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Gastronomy as an Attractive Issue for Luxury Tourism

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In the market age of luxury the significant expansion of purchasing powers in numerous emergent countries (China, Brazil, India, etc.) and their always greater weight in developed countries allow to offer increasing outlets for luxury producers. The 2008 report of Merrill Lynch and Capgemini estimates that more than 10 millions of people around the world hold more than one million dollars of financial assets (they are the High Net Worth Individuals –HNWI) and for 103,000 of people their financial assets exceed 30 millions dollars (they are the Ultra High Net Worth Individuals -UHNWI). In this context, demand for luxury goods and services is potentially considerable (even if the current crisis would limit activity of luxury groups).

This paper focuses on the relation between tourism and gastronomy. Being a leisure activity and implying important financing resources, consuming gastronomy requires travelling and is besides most of the time called *gastronomic tourism*. Gastronomic tourists go to the Restaurant *El Bulli* of Ferran Adrià in Spain, visit the Restaurant of Pierre Gagnaire in Paris or the *Fat Duck* of Heston Blumenthal in England for instance. Chefs seem to attach importance to gastronomic globetrotters and are interested in tourism in big cities when opening restaurants in several countries (ex. Joël Robuchon, one of the most famous French chef, opened restaurants in Paris, Macao, London, Tokyo, Las Vegas, etc.).

Considering this context one can notice that for several years now, not only French but also worldwide gastronomy encounters numerous mutations. One of the most important consists in evolving to luxury supply: prices increased significantly. For the case of gastronomic restaurants located in Paris for instance an original statistic analysis shows that the increase of prices is at least about 130 % between 1960 and 2000 (in constant euros). The demand for luxury gastronomic services being very dynamic luxury groups began to invest in gastronomy not only by owing luxurious hotels (that was already the case) but also by joining to their luxurious rooms supply prestigious restaurants. This means that luxury hotels begin to attract first class chefs who are very well ranked by gastronomic guidebooks (ex. Michelin) and who are contractually compelled to get especially Michelin stars (for the case of France) to remain in their luxurious kitchen.

This paper aims to analyse the current relation between tourism and gastronomy in the market age of luxury and to understand the strategies of actors (chefs, luxury groups, public actors...) which give a lift to the market for gastronomy and luxury tourism.

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