

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF GREEK ENOGASTRONOMIC HERITAGE

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Abstract. The tourism industry is undergoing a digital transformation, which profoundly affects enogastronomic tourism. Implementing digital tools offers a richer tourist experience, streamlines the reservation procedure, and tailors travel packages to individual preferences. Advanced instruments, including online portals, augmented reality applications, artificial intelligence systems, and blockchain technology, are important elements in maintaining the historical value of local cuisine, fostering local economies, and enhancing the viability of food-focused itineraries. Greece provides a prime example of successfully incorporating digital strategies into culinary tourism. Interactive websites, smartphone apps, virtual tourism opportunities, and product certification services prove how innovative technologies can harmonize with established gastronomic customs. Digital projects such as Greek Wine Routes, Taste Halkidiki, and Agroknow help promote gastronomic tourism and entice fresh tourist interest.

Keywords: enogastronomic tourism, digital economy, online platforms, virtual tastings, blockchain in gastronomy, Big Data in tourism.

JEL Classification: O33, Q01, Z32

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the ongoing digital revolution, the tourism sector is proactively embracing cutting-edge technologies, fundamentally reshaping how tourists, enterprises, and local populations interact. A particularly advantageous area, merging cultural expression, traditional practices, and financial prosperity, is enogastronomic tourism. Greece, renowned for its extensive culinary and vinicultural legacies, is aggressively leveraging digital instruments to showcase its genuine offerings and customs.

The digital realm unveils novel roads for safeguarding and amplifying enogastronomic heritage. Internet-based platforms, smartphone applications, virtual tasting sessions, blockchain systems verifying genuine recipes, and the utilization of Big Data to tailor tourist itineraries, altogether contribute to a more enhanced tourist experience. These tools don't simply make authentic Greek commodities more accessible; they also back up regional businesses and help maintain time-honored culinary traditions.

The principal objective of this research is to evaluate present-day digital technologies within the framework of Greek enogastronomic tourism, ascertain their efficacy in preserving cultural identity, and highlight potential directions for their forthcoming advancement.

MAIN CONTENT

The digital economy is one of the most vital driving powers of global development, influencing all sectors, including tourism. The application of digital technologies in tourism promotes process automation, betters interactions between tourists and businesses, and generates fresh chances for cultural heritage promotion. This is especially pertinent for enogastronomic tourism, which combines taste experiences with the investigation of a region's culinary traditions. Enogastronomic tourism is an essential part of cultural exploration, and its digitalization allows tourists to access various services, select unique gastro-expeditions, and get familiar with local producers. The digital economy shapes new methods to organizing travel, streamlining planning, booking, and experience-sharing processes.

The main digital tools used in enogastronomic tourism for its popularization:

1. **Online platforms and booking services** enable tourists to find authentic restaurants, wineries, and gastronomic tours based on reviews, recommendations, and ratings. For instance, platforms like TripAdvisor, Airbnb Experiences, and Google Maps help select locations for tasting traditional Greek dishes or participating in wine tastings.

2. **Virtual and augmented reality** allow tourists to explore a region's cultural heritage before traveling. Virtual winery tours or Greek cooking masterclasses create an immersive experience without physical presence.

3. **Digital platforms for selling local products** (online markets and gastronomic platforms) facilitate not only tour bookings but also direct purchases of authentic products such as wines, cheeses, and olive oil.

4. **Social media and influencer marketing** significantly influence tourists' choices. Many travelers select gastronomic destinations based on recommendations from bloggers and experts on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

Considering all the avenues of the digital economy in enogastronomic tourism, we can highlight the key advantages and challenges (Table 1).

Table 1. Key advantages and challenges of the digital economy in enogastronomic tourism

Advantages	Challenges
accessibility of information	risk of losing authenticity
convenience and personalization	cybersecurity threats
support for local businesses	unequal access to digital technologies
environmental benefits	

The digital tools previously highlighted within the sphere of Greek enogastronomic tourism offer extensive possibilities for drawing in visitors, bolstering the competitive advantage of regional producers, and safeguarding culinary traditions. A central pattern involves the expanding application of artificial intelligence coupled with personalized recommendations. Powered by machine learning systems, tourists are presented with customized suggestions for dining venues, wineries, and food-related gatherings, encompassing culinary workshops, all tailored to individual tastes and prior adventures. AI-driven applications meticulously examine reviews and ratings to identify the most suitable options for tastings or culinary adventures.

Augmented reality delivers the capability to generate interactive, 3D tours/guides for Greek gastronomic trails, wineries, and eateries. These resources are accessible to travelers before their arrival in the country, thus appealing to a new subset of tourists who prefer advanced trip preparations.

By utilizing AR glasses or smartphone applications, for instance, tourists can engage with virtual wine descriptions, uncover the history of viticulture, and join in virtual tasting sessions.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence supports vintners and restaurateurs in areas like demand prediction, production streamlining, and the development of effective promotional plans. The utilization of NFT tickets for select gastronomic events offers unique entry to tastings and culinary training sessions.

The broad use of blockchain technologies enhances transparency in product manufacturing and the authentication of Greek wines. This allows tourists to verify product origins and avoid counterfeits. Furthermore, digitalization contributes to the development of sustainable enogastronomic tourism by regulating resource consumption and promoting eco-friendly production.

Successful Digital Initiatives in Greece.

Greece stands as a prime example of seamlessly weaving digital advancements into enogastronomic tourism, effectively marrying age-old culinary customs with contemporary technology. Key projects and initiatives that have achieved notable success include:

1. Greek Wine Roads is interactive platform serves as a promotional tool for Greek wine regions, integrated with Google Maps, the platform empowers tourists to create custom-tailored itineraries, easily locate wineries and tasting rooms nearby, and reserve excursions. It supplies comprehensive details regarding wineries, culinary routes, and events such as tastings and wine festivals ("GREEK WINE ROADS", accessed 10.02.2025).

2. Taste Halkidiki is sait, dedicated to spotlighting the culinary heritage of the Halkidiki Peninsula and delivers information on local products, culinary traditions, event calendars, and even facilitates the delivery of genuine Greek dishes ("TASTE HALKIDIKI", accessed 10.02.2025).

3. Melitzazz Festival (held annually in Leonidio) is gastronomic and cultural festival spotlights the local Tsakoniki Melitzana eggplant, a product protected under a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). The festival encompasses tastings, culinary workshops, musical performances, and opportunities to engage with local producers ("Melitzazz 2024", accessed 10.02.2025).

4. Virtual winery tours is utilizing augmented reality technology. Wineries like Boutari and Gerovassiliou provide virtual tours of vineyards, insights into production processes, and remote tasting experiences ("Boutari Wineries", accessed 11.02.2025), ("Gerovassiliou Wineries", accessed 11.02.2025).

5. Agroknow platform is blockchain-based solution is designed to ensure product certification and authentication for Greek wines, olive oils, and other traditional products ("Agroknow platform", accessed 11.02.2025).

6. Greece 2.0 initiative is national government initiative is focused on investing in digital infrastructure to stimulate gastronomic tourism and foster the development of novel digital solutions specifically for local producers and tour operators ("National recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0"", accessed 13.02.2025).

These successful initiatives showcase how digital technologies can be integrated within the realm of enogastronomic tourism, thereby providing ease for tourists, bolstering local enterprises, and preserving cultural heritage. Greece effectively serves as a compelling instance of how innovation can revitalize a traditional industry, rendering it contemporary, accessible, and competitive.

CONCLUSIONS

The digital age is profoundly reshaping enogastronomic tourism, rendering it more readily available, engaging, and tailored to individual preferences. The deployment of online portals, augmented reality tools, artificial intelligence systems, and blockchain networks is streamlining workflows, amplifying the ease of travel for tourists, and providing support for local culinary creators. In the future, the convergence of all digital advancements into comprehensive tourism platforms will elevate the approachability, ease, and appeal of enogastronomic tourism within Greece, for all who visit. This evolution not only fortifies the competitive edge of the tourism sector but also aids in the protection of cultural legacies. Concurrently, the embracing of innovation will cultivate sustainable practices and elevate the worldwide acclaim of Greek cuisine, especially appealing to younger demographics who are frequent users of digital resources during their journeys.

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