

The expectations of tourists and hosts about food tourism in Central Asia



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Overview

- Explanation project SUFACHAIN
- Description of project region Central Asia and its tourism industry
- Food tourism
- The research approach, results and recommendations



SUFACHAIN

Sustainable agroforestry value chains

[View in Map](#)

About the project

The agricultural sector is an important source of livelihood for the rural population in Central Asia. At the same time, the region's agricultural and forest landscapes are threatened by excessive water use, land degradation, overgrazing, and overuse of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) from natural forests. These problems are further exacerbated by population growth and economic



Project SUFACHAIN

- Sustainable agro-forestry supply chains
- Issues:
 - Land degradation
 - Over-grazing
 - High water usage
 - Climate change
 - Lack of local knowledge regarding sustainable agro-forestry
- Six work packages (e.g. analysis of sustainable agroforestry systems in fruit and nut production, develop attractive market niches for agroforestry products)

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Work package 6: culinary tourism development

- Goals:
 - Analysis of potential of tourism agroforestry sites and food (Food map)
 - **Determining the preferences of international Western tourists regarding local agroforestry products**
 - **Attitude of rural households towards food/culinary tourism**
 - Concept development for sustainable food/culinary tourism (Handbook)
 - Testing of the tourism concept in cooperation with tour operators (Two tourism offers)

Do not expect the final results yet...

- Four step process (practical project):
 1. Develop a food tourism map of Central Asia
 2. **Evaluate the expectations of host and tourists regarding food tourism in Central Asia**
 3. Create a handbook about dealing with Western tourists for local tourism operators in Central Asia
 4. Design and test two tourism offers by a tour operator (Dimsum Travel) (choice experiment)



Country	Pop. mill	Seize sqkm	Pop. Density per sqkm	Int. tourists mill.	Tour. Spending GDP %	Description (Kunze, 2019)
Kyrgyzstan	6-10.4	200,105	37	8,6 (2023)	9,6	Democratic island
Uzbekistan	32-37.5	447,400	80.2	6,6 (2023)	5,2	Stability anchor
Tajikistan	8.7-10.8	143,100	75.4	1,0 (2022)	?	Alms house
Nepal	31.1	147,516	180	1,0 (2023)	6,7	-

Western tourism to Central Asia

- Lack of knowledge about the region (Kunze, 2019)
- But: tourism to region is becoming more prominent (Kantarci et al., 2015)
- Food tourism as authentic experience can be integrated into sustainable agro-forestry supply chains
- Potential for economic development
- Challenges regarding social and environmental impacts of increasing tourism numbers

Food/Culinary tourism

- 'visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of special food production regions are the primary [a] motivating factor for travel.' (Hall et al. 2004, p. 10)

- Sometimes also gastronomy and culinary tourism



TOP 10 FOODIE DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE

Places with the highest number of endorsements for food and restaurants on the Booking.com platform

1. Barcelona, Spain
2. Prague, Czechia
3. Lisbon, Portugal
4. Madrid, Spain
5. Paris, France
6. Krakow, Poland
7. Budapest, Hungary
8. Porto, Portugal
9. Berlin, Germany
10. Athens, Greece



The top 10 reflects the number of endorsements for 'Food', 'Local Food', 'Restaurants' given to the destination by global Booking.com travelers as of June 2023; ranking consists of EU member countries only

Source: Booking.com



Booking.com statista

Importance food/culinary tourism

- Eating as **sensory** experience
- Important part of **marketing image** of a country (UNWTO, 2012)
- Tourists spend **half their travel budget** on food and drinks (Okumus et al., 2018)
- → culinary activities **a vital part of the tourism** experience and the economic success of a destination
- → local foods communicate a **direct and authentic experience of local culture** (Ellis et al., 2018)





Research question

What are the differences in the expectations of the relations between European tourists and the Central Asian hosts?

Research approach

- Literature review (main topic areas in food tourism in Central Asia)
- Two quantitative surveys: the expectations of the hosts and European guests regarding tourism in Central Asia (mainly closed questions with five points Likert scales)
 - Online/face-to-face survey with tourists who had visited Central Asia (relevance of sustainability in general, link between the authenticity of and the satisfaction with the travel experience in general and regarding their trip to Central Asia, the touristic infrastructure); contact with travel forums on Central Asia, than snowball system; available in Dutch, English and German (134 tourists from more than ten European countries)

Research approach

- Face-to-face survey with the hosts (relevance of sustainability and authenticity in general, satisfaction with the touristic infrastructure, satisfaction at work and the 'real' authenticity at work); contact with local tourism operators, mainly B&Bs, available in English, Russian, Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik (104 hosts)

Key findings (if you wanted more precise statistics-
complain to Ian, he did not want to let me talk for 2 hours!)

- Both hosts and tourists value the socio-cultural aspect of the touristic relationship slightly higher than environmental and economic aspects.

Tabelle 16: Mittelwertvergleiche Hypothese 1

Fragen-block	Question	$\bar{x}$ Frage	$\bar{x}$ Fragen-block	s Fragen-block
Economy	G4: Es ist mir wichtig, ein sicheres Einkommen zu haben.	4,38	4,34	0,93
	G5: Es ist mir wichtig, die Chance auf ein wachsendes Einkommen zu haben.	4,3		
Ecology	G6: Es ist mir wichtig, dass die Natur in ZA geschützt wird.	4,79	4,49	0,81
	G7: Es ist mir wichtig, dass nur wenige Ressourcen genutzt werden.	4,18		
Social	G8: Es ist mir wichtig, dass die Traditionen in ZA erhalten bleiben.	4,51	4,65	0,72
	G9: Es ist mir wichtig, dass die Sehenswürdigkeiten und Denkmäler in ZA erhalten bleiben.	4,78		

Quelle: eigene Darstellung

Tabelle 17: Mittelwertvergleiche Hypothese 2

Fragen-block	Question	$\bar{x}$ Frage	$\bar{x}$ Fragenblock	s Fragenblock
Economy	R2: Ich bin bereit, mehr für meine Reise zu zahlen, wenn meine Gastgebernde dadurch ein faires Einkommen erhalten.	4,12	3,83	1,01
	R3: Ich bin bereit, mehr für meine Reise zu zahlen, wenn dadurch das Wirtschaftswachstum in ZA gefördert wird.	3,54		
Ecology	R4: Ich achte darauf, die Natur mit ihren Pflanzen und Tieren zu schützen.	4,84	4,34	0,92
	R5: Ich achte darauf, möglichst wenig Ressourcen zu verwenden.	3,84		
Social	R6: Es ist mir wichtig, dass die Traditionen in ZA erhalten bleiben.	4,53	4,63	0,65
	R7: Es ist mir wichtig, dass die Sehenswürdigkeiten und Denkmäler in ZA erhalten bleiben.	4,72		

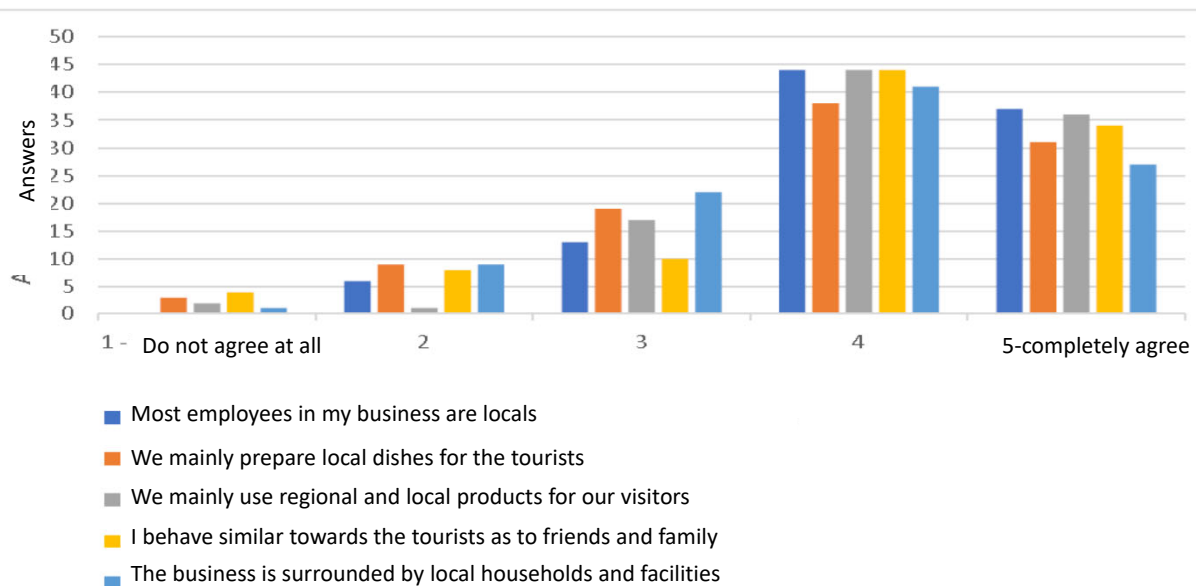
Quelle: eigene Darstellung

Results: most valued touristic aspects

Key findings

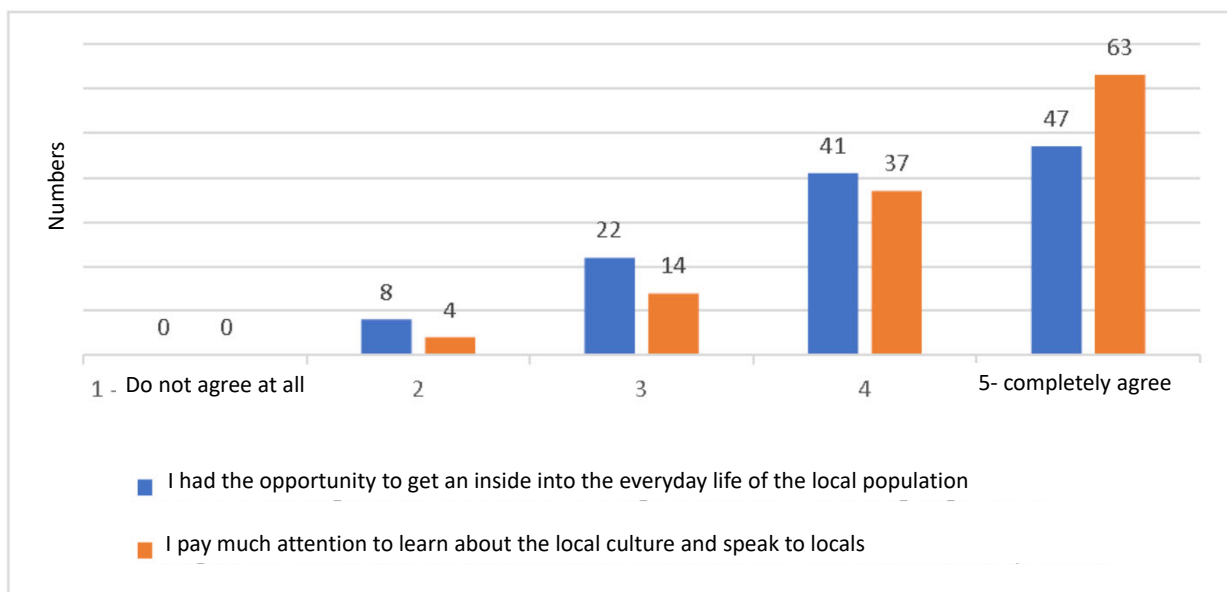
- Both the tourist and the host evaluate the touristic encounter more positive the more authentic the (food) experience is perceived.
- There are some issues regarding the offer of food allergies, vegetarian and vegan food (lack of **authenticity**)
- There are differences in the expectations of the touristic infrastructure:
 - **Tourists** perceive it as great (they prefer a somewhat **challenging infrastructure** as long as they can **retreat to their purpose-built touristic infrastructure if wanted**)
 - **Hosts** see the **necessity to develop the touristic infrastructure**, touristic offers and transport opportunities further

Table 1: 'Real' authenticity of hosts

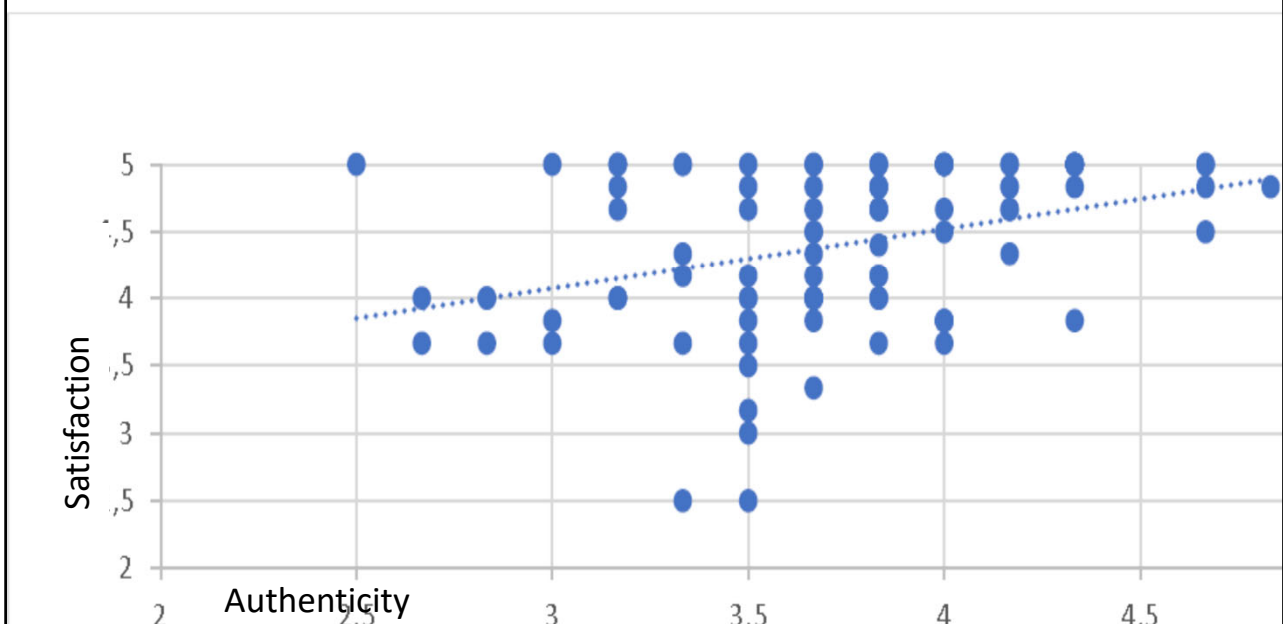


Quelle: Eigene Darstellung

Table 2: Inside into the local everyday life and impact on the satisfaction of the tourists

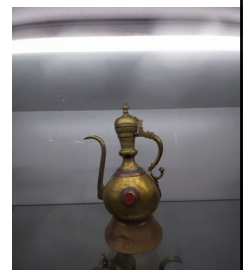


Graph 1: linear relationship of authenticity and satisfaction of the hosts



Recommendations

- The development of the touristic infrastructure should be done with care trying to balance the expectations of the hosts and the guests
- A continuous focus should remain on the integration of cultural heritage, including food tourism, in the Central Asian tourism offers (e.g. traditional Central Asian dances, Yurt camps, contact between locals not involved in the production of the tourism experiences and tourists)
- Additional authentic food tourism experiences such as cooking courses/experiences with locals or on farms, cooking shows



Thank you very much for your attention



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