An exploration of food tourism and destination experience along the Wild Atlantic Way.

Authors: *Ivor O' Donovan, Michael Quinn & Anne Marie Lally (Waterford IT).*

Food is an essential part of Ireland's tourist experience and is a major draw for inbound tourists; food is sustenance, however it can also appeal to visitors looking for authentic experiences. Food experiences can help to create, enhance or reinforce a sense of place; for some it is a primary motivator for selection of destination; for others it is considered peripheral to experience but a necessary part of travel. Food can also provide social opportunities for visitors to engage with local people, to experience and exchange information about food and the destination (Hede, 2008). This paper seeks to establish a position from which primary research can be conducted into how tourists experience the Wild Atlantic Way through food. The aim of the research is to identify the variables that are required to evaluate to role of food as an element of the overall destination experience and to explore methodologies that would allow researchers effectively capture visitors' perceptions of food experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way.

The Wild Atlantic Way provides a great variety of opportunities for tourists to consume Irish food as a part of their overall destination experience. The route is created and designed to blend experience with landscape; and whilst tourists are unified by a set of common requirements, it appears that Wild Atlantic Way attracts a diverse range of visitors, using various modes of travel, in search of many different kinds of destination experience. A review of literature and insights from sectoral experts is to be undertaken so as to establish the elements are most critical to the authentic food experiences so as to build a framework that will enable the researchers clarify a methodology to audit of the behaviours, attitudes and food experiences of tourists along the route.

It is proposed that this paper will allow for the presentation of a conceptual framework of the elements of authentic food experiences and propose an evaluation methodology to evaluate tourist food experiences. It is anticipated that the framework and ensuing operationalisation of the research will give rise to practical recommendations for food tourism stakeholders that will inform best practice along the Wild Atlantic Way thereby adding value for consumers, tourism stakeholders and destinations

Introduction

The focus is the paper is to establish a position from which primary research can be conducted into how tourists experience food and perceive food experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way (for the purposes of expedience and repetition Wild Atlantic way is abbreviated to WAW). The aim of the research is to identify the variables that visitors use to evaluate food experiences and to explore methodologies that will allow researchers to effectively capture visitors' perceptions of food experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way. The research framework will be developed by combining literature and practitioner insights to develop a conceptual representation of the elements of food experiences that will guide the design of a methodology to will allow for a meaningful appreciation of the behaviours, attitudes and food experiences of tourists along the route.

In order to set the context for this study is first necessary to by way of introduction to discuss the position of food and food tourism within contemporary tourism and to establish how food experience has become a central aspect of destination experience, in particular along the WAW. Over the past decades food has evolved far beyond its traditional role to fulfil physiological needs and has positioned itself increasingly at the centre of many emotional and social aspects of our lives. More than ever food permeates our conversation and lifestyles; in a postmodern world the conventions of food and its consumption have evolved, for many food is increasingly aligned with identity and food experiences are readily shared, pictured, blogged and tweeted. Both technology and a heightened focus on food credentials encourage food consumers to rank and rate experiences, to discuss and display food perceptions on an almost continuous basis. The term '*foodie*' has democratised the worlds of gastronomy and gourmets, the value of food experiences (Getz & Robinson, 2014) is realised by consumers when they are both willing and equipped to critically appraise their food experiences.

Food experiences are increasingly acknowledged as a critical element of destination positioning; food is a major draw for tourists; it is a vehicle for the ingestion of culture and place; it can add to the competitive advantage of tourism destinations by underpinning differentiation based on the calibre of food experiences offered (Hall, Mitchell, Scott & Sharples, 2008). Food appeals to visitors looking for authentic experiences and is therefore defined as essential part of Ireland's tourist experience. Food experiences can help to create, enhance or reinforce a sense of place and for some it is even a primary factor in destination choice. Food experiences impact upon the cognitive, psychological cultural, individual and collective behaviours among tourists (Fischer, 1988). Food experiences provide social opportunities for visitors to engage with local people, to experience and exchange information about food and the destination (Hede, 2008). The growth in appreciation of food experiences as part of tourism has led to a repositioning of food providers within tourism; growers, producers, artisans, hospitality practitioners, destinations marketers, policy makers and academics have collectively come to recognise the interdependencies between food and tourism, and have therefore sought to foster collaborative structures to leverage and promote food experiences as part of destination experiences (Hall, 2004). Authenticity in food experiences can enhance the collaborative potential of partnerships among food, tourism and agrarian stakeholders; it provides tourists with an opportunity to connect food experience to the authentic living culture of the hinterlands and enhances both destination perception and destination experience. Food also provides important opportunities for regional economic activity and can be used to engender strong visual representations of agrarian and artisan heritage within our society, in particular via opportunities for traditional places of food production to become vibrant places of food consumption and food experience (Everett & Slocum, 2013). These themes of behaviour, authenticity, partnership, the merging of food production and consumption within food tourism will be discussed in greater detail in the body of this work.

The WAW was launched in 2014 to package the west of Ireland experience as a tourism route of international standing, comparable to the great driving routes of the world. The route is over 2000km long; passing through nine counties and three provinces, the route is supplemented by 159 discovery points, these discovery points comprise of distinct sites, large and small, each chosen for their potential to offer visitors an authentic and intimate experience of the natural and wild landscape and seascape (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). The route was developed and funded by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland in conjunction with local and regional stakeholders. The route is created and designed to attract a wide range of tourists; and whilst tourists are likely to have some common requirements, it appears that *Wild Atlantic Way* attracts a diverse range of visitors, using various modes of travel, in search of many different kinds of destination experience. Due to its span, topography and diversity *The* WAW provides a great variety of opportunities for tourists to consume

Irish food as a part of their overall destination experience. The route has an excellent food offering and a strong reputation for artisan food production which provides a strong product base; in addition there exists a great variety of food service options along the WAW, ranging along a continuum of food vans, bistro's and cafes to hotels, hostelry's and fine dining restaurants, contributing to tourists experience along with exposure to native people, producers and produce.

It is this relationship between tourist, experience and destination is a topic of considerable interest for Wild Atlantic Way stakeholders, as food has the ability to enhance positive outcomes for tourists and also to augment the economic sustainability of destinations and local communities. *The* WAW has received much infrastructural investment and the development focus going forward will invariably concentrate on the '*experiential*' development of the destination offerings, of which food and food offerings are key components. Fáilte Ireland '*Food Tourism Activity Plan 2014-2016*' (Fáilte Ireland, 2013) places specific importance on the need to deliver authentic food experiences and it is this objective that the proposed research will seek to complement. The research question this project ultimately strives to address is whether food stakeholders are cognisant of the evaluative criteria and perceptions of visitors with regard to food experiences along the *WAW*. Is the *WAW* delivering upon it promise of authentic food experiences? It is proposed that the findings of such exploratory research would contribute insights toward enabling effective evaluation and continuous improvement of food experiences along the *Wild Atlantic Way* and is therefore well aligned to both economic and strategic priorities.

In examining the relationship between food, tourism and destination experience along the WAW it is first necessary to explore the elements and characteristics of food experiences. The work will firstly consider the interacted themes if food imagery, authenticity, experience and food environment and explore how these elements influence customer perceptions of food experience.

Exploring the elements of Food experience

Food Imagery

It is often stated that we eat with our eyes and judge books by their covers; both testaments to the increasing reality that consumers frequently make purchase and destination decision based on the promises presented by imagery. The relationship between image, perception and destination is a subject that has been consistently measured in a variety of settings, it is accepted that image is formed by the interaction between cognitive attributes and affective attributes of products and services (Dichter, 1985; Mazursky & Jacoby, 1986; Stern & Krakover, 1993). Cognition refers to thinking and awareness, it is the set of processes that determine how we make sense of, perceive and make judgements in the selection products and services. Affective attributes refer to feelings and emotions, or what is termed the volitional characteristics, that determine behaviour. Contextualised destination image is a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive and affective dimensions (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Stern & Krakover, 1993). Studies that have explored the role and influence of destination image in tourist behaviour consistently identify destination image as a key component of destination loyalty. Food image has also been identified as a significant factor in motivating tourist behaviour (Sims, 2009). Destinations that incorporate food imagery attract tourists and tourists are more likely to seek to consume destination foods with strong positive images (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Stronger positive food imagery in destination positioning re-affirms the link between food and place and as such serves as a powerful force offering visitors a way to experience destinations. A notable example of linking destination development and food through imagery and branding is West Cork, where the *Fuchsia* brand and striking artisanal imagery of products such as *Clonakilty Black Pudding* and *Gubbeen Farm House*

products are particularly interesting examples of these phenomena. These products and the hinterlands in which they are located have enjoyed sustainable growth arising from partnerships in branding and imagery that have assisted the destination and the product develop market image, attract new visitors and thus boost economic sustainability in the long term (Ilbery et al., 2003). Both products have served to create and reinforce the image of the region because they can be linked to the landscape, locality and production methods in a way that tourists can identify with and want to experience. In addition consumers are quick to identify with the authentic and artisanal nature of such products adding to perceptions of purity and attractiveness of West Cork as a destination. Imagery linking product and destination stimulates consumption intentions among tourists. In particular cognitive associations engendered by imagery, leading to a perception of socially sustainable enterprise acts as a further attraction because it enables visitors to cast themselves in the role of the "*good*" and "*responsible*" tourists who care about the destinations they are visiting (Sims, 2009).

Fáilte Ireland (2014) has completed a comprehensive body of work as a result of in-depth market research analysing domestic and international tourist's perceptions of Ireland through the prisms of food, image, and destination. The elements are illustrated in Figure 1.0, through the medium of "*Irelands Food Story Marketing Tool Kit*" which places particular emphasis on demonstrating the potential of food and food tourism along the *WAW*. The toolkit constructs Ireland's food narrative through six interrelated themes of "*simple and fresh, sense of place, local rules, warm people, new news and memorable experiences*". The themes are distilled exposing the characteristics of domestic and international market segments in relation to food, destination and experience. The toolkit places food imagery as a conduit to tell food stories, articulate themes and build desire for food experiences. It is notable that in contemporary tourism food imagery is both a trigger for destination choice but also a resultant outcome of tourist experiences. User generated imagery of food and food experiences are some of the most commonly shared elements of consumer post-experience interactions about destination experiences

Fig.1.0 Irelands Food Story Toolkit (Source Fáilte, Ireland, 2015)

Authenticity is an all-encompassing adjective that is variously defined in dictionaries to mean *real or genuine, accurate, pure, credible, trustworthy,* to name but a few. In its most basic incarnation, authenticity in the context of tourism can be described as *"escaping from the pressures of one's home"* *society in order to search for more "authentic" experiences* (Cohen, 2010; p.33). The conundrum for those who study and practice tourism is the more that we try to understand the nature of authenticity, the more nebulous the concept seems to become, themes such *as identity, heritage, provenance, ambience and sense of place* serve to illustrate its complexity; Taylor (2001: p.8) highlights this fact stating that *"there are at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it"*. There are two fundamental principles that can be applied in order to open a dialogue in relation to authenticity, firstly it is a primary driver in tourist motivation when selecting destination and secondly authenticity is very much determined by experience. If we apply the term *"experience"* as a means to understand the nature of authenticity in a tourism setting, three perspectives may be demonstrated to understand the tourist and quest for authenticity; these are objective, constructive and existential.

Objective Authenticity is based upon the premise that tourists take an epistemological approach, one in which the meanings or authenticity of place and culture is conveyed and interpreted via a series of toured objects (Wang, 1999). Sims (2009) describes the authenticity of objectivism as consisting of a static understanding of place and culture. Constructive authenticity is more symbolic in nature and therefore renders authenticity as variable, thus the genuineness of a toured object is socially constructed though the application of interpretation as a means to present a narrative (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), in this sense things appear authentic *"not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers"* (Wang, 1999: p.356). Existential Authenticity Wang (1999); Cohen (2010) illustrate a more nuanced postmodern understanding of authenticity, one which does not rely on the authenticity of toured objects and attractions. It is based on the idea of an *"authentic self-"*. In this context existential authenticity is described as a process of *"being in touch with one's inner self, knowing one's self, having a sense of one's own identity and then living in accord with one's sense of oneself"* (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006: p. 300). This is what Sims (2009) describes a state of conciseness in which we develop and existential understanding of authenticity not to objects or attractions themselves, but as a response that a particular tourism experience generates in the tourist.

The notions of authenticity as expressed suggest that tourists seek authenticity of place and culture in the context of three interconnected perspectives. In its objective incarnation authenticity can be expressed as a set tangible elements or reference points tourists use when selecting destinations; for example the numerous built heritage or natural amenity locations across Ireland, Bunratty, the Burren, and The Blasket Islands, all convey objective authenticity about the destination. Constructive authenticity refers to more narrative based representations of culture and place, *"the unique social nature of the Irish pub"* is a good example of constructive authenticity, the Irish pub may be perceived and thus represented a unique social phenomenon, however this may not be necessarily true, the term public house indicates a social dimension, but some pubs are more social and uniquely Irish than others. So in this sense, is the perception of the *"Traditional Irish pub"* just a construct of authenticity? When the tourist departs from the pub does the music & craic cease and its inhabitants revert to a mundane existence?

The first two perspectives of authenticity view tourists as passive participants observing and occasionally interacting with place and culture, Existential authenticity affirms the active role of

"*self*" as arbiter of authenticity, this perspective suggests that we apply our own sense of identity and values to determine that which is authentic and that which is unauthentic, thus the existential perspective posits a more unfettered view of authenticity, one in which personal experience is the fulcrum through which the world is interpreted (Cohen, 2010). *Wild Atlantic Irish Seaweed* on the ring of Kerry is one such example. This tourism offering appeals to the sense of existential authenticity in tourists not only though natural products, but also through seaweed tours, tastings and workshops. The experience of foraging, gathering, cooking, and eating *in-situ* appeals to such requirements for *existential authenticity* that exists for many contemporary tourists as outline in the aforementioned *Irelands Food Story* (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). Over the past decade food has become very closely identified with authenticity and consumers espouse high levels of concern and fascination in relation to the provenance of food (Hall & Sharples, 2003);. In the context of this paper the obvious question to ask is whether there is one dominant perspective that can be applied to authenticity in food and food tourism? The answer is that in food we see an amalgamation of *objective, constructive, and existential* authenticity. Food should be authentic to its place, food affords us the opportunity immerse absorb culture, food invites us to engage in experiences with people, cuisine, beverage and other social activities, moreover food as a personification of the self enables us to experience, assimilate, understand and appreciate relationships between the people, landscapes and culture we encounter.

Food Experience

Tourists are no longer content to be the beneficiaries of staid services, inanimate heritage attractions nor passive observers of culture; the modern tourist actively seeks unique, memorable, interactive experiences that engage, challenge and deliver positive emotional outcomes. Indeed, empirical evidence shows that the experience component of tourism products is the overriding factor influencing customers' motivation to visit, stay and spend in our destinations (Voss, 2004). At the heart of successful destination experience is a clustering of unique, dynamic, engaging tourism encounters that consumers will remember, want to repeat and most importantly that they will want to tell their friends about. The promising of unique and authentic experiences is only one stage of effective destination promotion; unfortunately the term *experience* is widely used in tourism circles, but the prevailing reality is that extraordinary tourism experiences are not as common as marketing campaigns might suggest.

The seminal work of Pine & Gilmore (1998) articulated that experiences are as different from services as services from products and that experience design must consider the distinct characteristics of experiences in order for them to provide the requisite emotional outcomes. Experience design aims to create emotional connection with guests or customers through careful planning of tangible and intangible service elements (Pullman & Gross, 2003). The primary characteristics of experiences are that they are unique, memorable, participative, socially interactive and sensory (Pine & Gilmore 1998; Gupta & Vajic, 2000). Food is a willing partner in the creation of experiences; meal occasions have always held potential to be sensory, social, interactive and memorable. Food experiences are amongst the most accessible form of cultural experiences for tourists given that food is something that all visitors engage with throughout their visit. Creating authentic food experiences requires producers and providers to move beyond the traditional provision prospective of food toward experience creation where the product, context and participative elements of the food experience are linked within a coherent theme and environment.

Food Environment

Gupta & Vajic (2000) assert that a key element in differentiating between experience and non-experience settings is the customers use environment and the active role that customers are given in

engaging with that environment. This differentiating factor is perhaps a clue to why many food tourists allude to the highly experiential nature of locations of consumption and production, locations such as micro-breweries, vineyards, artisan workshops, where high levels of experience and authenticity converge. The development of food tourism internationally has seen a growing transformation of food work places and food production sites into destinations of novel touristic experience. Historically places of food production have been popular tourist attractions; these attractions were largely interpretive in nature with a primary objective to recreate food making predominately practised as elements of an overall attraction such as a folk museum or traditional houses (Everett & Slocum, 2013). In a globalised tourism environment of intense competition, points of distinction and differentiation, coupled with more sophisticated consumer, providers of tourism and destinations are attempting wherever possible to differentiate themselves, both locally and internationally (Lane, 2009). Within destinations places of production and consumption have emerged as points of differentiation, accommodating visitors who wish to watch or participate in food production as part of their tourism experience (Everett & Slocum, 2013). This trend has given rise to the innovative transformation of traditional production facilities into purpose made spaces that are designed to not only to produce but also to cater as tourist destinations for those who wish to experience products first hand in contemporary, yet authentic, settings. The WAW contains places of production and consumption related to traditional food production enterprises such as bakeries, dairies and smokehouses; however it also contains modern purpose made facilities that are designed to accommodate tourist's such as breweries, distilleries and food markets.

Research Methodology

The objective of this paper is to propose a mechanism by which the perspectives of visitors pertaining to their food experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way might be explored and in particular to examine how the interrelated elements of imagery, experience, authenticity and facility influence food tourism outcomes along the WAW. Smith and Xiao (2008) provide a comprehensive classification of food tourism products, services, events and stakeholders that can be used to illustrate the wide range of potential locations for food experiences along a route such as the WAW.

Facilities	Events	Activities	Organisations
Buildings/structures Food Processing Facilities Wineries/breweries Farmers' markets Food stores Food-related museums Restaurants *Land Use* Farms Orchards Vineyards Urban restaurant districts	*Consumer shows* Food and drink shows Cooking equipment (kitchen shows) Product launches Food Festivals Wine festivals Harvest festivals	*Consumption* Dining at restaurants Picnics utilising locally-grown products Purchasing retail food & beverage Pick your own operations *Touring* Wine regions Agricultural regions City Food districts	Restaurant classifications or certification systems (e.g. Michelin, good Food Ireland) Food/wine classification(FSA, HSA,) Associations (Slow Food, IOFGA)

Routes		Educational/Observation	
Wine routes		Cooking schools	
Food routes		Wine tasting/education	
Gourmet Trails		Visiting wineries	
		Observing chef	
		Competitions	
		Reading food, beverage Magazines and Books	

Table 1.0   Types of Food Tourism

Source; Everett & Slocum (2013, p. 791) adapted from Smith & Xiao (2008)

It would be unrealistic for the research to attempt to capture perceptions from across the full range potential experience providers however the classification is helpful in that it provides an insight to the depth and richness of this sector. From the table by far the most interesting and viable unit in terms of the WAW that merits consideration is classified under *Facilities* namely f*ood processing facilities, wineries and breweries*, these facilities are more appropriately defined as "places of *production and consumption*" (Everett & Slocum, 2013: p.796). This bounded context for our study is of interest for four reasons, Firstly, *places of production and consumption* are viewed as contributing to the overall experience of the WAW, however these facilities are also destinations in themselves, therefore it is of interest to investigate the perceptions of these facilities and the impact that they are having on the views of tourists visiting the WAW. Secondly, it is clear from the research that when considering food in a tourism context, authenticity is foremost in the minds of consumers, therefore it would be beneficial to attempt to gauge the attitudes of those visiting places of production and consumption in relation to objective, constructive and existential authenticity. Finally, in terms of international benchmarking, many of the great driving routes internationally, the Great Ocean Road, Australia, for example have built much of their reputation via clearly defined places production of consumption that focus not only an the product which is a value in itself. Little Creatures microbrewery in Geelong focuses on both a range of products, but also creating enhanced service experiences based on immersion, absorption, active participation in the food production process as well as its consumption.

Having decided that food experiences within places of production and consumption will be the focus of the research, the next element to be considered is *how* the researchers will capture the visitor perceptions of the food experiences offered. Consumer research of this type has traditional used survey methodologies to extract primary data that amounts to post-purchase evaluations of the experience as perceived by the tourist. Whilst this methodology is both reliable and empirically proven, there is an element of both retrospection and mediation introduced into the post experience evaluation. An innovative approach proposed by for this study would be to adopt a more observatory stance in the collection of feedback and to utilise the extensive online depository of visitor dialogues as a lens through which visitor perceptions might be ascertained. Whether it is trip advisor or Facebook, blogs or twitter, food tourists are sharing their post-experience evaluations openly and therein perhaps lies a valuable source of direct, un-biased customer perceptions that articulate those elements of food experiences are most meaningful, most impactful, most desired in

the pursuit of authenticity, emotions and positive memories. Additionally these conversations will also disclose the shortfalls in food experience as articulated by visitors, data which can prove exceptionally useful in developing prescriptions for development and improvement in food experiences. Ultimately the goal would be to identify a number food providers whose operations would be considered places of consumption and production and then follow the online discussion of the food experiences amongst consumers to identify whether the variables identified in the literature as being central to optimal food experiences; imagery, experience, authenticity and environment, are central to visitor espoused experiential outcomes. Whilst the study is informed by the extant literature on the subject of food experiences, a largely inductive and exploratory approach will be utilised by the researchers whereby common themes and patterns within the online narrative will be extracted to inform resultant recommendations on food experience development

Conclusion

There are a wide variety of organisations that have beneficial interest in the development of food tourist experiences along the *Wild Atlantic Way*; food is a central aspect of national and regional tourism strategies, destination branding, agri-food systems, economic development and municipal services. The establishment of the WAW is a multi-disciplinary activity that requires interconnected action by all stakeholders which in itself needs to be underpinned by timely information on consumer perceptions. Research that explores the nature of food image, authenticity in settings of production and consumption along the WAW will contribute to the development and sustainability of the route. The use of social media, a contemporaneous narrative will allow for the capture of real-time information on the experiences tourists have towards food when travelling the WAW. This will provide a platform *to* contribute unique insights, generate knowledge and provide prescient recommendations for best practice in the design and delivery of authentic and memorable food experiences for domestic and international tourists.

References

Baloglu, S., & Brinberg, D. (1997), 'Affective images on tourism destination', *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 20(4), 11–15.

Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. (1999), 'US international pleasure travellers' images of four

Mediterranean destinations: A comparison of visitors and non-visitor', *Journal of Travel*

Research, Vol. 38(2), 144–152.

Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004), 'Factors influencing destination image', *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 31(3), 657–681.

Cohen, S. (2010) 'Searching for escape, authenticity and identity: Experiences of „lifestyle travellers', in M. Morgan, P. Lugosi & J.R.B Ritchie (Eds.), *The Tourism and Leisure Experience: Consumer and Managerial Perspectives* (pp. 27-42). Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Dichter, E. (1985). 'What's in an image?' *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 2(1), 75–81.

Everett, S., & Slocum, L. (2013) 'Food and tourism: an effective partnership? A UK-based review', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 21(6), 789-809.

Fischer, C. (1988). Food, self and identity. *Social Science Information*, Vol. *27*(2),

275–292.

Getz, D., & Robinson, N.S. (2014) 'Foodies and Food Events' *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 14:3, 315-330,

Gupta, S. and Vajic, M., (2000). "The Contextual and Dialectical Nature of Experiences" in Fitzsimmons, J. A. &Fitzsimmons M. J., (Eds.), *New Service Development: Creating Memorable Experiences*, Sage: Thousand Oaks CA, pp. 33 –51.

Hall, C. M. (2004). *Wine, food, and tourism marketing*. London: Routledge

Hall, C.M., Mitchell. R., Scott, D. & Sharples, L. (2008), The authentic market experiences of farmers' markets, pp.197-231 in C.M. Hall & L. Sharples, (Eds), Food and Wine Festivals and Events Around the World: Development, Management and Markets, Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford.

Hall, C.M., Sharples, E. (2003). The consumption of experiences or the experience of consumption? An introduction to the tourism of taste. In C.M. Hall, E. Sharples, R. Mitchell, N. Macionis, & B. Cambourne (Eds.), *Food tourism around the world. Development, management and markets*.(pp. 1–24). Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

Hede, AM. (2008) *Food and Wine Festivals: Stakeholders, Long-term Outcomes and Strategies for Success.* C.M. Hall & L. Sharples, (Eds), Food and Wine Festivals and Events Around the World: Development, Management and Markets, pp. 85-100 Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford.

Ilbery, B., Kneafsey, M., Bowler, I., & Clark, G. (2003). Quality products and services in the lagging rural regions of the European Union: A producer perspective. in K. Beesley, H. Millward, B.Ilbery, & L. Harrington (Eds.), *The new countryside: Geographic perspectives on rural change*. Manitoba, Canada: Brandon University.

Lane, B. (2009). Rural tourism: An overview. In T. Jamal & M. Robinson (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of tourism studies* (pp. 354–370). London: Sage.

Mazursky, D., & Jacoby, J. (1986), 'Exploring the development of store image', *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 62(2), 145–165.

Pine, J. B. II, & Gilmore, J. H., (1998). "Welcome to the Experience Economy", *Harvard Business Review*, July- August, pp. 97 – 105.

Pullman, M. E., & Gross, M. A., (2003). "Welcome to your experience: Where you can check out anytime you'd like, but you can never leave" *Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 215 –232.

Reisinger, Y. and Steiner, C.J. (2006) 'Reconceptualising object authenticity'. *Annals of Tourism Research, Vol.* 33 (1), 65–86.

Sims, R. (2009) 'Food, place and authenticity: local food and the sustainable tourism experience', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 17:3, 321-336.

Smith, S., & Xiao, H. (2008), 'Culinary tourism supply chains: Preliminary examination', *Journal of Travel Research, Vol. 46*(3), 289–299.

Stern, E., & Krakover, S. (1993), 'The formation of a composite urban image', *Geographical Analysis*, Vol. 2(2), 130–146.

Taylor, J. (2001), 'Authenticity and sincerity in tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 28, pp* 7–26.

Voss, C. (2004), 'Towards an integrative approach to designing service experiences; lessons learned from the theatre',*Journal of Operations Management*, Vol. 22, pp 609-627.

Wang, N. (1999) Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research Vol.* 26 (2), 349–370.

Web References

Fáilte Ireland (2013) Food Tourism Activity Plan 2014-2016

http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Bu
siness/3_Marketing_Toolkit/6_Food_Tourism/Food-Tourism-Activity-Plan-2014-2016.pdf?ext=.pdf:
assessed April 17th 2015

Fáilte Ireland Irelands Food Story Toolkit (2015)

www.failteireland.ie/Supports/Food-Tourism-in-Ireland/Telling-Ireland-s-food-story.aspx   :assessed
April 17th 2015

Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way

http://www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way.aspx:assessed April 17th 2015