hypothesis H10 is confirmed.

Tourists who prefer higher class hotels in star rating system are more willing to choose a hotel that provides exclusively local food in its menu and to pay a price premium for it. So, hypothesis H11 is confirmed.

Participants who are more likely to consume local food during their trips are willing to pay a higher price premium for staying in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food. So, hypothesis H12 is confirmed.

Also, a percentage of 90,1% of the participants prefer local food to be served as fresh unpacked produce when only 9,9% prefer it to be served in packaged form.

Tourists who believe that local food is of higher quality than globalized are more willing to choose a hotel that provides local food in its menu and to pay a higher price premium for it and so, hypothesis H13 is confirmed.

Tourists demonstrate a high level of desire for tasting in a Greek hotel meals that are consisted exclusively of local ingredients with mean scores 4,23/5 for breakfast 3,94 for dinner and 3,84/5 for lunch.

Tourists demonstrate a high level of desire for tasting all local food categories that can be available in a Greek hotel with mean scores 4,16/5 for seafood products, 4,08/5 for dairy products, 4,03/5 for fruits and vegetables, 3,73/5 for bakery products and 3,70/5 for meat products.

The findings didn't reveal significant differences on tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food depending on their geographical or distance definition of local food. So the hypotheses H16a and H16b has to be rejected

The moderating effect of local food

By using independent samples t-tests in SPSS, this research is trying to reveal if between tourists' groups in which there is a significantly different percentage of WTP for local food, there are also differences considering the type of meal or the food category which tourists are more willing to consume.

The findings demonstrate some differences for tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food, depending on differences on their level of desire to consume local food in a specific included in total room price meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner). So, hypothesis H14 is confirmed. Also, tourists' willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food differs depending on differences on their level of desire to consume a specific local food product. So, hypothesis 15 is confirmed.

Motivational factors

The motive which had the highest mean score in a 5-point likert scale was "Local food contains a lot of fresh ingredients produced in a local area" (4,24) followed by "It is important to me that the local food I eat tastes good" with a mean score of 4,17 and "The taste of local food in its original countries/regions is different to the taste of same food in own my country/hometown" with a mean score of 3,95. On the other hand the motives which had the lowest mean scores were "Tasting local food in an original place is an authentic experience" with a mean score of 2,67, "Experiencing local food makes me see the things that I don't normally see" with a mean score of 2,83 and "Tasting local food makes me not worry about routine".

The motives which had the highest correlation coefficient ($r=4,29$) and therefore the stronger correlation with WTP were "Tasting local food in its traditional setting is a special experience" and "Tasting local food in its original place is an authentic experience" followed by "Experiencing local food gives me an opportunity to increase my knowledge about different cultures" with a correlation coefficient $r=4,27$. On the other hand the motives which had the lowest correlation coefficient and thus the weaker correlation with WTP were "I want to give advice about local food experiences to people who want to travel" with a correlation coefficient of $r=0,162$, followed by "Tasting local food helps me to relax" with a correlation coefficient of $r=0,190$ and "It is important to me that the local food I eat looks nice" with a correlation coefficient of $r=0,210$. Finally, there is no link between the motive "Tasting local food makes me not worry about routine" and WTP with a correlation coefficient of $r=0,139$ ($p=0,071$)

Barriers

The barrier which had the highest mean score (3,98) was "I prefer to eat local food in places where locals eat" followed by "I prefer to consume products that have ISO certification" with a mean score of 3,16 and "I don't like my food choices during traveling to be limited" with a mean score of 3,03. On the other hand the barriers which had the lowest mean scores were "I am afraid that I will get sick if I consume Greek local food" with a mean score of 1,54, followed by "Greek local food looks too weird to eat" with a mean score of 1,67 and "I am not confident to consume new and unfamiliar food" with a mean score of 1,54.

The barriers which had the highest negative correlation coefficient ($r=-4,48$) and therefore the stronger negative correlation with WTP were "It is more expensive", followed by "I don't know anything about what Greek local food contains" with a correlation coefficient $r=-0,315$ and "I am afraid that I will get sick if I consume Greek local food" with a correlation coefficient $r=-0,305$. On the other hand the barriers which had the lowest negative correlation coefficient and thus the weaker negative correlation with WTP were "I prefer to consume products that have ISO certification" with a correlation coefficient of $r=0,162$, followed by "Tasting local food helps me to relax" with a correlation coefficient of $r=-0,163$, followed by "I don't believe that the food served in Greek hotels as local is indeed local" with a correlation coefficient of $r=-0,167$ and "I am not confident to consume new and unfamiliar food" with a correlation coefficient of $r=-182$. Also, it was found that the barrier "During my trips in Greece, I want to be able to consume specific foods products even if these are out of season for local produce" has a weak positive correlation with WTP with a correlation coefficient $r=0,240$. Finally, there is no link between WTP and the barriers "I prefer to eat local food in places where locals eat" ($r=0,141$, $p=0,067$), "I am very particular about the foods I eat" ($r=0,127$, $p=0,098$) and "I prefer to eat in HACCP certified establishments" ($r=-0,143$, $p=0,063$).

Discussion

The findings of this research indicate that tourists are willing to prefer a hotel that provides exclusively local food in its meals. From 172 participants only 2 selected the "not prefer it" option for staying in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food in its

included to room price meals. Moreover, tourists demonstrate their willingness to pay an average premium of 19,4% above a Greek hotel's original price if it is to serve exclusively local instead of standardized globalized-conventional food in its meals.

Considering participants' socio-demographic factors examined by this research, age, marital status, number of children, personal income and family income were found as influential factors for tourists' willingness to pay for local food in a Greek hotel. On the other hand, significant differences of the percentages of price premium based on gender and education level were not found.

Considering participants' travel factors examined by this research the duration, the destination and the season of tourists' trips in Greece and also their usual hotel star rating choice found that influence their willingness to pay in order to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food.

Considering the factors that are related with Greek local food as a product, tourists strongly accepted its higher quality than standardized globalized-conventional. Also, it seems that a precise definition of local food is not significant in tourists' willingness to pay. Moreover, tourists expressed a strong preference for local food to be served as fresh unpacked produce instead packaged forms.

Also, it can be highlighted that tourists from groups that accepted a higher price premium were significantly more eager to taste local food in their lunch and dinner when for local food in breakfast weren't found many significant differences between groups. Also, a significantly higher desire for local seafood products was revealed for tourists who accepted a higher price premium when for bakery products, fruits and vegetables, dairy products and meat products weren't found many significant differences between groups.

Finally, although this research is only a snapshot considering the scope of its area and the number of factors that influence tourists' decisions towards hotel hospitality and food consumption, presents a useful multivariate amount of information towards tourists' general attitude so to be used as a preliminary tool for predicting tourists' actual behavior towards a Greek hotel that provides local food.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study revealed that there is a strong willingness to foreign leisure tourists for consuming local instead of standardized-globalized conventional food during their trips in Greece. So, Greek hotels' owners and managers may use these findings in order to design a local food oriented strategy as a food service differentiation strategy, capable of giving them a competitive advantage in the middle of an extremely competitive internal and external environment.

As a food service differentiation strategy, the introduction of local food in a Greek hotel's menu and even the presence of other food service organizations that provides local food nearby Greek hotels seem to have a strongly positive effect on tourists' hotel choice process. The fact that from 172 participants only 2 participants answer that they would not prefer to stay in a Greek hotel that serves exclusively local food is a good indicator for the general positive

image perception of Greek local food. Moreover, hotel managers and owners for achieving the most effective use of local food considering their profitability, can focus on the socio-demographic groups such as for example marriage versus single tourists that are willing to pay a significantly higher percentage of price premium in order to enjoy local food in Greek hotels. Hotel managers and owners will be better prepared to estimate the level of influence that many parameters, as for example the hotel evaluating performance on the star rating system (3,4* or 5,5*) or the season of the trips, have on tourists willingness to pay a higher or a lower percentage of price premium for tasting local food in a Greek hotel.

The results revealed that all categories of Greek local food (bakery products, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, meat products, seafood products) are welcomed by tourists with a high average level of agreement between 3,70/5 for bakery products and 4,16/5 for seafood products. Also, tourists would like to consume meals that are consisted exclusively of local ingredients in every included to a hotel total room price (breakfast, lunch, dinner) meal with a high level of agreement between 4,23/5 for breakfast and 3,84/5 for lunch. The statistical analysis above gives the opportunity to Greek hotels' owners and managers, considering that each hotel has its own different food service and meal provision policy, to use the introduction of local food in the most effective way for their hotel.

Limitations

The findings of the present study is only a modest contribution to limited literature on the identification process of the most efficient way to introduce local food in a Greek hotel's menu. The limited sources in the literature about the interrelation of hospitality and local food areas were an important initial barrier for the construct of this research. Although all the questions that were used were based on previous researches, complete models of measuring the influence of local food to a hotel choice or explore tourists' willingness to pay for staying in a hotel that serves local food, the researcher wasn't able to find. So, the study may lack in robustness. An inherent limitation of this study was its sampling frame. The sample size of the participants who fully and correctly filled the distributed questionnaire was only 172 non Greek tourists, involving 151 British tourists and only 21 of other nationalities. It had to be reported that tourists of other than British nationalities and also parents who were travelled with their infant or underage children were suspicious and in general negative about participating in this research. This has to be considered in every future tourism research and probably to try a different approach of the above groups in other circumstances. Thus, even there was an effort of controlling the randomness of participants' selection between socio-demographic groups, the generalization of the findings of this study is not particularly strong even though these may be considered as relatively more reliable for British tourists.

There is also a seasonal limitation because the survey took place in the last week of May 2015 and thus, tourists who visit Greece during other seasons are not included or included only indirectly if they had performed another trip in Greece during the last 12 months. Another limitation was the use of the construct willingness to pay a price premium in the form of absolute prices above a predefined price

instead of percentages which were also used in similar researches (Campbell et al., 2014). This may raise issues about the adjustments that hotels' managers have to make considering their hotels' original price if they want to introduce local food and therefore to use the findings of this research.

Another limitation comes from the fact that the room prices in Greek hotels vary depending on a number of factors as duration of staying, trip season, hotel star level or location and so it was impossible for this research to conclude in a reliable average room price for Greek hotels to be used as the predefined room price. So it was used the price of 100 Euros which considered in a pilot test as the most convenient for participants to make their calculations. Another limitation derive from the existence of a large number of criteria that influence tourists' final hotel choice and willingness to pay a price premium such as value, location, sleep quality, rooms, cleanliness, and service as Rhee and Yang (2015) support. Also Kim and Perdue (2013) state that a combination of cognitive (e.g., price, service), affective (e.g., comfortable feeling, entertainment and sensory (e.g., room quality, overall atmosphere) attributes influence tourists' hotel choice. In this research all these attributes are assumed equals and the only difference between two otherwise similar hotels is that one serves local instead of standardized globalized-conventional food in its included to total room price meals. Certainly a future comparative research that includes all influencing hotel attributes along with the existence of local food will be more accurate considering its exact effect. So, a more general tourists' sample, in conjunction with field studies as Robinson and Gentz (2014) support, is needed to further validate the findings of this research.

Future Research

This research targeted only on tourists who were waiting their departure flight for their origin country or for other Greek destinations inside the international airport of Athens in order to capture a more general picture of their attitude towards local food..

So, a broader future research could use a larger sample of respondents and include many different Greek airports in order to compare the findings. Also, on the other hand, in a future research the basis of this study can be minimized and become more focused so to capture tourists' opinions in a specific Greek region. This, because in the most of Greece's regions there are hotels that host foreign tourists and also a number of farmers, markets, local producers that are capable of providing large numbers of differentiated local food products. Moreover, it will contribute to identify the interrelations between hotels, food service organizations and local producers in a specific area so to reveal possible strengths and weaknesses considering the introduction of local food in a Greek hotel's menu, with a further aim to increase tourists' satisfaction and minimize their concerns. Future research could also investigate the attitude of tourists towards specific food products such as Greek tomato or Greek cheese and not only towards specific food categories and even ask them to choose between several local food products, as Willis et al. (2013) also proposed, to identify which is the most critical to influence tourists' nutritional and hospitality choices in Greece. Moreover, in cooperation with Greek hoteliers, a future survey may focus on one specific hotel and ask the hosting tourists based on what they eat if

they would like it to be consisted exclusively of local ingredients and what price premium are willing to accept. Also there are many additional research questions that can be investigated by future studies as for example, What influence has the introduction of local food in a Greek hotel on tourists' level of satisfaction? What impact has the introduction of local food to the development of a local territorial brand?

The usefulness of a research in a limited sourced area such as hotel hospitality and local food as a valuable starting point it is also highlighted by Alonso and O' Neill (2010) in their research about the possibility for small hotel enterprises of gaining a competitive advantage with the use of locally produced food in U.S.A.. Also future research in order to provide more insightful information for hotels' managers and owners can focus exclusively on cost/benefit relationship of local food provision in a hotel's menu and furthermore can explore if it differs between different types of Greek hotels. These differences can derive from a variety of factors such as Greek hotels' quality levels, location or even its strategic management. Also it will be equally useful and probably more practical to be investigated in each Greek region separately, the existence and the credibility of an effective local food supply chain, as Jones, Comfort and Hillier (2004) demonstrate for local markets in U.K., which will supply hotels with the appropriate amount of local food products in order to cover demand.

In addition, future studies may replicate this research so to be included tourists who visit Greece for other than leisure purposes such as business, family or testimonial because in the literature of tourism area differences on the purpose of stay, entail different attitude for travelers. For example, Arrifin and Maghzi (2012) state that holiday travelers have more expectations from a hotel in relation to those who travel for business purposes. Finally the findings of future research can be compared with the presented findings and therefore provide hotels' owners and managers with a more complete picture of tourists' attitude towards Greek local food on their travel destinations, in order to be able to predict possible advantages.

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Figure 4: Research model

