

THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF CULINARY TOURISM (2001-2025): A MULTIDIMENSIONAL REVIEW OF TRENDS, IMPACTS, AND POST-PANDEMIC TRAJECTORIES

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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive review traces the dynamic evolution of culinary tourism over the first quarter of the 21st century (2001-2025), analyzing its transformation from a niche activity to a primary travel motivator. Employing interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks, the study systematically examines culinary tourism across pre-COVID-19, pandemic, and post-COVID-19 periods. Food festivals, experience-driven travel, and early social media drove pre-pandemic, continuous growth and diversification. The COVID-19 crisis spurred rapid digital innovation (e.g., virtual culinary tourism) and emphasized social responsibility. Post-pandemic recovery reveals a fundamental shift in traveler values towards authenticity, localism, well-being, and sustainability, with digital platforms and influencers playing critical roles. Complexities identified include the cultural politics of food, economic disparities, and a persistent gap between intention and behavior in sustainable practices. The paper outlines crucial research gaps, particularly the need for context-specific theories and strategies to bridge the sustainability gap. It also highlights the exploration of emerging technologies such as AI, AR/VR, and blockchain in culinary tourism. The review concludes that collaborative efforts among academics, practitioners, and policymakers are imperative to foster sustainable, authentic, and inclusive culinary tourism that is responsive to evolving global trends and traveler expectations.

Keywords: Culinary Tourism, Sustainability, Post-Pandemic Trends, Digital Transformation, Traveler Behavior

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