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# **Cultural globalisation and food in urban destination marketing**

Despite a considerable body of research focusing on food tourism, the academic community has been slow to consider the cultural potential of this highly topical phenomenon. To address the research gap, cultural globalisation is discussed as the theoretical perspective that proves helpful in explaining the application of food in destination marketing and how this, in turn, affects the conceptualisation of the 'local', the 'global' and the 'glocal' in an urban context. Taking the city of York, England, as a case study, through a qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews with food tourism stakeholders from public and private sectors, it is considered how the increasing use of food as a cultural artefact in urban destination marketing is influenced by the various forces of cultural globalisation. It is shown how cultural homogenisation, heterogenisation and glocalisation influence both the cultural landscape of York, as well as in how food (global, local and glocal) is presented and marketed to visitors. Knowledge of these specific characteristics and peculiarities of food allows tourism professionals to develop urban destination marketing that is socially and culturally informed which may help to reinforce the destination's uniqueness and difference.

Keywords: cultural globalisation; food tourism; destination marketing; York, urban tourism; local; global; glocal

## **Introduction**

As the use of food becomes increasingly prevalent in the marketing and promotion of destinations to tourists (Okumus et al., 2013; Seo et al., 2017) as a signifier of distinction (Okumus et al., 2007), and as a means of creating and defining both the image and identity of places (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016), the need now arises for a deeper conceptualisation and understanding of the range of influences underpinning such practises. In that light, this study seeks to consider and to illustrate the role and influence of cultural globalisation (Hopper, 2007) on the application of food in destination marketing and how this, in turn, affects the conceptualisation of the

'local', the 'global' and the 'glocal' in an urban context. It seeks to respond to Ellis et al. (2018) and Everett's (2019) calls for a more 'cultural turn' in the study of food in tourism and to add empirical weight to this discussion.

Traditionally, food products, food experiences and food culture have been suggested to be an appropriate means of developing a tourism product in rural areas (Ellis et al., 2018). However, there appears to be an increasing number of urban destinations utilising food in destination marketing activities in an attempt to position themselves strongly in the fiercely competitive environment. As such, food, as an element of culture, can be particularly important in urban destinations allowing for differentiation (Henderson, 2016). Thus, food is now an increasingly important element for destinations in more cultural approaches to place marketing, attracting visitors and in developing tourism (Okumus et al., 2007). Cities and towns, described as places of large-scale movement and agglomeration of people (Sheller & Urry, 2006) often have a long history of economic and socio-cultural activity, and of mercantile or capitalist power (Su et al., 2018). The 'urban encounter of art, culture, technology and organization' (Rossi, 2017, p. 43) means that cities can draw many tourists to them. Thus, the purpose of this article is to present an exploratory case study of York, England, the cathedral city, and the historical capital of northern England (Visit York, 2020).

With a population of 198,051 in 2011 (City of York Council, 2020) and the estimated population in 2020 to be 211,099 (Office for National Statistics, 2020), York was voted by TripAdvisor a top 10 European Destination for food and wine in 2011 (Visit York, 2020). Moreover, York was chosen as the case for the study due to it being recognised as a world-class tourist destination, attracting more than 6.9 million tourists each year, spending a total of £564 million (Visit York, 2020). During the past five

years, the total number of visitors has gone up by nearly 500,000 and the amount spent in the local economy increased by more than £100 million (Visit York, 2020). However, despite this interest, no one to the best of the author's knowledge, has studied food tourism in York, England. Thus, it is timely to conduct an empirical investigation to further explore the identified research gap.

Whilst a limited number of previous studies have explored the complex interplay between globalisation and food in the context of tourism (for example: Mak et al., 2012), this study focuses specifically on cultural globalisation, seeking to provide new insights into the use and applications of food in the context of the marketing of food tourism. In short, 'cultural globalisation' (Hopper, 2007) reflects the so-called 'cultural turn' in the study of globalisation, rather than viewing globalisation as simply a form of interconnectedness or exchange (Axford & Huggins, 2011). By adopting a social and cultural studies approach, the role of food in urban destination marketing is reconceptualised through the lens of cultural globalisation. Consequently, the research question guiding the approach presented here is formulated as follows: How does cultural globalisation impact on the application of food in urban destination marketing and how this, in turn, affects the conceptualisation of the 'local', the 'global' and the 'glocal' in an urban context?

The following sections are an attempt to answer this research question. The first section begins with an overview of urban destination marketing literature before developing an understanding of the relationship between food, tourism and culture. This is followed by an exploration of literature dedicated to cultural globalisation and its main concepts of cultural homogenisation, heterogenisation and glocalisation. The second part introduces the methodology. By adopting the sociocultural lens of cultural globalisation, we then consider and discuss how the empirical evidence demonstrates

the range of forces at play which influence both the cultural landscape of York, as well as in how food is presented and marketed. Lastly, the conclusion is presented, summarising the findings, outlining theoretical and practical implications as well as presenting limitations and indicating directions for further research.

## **Theoretical background**

In this section, theories and concepts that lay the foundation for the research are presented and outlined in three subsections: urban destination marketing; food as a manifestation of culture at the destination level; and cultural globalisation.

### ***Urban destination marketing***

Whilst tourists enjoy a plethora of choices of available destinations, DMOs (Destination Marketing Organisations) at all levels find themselves competing against other destinations more than ever before (Crouch, 2011; Knollenberg et al., 2020). What is more, the increasing global mobility of tourists means that new competitors are emerging globally, not just locally (Abreu Novais et al., 2018). Thus, amongst intensified competition between destinations as well as concerns over limited resources, differentiation and uniqueness have now become essential in destination marketing (Pike & Page, 2014). Accordingly, the destination marketing literature emphasises that each destination should differentiate itself by highlighting its unique tangible and intangible features (Okumus et al., 2007). However, while this in itself is not a new activity, what is new is the scale and extent of this highly competitive activity, particularly in urban destinations.

More specifically, while emphasising uniqueness and difference is essential in destination marketing activities, it is now widely acknowledged that destination marketing should be done in a way that also offers benefits sought by travellers, and

represents the interests of destinations' stakeholders (Pike, 2016). Consequently, destination marketing should not only aim to increase the number of visitors by emphasising unique tangible and intangible features, but should also aim to meet the expectations of multiple stakeholders, each with different aims, agendas and expectations (Okumus et al., 2007). This can be challenging for urban destinations which due to the large-scale movement and agglomeration of people (Sheller & Urry, 2006), are seen as places to visit, work, live and study and therefore they tend to compete more aggressively (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Pike & Page, 2014). Thus, urban destination marketing can be viewed as an attempt by cities to position themselves in the fiercely competitive environment for increasingly mobile resources, whether investment capital, relocation of companies, visitors and residents (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007).

Given the above, the use of food in destination marketing has been accelerated in an attempt by cities to position themselves strongly in the fiercely competitive environment. For example, Barcelona (Dimitrovski & Crespi Vallbona, 2018), Houston (Nelson, 2016), Istanbul (Okumus & Cetin, 2018), Macau (Lai, 2020), Shiraz (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020), and Tainan (Tsai & Wang, 2017) are cities which highlight their food resources and food-based experiences. In this vein, the literature acknowledges that identifying and promoting food products and food-based experiences can be influential in the context of economic development and destination marketing efforts (Okumus et al., 2013; Sims, 2009).

However, while food can be important in urban destinations in providing a means of differentiation and acting as a marker of distinction in the struggle to attract visitors, investment, business and growth (Henderson, 2016), food has been increasingly conceptualised in destination marketing as much more than an economic

commodity. This is because food has been established as a communicator of cultural meaning and a material object embedded with sociocultural relationships (Everett, 2019). Thus, we can shift the focus away from economic dimensions of food in favour of urban destination marketing that is socially and culturally informed: where food can be utilised in the cultural representation of place and expression of the social landscape.

It must be stressed that this article does not dismiss the significance and utility of food in the context of economic development and destination marketing. However, as we move towards the view that ‘destination marketing should not only aim to increase the number of tourists travelling to a destination, but also aim to facilitate sustainable tourism development’ (Okumus et al. 2007, p. 254), it becomes increasingly clear that food, a seemingly innocuous economic commodity, conveys an important representation of culture and social landscape at the destination level. Thus, akin to such view, the following section considers food as a manifestation of culture at the destination level from the cultural and sociological perspective.

### ***Food as a manifestation of culture at the destination level***

Food – its cultivation, preparation and consumption – has long been considered an aspect of culture (Montanari, 2006). Food can be a window onto and representation of another culture, comprises a key feature of all cultures and a major component of cultural heritage (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016), and has long been one of the most important markers of regional and ethnic identity (Timothy & Ron, 2013). As destinations need to differentiate themselves from competitors through highlighting their unique tangible and intangible assets (Okumus et al., 2007), increasingly food, as an element of culture, is being used in many destination marketing and management strategies to benefit not only the tourism industry and the visitor, but also economic, social and environmental aspects of a destination (Everett & Slocum, 2013; Sims,

2009). Thus, in recent years, the use of food has assumed greater importance in the marketing and promotion of destinations to tourists (Knollenberg et al., 2020; Okumus et al., 2007; Okumus et al., 2013; Seo et al., 2017).

On one hand, despite the fast-growing literature in food tourism, it comes as something of a surprise that the academic community has been slow to consider the cultural potential of food in tourism (Ellis et al., 2018; Everett, 2019). However, on the other hand, this is perhaps not surprising, given that the parent discipline of tourism has long been characterised by a legacy of management and business perspectives, before its belated turn towards more cultural and critical discourses and interpretations (Morgan et al., 2018). While it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed overview of the tourism knowledge and its tribes, it is important to note that given the nature of the global business-orientated tourism, the academy has been slow in the adoption of more critical tourism research agendas and approaches (Tribe, 2006). Thus, as explained by Everett (2019), in parallel with tourism research, food tourism research has also been dominated by economic considerations before adopting more interpretative sociocultural perspectives. In a similar vein, Kim and Ellis (2015) suggest that food tourism literature can be broadly categorised into two disciplinary approaches and perspectives: 'business management and marketing', and 'cultural and sociological perspectives'. Thus, while the majority of previous studies are characterised by the application of marketing, management and general business principles to the discussion of food and tourism, it appears that this paradigm is beginning to wane in favour of 'more wholesome and exploratory discussions of food and culture' (Ellis et al., 2018, p.250).

As demonstrated above, the movement of the food tourism literature in recent years appears to be from a management to a cultural perspective. This is further



emphasised by Everett (2019, p.9) stating that: ‘the cultural turn manifested itself in food tourism research rather more slowly and belatedly, so much so that there is still much to be gained from it’. Food as a tourism research subject appears likely to increase in prominence (Ellis et al, 2018), thus the need now arises for a deeper conceptualisation and understanding of the range of influences underpinning such practises in order to address this critical gap. It is in response to Ellis et al.’s (2018, p.250) and Everett’s (2019) calls for more wholesome and exploratory discussions of food and culture that we now turn to consider the relevance and application of Hopper's (2007) conceptualisation of ‘cultural globalisation’ in the context of the use of food as a marketing approach.

### ***Cultural globalisation***

The concept of globalisation is highly relevant for studies on food in the context of tourism, as heightened globalisation has brought about not only profound transformations in food production and consumption in general, but also in tourism more specifically (Mak et al., 2012). Not only have tourists become more mobile, but the food they eat has also become more international and there is an increasing availability of both ethnic restaurants in tourists’ home settings and information sources about foreign foods (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). This provides tourists with the opportunity to become acquainted with a variety of foreign cuisines before they travel (Mak et al., 2012), potentially leading to changes in food consumption behaviour whilst travelling as well as in destination choice (Torres, 2002).

Whilst much of the academic focus on globalisation has been largely economic in nature, this is now extending to include political, social and cultural phenomena (Richards, 2007). Accordingly, ‘cultural globalisation’ is seen as a more appropriate means of conceptualising the relationship between food (as a cultural artefact) and

globalisation. Hopper (2007, p. 188) defines cultural globalisation as a 'concept to describe international, transnational, regional, local and global developments that have a cultural dimension, as well as counter-developments such as forms of cultural consolidation'. Thus, cultural globalisation should not be seen as a single and unitary condition of globalisation, but as a multidimensional set of integrated and interpenetrating processes between globalisation and culture. This means that common expressions such as 'the impact of globalisation on culture' or 'the cultural consequences of globalisation' should be redundant as they contain an assumption that globalisation is a process with its sources and its terrain of operation outside of culture (Tomlinson, 2007). Homogenisation, heterogenisation and glocalisation capture different dimensions of cultural globalisation. Accordingly, the following sections review the main concepts of cultural homogenisation, heterogenisation and glocalisation in the context of food tourism.

#### *Cultural homogenisation, heterogenisation and glocalisation*

According to Hopper (2007), there are aspects of cultural globalisation (mass communication, the media and economic globalisation) that have a homogenising effect, ultimately leading to the world becoming a smaller place, local cultures and traditions disappearing and cultural differences becoming eroded. To illustrate this point, Hopper (2007) provides the example of city centres across the globe which look increasingly similar – the same major retailers, banks and food restaurants.

As a result of cultural homogenisation, cultural authenticity is eroding to the extent that some researchers talk about the emergence of global culture (Smith, 1990) or world culture (Hannerz, 1990). In particular, Ritzer's (2013) McDonaldisation concept highlights how the dominance of global franchised operators, such as McDonald's and Starbucks, can lead to the predictability of products and services in destinations. Ritzer

sees globalisation as far-reaching homogenisation and considers McDonaldisation as being equivalent to previous paradigmatic shifts, such as Taylorism and Fordism, along with their standardisation, routinisation, deskilling and homogenisation of production and consumption (Ritzer, 2013). From this perspective, according to Leslie (1995, as cited in Everett, 2016, p.75), McDonaldisation can be seen as a destructive process undermining 'local' food cultures.

In the food tourism literature, cultural homogenisation is seen as a vehicle for 'global cuisine' and 'global palate' where foods and dishes can be found anywhere in the world (Scarpato & Daniele, 2003). This homogenising force of globalisation is thus seen as a threat to the close connection between food and place - a force that can alter local food traditions and undermine the sense of place for both locals and tourists (Richards, 2002). However, initially heavily criticised for leading to universal conformity and standardisation, there appears to be now an appreciation that cultural globalisation does not inevitably lead to homogenisation and ultimately to the destruction of indigenous food cultures and there are possibilities for co-existence (Inglis & Gimlin, 2009). Indeed, whilst cultural globalisation has been accused of suppressing uniqueness and difference, on one hand, the other dimension of cultural globalisation – heterogenisation – is seen as producing diversity on the other (Mak et al., 2012). For example, cultural globalisation brings increased diversity and greater availability of food products (Henderson, 2016). Hence, cultural globalisation can be seen as bringing a variety of different food offerings available for tourists and residents in urban destinations.

Moreover, apart from producing diversity, there is preliminary evidence suggesting that cultural homogenisation can also provide an impetus for the reinvention of local food cultures (Mak et al., 2012). This impetus for the revival of the local has

been named as 'localisation' described as a process of counteracting the dilution of food distinctiveness by preserving and promoting local distinctiveness in the face of globalisation pressures (Everett, 2016). As such, localisation or the resurgence of the local, is stimulated by the growing resistance to what many perceive as the homogenising forces of globalisation (Richards, 2002) thus creating a greater demand for local specialty products and indigenous cuisine (Torres, 2002). For example, Ram (2004) states that the arrival of McDonald's in Israel led to the renaissance and revival of a local delicacy – falafel – rather than the erosion or replacement of local food culture. This, therefore, illustrates that cultural globalisation is not only a force for homogenisation, but can also act as an impetus for the revival of the local. Indeed, Hall and Mitchell (2002) note that one of the greatest paradoxes of globalisation is the extent to which the local and localisation have become significant. In food and tourism terms, this is reflected in the marketing of local food products as an attempt to attract tourists and differentiate the destination in the marketplace.

It can be summarised that cultural globalisation can never be seen in a simplistic form as being either a destructive or a cultivating force. As Everett (2016, p.72) points out, 'globalisation should not be regarded as a monolithic concept, but as a multi-dimensional and complex mixture of homogenisation (similarity) and heterogeneity (difference)'. This discussion would not be complete, however, without consideration of 'glocalisation': the co-presence of both the global and the local or a process whereby global products or ideas become accepted and adapted to suit local needs (Robertson, 1995). Rumford (2013), for example, cites the case of the Maharaja Mac produced by McDonald's for the Indian market, as well as Domino's pizza with halal toppings. Both of these products are simultaneously global and local; global food staples which are given a local flavour. Elsewhere, Mak et al. (2012) state that in Japan McDonald's

introduced Teriyaki burger and McRice burger in Hong Kong. ‘Glocalisation’ therefore can be seen as a function of difference within sameness, resulting in an increased diversity of food products rather than a suppression of local cultures (Mak et al., 2012). The definition of ‘glocalisation’ presented here may, however, appear limited, as it does not incorporate the situation whereby local food products and experiences are extended into the global market. Such an example may include the Irish themed pub where local has become global, which Everett (2016) considers as providing a more suitable definition of ‘glocalisation’, as the merging of the local and the global. This can be further explained as a two-dimensional process where local foods are internationally available, or where global brands adapt to local cultures and tastes.

## **Methodology**

An exploratory case study strategy (Yin, 2009) was adopted with the following justifications. First, Everett and Aitchison (2008) state that studies in food tourism often utilise case studies that can lead to effectively identifying relevant issues and contextual information. Indeed, a case study is an appropriate research method that ‘investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context’ (Yin, 2009, p.18). Second, it is also beneficial when it focuses on contemporary events in which very little information exists for a wider international audience (Yin, 2009). In this regard, the fact that food tourism in York, England, has not been subject to much academic research supports the author’s selection of this research method. Data collection took place between January-March 2016 and June-September 2016 and was broadly conceived to explore how food was used in the context of the marketing of York as a destination. Despite the adoption of a single case study, multiple resources and different data collection methods were employed to improve the reliability (Yin, 2009). Namely, a qualitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews were utilised.

According to Camprubi and Coromina (2016), in recent years, an increasing number of studies in the tourism field have used qualitative content analysis. Given that different yet overlapping approaches to qualitative content analysis exist (e.g. Altheide and Schneider, 2013; Krippendorff, 2013; Schreier, 2012) certain similarities were noted that tend to recur in the application of this particular research method. As the official DMO websites now arguably represent the most important marketing tools engaging in communications with actual and potential visitors (Morrison, 2019), a qualitative content analysis of food-related information presented on the official website of York was undertaken. This approach utilised an open coding technique in NVivo 10 which involved unrestricted coding of the data (Strauss, 1987).

In addition, 19 semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with supply-side representatives. It is thought that this supply-side approach can be useful because it involves those who are knowledgeable about the entire portfolio of destination resources. What is more, they are in regular contact with consumer groups and thus may offer reliable insights into the marketplace. According to Crouch (2011), gathering and analysing professional opinions from individuals (e.g. destination marketers) based on experience, expertise, and insight is, in itself, a valuable source of information. Thus, the point to be made from this is that data gathered from semi-structured interviews with supply-side representatives exploring the use of food in urban destination marketing is a viable approach.

The interviewees included members of private sector tourism organisations (e.g. accommodation establishments, guided food trails, restaurants) and public sector organisations (e.g. regional and local DMOs). Several interviewees represented both sectors simultaneously. For example, the same person was representative of a public and a private sector (e.g. member of a DMO and running a private tourism business).

Target interviewees were individuals having some experience or knowledge regarding food tourism and destination marketing. Thus, the interviewees were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. All interviewees are identified by using numbers from 1 to 19. Table 1 summarises the features of the interviewees [Table 1 near here].

The interview questions were non-directive and open-ended to allow respondents to frame and express their opinions as openly and freely as possible. The interviews were either audio-recorded when the interviewee consented, or documented through extensive notes taken during the interviews and double-checked with the interviewee afterwards. The interview material was then transcribed into texts. Data analysis process followed Miles et al's. (2014) guidelines on qualitative data analysis as a process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming information in order to develop conceptual interpretations. New research questions and interpretations emerged from this iterative interplay between empirical evidence and the theoretical perspective.

The following section focuses on two issues: the relevance of cultural globalisation and the new interpretations it provides; and the potentially useful research questions and research directions that cultural globalisation suggests. The consideration of these issues for the case study example provides analytical ideas and insights that can assist other researchers in applying cultural globalisation to food-related tourism in other contexts.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The findings and discussion presented in this section describe the overall influence of cultural globalisation on food in tourism and the marketing of food in an urban context by taking the city of York, England, as a case study. The findings indicate that the

global, the local and the glocal exist and connect in a complex relationship within the domain of food in an urban destination creating the inherent tensions at play in terms of how food is portrayed in the marketing of York as a tourist destination and the perceptions of such as held by supply side stakeholders.

### *The global*

The qualitative content analysis indicated that the Visit York's website featured international cuisines thus reflecting cultural homogenisation perceived by some (Richards, 2002; Scarpato & Daniele, 2003) to be a force undermining or diluting local culture and identity/identities. For example, in the section called 'From the Four Corners,' Visit York promised that there is something to satisfy every craving of each visitor ranging from 'Nepalese curries, Mexican fiestas or even delicious Spanish tapas. Cuisine from around the world – all in one city!' (Visit York, 2016). Thus, it can be argued that the marketing of international cuisines in this example case represented cultural homogenisation (Hopper, 2007) which was visible in the uniformity and predictability of content. This predictability is one of the key components of McDonaldisation (Ritzer, 2013) which highlights how the dominance of global franchised operators, such as McDonald's and Starbucks, can lead to the predictability of products and services in destinations. Such predictability can potentially lead to increasing sameness and identikit destinations rather than delivering uniqueness and difference. This was noted by the interviewee 4 who compared this situation to the high streets which are significantly dominated by chain stores: 'it is a little bit like a retail high street, it is all looking the same and food [in urban destination marketing] could go the same way if we are not careful'.

However, such uniformity and standardisation are surprising given that, according to the theoretical best practice, destination marketing is quintessentially a



process of achieving a competitive superiority through marketing uniqueness and difference (Okumus et al., 2007; Pike & Page, 2014). This discontinuity suggests that there may be a possible gap between the theory and practice. A similar contradiction was previously noted by Ashworth and Page (2011) who stated that while urban destinations strive to be unique and differentiate themselves from competitors, due to the global character of contemporary tourism, they serve tourists that are also global in their preferences and choices.

However, a number of interviewees suggested that, in their opinion, visitors and residents were often happy with cultural homogenisation and predictability of food in urban destinations due to the ‘cosmopolitan nature of cities’. In particular, interviewee 19 commented that ‘this is what cities are: they are not just the local people, there is demand for all these multicultural facilities, shops etc. providing to meet that demand’. This comment emphasises the global character of contemporary tourism and the multicultural nature of cities. Indeed, it has been claimed that patterns of migration have led to multicultural populations which in turn has influenced food and culture in urban destinations (Henderson, 2016). From this perspective, international food in this example case can be seen as reflecting contemporary cultural globalisation tendencies which lead to disruptions between culture and a territory. For example, one of the interviewees described global food in urban destinations as ‘a melting pot of different cuisines all in one place, because we have got so many different nationalities living here now’ (Interviewee 6). This signifies that, within a single territory, culture becomes multi-local and thereby deterritorialised going beyond the limits of a specific territory (Hopper, 2007). Consequently, rather than viewing cultural homogenisation as a vehicle for “global cuisine” or “global palate” (Richards, 2002; Scarpato & Daniele, 2003) and thus a threat suppressing uniqueness and difference in urban destinations, interviewees

indicated that the global food acted as the medium representing diverse cultures. For example, interviewee 10 specifically stated:

‘There is a street in York and down that street, there must be over 20 independent restaurants providing worldwide cuisine: Argentinian steak house, Italian pizza place, Indian Restaurant, Polish restaurant. And that reflects the makeup of the city and who is living in York’.

This diversity of different food offerings available for tourists and residents in York was also visible on the DMO website which, as previously mentioned, promoted a wide range of different cuisines such as: Italian, Indian, Chinese, Contemporary European, French, Japanese, Spanish, Mexican, Thai, American, Brazilian and Turkish. Thus, rather than fostering cultural homogenisation, cultural globalisation here can be seen as preserving cultural plurality or cultural difference and thus leading to cultural heterogenisation. This has important implications for urban destination marketing, as outlined by one of the interviewees: ‘We are a city with lots of different ethnic groups living in the city. Marketing of the global food offer is about showing that they [different ethnic groups] are part of the city and part of the city life’ (Interviewee 3). This comment highlights the importance of inclusive cultural representation in urban destination marketing, or as interviewee 7 noted, ‘community cohesion’. Thus, as it appears from the interviews, respondents believed that international food does just that: represents the culture/s and social landscape/s at the destination level. Consequently, this potentially elevates the role of global food in urban destination marketing from a mere economic commodity towards a means conveying diverse social identities and cultural landscapes at the destination level.

### ***The local***

Apart from the diversity of international cuisines, this case example also illustrates the

prominence of local food. For example, qualitative content analysis of Visit York's website indicated a strong emphasis on local food, as Visit York website had whole pages dedicated to local produce, 'local foodie heroes' and local markets. What is more, analysis of food descriptors indicated that food was mostly described as 'local', 'fresh' and 'homemade'.

In this case example, local food was often intertwined with history and heritage. Content analysis revealed that, for example, the story of chocolate heritage featured prominently on the Visit York's website. According to the website:

'While other northern centres made their wealth from wool, cotton and steel, York went its own sweet way and built a city from chocolate. York truly is the home of chocolate and this great tradition continues to this day.' (Visit York, 2016).

In the context of the above, one could argue that the marketing of local food in this example case was shown as rooted in the environment and culture of the destination and reinforced by its local traditions. This could be seen as a counteracting process to an apparent erosion of food distinctiveness in the face of globalisation pressures (Everett, 2016). Local food was clearly presented as being embedded in the landscape and local traditions and potentially in opposition or contrast to cultural homogenisation. This finding corroborates the ideas of Mak et al. (2012, p.191) (making reference to Hall & Mitchell, 2000) who suggested that 'globalisation is impossible without localisation, and that one of the greatest paradoxes of contemporary globalisation is the extent to which localisation has become significant'. These observations further support the idea of localisation as a process of counteracting an apparent dilution of food distinctiveness by preserving and promoting the local distinctiveness in the face of globalisation pressures (Everett, 2016). As such, localisation, the resurgence of the local, is

stimulated by the growing resistance to what many perceive as the homogenising forces of globalisation (Richards, 2002).

Furthermore, in accordance with previous studies (such as: Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Okumus et al., 2007; Okumus et al., 2013; Sims, 2009), interviewees indicated that local food and local food experiences might appear to be of increasing importance to visitors and residents alike. This was reiterated in the following comments: ‘visitors do not want to turn up to a lovely market town and find a kebab shop, they want locally produced food’ (Interviewee 4); ‘we have got so many local specialties ranging from Yorkshire Pudding to Yorkshire tea, chocolate, beer; it is kind of integral to what people do when they visit’ (Interviewee 6). The comments outlined here demonstrate that interviewees perceived local food as an integral part of the overall tourism experience of the destination, regardless of food being a primary or secondary motive to visit (McKercher et al., 2008). This finding is also in agreement with Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen’s (2016) which showed that local food holds much potential in terms of attracting travellers and contributing to the overall tourist experience which in turn indicates marketing potential for hospitality and tourism businesses.

Another common view amongst interviewees was that local food was in itself an important aspect of local culture and thus considered a source of uniqueness and difference essential in urban destination marketing. In particular, interviewees believed that local food “tells the story about a place” (Interviewee 1), “[local food] is the heart and soul of the destination and helps to distinguish a personality of a destination” (Interviewee 4). This finding is consistent with those of other studies which view local food as a window onto and representation of another culture (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016; Montanari, 2006). Furthermore, the quotes above reflect a common belief among the interviewees that local food and its background stories, such as the

source and origins of a particular food, can be used to tell the story of the destination. Indeed, storytelling has been recognised as a tool to enhance the competitiveness of destinations (Bassano et al., 2019) which, according to Sims (2009), encourages the development of products and services that boost socio-cultural sustainability and benefit not only destinations, but also visitors and residents alike. Since food tourism destination landscape is becoming increasingly more competitive and that destinations need to work hard to distinguish themselves (Knollenberg et al., 2020), this finding potentially highlights the capacity of the socially and culturally informed storytelling for the successful urban destination marketing of food tourism.

Moreover, in agreement with observations made by Ellis et al. (2018), interviewees indicated that local food provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about the culture and history of the destination and thus, local food can potentially act as a perfect medium enabling tourists to gain a clearer knowledge and understanding of a place. In a similar vein, interviewee 6 noted that local food in urban destination marketing can provide an impetus for: ‘slow-moving way of enjoying the local culture rather than running around and sightseeing’. The comment here resonates with the idea of slow travel and its connection with culture and the opportunities it offers for visitors to enjoy more detailed aspects of the destination (Serdane, 2020). Furthermore, the above comment suggests that local food was possibly associated with slow food which, based on similar principles of slow travel, is seen as an antithesis to fast food and thus accordingly, to the homogenising forces of cultural globalisation.

Interviewees also noted that, in their opinion, marketing of local food can have major implications for the economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability of urban tourism destinations, resulting in benefits for both hosts and guests. While similar views have been echoed in tourism literature (e.g. Everett & Slocum, 2013), other arguments

(e.g. Avieli, 2013; Sims, 2009) have focussed on the ambiguity which surrounds the concept of 'local' food with researchers highlighting the many different meanings that lie behind the term. However, it is beyond the scope of this article to review the debates surrounding the various definitions and meanings of local food. It is important to note, however, that given the intensity and extensivity of cultural globalisation processes in urban destinations, the local here is very likely to be much more internally diverse than ever before (Hopper, 2007). As such, rather than being static or fixed, cultural globalisation views local food as dynamic, responsive to social changes and involved with multi-directional processes of negotiation and interpretation. Thus, local food reflects the relationship not only between food and destination, but it also reflects the transformations it takes over time and space (Avieli, 2013). Accordingly, destination marketers should harness the positive effects of cultural globalisation by reviving and reconstructing local food traditions and particularities for the tourism market.

### ***The glocal***

In addition to the findings described and discussed in the previous two sections, this case example illustrates some elements of glocalisation, previously defined by Everett (2016) as merging of the local and the global. For example, as previously explained, one of the examples of glocalisation is a situation when local food products and experiences are extending into the global market. In the case of York, this was illustrated with some of the world's most well-known names in chocolate which began life in York – KitKat, Smarties, Aero and Chocolate Orange (Visit York, 2016). In particular, Kit Kat chocolate bar could be seen as a noteworthy example of glocalisation. According to the DMO website, Kit Kat appears to be very popular in Japan where the name sounds like 'kitto katsu' – a Japanese phrase that means 'surely you will succeed' (Visit York, 2016). Since its introduction to Japan in 1973, hundreds of limited-edition seasonal and

regional flavours of Kit Kat bars have been produced in Japan. Thus, glocal here can be seen as a cultural bridge between the local and the global, allowing Japanese to experience another way of life.

Furthermore, this section would not be complete without a consideration of another aspect of glocalisation: where global products adapt to local cultures and tastes. As already mentioned, the qualitative content analysis revealed that the DMO website of York promoted a range of international cuisines (please see 'The global' for more information). However, from the content analysis alone it is difficult to ascertain to what extent these global food products/cuisines have been given a local flavour and modified to suit the local culture. Nevertheless, Everett (2016) states that relatively very few global brands and products are sold in a standardised form and most of them are reshaped to suit local markets and cultures. Similarly, Hopper (2007) notes that even McDonald's, 'the supposed great cultural homogeniser', is sensitive to local cultural conditions by adapting its outlets and food products to reflect the local contexts in which they operate. Indeed, this was also noted during the interviews when respondents frequently provided an example of curry and how, in their opinion, it adapted to local tastes. As such, from the perspective of cultural globalisation, this aspect of glocalisation can be viewed as the merging of the global and the local in a mutually informing and constructive way (Everett, 2016). However, we need to be cautious with such interpretations and more research is required.

### **Conclusion and implications for future research**

Although there is an expanding body of work on food in tourism, the majority of previous studies are characterised by the application of marketing, management and general business principles rather than more wholesome and exploratory discussions of food and culture. This study responds to this gap in knowledge by focusing on the role

and influence of cultural globalisation (Hopper, 2007) in an urban context. In the context of Ellis et al.'s (2018, p.250) and Everett's (2019) calls for a more 'cultural turn' in the study of food in tourism, the empirical discussion has outlined the range of dynamic and at times contradictory forces at play which influence both the cultural landscape of York, as well as in how food tourism is presented and marketed to visitors. In particular, the findings and discussion demonstrate that food in the urban context has the peculiarities that have not been adequately elaborated within the existing literature, especially the cultural dimension of the food within the urban destination marketing. Consequently, this shifts our attention from food tourism in rural settings and calls for more research focusing on cultural dimensions of food and its role within the urban destination marketing. There are implications, both theoretical and practical, that arise.

First, from a theoretical point of view, cultural globalisation is used as the theoretical basis to explore the application of food in tourism destination marketing and how this, in turn, affects the conceptualisation of the 'local', the 'global' and the 'glocal' in an urban food context. The findings indicate that the marketing of the global in this case potentially reflected cultural homogenisation which was visible in the predictability and standardisation of the international food offer. This could signify a possible gap between the theory and practice leading to an increasing sameness and identikit urban destinations rather than delivering uniqueness and difference. However, cultural globalisation should not be seen in a simplistic form as being only a destructive force. This is because, the global may also be seen as reflecting the international character of contemporary tourism and the multicultural nature of cities. Thus, cultural globalisation may potentially elevate the role of food in the marketing of urban destinations as a means conveying diverse social identities and cultural landscapes in urban places. Moreover, the findings suggest that such increasing sameness and



predictability could potentially be alleviated by utilising local foods which can provide a crucial source of representing and transmitting the culture of a destination and thus delivering uniqueness and difference. The role of local food and its contributions to the sustainability agenda, which is now widely encouraged in destination marketing (Okumus et al., 2007), are also noted. However, while various terms highlighting the many different meanings that lie behind the term local exist, given the intensity and extensivity of cultural globalisation processes in urban destinations, the findings indicate that the local in urban destinations is very likely to be much more internally diverse than ever before. Thus, while it is not the aim to suggest a fixed definition, the findings indicate that, from the perspective of cultural globalisation, local food can be seen as dynamic, responsive to social changes and involved with multi-directional processes of negotiation and interpretation. Lastly, cultural globalisation appears to not be a question of the global being separate from and threatening to overwhelm and destroy the local, but of a dynamic and multifaceted relationship visible through fluid and adaptable 'glocal'. The findings, although preliminary, indicate that the glocal can be seen as a cultural bridge between the local and the global, allowing residents and visitors to experience another way of life which remains outside the scope of this study but provides avenues for future research.

Second, there are also practical implications that arise from the findings. In an increasingly competitive market, an understanding of how destination competitiveness can be elevated and sustained is a fundamental issue in destination marketing. In recent years, the growing interest in food on a global scale has created an increased demand for food experiences and provided the opportunity and challenge for destinations to utilise food as an element in destination marketing. This is particularly vital in urban destinations as food can act as a means of differentiation and marker of distinction in

the struggle to attract visitors, investment, business and growth. Accordingly, tourism organisations should emphasise and differentiate the unique characteristics and contents of their local food offer highlighting local culture and traditions which in turn should provide an opportunity to showcase the destination's rich intangible heritage, local traditions, ethnic backgrounds and cultural landscapes. However, while the range of a city's food culture can be a powerful element in destination marketing strategies, destination marketers need to consider local food cultures with other key aspects of the wider culture and society. Thus, global and glocal cannot be overlooked in destination marketing practices and such a holistic and more inclusive approach should reinforce the destination's uniqueness and difference. This has important implications for the development of an effective and consistent destination marketing strategy that is both culturally and socially informed. Furthermore, the findings indicate the capacity of the socially and culturally informed storytelling for the successful urban destination marketing in food tourism. Within such a context, storytelling may aid in preserving memories and traditions of local food. However, it has to be noted that, with regards to cultural globalisation, storytelling in urban destination marketing is likely to have a dynamic nature interpreting and reinterpreting the present looking not only at the past but also the future. Thus, this potentially elevates the role of digital storytelling which allows not only continuous modification, but also co-creation of the stories according to their cultural and societal changes (Bassano et al., 2019).

Although there are valuable academic findings and practical contributions, limitations are also acknowledged that can be further investigated in the future. A single case approach adopted limits this work, though simultaneously provides avenues for further scholarly investigation in the future. However, whilst generalising the findings was not the intent, further case studies in other urban destinations could be executed to

further appraise not only the findings of this study, but also the theoretical basis of cultural globalisation. Finally, given the importance of consumer perceptions, to gain a better insight into food in urban destination marketing and broader urban socioeconomic structures, more empirical research is necessary on the demand-side.

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