

Community Driven Food Tourism and Micro-Enterprise Growth: An Empirical Assessment

Ashish Raina, Amiya Bhaumik, Deepa Dixit, Dharmesh Dhabliya

Abstract: *Community-based food tourism has become one of the most important processes of ensuring inclusive economic growth and empowering local entrepreneurial systems. This research paper is an empirical investigation of how food tourism can develop micro-enterprises in the community-based tourism destinations. The study is aimed at considering local food culture, community involvement and value-chain involvement in enhancing sustainability small business-like street food vendors, farmers, home based food producers and local culinary entrepreneurs. Responses to the questions on the various stakeholders in the tourism industry, the local vendors, and community members engaged in food-related tourism activities were collected with a structured survey and field-based data collection strategy. Some of the notable variables that are considered with respect to the study are tourism demand, participation of enterprises, generation of income and the degree of the community involvement in the tourism activities. According to the data provided through the descriptive analysis of the statistics and the empirical assessment, community participation is an important mediating factor between food tourism activities and the growth of micro-enterprises. The findings show that the areas where there is a stronger cooperation and encouragement between the communities as well as the traditional food attract more tourists and further development of the local businesses. Moreover, the incorporation of local foodstuffs and cultural foods in tourist services contributes to the economic sustainability of micro-enterprises to a great extent. The results note that community-based food tourism does not only help preserve the cultures but also improves local supply chains and promotes entrepreneurship at the grassroots.*

Keywords: Food Tourism, Micro-Enterprise Development, Local Value Chains, Culinary Heritage, Tourism Entrepreneurship

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Introduction

The food tourism has developed into a vibrant aspect of the world tourism market, where tourists are drawn and seeking the authenticity of their cuisine, culture, traditions, and identity of a destination. Food tourism is based on the presentation of the local cuisine and culinary traditions as well as food production systems unlike traditional tourism, the major aim of which is sightseeing and recreation. The growing interest among tourists is in local food markets, the traditional culinary practices, local ingredients, and the culinary events based on the community. This increasing interest has brought forth new economic prospects to the local communities especially small-scale food producers, street vendors, farmers, and home-based food entrepreneurs (Cuevas et. al., 2023). Consequently, food tourism has emerged as a key local economic development driver and building of micro-enterprises. This is because community engagement is very important in developing effective food tourism ecosystems. Many destinations and destinations of tourism are known to have local communities, who are the main custodians of culinary heritage, traditional recipes, and the indigenous food practices. Their participation makes tourism experiences authentic, culturally significant and sustainable (Lestari et. al., 2024). Food tourism programs are community-based programs that invite the active involvement of local residents in food tourism activities by preparing, attending food festivals, visiting farms, attending food workshops and street food markets (Bankar et al., 2026). This kind of initiative does not only safeguard cultural heritage but it also generates jobs and enhances entrepreneurship in the society. The active participation of the local stakeholders assists in consolidating tourism value chains and improving the flow of income created out of tourism to the local people (Hermawati et. al., 2020 and Cuevas et. al., 2024).

Micro-enterprise constitutes an important part of the community-based tourism system. These are small-scale enterprises usually run by individuals or families and they fall under food stalls, small restaurants, artisanal food producers, farm to table programs and local food processing units. Micro-enterprises are also especially important in rural and semi-urban areas which lack formal working opportunities (Kilinc et.al., 2024). Food tourism also offers these enterprises a first-hand access to a growing tourist market, and they can easily grow their businesses, raise the level of income and enhance their economic sustainability. Figure 1 indicates that food tourism influences the participation of communities and the growth of micro-enterprises. Food tourism establishes a symbiotic economic ecosystem by linking tourists to local food producers and vendors and this benefits various stakeholders along the supply chain (satpathy et. el., 2025).

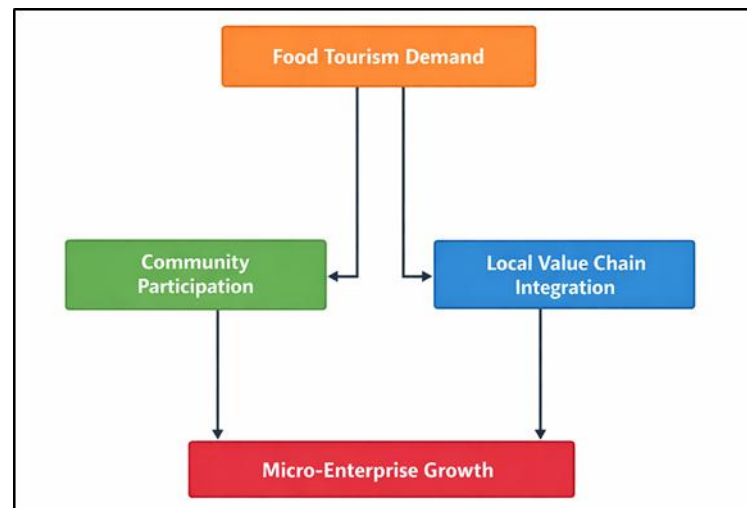


Figure 1: Community-Driven Food Tourism Framework for Micro-Enterprise Growth

There is also the integration of local food products in tourism experiences which help in development of local value chain. Primary producers, such as farmers, fishermen, spice growers and so on, are included in tourism-led food networks. Local food supply chains are also used where restaurants and vendors purchase products at local markets and farms, promoting local agriculture and minimizing reliance on external supply chains (Khurana et. al., 2021). This local economic circulation makes rural economies stronger and makes the tourism development more sustainable. Further, food tourism also encourages reliance and commercialization of the traditional food

knowledge thereby increasing innovation and diversification with local food businesses. Although its significance is rising, empirical studies on the relationship between community-based food tourism and the development of micro-enterprises have been comparatively low, especially in developing tourism destinations (Fernandes et. al., 2024). Although a number of studies have emphasized the cultural and experience dimension of culinary tourism, not many studies have thoroughly examined the role of community involvement in the development of enterprises and the determining impact on the local economy. This relationship is crucial to policymakers, tourism planners and development practitioners who seek to come up with inclusive tourism plans that would be of benefit to the local communities. Thus, the proposed research will have the purpose of empirically determining the influence of community-based food tourism on the development of micro-enterprises in the local tourism systems (Gangata et. al., 2024).

Literature Review

Concept and evolution of food tourism

Food tourism is also known as culinary tourism or gastronomy tourism and has become an influential niche sector in the world tourism industry. It is a type of traveling when a tourist visits a place but rather in the context of its cuisine, the local culture and gastronomic customs. This is because the initial forms of food tourism first surrounded wine tourism in European countries like France and Italy where the tourists would visit vineyards and engage in a tasting experience (Suriyankietkaew et. al., 2022 and Aviyanti et. al., 2024). Gradually, the concept was broadened to cover the street food experiences, farm-to-table tourism, traditional cooking demonstrations, food festivals, and visiting local markets. These activities help to offer more cultural understanding to the tourists visiting the destinations. Globalization, increased focus on genuine cultural experiences and an expansion of appreciation of food as a cultural identity marker have all contributed immensely to the development and evolution of food tourism (Nistor et. al., 2022). Today, tourists want to have an immersive experience, which extends beyond the traditional sightseeing, and food has become a key component of destination branding and tourism marketing. Food tourism is an effective tool to tell stories about culture since the local cuisines are usually influenced by history, farming methodologies, and the systems of knowledge. The growing interest in sustainability and local sourcing (Wang et. al., 2024) is another significant change in the history of food tourism. The contemporary food tourism promotes the utilization of locally grown or harvested products, old-fashioned food preparation, and food enterprises owned by communities (Mane. et al., 2026).

Role of Community Participation in Tourism Development

Community involvement is well known as one of the core components of sustainable development of tourism. Engagement of the communities on the ground will make sure that the tourism activities are in line with social, cultural and economic interest of the locals. When it comes to food tourism, local people tend to serve as the main repositories of traditional culinary knowledge, local food substances, as well as cultural food customs (Kokkranikal et. al. 2024). They are involved to guarantee that the authenticity of the tourism experiences is preserved and that the benefits of tourism are shared more fairly in society. Local engagement may be in various forms such as food production, preparation of local food, food festivals, local market management, and small hospitality business operation (Fei et. al., 2023 and Apak et. al., 2023). There is also local community-based tourism which promotes the working of local farmers, food vendors, artisans, and cultural groups to form integrated tourism experiences. This would enhance local supply chains and create social cohesion between the stakeholders. Communities will be more willing to support tourism projects and make them sustainable in the long run when communities actively participate in tourism planning and decision-making. Moreover, community involvement increases the strengths of the tourism ecosystems by enabling the local stakeholders with financial prospects as well as decision making power (Gündoğan et. al., 2023). The models of participatory tourism promote capacity building, skill development, and entrepreneurship among people living in the community. This is a solution that enhances generation of income as well as encourages cultural conservation and environmental conservation.

Micro-Enterprise Development in Tourism Ecosystems

Micro-enterprises are vital in the tourism ecosystems as they supply goods and services that are critical to the tourism activities. These businesses are usually small restaurants, street food, home based food, handicrafts producers, small accommodation facilities and local tour operators. The micro-enterprises are the staple of the local tourism economies in many developing areas due to their comparably low capital requirements and dependence on the local skills, knowledge, and local resources (Kritikos et. al., 2025). Micro-enterprises are also important in food tourism ecosystems in promoting economic development and cultural preservation. Small food providers and local cuisine outlets tend to present local cuisine, local foods, and local cooking styles that represent the cultural diversity of the community (Santos et. al., 2022). The businesses offer the tourists authentic gastronomic experiences that cannot be easily counterfeited by huge commercial businesses. Consequently, micro-enterprises make the tourism destinations more diverse and alluring. New market potentials through food tourism also emerge whereby the micro-enterprises gain market demand of local food products and culinary services. Small-scale entrepreneurs and informal and semi-formal food businesses are promoted by tourists visiting food markets, street food outlets, and small restaurants.

Table 1: Comparative Review of Previous Studies on Food Tourism and Micro-Enterprise Development

Study Region	Research Focus	Methodology	Key Findings	Research Gap
New Zealand	Food tourism development	Conceptual analysis	Culinary tourism enhances destination branding	Limited empirical validation
Europe	Gastronomy tourism evolution	Literature review	Food culture strengthens tourism attractiveness	Lack of micro-enterprise focus
United Kingdom	Role of local food in tourism	Case study	Local cuisine promotes regional identity	Limited economic impact analysis
United Kingdom	Local food consumption by tourists	Survey analysis	Tourists value authenticity of regional food	Small enterprise role unexplored
Hong Kong	Gastronomy tourism experience	Empirical survey	Food experience significantly influences destination choice	Limited community participation analysis
Finland	Food tourism motivations	Quantitative survey	Culinary motivation drives tourism engagement	Lack of enterprise-level analysis
Global	Food tourism marketing	Literature synthesis	Culinary experiences increase tourist satisfaction	Limited focus on local supply chains
Global	Definition of food tourism	Conceptual framework	Food tourism integrates culture, economy, and identity	Empirical economic outcomes missing
Scotland	Local food festivals and tourism	Case study	Food festivals support local businesses	Lack of quantitative income analysis
France	Culinary heritage tourism	Ethnographic study	Food heritage strengthens cultural identity	Micro-enterprise growth not analyzed

Australia	Small food business in tourism	Survey analysis	Tourism demand increases small food business viability	Limited community participation perspective
United Kingdom	Local food networks	Mixed method	Strong food networks enhance tourism supply chains	Limited focus on economic multiplier
Italy	Rural food tourism	Empirical analysis	Farm-based tourism increases local income	Limited enterprise scalability analysis
Taiwan	Culinary tourism and local economy	Quantitative modeling	Food tourism contributes to economic diversification	Community-driven enterprise analysis limited

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Conceptual relationship between food tourism and micro-enterprises

Food tourism generates direct economic contact between tourists and firms based in the local food industry, which is why it is an important impetus towards developing micro-enterprises. Micro-enterprise businesses like street food sellers, home-based culinary enterprises, small restaurants, and artisanal food producers usually depend on the needs of the tourists to generate income. The tourists, who demand traditional food products and services offered by small-scale entrepreneurs, arouse the demand when travelling to local culinary and food experiences. This will boost the local tourism economy through the promotion of entrepreneurship in the food industry. Demand-driven market expansion may be used to explain the conceptual relationship between food tourism and micro-enterprises. With the rise in the number of tourists, the demand of local culinary activities also rises and this creates chances of new businesses that are related to food to emerge. This need creates an advantage to the micro-enterprises that provide the destination with unique and culturally rich food products. In addition, food tourism will enable businesspeople to position their products through the emphasis of traditional recipes, local ingredients, and local food supplies. The other factor that is significant about this relationship is that, there is low entry barrier to micro-enterprises dealing with food. Small food outlets, food trucks, and home-based food preparation businesses involve quite low investment needs thus allowing individuals and families to be involved in tourism-related economic processes. Food tourism therefore serves as a medium through which it enables grass root business and revenue generation. It is on the basis of this conceptual insight that as it is theorized, the food tourism demand has a positive impact on the development and sustainability of the micro-enterprises in the local tourism destinations.

Community Participation as a Mediating Factor

The community involvement is an intermediate that enhances the relationship between food tourism and development of micro-enterprises. Although the tourism demand has the potential of generating economic opportunities, the extent of community involvement defines the degree to which the opportunities can be turned into sustainable enterprise development. The local people will be involved in tourism planning, food production, and promotion of cultures which contributes to developing genuine and meaningful tourist experiences that bring visitors. Figure 2 indicates that the community participation mediates food tourism and enterprise growth. This involvement helps in sharing the gains of tourism in the community instead of having it concentrated with a few stakeholders.

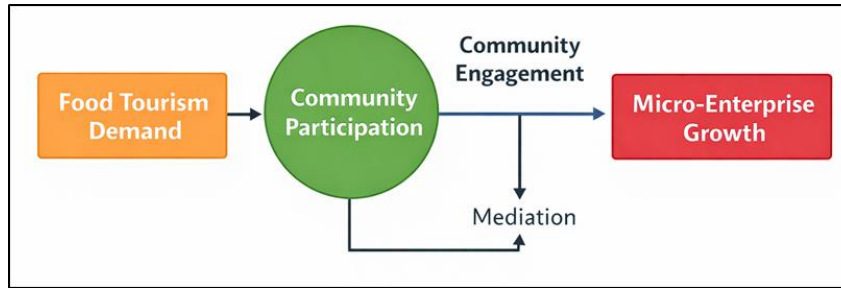


Figure 2: Community Participation as a Mediating Factor in Food Tourism–Driven Micro-Enterprise Growth

The community members also help in food tourism in other ways such as maintaining the old recipes, food festivals, promoting local markets and conducting small scale culinary industries. Their presence adds to the genuineness of food tourism experiences and makes the destination more culturally distinct. Besides, community-based projects also promote cooperation between farmers, vendors, chefs, and tourism operators, which enhances the coordination of the tourism ecosystem. Community participation as a mediating factor would enable sharing of knowledge, skill building and collective selling of local food products. The communities that are actively involved in tourism activities have a higher likelihood of coming up with supportive networks that enable the micro-enterprise to grow and adjust to the changing tourist needs. This team spirit augments entrepreneurial robustness and fosters long term sustainability. Thus, the hypothesis is that participation of communities in the community is a positive mediator of the relationship between food tourism demand and development of micro-enterprises in the tourism ecosystems.

Local Value Chain Integration Model

The model of local value chain integration describes the relationship among various stakeholders in a food tourism ecosystem that create an economic value to the local societies. The various actors in a food tourism destination like the farmers, food producers, street vendors, restaurant owners, and tourism service providers are related in the supply and distribution networks. These stakeholders are integrated to create a type of local economic system where local food products are produced, processed and sold by tourism demand. In this model the raw materials are the farmers and agricultural producers who provide raw materials like vegetables, spices, dairy products, and grains which are utilized by local food enterprises. These goods are then processed into edible goods through micro-enterprises such as the street vendors, restaurants and home-based food industries. Hotels, travel agencies and tourism operators market these kinds of food experiences to the tourists and this ensures a steady stream of demand on the local economy. This interdependence system increases the economic multiplier effect of tourism in that the income earned through tourism remains in the community. Another benefit associated with economic resilience is the local value chain integration as this lowers the reliance on external supply networks. As food tourism destinations are based on locally sourced food materials and services, they boost the agricultural output in the area and rural livelihoods. Moreover, integrated value chain leads to cooperation between stakeholders, which enhances efficiency, quality of the product and accessing the market. According to this model, the hypothesis is that the higher the level of local value chain integration the greater the positive effect of food tourism on development of the micro enterprises and economic growth of the community.

Research Methodology

Study area selection and justification

To study the relationship between community-driven food tourism and micro-enterprise development, it is necessary to select a suitable study area. This research was focused on the area because it is highly represented by the traditional food culture, the active tourism and the high number of small-scale food-related businesses. The geographical areas with their culinary background, street food stalls, local food festivals, and traditional food cooking are the best sites to study the dynamics of food tourism and its economic effects on the community. The chosen study region boasts of a dynamic local food system in which farmers, food vendors, and small restaurants are in tandem with the tourism activities. These areas usually have domestic and foreign tourists who want to

enjoy the native cuisine and traditional food. Community involvement in food preparation, cultural events as well as local food markets also increase the relevance of location to this study. The other reason behind choice of study area is that micro-enterprises are operating in the region, which relies on tourism as a source of income. Home-based food producers, small scale food vendors and local culinary entrepreneurs are an entire part of tourism economy in these areas. By targeting such an environment, the research will be able to analyze the role of food tourism in enhancing business development and economic growth of communities. The location chosen thus offers the right setting to study the interactions between tourism demand, community involvement, and the growth of micro-enterprises on a local tourism environment.

Sampling Strategy and Respondent Selection

An organized sampling plan was used to gather credible and representative data among the stakeholders involved in the system of food tourism. The paper used a purposive sampling method to find respondents that are active participants in the tourism activities that involve food. The approach was used to make sure that the respondents had the pertinent knowledge and experience related to food tourism operations, management of the micro-enterprise, and community based tourism practices. The research participants were a variety of stakeholders including street food sellers, small restaurants, home food people, farmers who sell ingredients and tourism facilitators. Moreover, fewer tourists were also consulted to find out their tastes and patterns of demand of local food items. The inclusion of various respondents served to get a broad perspective of the food tourism ecosystem and how the community is involved in the development of enterprises. The structured questionnaires and field interactions with the selected respondents were used to collect data. The sampling was done to make the representation of various types of enterprises and community groups interested in food tourism activities balanced. The sample size was predetermined so that it would be statistically reliable and would result in meaningful empirical analysis. With the help of choosing the respondents who are directly involved in the value chain of food tourism, the study managed to obtain information regarding the issues of operation, revenue trends, and the role that tourism demand plays in the development of the micro-enterprise. This sampling approach helped the study to come up with real-life opinions of critical stakeholders of the community-based food tourism system.

Measurement of Key Variables and Indicators

The measurement of the key variables plays a vital role in the analysis of the linkage between food tourism and community involvement and the growth of micro-enterprises. A number of indicators were designed in this research to measure the key constructs employed in the research plan. These variables are food tourism demand, community level of participation, development of micro-enterprises as well as integration of local value chains. The operationalization of every variable was done based on quantifiable indicators of the tangible aspects of tourism and business dynamics. The indicators used to measure food tourism demand included the number of tourist visits made, number of tourists participating in local food experiences, demand of local cuisine and the amount of money tourists spend on local food products. Such pointers assist in capturing the level, at which the local food economy is being affected by tourism activities. Participation in community was also measured based on the indicators like participation of the local residents in the foods preparation, attending food festivals, working together with the local business people, and involvement in the tourism planning activities. The micro-enterprise development was measured by indicators associated with generation of income, growth of business, creation of jobs and availability of market to small food-related businesses. Also, the local value chain integration was assessed by looking at how much food businesses are procuring their ingredients locally among their farmers and suppliers.

Community-Driven Food Tourism Ecosystem Analysis

Structure of local food tourism networks

The local food tourism networks are closely interrelated systems that have a number of stakeholders which jointly operate to develop and contribute towards the operation of various food tourism activities. These networks usually comprise of farmers, food producers, street vendors, small restaurants, tourism operators and local community organisations that work together to provide the tourists with the authentic culinary experience. These networks are usually structured in a decentralized manner whereby small-scale enterprises can run their business

on their own yet they are interconnected with each other via supply chains, common markets and community-based tourism ventures. The network typically relies on farmers and other agricultural producers who provide fresh and locally grown produce (vegetables, grains, dairy products, spices, and meat) to the network. The food vendors, restaurants, and home-based culinary businesses then use these ingredients to make traditional foods which are very attractive to tourists. Local guides, travel agencies and hospitality operators are tourism service providers who play a great role in promoting such culinary experiences by organizing tours, food festivals and visiting the local markets. Community organizations, including local cooperatives and cultural associations usually help to coordinate the stakeholders by organizing events, supporting the marketing process, and promoting collaboration within the tourism ecosystem.

Role of Farmers, Street Vendors, and Food Entrepreneurs

Farmers, street vendors and food entrepreneurs are very important players in maintaining community-based food tourism forces. All these stakeholders have a different contribution towards production, preparation and promotion of local food experiences that appeal to tourists. Farmers are the main providers of fresh farm products which are the basis of the local cuisine. Farmers offer vegetables, fruits, grains, and spices grown locally, and, therefore, food tourism experiences remain authentic and fresh, as well as facilitate the livelihoods of local farmers. In food tourism activities, street vendors can be found to be one of the most conspicuous. They offer affordable and easy to find traditional food that helps the tourist to taste local taste in casual and culturally colorful settings. The street food markets and food stalls often turn out to be one of the significant tourist sites as they reflect the variety of the local food and provide the direct contact between the tourist and the local food culture. These sellers usually act as micro-enterprises which have a huge reliance on the demands that tourism offers in terms of revenue and business sustainability. Small restaurant owners and home-based food producers further diversify the food culture by offering new variations of the traditional dishes and the curated dining experiences.

Cultural and Traditional Food Heritage in Tourism Promotion

The cultural and traditional food heritage is core in marketing food tourism and increasing the appeal of tourism destinations. The cuisine of a place is based on the past, the geography, the farming techniques and the cultural identity of the place. The distinctive cuisine of many destinations is a significant tourism marketing instrument that is applied to showcase authentic cuisine, traditional methods of food preparation, and locally produced raw materials. Figure 3 depicts cultural food heritage as a tourism promoter and community develops. All these cultural food aspects make the experiences of tourists visiting the country unforgettable and those who are willing to explore the traditions of the country more. Tourism projects conducted on a community level tend to focus on conservation and marketing of traditional recipes that are already intergenerational.

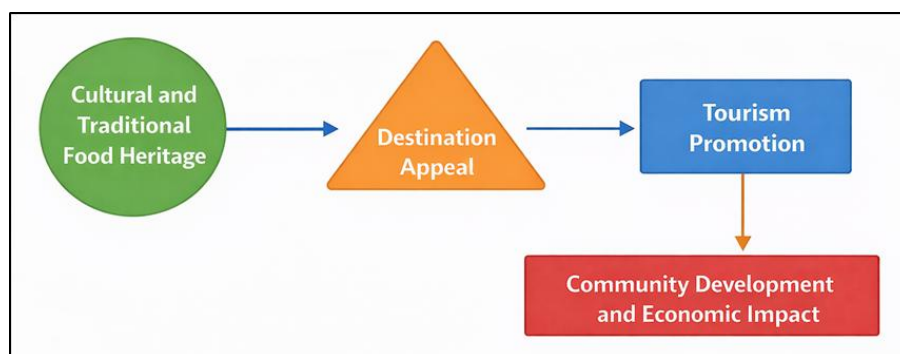


Figure 3: Cultural and Traditional Food Heritage Framework for Tourism Promotion and Community Development

These traditional dishes and meal practices are displayed in local festivals, cultural events and food fairs. The tourists who attend such events receive the chance to see cooking performances, taste the local delicacies and learn the communities. Moreover, cultural food heritage helps in promoting local identity and pride in communities. The mainstream cuisine turns into a tourist draw, and based on this, communities are likely to maintain native ingredients, cooking methods, and food traditions.

Empirical Results and Data Analysis

Analysis of Tourism Demand and Local Business Participation

This demand analysis of tourism shows that there is a close relationship between arrivals of tourists and the involvement of local food related businesses. According to the responses to the surveys, the great part of micro-enterprises reports about the inflow of customers during the seasons of high tourism activity, especially during cultural festivals and holidays. Tourists are very interested in trying local dishes and visiting street markets, attending food demonstrations and food tours. Local companies respond proactively to this pressure by adding to menu items, extending their operating hours and offering local dishes that reflect local culinary identity. The findings indicate that tourism demand promotes increased involvement of the local vendors and food entrepreneurs in tourism activities. Most of the businesses indicated that part of their clientele is comprised of tourists, which leads to increased sales and company exposure.

Table 2: Analysis of Tourism Demand and Local Business Participation

Indicator	Low Tourism Season	Moderate Season	Peak Tourism Season
Average Daily Customers	38	72	118
Average Daily Revenue (USD)	64	128	216
Percentage of Tourist Customers (%)	22	41	63
Participation in Food Festivals (%)	18	37	58

Table 2 shows that demand in tourism varies and thus affects business involvement in tourism in various seasons. The outcomes show that there is a big surge in customer traffic and business operations with the increase in the intensity of tourism. Figure 4 indicates that seasonal tourism is adding more customers and revenue to the local area.

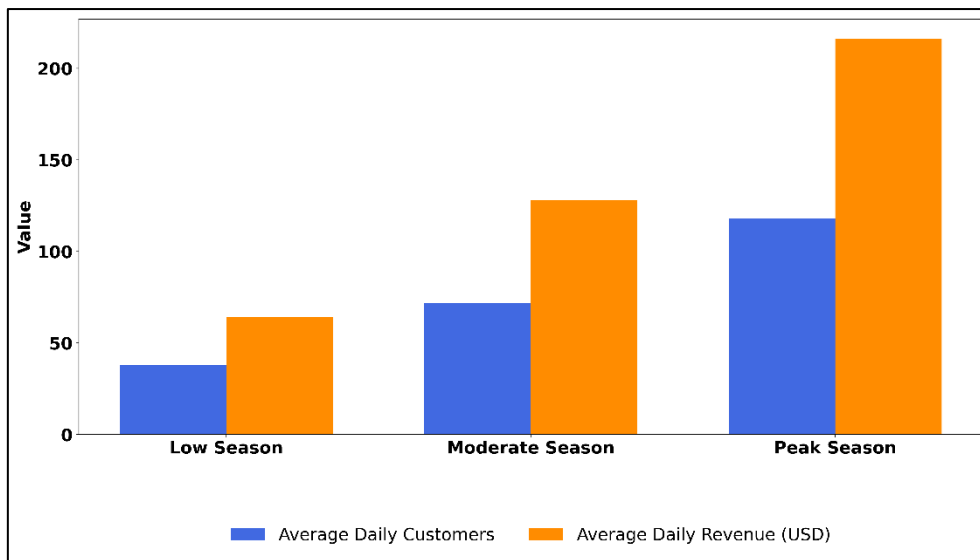


Figure 4: Seasonal Variation in Customer Footfall and Revenue Generation

The local businesses get an average of 38 customers every day and make it to USD 64 in daily income during the low tourist season. Figure 5 depicts that the tourist customer share has increased remarkably in different tourism seasons. This is a comparatively low demand that portrays the lack of tourists and reduced involvement in tourism activities.

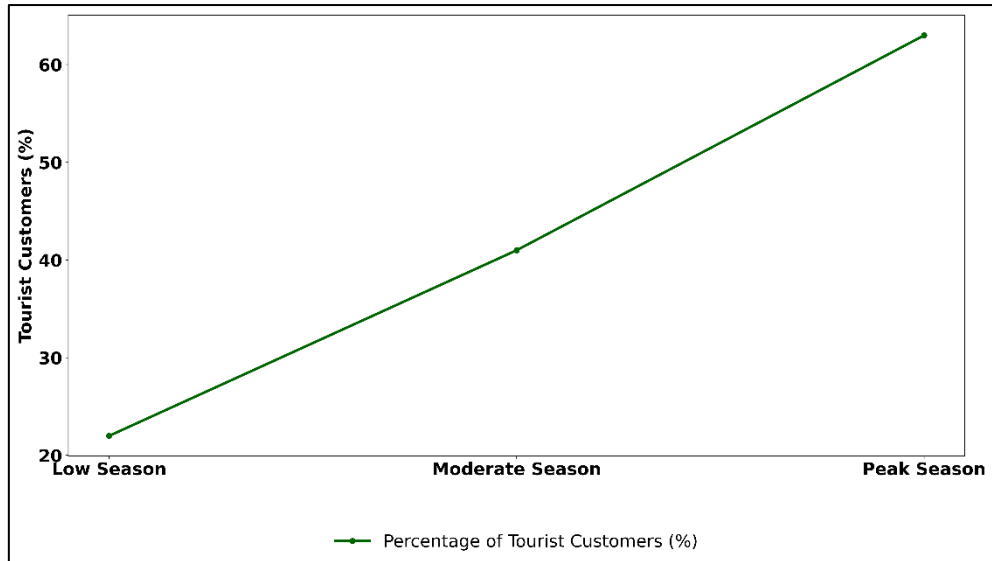


Figure 5: Percentage of Tourist Customers across Tourism Seasons

Moderate tourism season however almost doubles the number of customers to 72 per day and an average of USD 128 is the daily revenue. Figure 6 demonstrates that the seasonal participation in the food festivals have gone up in the community. This development indicates that local food businesses start enjoying the growth of tourists and enhanced market exposure.

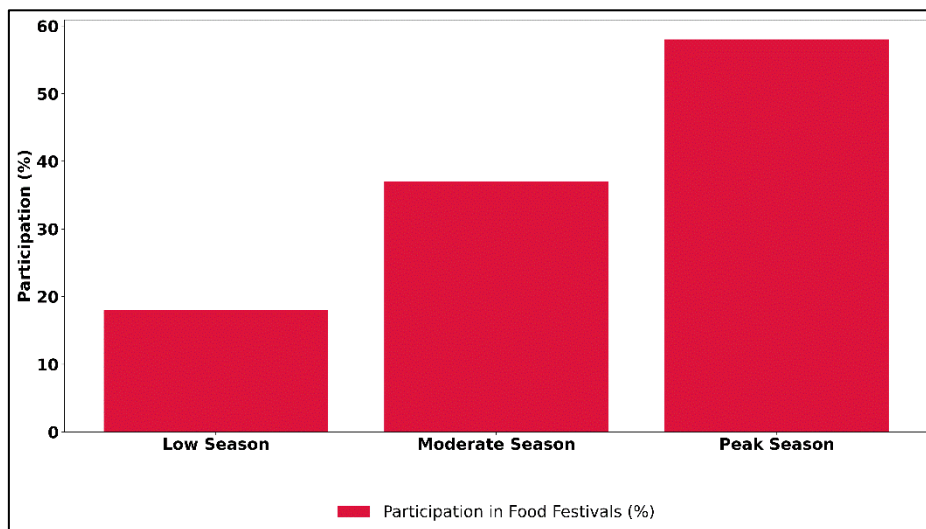


Figure 6: Seasonal Participation Trends in Food Festivals

Tourist customers also increase to 41% in the moderate season as compared to 22% in the low season which is an indication of the increasing role of tourists in the local business revenues. The effect is further heightened during the high season of the tourism. The average number of customers that come to the local businesses is 118 per day and the revenue is USD 216 on average. Moreover, the proportion of tourist clientele is 63, which means that the demand in the tourism sector turns into the leading force of the local food enterprise activity. Food festivals also attract more involvement of 18 percent to 58 percent as the community is more engaged and the local culinary companies get more publicity.

Impact of Food Tourism on Income Generation

The empirical review suggests that food tourism supports income generation to micro-enterprises that exist in tourism destinations. Respondents noted that during the times when tourists are very active, there are significant increase in the daily and seasonal revenue. Most food traders and small restaurant owners pointed out that the

tourism demand allows them to diversify their sources of income and increase their business activities. Growth in incomes can be especially seen in the case of street vendors or home-based food manufacturers, who depend on tourist dollars greatly. The resulting rise in the demand of the traditional food and the local ingredients also favors the farmers and the small suppliers who supply the raw materials to the food companies. Consequently, food tourism has a multiplier effect on the local economic system through its support of numerous stakeholders in the supply chain.

Table 3: Impact of Food Tourism on Income Generation

Enterprise Type	Average Monthly Income Before Tourism (USD)	Average Monthly Income After Tourism Growth (USD)	Income Increase (%)	New Jobs Created
Street Food Vendors	420	690	64.3	38
Small Restaurants	850	1320	55.3	42
Home-based Food Businesses	310	540	74.2	26
Farmers Supplying Ingredients	470	720	53.2	21

Table 3 shows the effects of food tourism on the income generation by various forms of local enterprises considered as the tourism ecosystem. The findings are clear evidence that the food tourism development contributes greatly to the monthly earnings of small-scale businesses and concerned parties. Figure 7 illustrates that there is a big rise in tourism that significantly contributes to the monthly income of the local businesses.

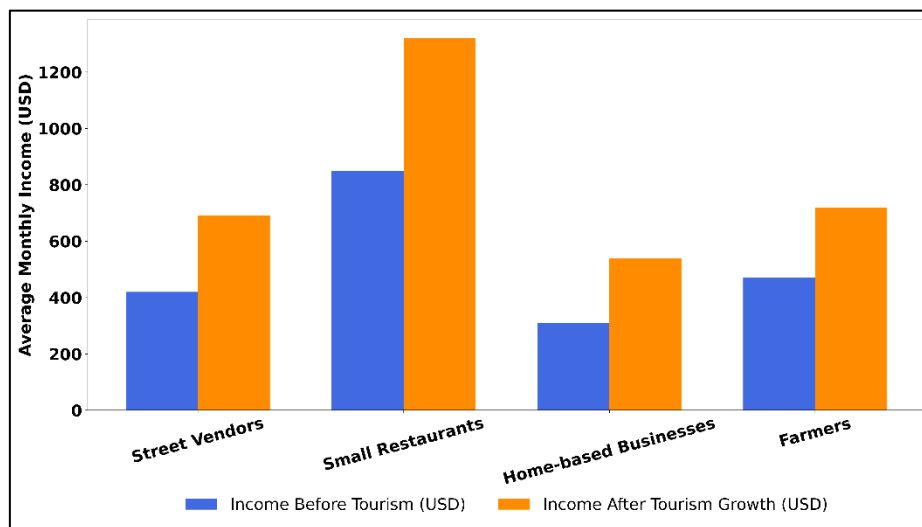


Figure 7: Comparative Analysis of Monthly Income Before and After Tourism Growth

The vendors of street food are also experiencing a significant increment in revenue as they are making USD 690 on average now than the USD 420 in the past due to the growth of the tourism thus achieving an increment of 64.3 percent on the income. Figure 8 depicts that the enterprise income is growing considerably because of the expansion of food tourism. This increase demonstrates how reliant the street food vendors are on tourist demand of local food.

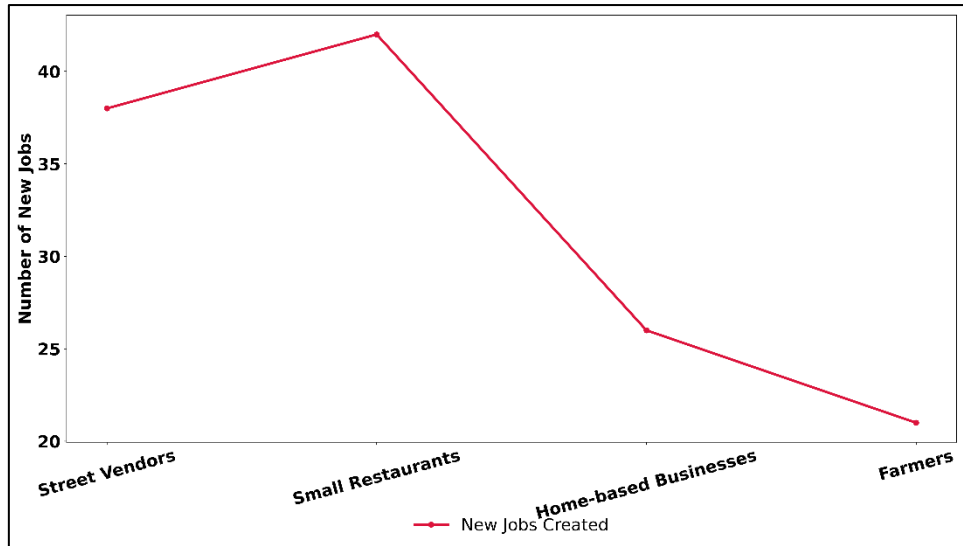


Figure 8: Percentage Increase in Enterprise Income due to Food Tourism Expansion

It is also true of small restaurants, which have increased their average monthly revenues, from USD 850 to USD 1320, or by 55.3 percent. This growth is majorly influenced by the growth in volumes of customers and higher expenditures by tourists who want to have authentic dining experience. Food tourism is creating jobs in most local food businesses as shown in figure 9.

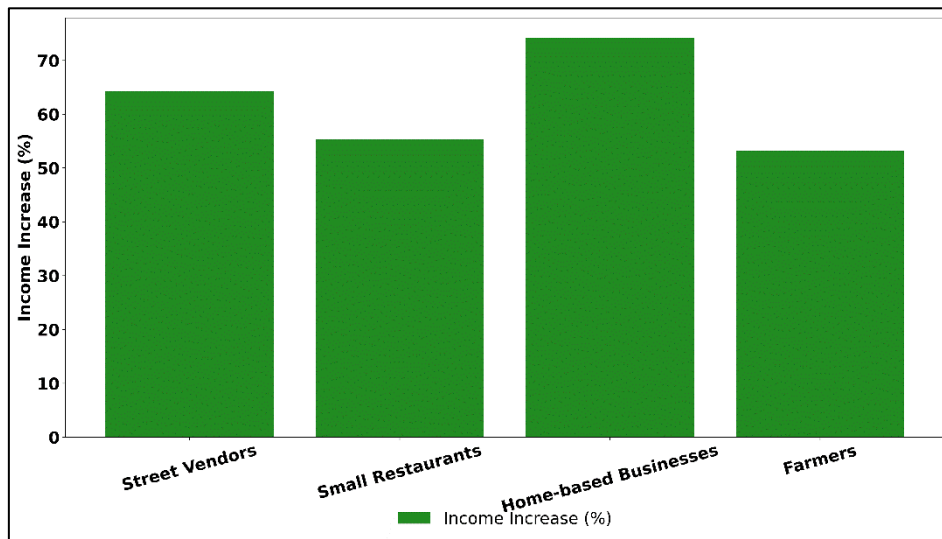


Figure 9: Employment Generation across Local Food-Based Enterprises

The percent growth of home-based food businesses is the largest with the income increasing by USD 310 to USD 540, which is 74.2% increment.

Discussion

Interpretation of empirical findings

The empirical results of this research point to the great importance of food tourism in the promotion of the micro-enterprises development in the community-based tourism destinations. The analysis shows that the growth of small food-related business directly depends on the interest of tourists towards the local cuisine. Local sellers, small restaurants, and home food producers enjoy the benefits of tourism demand getting more exposure to the market and higher inflow of customers. These results indicate that food tourism is an economic driver in that it unites the tourists with local food business. The other important finding made during the empirical study is the significance of local resource exploitation. A lot of micro-enterprises are dependent on locally sourced ingredients,

which make interaction between agricultural producers and food vendors stronger. The interaction facilitates the flow of revenue in the society and boosts the strength of the local economies.

Relationship between Community Participation and Enterprise Growth

The research results underscore the fact that community engagement has a great impact on the development and sustainability of micro-enterprises in the food tourism ecosystems. When the local people are actively involved in tourism related activities, culinary experiences being provided to tourists become more authentic and cultural. The communities involved in food preparation, cultural festivals as well as local food markets provide colorful tourism settings, which attract tourists and benefit local businesses. Community participation also allows the stakeholders to work together like farmers, vendors, and food entrepreneurs. The given cooperation allows sharing resources, knowledge, and market opportunities, which lead to the development of enterprises. By involving members of a community in the common tourism projects, they are in a better place to carry out supply chains, keep the products of high quality, and advertise local food to the outside world. Furthermore, participatory tourism models empower the locals as this gives them a chance to acquire skills and venture into businesses. The sustainability of tourism initiatives is also enhanced by the participation of the community members in the process of making tourism decisions.

Comparison with Existing Literature

This research results align with those of earlier studies focusing on the economic opportunities of food tourism to the local communities and small-scale businesses. Previous research has also pointed out that culinary tourism helps in the attraction of a destination by providing the cultural experience of a destination through local food. The ongoing study confirms this view by showing that tourists are becoming more and more interested in learning about the food culture in the region and communication with local sellers and manufacturers. There is also the literature available on the significance of community involvement in the realization of the sustainable tourism development. There have been arguments by scholars that in cases where local people are actively involved in tourism activities, the economic gains derived are more evenly spread amongst the stakeholders. Findings of this paper confirm this argument by indicating that community involvement enhances the relationship between tourism demand and the development of micro-enterprises. Further, the importance of localized value chains in increased economic value of tourism has been addressed by previous studies. This perspective is supported by the current results as they show that farmer, vendor, and food entrepreneur integration in tourism networks is also a source of income and local economic sustainability.

Conclusion

Food tourism is a new direction in community that has proven to be of significant use in encouraging the local economic growth, cultural conservation and advancement in micro-enterprises. The paper has analyzed the interaction between the food tourism activities with the community participation and how the small-scale food related business is developed in the local tourism ecosystem. The results show that food tourism generates great economic prospects to the local communities as it relates the tourist to the authentic experiences of local food in relation to the local culture and traditions. The empirical findings show that more tourism-based demand in traditional cuisine has a positive impact on the growth and viability of a micro business-like street food vendors, small restaurants, home-based food producers, and local farmers. These businesses have an advantage of increased exposure to the market, increased customer interaction, and better revenues are generated. Moreover, the research also emphasizes the fact that the active involvement of the local communities is also a significant determinant of the success of food tourism. The engagement of the larger community on food preparation, cultural events and tourism decision-making enhances the authenticity of food experiences and makes sure that the returns of tourism are shared among other local stakeholders. The other conclusion of the study that is important is the fact that local value chain integration can improve the economic impact of food tourism. The association of farmers, food vendors, entrepreneurs, and tourism facilitators results in a locally based economic system whereby the revenue earned through tourism is re-invested into the community.

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