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**Empowering Communities through Traditional Foods: A
Farm-to-Table Approach to Gastronomy Tourism and
Sustainable Community Development in Nyanga North,
Zimbabwe**

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¹Tinashe Abraham Kodzanai, ²Rudo Nyandima Zengeya*

*¹ Lecturer- Department of Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure Sciences, Faculty of
Agribusiness & Applied Social Sciences, Manicaland State University of Applied
Sciences, Mutare Zimbabwe.*

tinasheakodzanai@gmail.com,

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9287-3324>

*Dr. Zengeya Nyandima is a lecturer in the Tourism and Hospitality Department at
Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences, where she specializes in diaspora
tourism marketing, tourism marketing research, business*

Zimbabwe.nyandimar@gmail.com,

<https://orcid.org/00341508444>

Corresponding Author: nyandimar@gmail.com

Abstract

Globally, gastronomy tourism has demonstrated its effectiveness in maintaining heritage, helping local economies, and elevates small-scale farmers to the forefront of tourist attraction. However, in Nyanga North, Zimbabwe, a region equally rich in traditional foods and culture, this promise is generally unfulfilled. Local people continue to till fertile ground in obscurity, their culinary heritage not visible to the tourism industry and their voices muted in planning. This

qualitative study addresses that disconnect by investigating if a farm-to-table method may bridge the gap between tradition and tourism. Through observations and interviews with farmers in Dumba and Gairezi, the study captures the lived experiences of individuals who grow, prepare, and conserve Nyanga's food history. The findings confirm that traditional foods are not relics, but rather resources that may be used to promote empowerment, cultural continuity, and self-reliance. However, these possibilities are precarious, endangered by climate change, infrastructure decay, and exclusion from official markets. The study proposes a decolonised model of rural development in which communities take the lead, policy enables rather than dictates, and the path from farm to table becomes the journey from marginalisation to voice.

Keywords: *community development, gastronomy tourism, women empowerment and traditional foods.*

1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism has a significant impact on local economies since it increases revenue for communities that adopt environmentally and socially responsible practices (Addai, et al., 2024). Gastronomy tourism is a new subset of sustainable tourism which work towards sustainability and continued preservation of local foods (Cvijanović, et al., 2025). Nyanga North in Zimbabwe is well known for its vibrant cultural heritage and wide variety of traditional foods (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2023), yet the local communities remain largely marginalised from the benefits of tourism (Gohori & van de Merwe, 2022). The promotion of traditional foods and commercial farming of local produce presents an opportunity to empower communities and enhance their livelihoods. Gastronomy tourism, a growing trend globally, offers a platform to showcase local cuisine and culture, thereby contributing to community development (Hall & Gossling, 2016). Studies have shown that gastronomy tourism can support the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of regional cuisine., empowerment of local communities (Hall & Gossling, 2016; Kivela & Crotts, 2006), and regenerate tourism in rural areas (Duxbury, et al., 2020).

Globally, destinations such as Italy, Spain, and Thailand have successfully leveraged gastronomy tourism to promote their cultural identity and drive economic growth (du Rand & Heath, 2006; Sthapit & Bjork, 2017). Italy's rich gastronomic heritage, for example, has been instrumental in promoting tourism, with visitors flocking to experience the

country's renowned cuisine, wine, and olive oil (Montanari & Staniscia, 2009). Thailand's street food culture, for instance, has become a major draw for tourists, with visitors eager to sample dishes like pad thai, spicy Tom Yum Soup, and the flavoured green curry (Sthapit & Bjork, 2017). The United States has experienced a significant increase in food tourism, with visitors flocking to experience the country's vibrant food scenes in cities like New Orleans, San Francisco, and New York (Everett, 2016). In Africa, countries like South Africa, Morocco, and Ethiopia have recognized the potential of gastronomy tourism to promote cultural exchange, support local farmers, and create jobs (Mbaiwa & Darkoh, 2020; Wollen, 2011).

Zimbabwe's tourism sector has long been recognised as a key driver of economic growth and development, with a focus on community-based tourism initiatives (Mbaiwa, 2005). Marginalisation of local communities in Manicaland (Gohori & van de Merwe, 2022), has resulted in a disconnect between the tourism industry and local communities, with few opportunities for economic empowerment and cultural exchange. The commercial farming of local produce offers a potential link between local farmers and gastronomy tourism stakeholders, enhancing community livelihoods and preserving cultural heritage (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2023). Gastronomy tourism can contribute to sustainable agriculture and community development by promoting local cuisine and supporting small-scale farmers. Recent research has emphasized the significance of empowering local communities in the development of gastronomy tourism, highlighting the necessity for inclusive and sustainable strategies (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2023). By involving local communities in the development of gastronomy tourism, their needs and concerns can be addressed, and their cultural heritage preserved.

The aim of this study is to investigate how gastronomy tourism can empower communities of Nyanga North through a farm-to-table approach, connecting local farmers with gastronomy tourism stakeholders. This research aims to examine the opportunities and challenges of gastronomy tourism in Nyanga North, contributing to the development of inclusive and eco-friendly tourism initiatives that support local communities and promote cultural heritage. Specifically, the research intended to examine the potential of traditional foods in gastronomy tourism as a tool for community development using farm to table approach. This included analysis of challenges faced by local communities and to determine strategies that can help to promote gastronomy as a tool for sustainable community development.

2. Literature Review

The intersection of gastronomy tourism, sustainable community development, as well as traditional foods has garnered significant attention in recent years, as scholars and practitioners seek influencing the tourism industry's growth for fostering positive social, economic, and environmental change (Mohd Salim, et al., 2023; Niedbala, et al., 2020; Hall & Sharples, 2003). Globally, traditional foods have been recognized as a vital component of gastronomy tourism, offering a unique opportunity for sustainable community development (Rana & Bisht, 2023; Smith & d'Hauteserre, 2017). Research has shown that traditional foods can serve as a catalyst for community empowerment, cultural heritage preservation, local economic growth and tourism regeneration in rural communities (Duxbury et al., 2020; Gyimothy, 2017; Trunfio, 2020; Kline, et al., 2018). The farm-to-table approach has been identified as a key strategy for leveraging traditional foods in gastronomy tourism, promoting regional food systems while assisting small-scale farmers (Duarte, Marujo, & Simoes, 2022). Farm-to-table approach is defined as a culinary approach that emphasizes the direct connection between local farmers, food producers, and consumers, promoting sustainability and locally sourced food systems (Gillespie, 2020). This approach emphasises the importance of direct relationships between producers, consumers, and local communities, fostering a sense of ownership and community pride (Lee & Kim, 2022; Gyimothy, 2017).

Studies have demonstrated that gastronomy tourism can contribute to sustainable community development by generating income, creating jobs, and stimulating local economies (Mohd Salim, et al., 2023; Duarte, et al., 2022). Moreover, the emphasis on traditional foods and local ingredients can help preserve cultural heritage and promote cross-cultural understanding (Duarte, et al., 2022; Smith & d'Hauteserre, 2017). However, research has also highlighted challenges and limitations, such as the commodification of traditional foods, cultural appropriation, and the need for equitable distribution of benefits among community members (Lee & Kim, 2022; Trunfio, 2020). To address these concerns, scholars advocate for community-led initiatives, participatory approaches, and collaborative governance models (Kostoglou, 2020). Thus, the literature suggests that traditional foods, when incorporated into gastronomy tourism through a farm-to-table approach, serve as a powerful tool for sustainable community development, heritage preservation, and local

economic growth. However, careful attention must be paid to ensuring equitable benefits, cultural sensitivity, and community involvement.

Globally, local communities face challenges in leveraging traditional foods in gastronomy tourism due to issues of cultural appropriation and intellectual property rights (Koch, et al., 2020). They noted that commodification of traditional foods can lead to the loss of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, while Bessiere, (2013) notes that standardization and certification of traditional foods can be a challenge for small-scale farmers and local communities. Also limited access to markets and inadequate infrastructure are significant barriers to the successful integration of traditional foods in gastronomy tourism (Duarte Alonso, 2017; Torres & Momsen, 2011). Duarte Alonso, (2017) highlights the importance of market access and infrastructure development, while Torres & Momsen, (2011) emphasize the need for community-led initiatives and participatory approaches to overcome these challenges.

In developing countries such as Zimbabwe, traditional cuisine plays a vital role in gastronomy tourism, presenting opportunities for community-driven development (Tichaawa & Rogerson, 2017; Mensah & Ofori, 2023). Research indicates that traditional foods can empower communities, preserve cultural heritage, and stimulate local economic growth (Niedbala, et al., 2020). The farm-to-table concept has emerged as a key strategy for harnessing traditional foods in gastronomy tourism, promoting local food systems, and supporting small-scale farmers in Africa (Mbaiwa & Darkoh, 2020). This approach highlights the importance of direct relationships between producers, consumers, and local communities, fostering community pride and ownership. Research has shown that traditional foods can serve as a catalyst for community empowerment and cultural heritage preservation (Cabras, 2019).

The dominance of external tourism operators and middlemen in the gastronomy tourism value chain can marginalise local communities and limit their benefits (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2017; Sims, 2017). Haven-Tang & Jones, (2017) recommend community-led initiatives and collaborative partnerships, while Sims, (2017) suggests that local communities need to develop their own tourism products and services to capture a greater share of the benefits. Furthermore, the integration of traditional foods in gastronomy tourism requires careful consideration of food safety and quality standards (Lopez-Guzman, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2022). Lopez-Guzman, (2020) emphasize the importance of food safety and quality standards, while Lee & Kim, (2022) note that local communities need to develop their own quality standards and certification systems.

Participatory approaches and collaborative partnerships between local communities, government agencies, and tourism stakeholders are essential for developing a sustainable farm-to-table approach (Tesfaye, et al., 2023). Community-led initiatives are crucial for sustainable community development through gastronomy tourism (Tichaawa & Rogerson, 2017), and can focus on promoting traditional foods and empowering local communities to take ownership of their culinary heritage (Mlambo & Maphosa, 2022). Participatory approaches and collaborative partnerships can facilitate the development of traditional food value chains and promote local economic development (Tesfaye, et al., 2023; Gohori & van de Merwe, 2022).

Based on the above literature review, it was noted that traditional foods have the potential to play a significant role in gastronomy tourism as a tool for effective community growth, particularly through a farm-to-table approach. This is because traditional foods are a unique and authentic aspect of local culture, and their promotion can contribute to the conservation of rural heritage. Additionally, capacity-building and training programs, the preservation of traditional food knowledge and practices, and empowering local communities are vital for promoting sustainable livelihoods and local economic development. Overall, the literature review emphasises the potential of traditional foods in gastronomy tourism as a tool for sustainable community development.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical frameworks that underpin the study on empowering communities through traditional foods and gastronomy tourism is shown in table 1 below. It outlines four key theories: Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) (Butler, 1999; Sharpley, 2017), Community-Based Tourism (CBT) (Murphy, 1985; Gyimothy, 2017), Gastronomy Tourism (GT) (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Smith & d'Hauteserre, 2017), and Social Capital Theory (SCT) (Putman, 1993; Trunfio, 2020).

Table 1: Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning Gastronomy Tourism and Sustainable Community Development

The four theoretical frameworks; STD, CBT, GT and SCT, were not arbitrary chosen. Rather, it was a strategic decision and deliberate choice made to provide a comprehensive, multidimensional lens through which to explore the intricate interplay of food, culture, and economic

Theory	Author	Description
Sustainable Tourism Development (STD)	Butler (1999)	This research highlights the environmental, financial, and socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability in tourism growth.
Community-Based Tourism (CBT)	Murphy (1985)	Highlights community involvement and ownership in tourism development
Gastronomy Tourism	Hall & Sharpley (2003)	Recognizes food and cuisine's significance in tourism experiences and local economic development
Social Capital Theory	Putnam (1993)	Emphasises social relationships and networks in building community capacity and fostering sustainable development

empowerment in rural Zimbabwe. These frameworks are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, addressing the environmental, social, economic, and structural aspects of the research subject.

The theoretical frameworks of STD and CBT were chosen for their capacity to ensure long-term viability while also redistributing power in Nyanga North's tourism landscape. STD serves as a vital environmental and ethical compass, directly responding to the climate-induced agricultural vulnerabilities found in the research and ensuring that farm-to-table operations do not destroy the natural capital on which they rely (Sharpley, 2017). CBT, on the other hand, directly targets the established marginalisation of local communities by empowering farmers and knowledge holders to act as owners and decision-makers rather than passive suppliers. Together, these frameworks ground the research in the ideas of intergenerational equality and structural empowerment, changing gastronomic tourism from a potential source of extraction to a vehicle for genuine local activity. GT and SCT build on this foundation by legitimising the distinctive cultural and relational assets that define Nyanga North's communities. GT theory transforms traditional foods from subsistence commodities to real cultural products with specific market value, thereby validating indigenous knowledge that is endangered by undocumented recipes and generational changes. SCT outlines how communities maintain resilience and coordination in the absence of formal infrastructure, emphasising trust networks, traditional leadership, and reciprocity as the true engines of production. This multi-theoretic integration guarantees that the research considers not only the environmental and political aspects of development, but also the cultural validation and social cohesiveness required for long-term, community-led transformation.

3.0 Materials and methods.

This study employed an interpretivist philosophy to understand the potential of gastronomy tourism in empowering local communities of Nyanga North, Zimbabwe, through the promotion of traditional foods and commercial farming of local produce. An exploratory multiple case study approach was used to gather data from two communities in Nyanga which are Gairezi and Dumba communities. To ensure input validity, the study used multiple sources of data, including face-to-face interviews, observations, and document analysis. This allowed for triangulation of data, increasing the validity of the findings. Additionally, the study used snowballing technique to identify potential participants. The use of snowball sampling method was methodologically necessary due to the lack of a structured sample framework, as traditional food entrepreneurs in Nyanga North trade informally without registration to tourism authorities or specified company premises. This technique, consistent with the study's Social Capital Theory framework, strategically leveraged the Gairezi and Dumba communities' social capital and trust networks, with initial referrals from respected local authorities conferring legitimacy and facilitating access to information-rich participants such as elderly custodians of traditional recipes and women leading communal farming groups. The first participants were obtained from local authority and the researcher then probed to identify other participants until saturation point was reached (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). Twenty potential participants were identified and fifteen were interviewed. Other five potential participants were not available during the time of interviews.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account to ensure the protection of participants' rights and privacy. Prior to data collection, the study secured informed consent from all participants, ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process. The study also prioritized participants' rights by obtaining their informed consent, allowing them to withdraw at their discretion, and ensuring their participation was entirely voluntary (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Primary data were collected over a period of one month through face-to-face interviews to yield rich deep data. The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their in-depth understandings and perspectives. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the farm-to-table approach in action, researchers conducted observations at farms during the interviews. Key aspects of the farming process observed included production, harvesting, and the marketing and sale of produce.

The use of qualitative research methodology assisted the local community residents to air out their views and concerns regarding their challenges in merging farming with gastronomy. Though conducting the interviews at farms and workplace of local residents, experiences and data were obtained in their natural setting. The interviews were conducted in Shona and the results were transcribed in verbatim to English to facilitate data presentation and analysis. Data were thematically analysed by grouping it into themes. Themes were identified and analysed in narrative forms using responses of participants in verbatim and supported by literature.

4.0 Findings and discussions.

The findings revealed that agriculture serves as the primary source of livelihood for rural communities. This trend is consistent with global patterns, as observed in countries such as South Africa (Tichaawa & Rogerson, 2017), India (Rana & Bisht, 2023), Botswana (Mbaiwa & Darkoh, 2020) and South Korea (Lee & Kim, 2022). These local communities in Nyanga are mainly doing farming on subsistence basis. Traditional foods being produced include yams, local sadza from small grains (millet, sorghum, rappoko), wild fruits, honey, relish made with peanuts and vegetables, and traditional drinks like mahewu (fermented corn drink). Most of the ventures are not formally registered with the ministry of tourism but have recognition from traditional leadership in both communities. Most ventures are located at shopping centres as there are no formal places designated for businesses in the communities studied. The traditional foods being produced in the communities' studies are completely using ingredients from local farms depicting the concept of farm-to-table concept. The results from participants' narratives led to the identification of the following themes:

The potential of traditional foods to drive sustainable community development via farm-to-table initiatives.

Results from the study reveals a strong connection between traditional foods and gastronomy tourism in Nyanga North, Zimbabwe, highlighting its potential as a tool for sustainable community development. Participants enthusiastically shared their traditional food specialties, such as yams, local sadza from small grains (millet, sorghum, rappoko), wild fruits, honey, relish made with peanuts and vegetables, and traditional drinks like

mahewu (fermented corn drink), demonstrating a rich culinary heritage. One participant in Dumba community said; *“Here we grow many different crops like maize, millet, sorghum and groundnuts”*. Another participant from Gairezi community added that; *“We do bee keeping, farming of potatoes and yams”*. Research indicated that tourists who visit the Gairezi community are interested in traditional food. One participant said; *“Most tourists prefer our honey because it is pure and raw”*. This indicates that tourists who visit these communities are also interested in traditional food indicating a growing interest in food tourism.

In Dumba community, most participants showed that they haven't heard about gastronomy tourism. This indicated lack of knowledge about this new concept in tourism (Agyeiwaah, et al., 2019). This also concurs with the views of (Mohd Salim, et al., 2023) that lack of knowledge by locals is an impediment to their empowerment and community development. The participants from Gairezi community indicated a good understanding of gastronomy tourism as they vividly articulated how they interacted with tourists during local festivals. One participant said;

Yes, visitors came to taste our traditional dishes. Sometimes we stand by the road side selling yams if we head that there are groups of tourists who came to Gairezi Ecotour

Participants were asked to indicate how the production of traditional crops and food is benefiting them, both at individual level and at community level. The benefits were multifaceted, with participants citing increased income through sales, improved food security, preservation of cultural heritage, and empowerment to share their culture. One participant from Gairezi community indicated that;

We are empowered to take ownership of our food culture.

Most participants from both communities indicated that gastronomy tourism provides an opportunity to keep traditions alive by showcasing local culture. Some respondents expressed interest in learning more about food tourism, suggesting a desire for capacity building and support. One participant from Dumba community said;

I heard of food tourism but not in this community. We are interested to know more about it since it is said to provide benefits like income

Notably, all participants recognized the value of traditional foods in promoting their community's development, with many emphasising the importance of preserving cultural traditions and showcasing local cuisine to visitors. It was noted that farm-to-table approach will only be effective if markets are created for local produce (Mensah & Ofori, 2023). A participant from Dumba community reiterated with concern that;

As much as we want to produce more traditional crops and foods, the market is not readily available. Here we grow onions and yams mainly for sale but we are having challenges as to where to sell the produce.

Overall, the findings suggest that a farm-to-table approach to gastronomy tourism can foster sustainable community development, enhance livelihoods, and celebrate the region's unique cultural identity. This is in support of the views of da Silva, (2018)

Challenges faced by local communities in using traditional foods in gastronomy tourism for sustainable community development.

The results reveal a myriad of challenges that local communities face in leveraging traditional foods for gastronomy tourism and sustainable community development. The major challenges highlighted include lack of infrastructure, competition from commercial agriculture, limited knowledge and skills in food preparation, climate change, and lack of support from local authorities. These challenges are similar to the rest of the world (Lee & Kim, 2022; Mbaiwa & Darkoh, 2020; Duarte, et al., 2022). Through observation, the researcher witnessed the challenge of road accessibility in Gairezi community. The area is hardly accessible with small vehicles which limits the potential of the area to attract business. One of the participants added that;

Transport is our major challenge for both to bring farming inputs and to carry the produce to the market since we mostly sell at Troutbeck or in Nyanga. This have led to increase in the cost of production costs

This indicates that accessing markets proved difficult due to limited transportation options, high transaction costs, and dependence on middlemen, resulting in exploitation and reduced profits. Additionally, respondents struggled with preserving traditional food culture while

adapting to changing market demands and balancing economic benefits with cultural preservation. One participant in Dumba said;

Most traditional recipes are known to our elders and the challenge of not documenting them is threatening their existence since most people left are young generation

Climate change and weather variability further exacerbated these challenges, leading to post-harvest losses and spoilage. Climate change have reduced the amount of rainfall leading to abandonment of certain crops which require good rainfall.

We have reduced growing of traditional crops such as millet and sorghum since they require more rainfall. said one of the participants in Dumba community.

Limited access to finance, credit, training, and capacity building hindered local communities' ability to scale up production, meet quality standards, and promote their products. Local authorities' lack of support and limited control over the supply chain added to the difficulties (Cabras, 2019). Notably, participants expressed concerns about cultural appropriation, maintaining quality and consistency, and preserving traditional food systems. One of the participants said;

We are failing to promote our products and services since we are not able to access formal market". Promoting gastronomy tourism can only be viable if there is good access to markets. This will act as an incentive to farmers and producers of local food (Bessiere, 2013).

Strategies for using traditional foods in gastronomy tourism as a tool for sustainable community development.

The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as infrastructure development, capacity building, market access support, and policy frameworks that protect cultural heritage and promote sustainable community development through gastronomy tourism. Addressing these challenges can empower local communities to effectively harness the potential of traditional foods in gastronomy tourism, ensuring equitable benefits and cultural preservation (Adenyika-Ojo & Roberts, 2016). The results identified key strategies for leveraging traditional foods in gastronomy tourism to foster sustainable community development using

the farm-to-table approach. Participants emphasised the importance of capacity building and training, marketing and promotion, partnerships with tourism operators, and quality control measures to enhance the competitiveness of local food products. Empowering local communities was a recurring theme, with respondents suggesting involvement in decision-making, community-led initiatives, and ownership of tourism projects. This concurs with the views of Gohori & van de Merwe, (2022) that empowering communities is a key driver to community development.

Authorities were encouraged to provide infrastructure, resources, technical assistance, and policy support to facilitate market access, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Sustainable agriculture practices, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental conservation were also highlighted as crucial strategies. Community-based tourism initiatives, community-led tourism management, and collaboration with local businesses were seen as effective ways to promote community engagement and resilience. The argument is that, when communities participate in decision making and formulation of projects and policies, they value them very much and take pride in it (Tsfaye, et al., 2023)

Additionally, respondents stressed the need for food safety training, value addition, and processing to enhance the quality and appeal of local food products. The findings suggest that a multi-stakeholder approach, combining community empowerment, private sector partnerships, and government support, is essential for harnessing the potential of traditional foods in gastronomy tourism to drive sustainable community development.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study as shown in Figure 1 below provides a comprehensive approach to exploring the empowerment of local communities through the strategic utilisation of four key inputs: Traditional Foods, Government Support, Community Engagement, and Market Access.

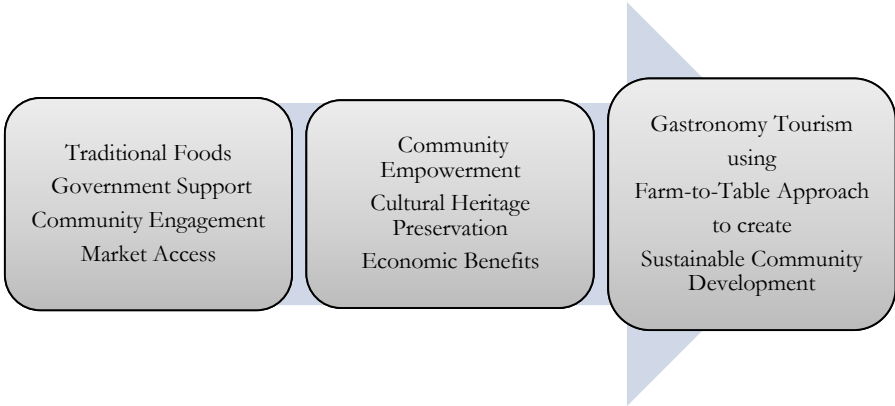


Figure 1: conceptual framework for Gastronomy Tourism using a Farm-to-table approach

As shown in Fig. 1, the conceptual framework for Gastronomy Tourism using a Farm-to-Table Approach to create Sustainable Community Development comprises four key inputs. Firstly, Traditional Foods represent the unique and authentic local cuisine that showcases the community's cultural heritage and identity (Lopez-Guzman, 2020). Secondly, Government Support encompasses policies, initiatives, and resources provided by local authorities to promote gastronomy tourism and support local food systems (Rinaldi et al., 2019). Thirdly, Community Engagement involves the active involvement and participation of community members in the development and management of gastronomy tourism initiatives, ensuring that their needs and interests are represented (Kostoglou, 2020). Lastly, Market Access refers to the availability of channels and opportunities for local food producers to sell their products to tourists and other consumers, thereby generating income and stimulating local economic growth (Cabras, 2019).

The process of developing gastronomy tourism using a Farm-to-Table approach to create sustainable community development involves three key stages. Firstly, community empowerment enables local communities to take ownership and control of their gastronomy tourism initiatives, ensuring their needs and cultural heritage are represented. Secondly, cultural heritage preservation protects and promotes the community's traditional foods, cooking techniques, and culinary practices, preserving their identity and authenticity. Lastly, economic benefits generate income and stimulate local economic growth through gastronomy tourism, benefiting local food producers, artisans, and communities. Through this process, the desired outcome is achieved: Gastronomy Tourism that utilizes a Farm-to-Table Approach to foster sustainable community

development. This outcome showcases local products and culinary traditions, improving well-being and the quality of life of local communities. Through empowering communities, preserving cultural heritage, and generating economic benefits, gastronomy tourism can be developed in a sustainable manner, ultimately benefiting local communities and promoting their development.

5. Conclusion and recommendations.

The findings demonstrate that traditional foods, produced through a farm-to-table approach, can serve as a vital tool for preserving cultural heritage, improving livelihoods, and promoting community resilience (Duarte, et al., 2022). However, local communities face numerous challenges in harnessing this potential, including infrastructural limitations, lack of resources, and limited market access (Lee & Kim, 2022). To overcome these hurdles, a multi-stakeholder approach is essential, combining community empowerment, private sector partnerships, and government support (Tesfaye, et al., 2023).

To unlock the full potential of traditional foods in gastronomy tourism for sustainable community development in Nyanga North, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The government should prioritise infrastructure development, capacity building, and market access support to enable local communities to effectively participate in gastronomy tourism. This includes establishing formal marketplaces, providing training and technical assistance, and facilitating linkages with tourism operators.
- Community-led tourism initiatives should be encouraged and supported, ensuring that local communities retain ownership and control over their cultural heritage and tourism projects.
- Policy frameworks should be developed to protect cultural heritage, promote sustainable agriculture practices, and ensure environmental conservation.
- Partnerships between local businesses, tourism operators, and community organizations should be fostered to enhance the competitiveness of local food products and promote community engagement.

Author biography

Tinashe Abraham Kodzanaï

Mr. Kodzanaï is a lecturer at Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences in Zimbabwe in the department of Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure Sciences. He is a holder of Msc and Bsc in Tourism and Hospitality Management both from the University of Zimbabwe. He is a tourism practitioner and consultant. His research focuses on women in tourism, rural tourism, community-based tourism and event tourism.

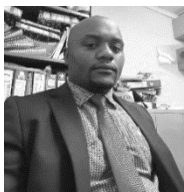
Rudo Nyandima-Zengeya

Mrs. Zengeya Nyandima is a lecturer in the Tourism and Hospitality Department at Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences, where she specializes in diaspora tourism marketing, tourism marketing research, business development, and academic training. She is also a hotelier, tourism practitioner, and consultant. Currently pursuing a PhD in Tourism, she is dedicated to training and developing students in areas such as soft skills, life skills, tourism, hospitality, online marketing management, business excellence, and service quality management.

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