

Chapter 5

Cheese Tourism Museums and Experience

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ABSTRACT

The rise of regional food-themed museums is made possible by the growing interest in gastronomy museums. For this reason, a thorough literature analysis is used to analyze cheese museums as gastronomy museums and the experiences these museums provide to visitors in the current chapter. This review is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding cheese museums as a gourmet tourism offering and cheese tourism as a subset of gastronomic tourism. In the current study, a case study will be carried out concurrently.

BACKGROUND

Gastronomic tourism, which is developing rapidly around the world, is defined as a type of tourism based on the consumption of local food by tourists (Everett, 2019). However, due to its multidisciplinary nature, gastronomy tourism contributes to tourism activity with activities such as gastronomy festivals, cooking courses or gastronomy museums, as well as local food consumption of tourists (Yeoman et al., 2015). In this context, gastronomy museums, which reflect the culinary culture of a country or region and display local products of the geography in question, create a different attraction for tourists. So much so that these museums attract the attention of not only tourists traveling within the scope of gastronomy tourism, but also many local and foreign tourists with different travel purposes. The growing interest in gastronomy museums encourages tourism practitioners to put more museums into operation. For this reason, the number of gastronomy museums, which are considered an innovative approach within the scope of gastronomy tourism, has been increasing recently (Kim et al., 2020).

Despite the increasing number of gastronomy museums in destinations, it is noticeable that academic interest in this subject remains limited, especially in the context of gastronomy tourism. However, gastronomy museums, which have many attractions in terms of both supply and demand, are an important part of gastronomy tourism; It is even considered a gastronomic tourism product. Moreover, gastronomy museums are described as gastronomy tourism areas that focus on food and culinary culture and draw attention to the cultural, political, sociological and geographical importance of food. In order to shed

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light on this issue in the literature, it is possible to say that it is important to evaluate gastronomy tourism from a more holistic perspective by examining gastronomy museums that discover, preserve and reflect the local culinary heritage and culture. Because gastronomy museums, which reflect the evolution of a society in terms of civilization in the context of culinary culture, offer tourists a different gastronomic experience as well as a different cultural experience (Park et al., 2020).

In this context, in order to reveal the current situation of gastronomy museums in terms of tourism and to explore their dynamics, this section primarily focuses on what exactly gastronomy museums mean. Afterwards, the touristic importance of gastronomy museums and cheese museums as an important type of gastronomic museum are discussed. In this context, the chapter is supported by a case study to shed light on the functions that cheese museums can have as a tool of experience. At the same time, the current chapter concludes with suggestions on how cheese museums can be evaluated as a gastronomic tourism product.

Gastronomic Museums

From ancient times to the present day, the phenomenon of “food” plays an important role in the evolution of social civilizations. Because food, in addition to the value it creates in human nutrition, is an important tool that reflects the social and cultural identity of societies. With this feature, the phenomenon of food becomes a part of cultural exchange by allowing the representation of social structure and customs (Harvey, 2009; Montanari, 2006; Murcott, 1982; Scarpato, 2002). With this strong relationship between food and social identity, food culture has come to the fore, especially in the search for identity of modern societies (Bauman, 1997). Increasing social awareness of food culture during the search for identity reveals the belief that local gastronomic traditions should be discovered. To reveal food stories and traditions in the past of cultures; discovering the lost culinary culture; to preserve the existing food culture and pass it on to future generations; The starting point for determining the role of food in social culture construction is museums (Hjalager, 2002; Moon, 2016).

Exhibiting food over time and space is a common occurrence in nature and history museums. The depictions in these museums generally focus on the development of agricultural practices, the tools and equipment used in past periods, and the impact of climate and geography on nutritional culture (Williams, 2013). On the other hand, the diversity of food as a multidisciplinary subject provides wide-ranging opportunities for its use in museum spaces (Park et al., 2020). At the same time, as food is seen as a part of social and cultural belonging, its presence in museums increases (Mihalache, 2014). In this direction, the interest in food and culinary culture within the scope of museums has led to the emergence of gastronomy museums (Park et al., 2020).

Gastronomy museums, which have recently become operational, are considered “cultural areas that document and exhibit food and beverages in all their different aspects” (Park et al., 2020). Unlike nature and history museums, gastronomy museums focus on the social and cultural meanings of food and beverages, such as their story, preparation, rituals and consumption styles, based on the food itself. In addition to exhibiting products, gastronomy museums facilitate the transfer of information about culinary culture by offering training, events and conversations about food and beverage culture to visitors (Garibaldi and Pozzi, 2020). Thus, gastronomy museums not only provide information about culinary culture, but also encourage visitors to internalize and learn this culture. At the same time, restaurants in gastronomy museums offer visitors the opportunity to have a different gastronomic experience. Thus, gastronomy museums become centers of attraction that attract the attention of both local and foreign tourists.

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