



Local Cuisine Promotion: Case Study Perspectives from Key Tourism Stakeholders in Botswana

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Abstract

This study attempted to address a relatively neglected tourism resource in Botswana; Setswana cuisine. By conducting interviews with key informants from tourism development stakeholders such as Botswana Tourism Organisation, Botswana Craft Marketing and Gaborone Sun Hotel, Casino and Conference Centre, this study identified *seswaa* (pound boiled beef) and beef based products such as biltong, as resources with potential for large scale tourism use. However challenges with commodity supply, the language barrier and a low market interest *inter alia*, were perceived as waning the efforts of promoting Setswana cuisine. Regular commodity supply, increased education and awareness at domestic level and the introduction of more local eatery places and cultural champions were perceived as measures that could ameliorate some of the challenges associated with the tourism promotion of Setswana cuisine.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has for long been predominantly considered a catalyst for the socio economic development of most African countries. Because of these potential benefits, many developing countries have selected tourism as a strategy for broadening their economic base (Mbaiwa, 2005) and of alleviating dependency on mineral based economies (IIED, 2002). Botswana is not exempt from the trend.

Botswana, located in Southern Africa, is a country chiefly dependent on diamond mining. Being the world's largest producer of diamonds in value terms (DeBeers, 2009), and ranked third in volume terms after the Democratic Republic of Congo and Australia (Newman, 2010), Botswana is a beacon to reckon with in the diamond mining sector. The country currently holds 22% of the world's diamond reserves (Newman, 2010 p. 5.1). According to the AFDB/OECD/UNDP/UNECA (2012), mining and quarrying contributed 34.7% of the country's GDP in 2011.

After mining, tourism has also been recognized as one of the country's largest economic sectors (Republic of Botswana, 2000). The sector has been identified as one with considerable potential of contributing towards economic diversification efforts (Republic of Botswana, 2000). Economic activity directly and indirectly generated by tourist sectors such as hotels, travel agents, airlines, restaurants, leisure and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services), accounted for an expected 6.6% of the country's GDP in 2011 (World Travel & Tourism Centre [WTTC], 2011) and 7.7% of GDP in 2012 (WTTC, 2013b). These figures are expected to rise to 8.9% of GDP by 2023 (WTTC, 2013b p. 3). In addition, tourism generated 31 500 jobs directly in 2012 (4.7% of total employment (WTTC, 2013b). This contribution to total employment is expected to increase by 2.6% per annum over the next ten years to 2023 (WTTC, 2013b). This increased contribution from travel and tourism is also evident globally. In 2012, travel and tourism's combined direct, indirect and induced impact was US\$ 6.6 trillion, representing 9% of total economy GDP globally (WTTC, 2013a). In addition, tourism generated one in every 11 jobs, 5% of total economy investment and 5% of world exports (WTTC, 2013a). Its contribution to GDP is set to grow by 4.4% on average per year to 2023, also translating to a total contribution of GDP by 10% and accounting for 1 in every 10 jobs (WTTC, 2013a).

Although Botswana's National Tourism Policy contained in the Government Paper No. 2 of 1990 was predominantly focused on the promotion of wildlife attractions, the Botswana Tourism Master Plan adopted in 2000, emphasised the economic and cultural relevance of tourism (Bolaane & Kanduzi, 2008). As such Botswana has identified song, dance and craft as options for tourism product diversification. However the contribution of these aspects of tourism to the overall tourism product portfolio remains minimal (Pansiri & Mahachi, In Press). In particular, local cuisine, which is the main focus of this study, has not been well developed and lacks exposure (Leechor & Fabricius, 2004). Local cuisine in this research refers to food and beverage 'that is produced or grown in the local area or local

specialty food that has a local identity' (Enteleca Research & Consultancy Ltd, 2000 p. 11). In Botswana this would primarily refer to Setswana cuisine, as these are foods and beverages that have local identity.

The relative contribution of local cuisine to tourism in Botswana remains limited, despite its unique tastes and flavours (Leechor & Fabricius, 2004). For instance, the Botswana Tourism Organisation (BTO), has a limited approach in marketing cuisine based attractions through its official website and travel guides. Of the 41 pages of Botswana's Tourist Guide, *Bajanala* (tourists, Setswana) for 2010, for instance, only three sentences were dedicated to food (Pansiri & Mahachi, In Press). On the other hand, the different districts in the country with their diversity in ethnicity provide opportunities for regional cuisine resources that could enhance the attractiveness of these areas.

This study was therefore informed mainly by the limited attention awarded to relationships between tourists and their eating or culinary experiences in general tourism literature (Moulin, 2000) and the lack of (or limited) presentation or exposure of local cuisine in Botswana (Leechor & Fabricius, 2004). Aspects of representation and 'exposure' can be best explained by tourism promotion, which allows for the development of communication channels, such as advertisements, with customers and other stakeholders, in order to increase awareness amongst consumers, persuading them to make purchases. Although aspects of promotion have received considerable attention in tourism literature (Buhalis, 2000), research on the promotion of local cuisine is still anecdotal and the link between food and tourism has taken long to be recognised (Frochot, 2003). It is only recently that cuisine tourism has to some extent gained cognisance from governments, especially African. For instance, the South African White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism (Republic of South Africa, 1996) now recognises the importance of tourists' activities such as sampling local food, wine and beer. However, this is one of the isolated cases associated with the development of cuisine tourism especially in Southern Africa.

In order to access the importance accorded to local cuisine in Botswana, this study established three key objectives and study sought the opinion of three key tourism stakeholders; Botswana Tourism Organisation, Botswana Craft marketing and Gaborone Sun Hotel, Casino and Conference Centre. Firstly, the study sought to identify local cuisine considered to have high tourism promotion potential by key tourism stakeholders. Secondly, the study identifies challenges facing the tourism promotion of Setswana cuisine and thirdly, ways that could be used to advance the tourism promotion of Setswana cuisine are investigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a number of organisations with interest in the development of tourism, particularly the marketing of tourism at the destination, which is the main focus of this study. These organisations in some way match the demand of tourism with its supply. In most cases, these organisations assume three main structures; the destination management organisation (DMO), a government ministry and a private entity (Pike, 2004 p.14). The DMO or destination marketing and management organisations (DMMO) as is the case in

some countries, is defined by Pike (2004 p. 14) as an 'organisation at any level responsible for the marketing of an identifiable destination', hence excluding separate government departments responsible for policy and planning. The DMO would be responsible for the development and promotion of tourism whilst the government ministry unit provides policy guidance and planning. The private entity on the other hand is usually a private sector umbrella association of industry representatives, also responsible for the development of tourism, albeit at a much smaller scale.

Botswana has a similar approach in its tourism development organisational structure. Three main structures for tourism development are evident; the existence of Botswana Tourism Organisation (the national tourism organisation), the Department of Tourism (a ministerial unit) and the Hospitality and Tourism Association of Botswana (HATAB), a private sector entity. The BTO (previously known as Botswana Tourism Board) and established by an Act of Parliament in 2004, has the mandate of marketing and promoting the country as a premier tourism destination of choice at national level (BTO, 2013a). The organisation is also responsible for grading and classifying accommodation facilities, and promoting investment in the tourism sector (Republic of Botswana, 2013). By achieving its key objectives, BTO mainly aims at strategically positioning the country's travel and tourism destinations, products and services in the major generating markets (BTO, 2013b), which are mainly Western countries. This also involves taking up the role of diversifying the sector to include other types of tourism such as cultural and heritage tourism (Mokgoabone, 2010). As such the BTO was considered the principle stakeholder in tourism development in this paper.

On the other hand, the Department of Tourism (a unit in the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, MEWT) is the official public sector representative for tourism in the country. The Department is responsible for the development and implementation of policies and strategies (Department of Tourism, n.d). The department also works in consultation with BTO. Lastly, HATAB, the private sector arm of tourism and hospitality in Botswana, established in 1982, has voluntary membership of over 40% of all registered tourism and hospitality establishments in Botswana (HATAB, 2013). Gaborone Sun Hotel Casino and Conference Centre is a member of HATAB and is one of the four star hotels in Botswana. Gaborone Sun was identified as one of key stakeholders in cuisine development as the hotel has been viewed as a leader in the hotel, casino and conference business in the country for over 30 years (Communications Regulators of Southern Africa, 2015). Though privately funded and organised, the HATAB, through its members as well, works closely with the Botswana Tourism Organisation and the Department of Tourism.

The last key stakeholder considered in this study, Botswana Craft Marketing, is a company that was established in 1970 by the Botswana Development Corporation to develop the rural based handicraft industry of the country. Botswana Craft Marketing was considered as a case for reference in this paper, because it is the recognized host of the Annual Letlhafula Festival, a popular food and culture festival in Botswana. The organisation also has a

restaurant, the Courtyard which is open every day and mainly serves traditional Setswana cuisine.

Through BTO, Gaborone Sun Hotel Casino and Conference Centre and Botswana Craft Marketing, amongst other stakeholders, Botswana would administer and coordinate the development of cuisine tourism in this case. The views and opinions of such stakeholders would be imperative in the development and promotion of cuisine tourism at a larger scale.

In developing tourism destinations, the destination marketing structures discussed above, usually require use of the marketing mix, which is a 'mixture of elements useful in pursuing a certain market response' (van Waterschoot & Van den Bulte, 1992 p.83). The marketing mix is a basic and traditional marketing concept. The traditional marketing mix is comprised of four Ps; price, product, promotion and place. The 4P classification system for the marketing mix was developed as a way of itemizing the large number of influences on market response that marketers should take into account (van Waterschoot & Van den Bulte, 1992). However, opponents of the traditional mix argue that the 20th century has radically transformed consumer's needs and their behaviour to such an extent that some of the components are irrelevant (Constantinides, 2006). This has led to researchers, especially academics, proposing the adoption of alternative frameworks or modified versions for the mix. This controversy is evident with components of the marketing mix especially in the service sector, where tourism firms lie. Constantinides (2006) for instance argues that the human element, a distinguishing element of services marketing, should be highlighted in adopting the marketing mix. Such controversy exists especially from the platform of the consumer as an interactive and more important component of the mix. However despite such controversy on which aspects are important for the marketing mix, this study only considers promotion as one of marketing mix tools, in more depth and how the tourism development structures especially the BTO have used or could use this tool to develop cuisine tourism in Botswana. Tourism promotion is important in reversing the limited nature of presentation and exposure of local cuisine in Botswana's overall tourism portfolio hence contributing towards diversification efforts.

Although the traditional promotion mix consists of four tools: advertising, sales promotions, public relations and personal selling (Fill, 1999), the modern promotion mix (communication options) includes media advertising, direct response and interactive advertising, place advertising, point of purchase advertising, trade promotions, consumer promotions, event marketing and sponsorship, publicity and public relations and personal selling (Keller, 2001). Keller (2001) further suggests that any marketing communications programme should integrate one or more of these communications options. As such the promotion of local cuisine in Botswana should aim to integrate two or more of the common communication options.

There are various options that can be used to promote cuisine, such as events, brochures and advertising, websites on food tourism, tourism guides, blogs, familiarization trips for journalists and tour operators and social networks (Jordan, 2012). Despite the myriad of promotion methods

available, Su and Horng (2011) argue that the most effective tools are brochures and websites. These two fall under direct response and interactive advertising according to Keller's (2001) typology of the promotion mix. Su and Horng (2011) support Morgan and Pritchard's (2000) argument that brochures are important and are the most popular medium used by tourism advertisers. Food has been used in brochures to create an eye catching appeal (Batra, 2008). DMOs usually present brochures of their tourism destinations at tourism fairs, exhibitions and conferences. These are usually presented to partners, prospective consumers and the general travel trade, who require information about the destination (Buhalis, 2000).

Destinations can also capitalise on the use of modern technologies such as websites and the Internet. The internet is a forum for over two billion users (Internet World Statistics, 2001-2014) making it an ideal platform for web based advertising techniques. Web based promotion tactics are especially significant for African countries that rely on developed countries as their source markets for tourism. Botswana is not an exception, because almost a third of all tourist arrivals are from the Americas, Europe and Asia (Republic of Botswana, n. d). The internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) have the potential of being powerful marketing and advertising tools for tourism related products (Cano & Prentice, 1998). Karagkouni (2012) even indicates that the construction of a state-of-the-art website is the key tool of successfully promoting cuisine tourism in general, the inclusion of information such as photographic images of the destination, information about regions and culture and search by keywords and the availability of text or photos changing or moving on the site has also made it more attractive for potential customers to select which places they may visit (Kozak et al., 2005). As such a website is very essential in any country's marketing efforts because it integrates tourists' main expected experiences (Kozak et al., 2005), directly influences the perceived gastronomic image of the destination and creates a virtual experience for culinary tourists (Horng and Tsai, 2010). Websites have been quite influential in travellers' decisions to visit France, Italy and Thailand for cuisine tourism purposes (Karim & Chi, 2010). It is therefore imperative to distinguish tourists' food and beverage experiences and emphasise these on any website, especially that of the national tourism organisation.

As Mcfarlane and Pliner (1997), suggest, providing information about novel foods using the promotion mix, is a technique that can be applied to large groups of people, encouraging mass marketing. Information, especially 'taste' information is quite effective in influencing people to try novel foods (Pelchat & Pliner, 1995 p. 162). Understanding consumer food tendencies and familiarity would help restaurant operators understand customer attitudes important in influencing purchase intentions and behaviour (Hwang & Lin, 2010). As Hwang and Lin (2010) further suggest, familiarity is important when marketing food thus, marketers should focus on promotion to increase the familiarity of new cuisines and make them more acceptable.

In summary, whilst local cuisine could be ideal for tourism promotion purposes, tourism stakeholders face a number of challenges. Firstly, the promotion of cuisine tourism inevitably results in the adoption of a marketing

approach to tourism development. Adopting a marketing approach implies that diners or cuisine tourists are viewed as consumers. This approach has a number of challenges (Boyne et al., 2009). The major challenge that exists is the lack of understanding of tourist behaviour in the context of cuisine tourism by the main tourism stakeholders (Buhalis, 2000; Okumus et al., 2007). The different types of local cuisine that exist in any area make understanding cuisine tourist behaviour even more complex, making it almost impossible to apply models of cuisine tourist behaviour in promotional efforts. Another major challenge is the varied nature of cuisine tourism stakeholders, who have complex relationships and varied interests in tourism development (Buhalis, 2000). For instance, there are restaurants, franchised (or not), retail outlets, street vendors, hotels and numerous other traders who have varying interests and motives for cuisine, less so for tourism. This is a challenge that does not only affect the promotion of cuisine tourism but nearly all streams of tourism as tourism is multidisciplinary, traversing several areas of trade and business.

Secondly, although a number of countries have somehow used several forms of promotion, such as the WWW or Internet in promoting cuisine tourism, there are several challenges worth noting. A web site may sometimes fail to offer linguistic versions of tourism products on offer in an international tourist's native language (Cano & Prentice, 1998). This is one area that has been identified requiring future study by Okumus et al. (2007). The other observation is that a destination may have a very good website but this website is uni-directional as it does not allow interaction with clients (Cano & Prentice, 1998). Cano and Prentice (1998) further suggest that national tourism organisational websites might have to employ personnel who can communicate remotely with customers. With some, the websites are not refreshed occasionally. Technical challenges also exist, for instance, not all users would have access to recently updated versions of the Hyper Text Mark-up Language (HTML) and Java, common computer languages (Hanna & Millar, 1997) and even web browsers. The challenges as highlighted may therefore restrict the applicability of websites as useful tools for promoting cuisine tourism. However despite the challenges identified websites are continuously used by tourism stakeholders to promote tourism to existing and potential customers. Botswana is not exempted from this trend, as the national tourism office, BTO and various other stakeholders have used one or more of these tools to market tourism regionally and internationally, albeit at a much smaller scale. This study therefore seeks to explore the views of such stakeholders in the promotion of Setswana cuisine as a unique tourism attraction.

RESEARCH METHODS

Three key organisations were approached through use of typical case purposive sampling. The following acronyms were used for the three organisations: BTO represented Botswana Tourism Organisation, which is the national representative of tourism development in Botswana. BCM was used as an acronym for Botswana Craft Marketing, a private organisation that hosts the annual Letlhafula Food Festival whilst the acronym GSHCCC was used to refer to Gaborone Sun Hotel, Casino and Conference Centre, one of the four star hotels in Gaborone, often viewed as a leader in

the hotel, casino and conference business in the country for over 30 years (Communications Regulators of Southern Africa, 2015). The three organisations were perceived as typical cases in this study, as they are representative of the group of cases under study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this case they represented other organisations responsible for tourism promotion. Purposive sampling was used in this study; because it had the advantage of enabling access to the best available knowledge about the area of study (Sharma, 1997), making it possible to select information-rich cases that allow one to learn more about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990). The organisations selected as cases, were presumed to have special knowledge about tourists' needs and were in close and constant contact with the target population.

Semi-structured formal interviews were conducted in 2014 with key marketing informants at these organisations. The interviews were guided by five main questions. The interviews were mainly used for soliciting information on local cuisine that could be used for tourism purposes, identifying challenges facing the promotion of local cuisine in Botswana and isolating interviewees' perceptions on platforms used for promoting Setswana cuisine at a much larger scale.

The interview with the BTO representative was held at her office and lasted for about 30 minutes. The second interviewee, with the representative at BCM was also held at her office and lasted for about 25 minutes. The interview with the third interviewee, from GSHCC was at her place of work and it lasted for about 40 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed manually.

A research permit to conduct such a study granted by the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, with support from the Office of Research and Development at the University of Botswana, was used to assist the authors' access survey permission from these organisations

Demographic questions were analysed using descriptive statistics, whilst the open ended questions were evaluated using thematic content analysis. Content analysis was selected because of the need to understand in-depth views and meanings associated with written expressions, sentiments and comments from the interviewees (Mahachi & Shemi, 2014). The thematic analysis approach described by Mills et al. (2010) was used in this study. This approach involved:

1. Identification of themes or patterns of meaning
2. Coding and classification of data according to themes
3. Interpretation of the results in common themes

In this study, words and phrases were extracted from the interviewees' responses and were coded and collated into themes. The collation into themes relied on the interpretive abilities of the authors (Cassell & Symon, 1994) and was therefore subjective. Findings derived from the analyses were then expressed either qualitatively or quantitatively (Okumus et al., 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into four areas of focus namely: the demographic profile of the respondents, the type of

Setswana cuisine with tourism promotion potential, challenges in promoting local cuisine to tourists and platforms that have been or could be used to promote Setswana cuisine at a larger scale.

Demographic Profile of Interviewees

The demographic profile of the interviewees is presented first. Table 1 highlights that all interviewees were female, were aged between 30 and 39 and were all Batswana.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Interviewees

| | Gender | Age | Highest Educational Qualification | Nationality |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| BTO representative | Female | 30-39 | Bachelor | Botswana |
| BCM Representative | Female | 30-39 | Diploma | Botswana |
| GSHCCC Representative | Female | 40-49 | Bachelor | Botswana |

Type of Setswana Cuisine with Tourism Promotion Potential

Interviewees were asked to identify local cuisine that could be used for tourism purposes in Botswana. Their remarks were:

BTO Representative: *The domestic market like more of the traditional food, they love their own food. The international market, well, they like game meat especially biltong¹, and also a fusion of local cuisine with what they are used to.*

BCM Representative: *Seswaa² is the ultimate, because it is unique.*

GSHCCC Representative: *Seswaa and Paletshe³. Paletshe is not difficult to sell, it is also internationally recognised. Tourists also love our beef because it is seen as organic, they also love game meat.*

In general it emerged from the interviewees that beef based cuisine like *seswaa*, game meat and biltong were popular amongst tourists. This confirms Denbow and Thebe (2006) who state that Botswana's cuisine is centred on meat. This assertion could therefore be used as the central theme in the tourism promotion of Setswana cuisine.

¹ Locally dried and processed meat.

² Pound boiled beef (Rudloff, 2007)

³ Maize meal porridge (Rudloff, 2007)

Challenges in Promoting Local Cuisine to Tourists

Interviewees were asked to identify the main challenges they faced in trying to promote local cuisine. Interviewees gave the following responses:

BTO Representative: Demand exceeds supply, for example there is not enough free range chickens to feed everyone...The produce from suppliers is not consistent...Most farmers produce for their own consumption and not for sale...Again there is limited knowledge in traditional food preparation. People who are knowledgeable are unaware of the opportunities...The language barrier is also a major challenge, as caterers sometimes fail to express themselves.

BCM Representative: We don't have many types of vegetables only versions of morogo⁴. The starches like bogobe⁵, stampa⁶ and the meats are plenty...We also need a steady supply of ingredients from individuals...The quality of ingredients is not consistent...The market for local cuisine is low so opening many places won't work.

GSHCCC Representative: Tourists love brightly coloured food but our dishes are bland and sometimes do not need a garnish. We once tried phane⁷ as a snack, and we had to remove it from the menu because they were not appealing...It is difficult to source some of the ingredients like, already processed sorghum in bulk...from a business point of view there is not enough profit you can get from selling traditional dishes...The safety for tripe is questionable; to what extent do they clean the tripe. I have never heard of a place where the ingredients have been checked for safety and hygiene...Some of the dishes take time to cook e.g the free range chickens, that is time and energy.

From the responses elicited, 10 themes of challenges associated with the promotion of Setswana cuisine were extracted based on the authors' interpretative abilities; supply irregularities, limited variety of vegetables, language barrier, limited awareness of opportunities, limited knowledge in traditional cuisine preparation techniques, aesthetic reasons, safety, health and hygiene considerations, financial consideration, lengthy preparation times and low market interest. These are discussed in the following section.

Supply Irregularities

One of the main challenges as mentioned by respondents sampled in this study were irregularities in the supply of commodities used in the preparation of local cuisine. Three main concerns associated with the irregularity of supplies were raised: insufficient supply, inconsistencies in the availability of supplies and inconsistencies in the quality of supply.

All interviewees raised concerns on the irregularities of supply, emphasising the inconsistencies in the availability of supplies. In particular, the BCM representative clearly emphasised that there was need for a steady supply of produce from suppliers. However in cases where availability of supplies was consistent, the BCM representative further indicated that the quality supplied is not consistent. The interviewees' trepidations are duly noticeable, even at national level and are partly due to the performance of the agricultural sector in the country. Although agriculture in Botswana is one of the country's largest economic sectors, over the years the performance of this sector has been poor, mainly due to intermittent rainfall and pest and disease outbreaks (Statistics Botswana, 2014). Low levels of supply could also be attributed to farming produce that is mainly reserved for domestic consumption; as the BTO representative noted, '*most farmers produce for their own consumption and not for sale*'. This assertion is true in some cases. For instance with reference to the sorghum crop production disposal figures for 2012, 7461 metric tonnes were produced. Of these 5588 metric tonnes (75%) were stored and used for home consumption, whilst only 1361 metric tonnes (18%) were sold or traded (Statistics Botswana, 2014 p. 112). Sorghum is a central ingredient in the preparation of *bogobe*, one of Botswana's distinctive cuisine types. The trend for millet is even similar: 1499 metric tonnes (95%) were stored and used for home consumption whilst only 9 metric tonnes (0.6%) was sold or traded out of a total 1582 metric tonnes (Statistics Botswana, 2014 p. 114). Probably the main reason why farmers do not produce for sale in larger quantities is because of the low market interest for Setswana cuisine. This is the next challenge that was discussed in this study.

Low Market Interest in Setswana Cuisine

The BCM Representative duly acknowledged the low market interest in Setswana cuisine: '*the market for local cuisine is low so opening many places won't work*'. Maruapula and Chapman-Novakodfski (2011 p. 353) noted that most young Batswana are not aware of the fibre-rich traditional dishes such as boiled sorghum grain (*lohata*) because such delicacies have not been presented in their original contexts to them but rather as processed alternatives. In addition, the low market interest could be attributable to the notion that most of the visitors to eatery places in Gaborone are mainly Batswana, who consume Setswana cuisine mostly as an extension of their daily staple cuisine requirements (Mahachi, 2014). It is therefore rational to state that the interest in Setswana cuisine amongst the indigenous populace would be low. It is also rational to state that most Batswana are less prepared to indulge in the same local cuisine that they can easily prepare at home and pay much less in comparison. In this case it is best to view Setswana

⁴ Green leafy vegetables

⁵ Hard sorghum porridge

⁶ Samp or cracked maize (Rudloff, 2007)

⁷ Mopane worms

cuisine eatery places in Gaborone as mainly an extension of the familiarity of home. As such not much market interest is aroused though effort is being extended to increase awareness amongst locals through the Letlhafula Food Festival and cooking competitions, amongst other aspects by Botswana Craft Marketing and Botswana Tourism Organisation.

Language Barrier

The language barrier identified as a communication gap and one of the impediments of food tourism by Cohen and Avieli (2004) was also eminent in this survey. It is apparent that if tourists could speak the native language, for those that cannot, then this problem could be eliminated. However tourists, especially international, by their nature, are not expected to reside at the destination for more than 12 months (Lubbe, 2003), as they cease to be classified as tourists. The ephemeral nature of international tourists' stay at the destination is the main reason why for most, cannot speak or understand the native language.

However this study, has noted that the language barrier is not only a challenge with international tourists as expressed in extant literature, but it is a challenge for the service providers as well; as the BTO representative indicated, *'the language barrier is a challenge, as caterers sometimes fail to express themselves'*. The language barrier is therefore not only about the tourist understanding the native language but also about the caterer knowing how to express themselves in a way that the tourist understands. In general, although tourist understanding of local cuisine is exemplified as a challenge, it could be seen as an opportunity for the food service facility and for the national tourism office. Associating cuisine with its native or indigenous name can be used as a reference for authenticity and hence act as its main selling point. The desire to experience authentic Thai food was one of the main driving motives for tourists' selection of locally owned restaurants in Thailand for instance (Buruskunul et al., 2011). The quest for authentic experiences can therefore act to draw more, even international tourists, to Botswana's indigenous cuisine. Tourists seeking culture have always been fascinated by authentic local food (du rand & Heath, 2006).

Limited breadth of vegetable based cuisine

The representative from BCM also noted the limited variety, especially in the vegetable range of Setswana cuisine when she stated that: *'we don't have many types of vegetables only versions of morogo⁸...'* This could be attributable to the reliance, to some extent of an imported supply of vegetables, amongst other commodities by Botswana (Lane et al., 2012) in order to meet the country's food supply requirements. The country's semi-arid climate limits the range of cultivable crops. Some of the vegetables which grow in the wild are also only available seasonally (Botswana Embassy-Japan, n.d).

Limited Awareness Of Opportunities

It was also apparent from the interviews especially by the BTO representative, that most caterers were not aware of the opportunities that present with cuisine tourism. Local and traditional cuisine is often viewed as an extension of the 'ordinary' cuisine experiences. Caterers can be made aware of opportunities of extending this view beyond the mundane and for tourism purposes through active marketing and awareness campaigns.

Limited Knowledge Of Traditional Cuisine Preparation

In addition *'there are very few people, who are knowledgeable of traditional cuisine preparation methods and techniques'* (BTO representative). Traditional cuisine preparation requires skills and knowledge that is generally transmitted along generations. However there is limited literature in Botswana on the knowledge linked to indigenous or traditional cuisine and how it could be used as tourism resources. This knowledge gap is exacerbated by the fact that there are so many regional variants of Setswana cuisine (Von Rudloff, 2007). Each traditional dish for instance has 'so many recipes' (Von Rudloff, 2004). With the rise in urbanisation, some of the known techniques can be lost if not well preserved. There is therefore need for traditional cuisine knowledge continuity and preservation. The efforts of the BCM and BTO in promulgating such knowledge and skills through the Letlhafula Food Festival and other similar events is appreciated, however more could be done.

Safety, Health And Hygiene Considerations

As reiterated by the GSHCCC Representative, *'the safety for tripe is questionable; to what extent do they [caterers] clean the tripe. I have never heard of a place where the ingredients have been checked for safety and hygiene'*. The interviewee is justified in her concern for the safety and especially the hygienic conditions relating to the preparation of tripe. By its nature tripe requires lengthy periods of time in cleaning and cooking. Levels of cleanliness can also vary depending on the caterers' thoroughness and attitude to cleanliness.

Aesthetic Reasons

It was also ostensible from this study that some of the popular cuisine was not visually appealing. For instance mopane worms as a tourism resource may not be appealing, as the GSHCCC representative stated,

'Tourists love brightly coloured food but our dishes are bland and sometimes do not need a garnish. We once tried phane as a snack, but we had to remove them from the menu because they were not appealing'

The taste of most Setswana cuisine is bland. The colour is unappetising (HATAB, 2015). In some dishes, garnishes (that would brighten the appeal) are not even used as they distort the authenticity of the cuisine. However despite the visual appeal, most of the cuisine has distinctive flavours and is of high nutritional value: these aspects acting as key selling points that could be considered further.

⁸ Leafy green vegetables

Lengthy Preparation Times And Financial Considerations

The GSHCCC representative also mentioned the lengthy preparation time taken for some of the local cuisine types and how this translates into cost burdens for caterers. For *seswaa* for example, preparation time can take as long as four hours (von Rudloff, 2007). To address the cost and lengthy preparation times, caterers could benefit from an investment in renewable sources of energy such as biogas, which have been used successfully by hotels such as Cumberland in Lobatse to prepare casserole dishes (Mahachi, Mokgalo & Pansiri, In Press). Although capital costs associated with such investments are usually high, the long term benefits are worthy (Mahachi et al., In Press).

Promoting Setswana Cuisine

This section had two questions. The first question asked interviewees to state the main methods or platforms used to promote Setswana cuisine. The second requested them to indicate what they perceived could be used to promote Setswana cuisine at a larger scale. The responses to the first section were;

BTO Representative: *we use cultural events like the Letlhafula and Dithubaruba...We sponsor and act in partnership with cultural organisations...Cuisine complements dance and Botswana culture is mainly dance and song...To some extent we use exhibitions and local eatery places.*

BCM Representative: *we mainly use radio, television sometimes brochures...Events and functions like Letlhafula, and then there is the Beef Festival.*

GSHCCC Representative: *we use functions and we have also tried theme nights. For functions it has to be the first day and not every day, because they will complain [especially the locals]. There is also the Letlhafula Festival in the country but there is lack of an educational tour in the event.*

All interviewees identified the importance of events and functions such as the Letlhafula, the Dithubaruba and several exhibitions, in the promotion of local cuisine. There was also mention of radio, television and brochures as important tools used to promote local cuisine. The BTO representative also mentioned the use of local eatery places in promoting local cuisine. These suggestions, fall under media advertising, direct response and interactive advertising, place advertising, event marketing and sponsorship, using Keller's (2001) typology of modern communication tools. It is quite apparent that promotion tools such as radio and television are for a restricted audience and more so for a local than an international audience. The extent to which these tools have been successful in communicating cuisine tourism at international level is therefore still debatable in light of

BTO's, role for instance, in marketing Botswana to the international audience.

In the second question, respondents were requested to state what they perceived could be done to promote local cuisine on a larger scale. Their responses were;

BTO representative: *Boost supplies...educate the suppliers...need for more Setswana eatery places in the city...*

BCM representative: *we have tried to promote the local cuisine but more can be done...suppliers should bring good produce...we need to keep our cuisine natural/original and traditional and not contemporary.*

GSHCCC Representative: *Our chefs should know how to cook for example serobe using a standardised recipe and at the same time make sure it is mixed right...education...BTO should get fact sheets of our local cuisine from knowledgeable people...establish standards...You can also do a demonstration video of cuisine from different regions prepared by well knowledgeable persons, as there are many regional differences...cultural groups should pick up key dishes and promote them to the level of seswaa. Seswaa is a signature dish...Understanding the cultural aspects of a dish is important. Emphasize the healthy perspectives of the cuisine, e.g sorghum is very healthy.*

All interviewees indicated that more could be done to promote local cuisine at a larger scale. Increased education and awareness; establishment of safety, hygiene and health standards; ensuring consistent and appropriate levels of supply; maintaining authenticity of Setswana cuisine and identification and introduction of cuisine promotion champions and more eatery places, were the main themes emerging from the responses and these are discussed further.

Increased Education and Awareness

It was apparent from the interviewees that education and awareness of Setswana cuisine should be highly considered, especially in emphasising its importance and uniqueness. 'Understanding the cultural aspects of a dish' and the 'healthy aspects of cuisine', for caterers as the GSHCCC representative indicated, is important. The emphasis of education in cuisine tourism is very important as there is a lack of grounded traditional knowledge amongst most of the populace as previously emphasised. For instance information on the history of some local cuisine, its development and transformations could be captured in short films or documentaries. In addition, there are regional variations in cuisine due to climatic differences that could be used as key selling points. The Northern part of the country for instance is climatically dissimilar to the Southern part, giving rise to

unique variations in diet and cuisine. These regional variations when depicted through an educational component can act to boost the low market interest that is perceived to be currently prevalent amongst consumers.

Establishment of Standards

The GSHCCC representative emphasised the need for the development of standardised recipes and standardised operating procedures. However, Von Rudloff (2004) argued that there can never be agreement on the correct method to prepare any menu item. For instance *seswaa* whilst being identified as the key tourism resource, is also commonly known as *chotlho* in other Tswana dialects (Denbow & Thebe, 2006 p. 113). Considering the two terms, *seswaa* and *chotlho*; the former is more popular in its use. As such it is important to establish agreed regional variants of recipes that can be used in publicity information for education and awareness purposes. The establishment of standards can act to regulate consistency and authenticity of Setswana cuisine. Standards can therefore be developed in purchasing so as to procure safe and hygienic produce and in preparation to ensure that appropriate techniques are adhered.

Ensuring Consistent Supply and Maintenance of Authenticity

Suppliers should also ensure and learn how to boost their supplies as suggested by the BTO representative. In some cases this might mean importing from neighbouring countries. It could also imply more education for suppliers on the best methods of ingredient procurement and supply. Although the use of imported products is quite questionable in relation to authenticity, Bélisle (1984) however argues that the use of imports in tourism is justifiable especially when the item is not available in sufficient quantities locally or the imported item is of better quality. Despite such, efforts should be extended on keeping '*cuisine natural/original and traditional and not contemporary*' as the BCM representative suggested, especially in the methods of preparation.

Identification and Introduction of Cuisine Promotion Champions

The BTO representative emphasised the importance of cultural groups in promoting local cuisine. Cultural groups can act as champions in the promotion of Setswana cuisine. The concept of cultural champions is not new in extant literature. Cultural champions have been used to promote Aboriginal culture (Nelson, 2007) for instance. In Japan, cultural champions have also been used to preserve Japanese culture and idealism (Calichman, 2005). As such cultural champions are important for the preservation and conservation of both tangible and intangible cultural products. In this context they can therefore act to promulgate the level of awareness of Setswana cuisine even at international level.

Introduction of More Local Eatery Places

Although the BCM representative acknowledged the low levels of market interest in Setswana cuisine, as one of the main challenges they faced when promoting cuisine, this opinion contradicts the recommendation by the BTO representative of the '*need for more Setswana eatery places*

in the city. The introduction of more local eatery places would however need a heightened interest from international customers which currently is silent. As Pansiri and Mahachi (In press) argue, the BTO has not made much stride in publicizing local cuisine. Cultural tourism, involving art, dance, song and even cuisine has until recently, advertently received lesser recognition in the tourism profile of the country. The low levels of publicity are highly attributable to Botswana's tourism which remains mainly nature centred. This department has been criticised by Moswete, Thapa and Lacey (2009) who argue that whilst the safari product, based on wildlife is lucrative, it is not sustainable. They instead advocate for the development and promotion of non-consumptive natural and cultural forms of tourism. The Centre for Applied Research (2009) also acknowledges that the inclusion of heritage and cultural tourism based on traditional villages and foods, for instance, in the overall tourism portfolio, can enrich tourist experiences.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study advocates for the continued wider scale support of local cuisine as an important tourism resource in Botswana. In terms of local cuisine that could be used for tourism purposes, interviewees noted the importance of meat based cuisine and more precisely *seswaa* (pound beef) as unique. *Seswaa* is non-disputably, Botswana's cuisine tourism attractor. One of the interviewees also noted that there is a much broader range of meat and starch based cuisine than that comprising of vegetables for sale in restaurant facilities. However this limited range as presented in restaurant or tourist facilities, is not commensurate with the range of traditional or indigenous vegetable based cuisine existing in Botswana. This finding supports Leechor and Fabricius' (2004) general observation that there is limited presentation of local cuisine for tourism purposes in Botswana. There is therefore need to increase the visibility of local cuisine offerings on the country's tourism map; with more emphasis on the vegetable based cuisine types. In this vein, effort should be expended in collating local vegetable based menus by caterers in collaboration with traditional or knowledgeable individuals and the BTO.

With reference to challenges faced in promoting local cuisine, all interviewees noted both demand and supply side considerations. However the interviewees mainly cited supply side challenges as they noted inconsistencies and irregularities in the quality and availability of commodities used in the preparation of local Setswana cuisine. Interviewees noted the importance of maintaining a consistent and ready supply of commodities by suppliers. Efforts of local small and medium enterprises could be engaged in order to boost agricultural supplies of fresh farm produce. Consistent supplies could also be attained by planned restocking techniques or procurement methods.

Also to note was the limited awareness of promotion opportunities and the limited knowledge on traditional preparation methods amongst most caterers. The interviewees noted that issues of awareness could be addressed by educating the populace on the uniqueness and importance of Setswana cuisine especially with regard to cultural heritage issues and nutritional concerns. Specific activities such as menu tasting and concept testing could be

undertaken by caterers, with support from BTO, for awareness and educational purposes.

In general the study recommends increased effort by caterers or suppliers and tourism providers, in addressing the supply driven challenges that were noted. The study recommends that tourism promoters should match demand with supply. Although demand analysis was not principally part of this study, it emerged from the interviews and literature that there is limited attention awarded to the presentation of local cuisine for tourism purposes. Findings from this study also emphasise that currently the perception of local cuisine tourism promotion is prominent only at domestic level. Efforts of engaging the international audience are limited, as even websites and brochures noted as important international tools for cuisine tourism promotion (Hornig & Tsai, 2010; Morgan & Pritchard, 2000) are seldom used even by the BTO, less so by other restaurant facilities. As such the national tourism office (BTO), as one of the main tourism stakeholders, needs to play an active role in order to excite market interest and awareness at both domestic and international levels. This could mean an active role in the appreciation of Setswana cuisine at domestic level and hence its increased publicity at festivals, on television and radio, as these were identified as the main promotional methods that could be used in order to capture the breadth of regional variants of Setswana cuisine. Such opportunities can be important towards tourism product diversification efforts in Botswana.

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