“PROMOTING THESSALONIKI AS A GASTRONOMIC CITY”

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I hereby declare that the work submitted is mine and that where I have made use of another’s work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student’s Handbook.

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Abstract

In this dissertation, the gastronomic identity of Thessaloniki and what is not working as to provoke Thessaloniki as a Gastronomic Capital, is analyzed.

To begin with, as public and private interest is motivated so as to gain a relationship between gastronomy, tourism and branding, the definitions of them are synthesized. Gastronomy as a definition is the art or activity for cooking and eating fine food, as Merriam-Webster’s dictionary of English usage informs, (1993), and “food tourism is an experiential trip to a gastronomic region, for recreational or entertainment purposes, including visits to primary and secondary producers of food, gastronomic festivals, food fairs, events, farmers’ markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, degustation of quality food products or any tourism activity relevant to food”, according to Hall and Sharples, (2003).

Introducing Thessaloniki, a city constructed along the sea, into Thermaïkos Gulf, a modernized metropolis bearing the marks of its blustery history and its cosmopolitan character, results that the location of the buns took a series of great gastronomy ventures mainly of young people who tried to renew the tradition of the city by introducing new cooking methods, blends, materials and traditions studied elsewhere.

So, Thessaloniki, a city with a strong Gastronomic character, attempts to showcase. An important initiative, organized by the Municipality of Thessaloniki in 2011, is the Food Festival. The gastronomic event promotes the luxury of the local cuisine, the local market and stakeholders, the destination as a Gastronomic city, and of course, the educational and social character by forming a culture of qualitative consciousness (Vassiliadis, 2016). Moreover, Thessaloniki has its own representatives in culinary events, that react as food ambassadors. The three young chefs organize cooking lessons, promote the local cuisine, products and shops and launch the “Food Basket”. The Food Basket is a new concept, (2017). This basket is composed of local products that are directly related to the city’s flavor. Other events are the first Street Food festival, the Kapani Project and the thessBrunch.

In order to achieve the specific aims of the dissertation, Trip Advisor’s reviews about food and beverage departments were analyzed, a questionnaire was conducted so as to assess tourist’s perception of the Gastronomy of Thessaloniki, Phenomenon Mapping was implemented, finding out what makes a tourist decide where to eat and what influence their path from one to another, Photovoice was processed, answering which is the “Gastronomic Product” of Thessaloniki, the portfolio product that tourists should taste and stakeholders, locals, tourists and civilians were interviewed.

The results of the research showed that there do exist excellent events in Thessaloniki, that promote the gastronomic identity of the city and simultaneously attract visitors as well as hard work and ideas endure to provoke the city as a Gastronomic Capital. In the other hand, unfortunately, there is a gap between local cuisine and stakeholders. There is not enough communication between them and as a result, good proposals are not notified. Lastly, due to low budget of Thessaloniki’s Municipality, there is a shortage in food branding policies.

To conclude, strong roots, a historic background, countless recipes and years of tradition correlate with Thessaloniki. By organizing a Food Policy Council, which means funds and collaboration of locals and stakeholders, adopting different food habits (alternative boost of Gastronomic issues, such as biological products, nutritional diets, etc.) as Copenhagen
promotes and focusing in the Branding of its Gastronomy, magnificent results could come of, and Thessaloniki win the title of the Gastronomic capital of Greece and why not Globally.
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1. Introduction

I. Gastronomy

Gastronomy as a definition is the art or activity for cooking and eating fine food (Merriam-Webster’s dictionary of English usage, 1993). Through the study of culinary customs and style, regional preparations and the use of the finest ingredients, gastronomy offers a creative approach to the art and science of good eating. With other words, it is called Comfort Food with a Twist.

Gastronomy is one of the most authentic cultural elements of a place. The qualities and characteristics of a society, as well as information about the cultural and economic history, are linked to the unique tastes of a destination’s cuisine. Meanwhile, food is also an important form of communication, a way to "speak" direct to someone's heart.

Nowadays, gastronomy is one of the primary reasons for many to travel, in conjunction with being a leisure for thousands and a fashionable trend. People chase to experience food comparably to other elements of different cultures like music, art and architecture. The tourism of Gastronomy offers colossal potential in challenging regional, local and national economies and boosting sustainability and incorporation. It bequeaths positively to many levels of the tourism value chain, such as agriculture and local food manufacturing (Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General, 2017).

The Committee of Culture and Education of the European Parliament in 2014, acclaimed a motion for European Parliament Resolution on the “European gastronomic heritage: cultural and educational aspects”. It distinguishes the gravity of food and gastronomy as creative and cultural expression and radical pillars of social relationship and family.

II. Gastronomic Tourism

Lately, Food Tourism has known a great growth and has become one of the most compelling and innovative segments of tourism. Both tourism and destinations companies are cognizant of the impact of gastronomy so as to modify tourism and inspire local, regional and national economic development. Moreover, Food Tourism, comparably to ongoing trends of cultural consumption, comprises in its discourse ethical and sustainable values depended on the landscape, the territory, the sea, authenticity local culture and local products (UNWTO Affiliate Members Program, 2012).

Gastronomic tourism is a developing phenomenon that is being emerged as a unique tourism product considering the fact that over a third of tourists’ expenditures concerns food, conforming to the specialized literature (among others, Quan and Wang, 2004). Consequently,
the destination’s cuisine is an aspect of major interest regarding the quality of the holiday experience (Carmina Fandos Herrera, UNWTO, 2012).

Hall and Sharples present one of the most utilized definition of the gastronomic tourism (2003), according to which “food tourism is an experiential trip to a gastronomic region, for recreational or entertainment purposes, including visits to primary and secondary producers of food, gastronomic festivals, food fairs, events, farmers’ markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, degustation of quality food products or any tourism activity relevant to food”. In addition, they mention that “the specific experiential journey is related to a lifestyle that includes experimentation, acknowledgment from different cultures, the acquisition of approving the qualities or attributes related to tourism products and culinary specialties produced in that region through its consumption”.

Food culture is definitely different in many ways, as food strategy exists. As a result, food is of high importance to city marketing, and vise-versa. As Mr. Penas mentioned, Mayor of Tourism and International Relations, “Food is part of the culture of a city or a nation, it is part of its symbolic capital, even so if the city does not have a strong gastronomic identity”. Besides, there is a strong bond between food and quality of life, sharing experiences, sharing a taste, meeting people, imaginary, rituals, it is a social construction. “It can be understood as part of the symbolic capital of a city” (The Gastronomic sense of place, Meynadier, B., 2015).

III. Gastronomic Branding

Furthermore, the role that food can play in influencing the overall branding and positioning of a destination is mentioned by Richards (2015):
• Food is an essential component of the destination marketing mix, as it provides a sense of place and permit tourists to literally taste the destination, contacting directly the local culture.
• Gastronomy is the aspect of culture that tourists most frequently contact with, by eating at least twice per day.
• The people’s eating time, way and habits are the differences mentioned, entering a new culture.
• Tourists are able to distinguish origins of a cuisine as far as food provides a direct connection with landscape.
For these reasons, according to Hall and Sharples (2008) and Hall (2012: 50), public and private interest is motivated so as to gain a relationship between gastronomy, tourism and branding:

- “Gastronomy and cuisine-oriented tourists are acknowledged as high yield markets.

- Visitors products such as cultural and natural heritage attractions can be linked with food tourism, thus providing a comprehensive offer.

- An alternative is provided to rural areas that may be affected by economic restructuring: the development, maintenance and/or even revival of local food products.

- Quarters and urban neighborhoods can become attractive to visitors, principally those that specialize in kind of ethnic foods. A centralization of restaurants, cafés and markets can bring character to the neighborhood”.

IV. Best Case Studies regarding Gastronomic Branding

In order to be able to compare and achieve researches to the case of Thessaloniki, the best case studies regarding Gastronomy, Gastronomic Branding and Food policies are quoted.

a) Copenhagen

To begin with, the case of Copenhagen was examined (Cooking and Food Festival), which is one of the most interesting in the world. Copenhagen has expanded from a gastronomic unknown capital to a world-class food metropolis. Copenhagen Cooking and Food Festival is a food festival taking place the ten last days of August for the last 14 years. The Festival is organized by Food Organization of Denmark, which is a non-profit organization promoting and developing the Danish and Nordic food and Gastronomy. More than 100 events and 80.000 visitors participate every year, celebrating the Nordic kitchen the seasonal production and many culinary experiences.

The theme of Copenhagen’s Food Festival 2017 was “Breaking the new”. This collective idea promoted the Festival to be an important meeting place for new trends, knowledge, business platforms in food culture and gastronomy, social debates, initiatives and products (Copenhagen Cooking and Food Festival, 2017). Its special focuses were:

1. Sustainability and Organic Food waste, wild food, organic meals, vegetarian dishes and fermentation. Important to notice that 67.000 meals were organic, without exceeding budget.

3. International focus. International guest chefs, presenters, collaborators and events. Famous chefs and foodies invited visitors home to an extraordinary dining experience at their own house. Moreover, events took visitors outside the city center, right to the places where the food is produced, such as at Birkemosegaard, where the owners of the biodynamic farm cooperated with the organic food store KOST, and invited visitors to a dinner in the middle of the fields where they produce their fantastic vegetables.

4. Knowledge and learning. Workshops, debates, symposia, fairs, conferences and competitions such as activities centered around the lively farmyard with a small open scene, experiencing talks about gastronomy and agriculture spiced with musical elements and stalls so as to buy delicious organic food and drinks, or participating in a Cider Festival, etc.

5. Drinking beer, wine, spirits, juice, fermentation and much more.
6. Food, art and culture. Food culture, cultural institutions, artists, cultural festivals, cross-over events. Experiencing from an exclusive pop-up dinner from 3 Michelin stars chefs, to the Topdog Charity hotdog competition, which is the unofficial World Championship in Hotdog or dining in a restaurant wearing Virtual Reality glasses that abducted visitors to a dinner on a bounty island, and more. Commodity Celebration.

7. Harvest festivals, seasonal vegetables and desserts. 1200 people dined under open skies at one of the major crossroads, Frederiksberg Allé.

b) Los Angeles

The case of Los Angeles is really interesting because of its alternative character. Los Angeles has created a Food Policy Council, so as experts to decide about all issues regarding food.

The Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC) is a “collective impact initiative, representing over 300 organizations and thousands of individual community members, working to make Southern California a Good Food region for everyone, a place where food is healthy, affordable, fair and sustainable” (Siler, L., Gill, A. and Hammes, A., 2017). Food Policy Council’s members represent the full spectrum of food system activities: they are typically farmers, gardeners, chefs and restaurateurs, food processors and wholesalers, farm and food worker advocates, grocers, consumers, public health practitioners, anti-hunger and food security advocates and government representatives.
Their key objectives are to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, particularly in disadvantaged communities, develop a thriving “Good Food” economy, and strengthen agricultural and environmental stewardship throughout the region, by achieving prominence in distribution, production and consumption of good food.

![Picture of key objectives of Food Council of LA](image)

More detailed, good food economy means a sustainable system regarding food, that will create interesting food jobs with promoting and training opportunities. Employees will be treated with respect and caring, racism will not be accepted. Moreover, improving wellness of residents is based on a general idea of advocating nutritional food. Healthy nutrition results to decrease of illnesses, knowledge at production of food, adopting healthy customs and obtain culinary skills, that will help cooking healthy at home become a routine.

To continue, the industrial food system that exists globally, faces overweightness, hunger, illnesses regarding nutrition and environmental degradation. LA Food Policy Council follows some strategic priorities by boosting local agriculturists providing sustainability, access to healthy food options in all neighborhoods, fair working conditions for all employees and prevention of poverty.

To sum up, “Good Food” should get known by pursue a “Good Food System”. “Good food” is the food that is healthy, delicious, safe, aesthetically pleasing, affordable, fair and sustainable (produced, processed, distributed and recycled locally using the principles of environmental stewardship) (LAFPC). Respectively, a “Good Food System” is a combination of actions related to every aspect of the food cycle (production, processing, distribution, retail, preparation, consumption, and disposal).

c) The first United Nations World Tourism Organization Forum on food tourism

Lastly, an extremely interesting Organization regarding Food and Gastronomy is deposited, the first United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Forum on food tourism, that opened on April 2015, in the Spanish city of San Sebastian.
The forum looks to provide a platform to exchange experiences and ideas on how to manage the growing phenomenon of gastronomic tourism throughout the world.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Carlos Vogeler, the executive general secretary of the UNWTO, said this was the start of a period of an "exceptional time" for world tourism in which over 1,000 million tourists were crossing borders to try food from other cultures.

He said there was much to be done in this field as gastronomy has not been fully exploited and offers "excellent opportunities" to increase earnings for everyone from the "smallest fisherman, to the local fruit and vegetable producer, to the man who serves tables and the street food vender," and as such it can be another important tool for regional development.

The forum is designed to help realize the full potential in the field, explained Vogeler.

He highlighted that San Sebastian, which in 2016 will be the European City of Culture had the highest number of Michelin Stars in the world. It is a "city that lives by gastronomy" and a "world capital of gastronomy."

The forum is being held at the Basque Culinary Center (BCC), the first faculty of gastronomic sciences in Spain. During its six years of existence, the BCC has become a so-called reference for gastronomy which investigates, promotes and teaches the rich and varied gastronomy of the Basque region, which many believe has the best food in Spain.

Jose Mari Aizega, the director of the BCC said the forum aimed to "generate debate and analysis in the world of tourism and gastronomy, which is now a world phenomenon."

The event involves workshops and brainstorming sessions, which include famous chefs, representatives of the travel industry. The aim is to develop ideas on branding and strategy, in some cases though looking at case studies from gastronomic tourism destinations around the planet.

This report, developed by the UNWTO Affiliate Members Programme, aims at showcasing how gastronomy tourism can be a driver for the modern tourist hungry to create authentic yet memorable experiences and a pillar of sustainable tourism. Each of the 60 contributors to the report, including UNWTO Member States, Affiliate Members and partner organizations, provided the tried and tested case studies included in the report (Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary General, 2017).

The Global Report on Food Tourism, the latest in UNWTO Affiliate Members’ series of in-depth reports, takes a closer look at the links between tourism and food, highlighting the importance of this industry to the tourism sector and economies worldwide. Bringing together experiences from some of the world’s top tourism destinations, as well as from food tourism experts, the report offers important insight and recommendations into this growing segment of tourism (Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary General, 2012).

I trust it will serve as a delicious appetizer to the improved knowledge and continued development of food tourism.
V. Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki, is the second biggest city in Greece. It is situated 520 km north of Athens, the capital of Greece. It is a relaxing and historical center and both the “gateway to some fascinating parts of northern Greece and a worthwhile destination in its own right”, (Municipality of Thessaloniki). In a quick blink to history, Thessaloniki was first established in 316 B.C. by Kassandros and named after his wife, Thessaloniki, half-sister of Alexander the Great. Its name means “Victory in Thessaly”.

Thessaloniki is a bustling modern city with provocation to life and development. Considerable avenues, parks and popular squares, trees that structure commercial streets with “showy” shop windows. Classy houses, neoclassical buildings, stand parallel with modern domiciles which transform a walk through any section of the city an interesting promenade (city of Thessaloniki).

Picture, I took of Thessaloniki

Constructed along the sea, into Thermaïkos Gulf, Thessaloniki is a modernized metropolis bearing the marks of its blustery history and its cosmopolitan character. Thessaloniki is situated near the south boarders of Bulgaria, only 117 km away from Kulata, and the south boarders of FYROM, 77 km away from Gevgelija. Based on Hellenic Statistic Authority, 2011, the population of Thessaloniki’s city together with its prefecture is 1.104.460 people of which 529.480 are male and 574.980 are female. Based on the same facts, approximately 300 people live in every 1km².

The touch of past in combination with a modern taste are the characteristics that give a unique touch to this city and is the answer why it makes everyone feel romantic, with a bohemian feeling. Thessaloniki is famous for its greatest musicians, artists, poets and thinkers-philosophers. Moreover, the city is known for its delightful cuisine, luscious restaurants, its hundreds of entertainment choices all day and night long, the delicate cafes and finest hotels. There are many cinemas showing first-run English language films, as well as theaters with different plays all year round. The city is also the site of the renown “Thessaloniki Film Festival” in October-November and is the home of the International Trade Fair. In general, it hosts many cultural events, some classics, some alternative, some pioneering.

There is not a large number of ancient ruins within the city but there are enough Roman and Byzantine sites to keep any history-minded visitor occupied, plenty of museums and of course the ruins of Vergina, which include the tomb of Phillip, father of Alexander the Great. It is also a good starting point for visiting the beaches of Halkidiki and most beautiful spots in Greece in the region known as Macedonia.
In 2009, Central Macedonia welcomed 3.6 million tourists, which was the 18% of the total number of tourists who visited Greece that year. Thessaloniki has turned into investing in its tourism, with the results becoming more visible. 75% of nights spent in the city were held by Greeks in 2010 and only 25% by foreigners. Today, the proportion is 50-50%, while the summer of 2017 was the third in terms of hotel occupancy rates of over 70%, and 80% in some cases, despite the fact that summer travelers traditionally prefer Halkidiki. The big bet of balanced growth seems to have been won and stays, as from the 52 weekends of the year 40 found the hotels in the city full (Kasimi, A., 2017).

Lastly, from 2011 to 2013 Israeli arrivals increased by 325% and the Turks by 206%, while today the city counts 100,000 nights of Turks. By 2016, the Greeks kept the lion’s share among the visitors, as they accounted for 53% of the overnight stays in the hotels of the city, compared with 47% of the foreigners, according to the Thessaloniki Hoteliers Association. In 2017, the picture seems to be altered, with the proportion of foreign and Greek visitors being shared and Cypriots still retain their prime, followed by the Turks, while the Israelis and Germans occupy the third and fourth place (Kasimi A., 2017).

I. Thessaloniki’s Gastronomy

Thessaloniki has always been a multicultural city that united the East with the West in a way of life, tradition and, of course, tastes. With many communities within it, from Italian to Israeli, from Turkish to Armenian, as well as from Asia Minor, Pontos and Crete, it now unites all their gastronomic heritage to an event of every city’s cuisine (Parallaxi, 2016). As known of 2011’s statistics, the city contained 71.389 food and beverage services. Mrs. Samara and Mr. Pengas refer that Thessaloniki is a crossroads of flavors, a metropolis of tastes, a gastronomic capital.

Nowhere else in Greece can one find so many different flavors combined in the same table. The heritage of the Ottoman Palaces and the traditions of Greek refugees from Asia Minor and Istanbul with their own bold and rich gastronomical identity features, as well as distant Pontus, are combined with gastronomical customs of the Balkan hinterland fashioning the distinct gastronomic profile of the city. Byzantine flavors and techniques have been incorporated in the local cuisine. The coexistence of the Turkish, Jewish, French and Greek communities, resulted in a multitude of dishes, since the city cuisine borrowed techniques, ideas, products and moods. Thessaloniki is famous for its traditional cuisine, especially fish and seafood, cooked in manners that betray the origin of their various influences. Therefore, the city’s cuisine could not but be influenced and developed, producing admittedly worthy results (Thessaloniki’s Food Festival 2017).

However, the time when Thessaloniki was famous for the taverns of the Upper Town with the retsina (traditional cheap wine) and Krikellas (old, very known taverna) does no longer exist. The location of the buns took a series of great gastronomy ventures mainly of young people who tried to renew the tradition of the city by introducing new cooking methods, blends, materials and traditions studied elsewhere. Around twenty creative kitchens throughout the city, excellent hotel restaurants that have finally entered the life of Thessaloniki, gourmet cuisine in restaurants, that do not have to envy anything from the corresponding European gastronomy festivals, but even excellent street food create hopes for introducing the top gastronomic destination country (Toulas, G. and Tzimou, K., 2017).

Subsequently, the people, things, dishes, habits, institutions that consist the face of Thessaloniki in 2017 are displayed.
a) Food Festival

In a variety of ways, Thessaloniki, a city with a strong *Gastronomic character*, attempts to showcase. To begin with, an important initiative, organized by the Municipality of Thessaloniki in 2011, is the *Food Festival*. This event focuses at the richness of Thessaloniki’s gastronomy, the Mediterranean and healthy cuisine, as well as the new trends. Its actions take place all over the year, with climax end of November and December (Thessaloniki’s Food Festival).

Thessaloniki’s Food Festival has a “character close to the heart”, as said Mrs. Samara, the supervisor of the event. The gastronomic event promotes the luxury of the local cuisine, the local market and stakeholders, the destination as a Gastronomic city, and of course, the educational and social character by forming a culture of qualitative consciousness (Vassiliadis, 2016).

Moreover, many actions have been made to promote Thessaloniki as a gastronomic city, the number one city in Greece, with this character (Guardian, NY Times, BBC Rick Stein’s Long Weekends). The first urban wine of Thessaloniki, with the name “Gorgona” = “marble”, was
presented for Thessaloniki’s Food festival in 2015. Furthermore, Food Festival has its day: “Tuesday night we are eating out!” Every Tuesday, more than 50 restaurants of the town have set menus of three courses at the price of 10 euros. Like this, locals and tourists are prompted to eat out, try the local cuisine and enjoy the gastronomic spirit of the city. The agenda of 2017’s Food Festival include philanthropic Brunch with famous chefs, the 2nd gourmet olive exhibition and delicacies, Euro Dinner with flavors of 40 different countries, burping and gluten free seminars, Tourism exhibition in London, “the map of tastes”, and many more events (Food Festival Agenda, 2017).

b) Thessaloniki’s Ambassadors Chefs

Thessaloniki has its own representatives in culinary events, that react as food ambassadors, Mrs. Thedoraki from “The Duck Restaurant”, Mr. Klaudianos from “Local” and Mr. Tzoumas from “Anassa”. The three young chefs organize cooking lessons, promote the local cuisine, products and shops and launch the “Food Basket”. Those chefs from the city's restaurants give their culinary delight by designing special menus and creating typical recipes of the city with selected Thessaloniki Food Basket products. Ambassadors - chefs present through their creations a modern view of local gastronomy in different parts of the world, displaying the city and its products, appealing to tourism entrepreneurs, journalists, restaurants and hotels, and importers (Balis Dimitris, news 24/7).

“Kolokithakia Gemista”, stuffed zucchini with mashed meat and rice. A traditional recipe with a gourmet touch (Thessaloniki - Food stories).

c) The Food Basket

The Food Basket is a new concept, that was launched in 2017. This basket is composed of local products that are directly related to the city's flavor: local pasta (100% Greek wheat), Pontian products, buffalo milk and milk products, olives and olive oil, pepper products, vine leaves and marshmallows, jams, sauces, chocolates and of course the
traditional Koulouri of Thessaloniki. Depending on the seasonality, other products will fill the Thessaloniki Food Basket, the composition of which will change twice a year. The basket is a means of presenting the local products of the wider region of Thessaloniki to the Greek public (came to Athens) and abroad (it went to London and Berlin and continued), establishing both the city as a gastronomic destination and the opening of streets export activity of producers (Thessaloniki’s Food Basket).

d) Thessaloniki’s Food Events

The city uses other festivals to showcase its gastronomy as well. In 2017, the first Street Food festival of Thessaloniki was launched, featuring music and street food. The organizers intended it to help “Thessaloniki to become a gastronomic capital, through the art of the street food!” (Thessaloniki’s Street Food festival, 2017).

Another event is the Kapani Project. This is a 24hour event, in which music, street theater and performances, “aim to attract young people to the history of the market, while the older generation can look back nostalgically” (Kapani project, 2016).

In addition, in the 19th Thessaloniki Film Festival Closing Ceremony (2017), the director discussed the new film section on food stating the title “Food vs Food”, in which 9 documentaries were screened in this year’s edition, revealing all aspects of food: memory, culture, human rights, life itself.

e) ThessBrunch

To continue, the weekends of Thessaloniki have a new tasty agenda and the hotels of the city open their doors to introduce thessBrunch. The project, runs at the initiative of Thessaloniki’s Hotel Association, aims to offer many alternative proposals for the brunch, giving the opportunity not only to the visitors but also to the inhabitants of the city to enjoy it. The brunch comes to cover the meal from breakfast to lunch, from which it has its characteristic name. Together with Thes from the verb “thelo”, that means I want in Greek, or Thessaloniki from the English name Thessaloniki, thessbrunch, a fresh gastronomic proposal of the Hotels of Thessaloniki, was created. Thessbrunch will be
hosted every time at a different hotel in the city and at selected intervals (summer thessBrunch, autumn thessBrunch, christmas thessBrunch, etc.)

In the framework of thessBrunch, the first contest takes place. With a hashtag #koulouriofthemonth, this contest gives the option to the public not only of Thessaloniki but also of Greece and abroad to participate, by choosing one of the most popular products of the city, which is none other than the well-known Koulouri of Thessaloniki. One will be able to participate with a picture hanging up a Koulouri as a frame, placing it so as to focus on various points like buildings, faces, dishes, or anything else one wants to include in his picture. Each month, the picture with the most “likes” will win two overnight stays in Thessaloniki in the case the winner lives outside Thessaloniki, while the prize for the Thessalonians will be a ThessBrunch for 2 people in one of the hotels that participates in the project.

Lastly, five walking tours of the city are offered, so as tourists and locals to have a more personal experience with the food. Eat and Walk gives the opportunity to participants to taste the flavors of Thessaloniki, as well as how to cook Greek meals.
VI. Creative Cities Network of UNESCO: Promoting Thessaloniki as a Gastronomic City

In this point, I would like to adjust an indication about the project that inspired me about my topic of dissertation, that began in the end of 2016, promoting Thessaloniki as a Gastronomic city within the UNESCO Creative Cities network.

Launched in 2004, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) aims to strengthen cooperation with and among cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development regarded to economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects. By joining the Network, cities acknowledge their commitment to sharing best practices, developing partnerships that promote creativity and the cultural industries, strengthening participation in cultural life and integrating culture in urban development plans. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Arts, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music (UNESCO, 2017).

The goals of the program included the “specific objectives to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and identified culture and creativity as one of the essential levels for action in this context” (UNESCO, 2017).

This program aimed to use gastronomy as a platform between cities to promote collaboration and the sharing of experiences and knowledges in order to tackle urban development and common challenges with new solutions, learning processes and collaborative projects (UNESCO, 2017).

Unfortunately, even if the team that had undertaken, organized, worked and completed the project, there was a lack of communication and cooperation between the Municipality of Thessaloniki and the Region. So, the project did not reach UNESCO’s dateline, because of the gap between stakeholders that regarding such crucial for the Promotion of Thessaloniki projects, should be filled.
2. Methodology

To begin with, on account of Creativity Platform and its aims to promote economic development in the city of Thessaloniki by encouraging collaboration among those working in the creative fields such as crafts and folk arts, design, film, gastronomy, media arts, literature and music (UNESCO, 2017), I conducted a research in order to understand how tourists and locals interact around food and what efforts to brand the city as a gastronomic center, take place.

I. Aims

The aims of this dissertation are to analyze the gastronomic identity of Thessaloniki and what is not working as to provoke Thessaloniki as a Gastronomic Capital. More specific:

a) To find out why Thessaloniki does not have so positive performance in the Gastronomic tourism
b) What Thessaloniki is doing to brand its Gastronomy
c) Which is the portfolio product of Thessaloniki

II. Objectives

In order to achieve the specific aims, it is necessary to

a) analyze Trip Advisor’s reviews about food and beverage departments
b) conduct a questionnaire so as to assess tourist’s perception of the Gastronomy of Thessaloniki
c) implement Phenomenon Mapping, finding out what makes a tourist decide where to eat and what influence their path from one to another
d) process Photovoice, answering which is the “Gastronomic Product” of Thessaloniki, the portfolio product that tourists should taste and,
e) interview stakeholders, locals, tourists and civilians

III. Recommendations

Lastly, I am going to give recommendations in how to promote projects and activities throughout the city in order to connect people within the creative, professional and entrepreneurial communities. Those will serve to encourage collaboration and thus, economic and social development within the city.
3. Results from Research

I. Results from Photovoice

In order to better understand what local people valued about the gastronomy of their city, I have utilized Photovoice. Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community. It enables people to illustrate and discuss a community’s straights and weaknesses for the purpose of enacting social change. Photovoice participants capture aspects of everyday realities, based on a specific question, then share and discuss the meaning of these pictures (Wang & Burris, 1997).

So, I have recruited a group of 50 people via Facebook, that have grown up to Thessaloniki and are of different age, but locals, and asked them to answer to my question with only one picture that they consider the most representative. The question was: “In your opinion, which is the <<Gastronomic Product>> of Thessaloniki, the portfolio product that tourists should taste?”

To start, I have informed the participants the complete process of photovoice. They were notified that they should decide to send me the best picture that comes as an answer to my question.

I have created a collage with all the answers (Appendices No 4 and 5). As a conclusion I can see that the first gastronomic product coming at the mind of the people is “Bougatsa” (Graph No1). Bougatsa became known in Thessaloniki when some traditional confectioners from a nearby area moved to the city. This luscious custard pastry became a much-loved sweet snack and hundreds of special pastry shops opened where a sweet or salty with cheese, minced meat or spinach, bougatsa is served. Often it is accompanied with Choco milk. Nowadays, new recipes are a trend, croissants stuffed with the cream of bougatsa, called bougatsAN (bougatsa-croissant), etc.
Second favorite product is the “Koulouri” of Thessaloniki. Koulouri is one of the most traditional Greek snacks that awaken the sweetest memories of our childhood. The classic Thessaloniki sesame-seed koulouri was the first to be made by the refugees that came to the city, mainly from Asia Minor. At the same time one of the healthiest sources of carbohydrates, proteins and other nutrients and energy. The city of Thessaloniki is known for the street vendors in every corner, selling the famous fresh and warm koulouri Thessaloniki’s, from very early in the morning.

Third place has the “trigona Panoramatos”. Trigona which mean triangles in Greek, is a regional specialty from the distinct of Thessaloniki, panorama, where they get their name from. The crunchy phyllo bending with the taste of syrup and cream, absolutely divine and worth every minute of driving or walking in order to find the pastry shop.

II. Analysis of Reviews of Trip Advisor

In this part of my survey, I have analyzed the 20 first Trip Advisor reviews about Thessaloniki’s Restaurants, Street Food Areas and Dessert shops that were written in English. Trip Advisor has a ranking system on a scale of one to five and was chosen due to its popularity. Photos and reviews are allowed from its users, in order to give a specific overall of their experience.

In details, I have compared the first 20 English reviews of the five best rated places for the three categories (Appendices 1, 2 and 3):

a. Restaurants
b. Street Food Areas
c. Dessert shops

To begin with, what makes Trip Advisor so influential is the ease of use that it offers. When looking for a place to go, rankings influenced people the most as it appears before customer reviews on the website and application. The ranking helps tourists quickly identify well-known food services that have been recommended by others like themselves. Furthermore, photos of the food served are used more than the reviews.

a. Restaurants

The five best rated restaurants are:

1. Dia xoiros, which is a delicatessen fast food restaurant, with good value for money and good quality of food.
2. Rouga, is an excellent fish restaurant without specific menu, but little expensive
3. Extravaganza, is an alternative restaurant. Greek cuisine with gourmet touches.
4. Bazagiazi, is a traditional restaurant, with “rempetiko” music (urban, folk music), in Modiano district, which houses an open market
5. Tria gourounakia, is a meet restaurant, serving big portions of mix grill. It is overcrowded and sometimes difficult to find a table.

b. Street food

The five best rated street food areas are:

1. Koukos, is a street food place in the center of Thessaloniki, known for its Koulouri and pies.
2. Last slice, is a new concept of pizza in slices, with the authentic Italian tiny dough and many ingredients and spices by choice.
3. Brothers in Law, is a burger house with many different options in meat (buffalo, beef, chicken, etc.) that consists the burger and ingredients.
4. Poselli Pizza, is again an Italian street food place, situated in a district full of bars, so specially preferred late in night.
5. Bougatsa Giannis, is a special breakfast shop with all different kinds of Greek pastries and pies. Bougatsa stuffed with chocolate is the favorite of young entertainers early in the morning.

c. Dessert Shops

The five most beloved pastry shops of Thessaloniki based on Trip Advisor’s reviews are:

1. Trigona Elenidi, is a pastry shop specially selling this sweet with the crunchy phyllo, syrup and cream. The first shop opened in Panorama, the district from which they took their name, but now there is a shop in the center of Thessaloniki.
2. Choureal is a pastry shop known for its profiterole. The authentic, freshly-grown choux meet the velvet, white, bitter, dark or milk chocolate Valrhona and customers can create their own sweet.
3. Ble is a bakery shop with tremendous options of salty and sweet snacks. Little expensive.
4. To Tsai is the place to drink tremendous choices of teas and small desserts, as cupcakes and candies.
5. Join Juice is a chain selling fresh squished juices, sandwiches and biscuits/deserts. It is an affordable choice and liked from students especially, because of the environment the establishments have and the Wi-Fi.

From the analysis, I could punctuate that the most frequently used positive words were <<friendly, quality, tasty>>. Opposite, the most frequent negative words were <<overpriced and typical>>. Overall, Trip Advisor provides more than just information on restaurants, but also assumptions and expectations of tourists. It creates “iconic experience”.

III. Results from questionnaires

Furthermore, as far as surveys are a useful tool for “collecting information from a selected group of people, using standardized questionnaires or interviews” (The Pennsylvania State
University, 2006), I have conducted a questionnaire (appendix No 5). My purpose was to assess tourist’s perception of the Gastronomy of Thessaloniki.

The questionnaire was given to tourists of different age and with different background, randomly. I distributed my questionnaire in the airport, pendant one rush hour at the arrival’s department, at the middle of August, until getting back 20 answers. Then, I distributed the questionnaire at 5 different city hotels’ guests pendant the International Exhibition of Thessaloniki, on September, at Electra Palace, City Hotel, The Met, Colors and Minerva Hotel, getting back 15 more answers (5 from each Hotel). Finally, I distribute the questionnaire a Sunday morning in the beginning of October, at tourists walking around the White tower, until getting 15 more answers (50 in total). On a whole, it is a short survey with an indicative result due to time lack, but tried to be comprised of different target groups as visitors of Thessaloniki Airport travelers, guests of city-hotels in Thessaloniki and randomly picked tourists).

Tourists answered questions regarding the amount of money spent on food, their perception before visiting Thessaloniki, what was the criteria that helped them choose the restaurant they have eaten, etc.

In details, by analyzing 50 randomly given questionnaires in order to gain information on how tourists view and perceive the gastronomy of Thessaloniki, i reached some conclusions.

I tried to keep equal the number of males and females by resulting into 24 men and 26 women, as well as the age of each questioned, 20% 18-26 years old, 38% 27-35 years old, 20% 36-45 years old and 28% 46-65 years old. Most of the tourists visited Thessaloniki for vacations (54%), while 16% and 18% were students and business people respectively.

Moreover, it is important to mention that 72% expected a rich culinary aspect for Thessaloniki, by word of mouth or social media, before their visit and 76% of them changed their perception into even more positive (the percentage was 100% positive in the change) after their stay (Graph No2 and 3).

Out of 50 people, 42 believe that major importance has the food to be tasty, regardless the price. This comes out as well by the aspect that 70% while their stay, chose to eat 2-4 times out and spend approximate ly 30-50 euros per day (Graph No4).
Furthermore, 54% chose the places they have eaten by friends’ recommendations in contrast with 20% that chose to follow Social Media and blogs and 18% to eat somewhere by luck. Only 4 people made up their minds by following reviews from Trip Advisor/Four squares. Lastly, it is crucial the subject that the 70% did not hear about the Food Festival and Basket of Thessaloniki, pendant their stay.

To continue, in the next graph (Graph No 5) we can see that 20 people consider the price and the traditional cuisine critical so as to decide where to go eat. Therefore, 52% find essential the rates at Social Media/ Trip Advisor and the restaurant’s location, and the 26% is extremely influenced by the popularity of a restaurant.

Lastly, regarding the gastronomic product of Thessaloniki, for once more, bougatsa (sweet pie) is in first place (Graph No 6), followed by koulouri of Thessaloniki (round traditional kind of bread), Gyros (kind of meat) and tsoureki (sweet bread).
In conclusion, by taking into account the answers of the questionnaire, one can see that Thessaloniki’s gastronomic identity is strong even before tourist’s visit and becomes even more substantive afterwards. Tourists visit Thessaloniki mostly as a city-break, enjoy eating out, taking into account mostly the suggestions of their familiars and invest in good quality food combining the tradition. Unfortunately, the Food Festival and Basket of Thessaloniki is not well-known and crucial efforts to promote them should be done.

IV. Results from Phenomenon Mapping

A method called *Phenomenon Mapping* was implemented to my research. This method has been previously used by the Community Food Lab to gain a basic understanding of how and where food is available in the city of Raleigh, North Carolina (White et.al 2013). I used this methodology slightly differently. I tried to find out what makes a tourist decide where to eat and what influence their path from one to another.

Four city-food related excursions were decided that differ one to the other with the way information had be obtained in order to choose restaurants, street food areas and dessert shops. By using alternative ways of creating the path the Walks followed, different places came as result.

It has to be mentioned that because I am from Thessaloniki, in order to have true results in my research, I followed the Walks as an observer and created a team of four tourists, with different age, background and nationality: one Belgian tourist visiting Thessaloniki with Erasmus, Angela, one employee from Portugal that came to work for 4 weeks in Thessaloniki, Hugo, one visitor from Athens, that is his first time to Thessaloniki, George, and lastly, one lady from Volos, a Greek region, that is visiting Thessaloniki after 20 years to see a cousin, Katerina.

The first Walk was preplanned, based on the top reviews of Trip Advisor. The second planned Walk was scheduled by tourists, that were asked prior where to go. The third Walk was local depended, as the group had asked locals of the age 25-40 to let them know which places to visit. The last Walk was unplanned. A random path was taken from White Tower to Aristotelous Square, and the group visited places they liked, because they seemed tasty, popular, value for money.

To conclude, a type of blog had come out, as every tourist, after having walked the four different Tours, wrote which places he preferred and why. Observation of locals and how they were acting (interaction) with the group was another theme of the blog, that came out.

In details, by searching what makes a tourist decide where to eat and what influence their path from one to another, i have conducted phenomenon mapping in three steps:

   a) Photo shooting food services and products, so as to visualize what the team saw along the way (Appendix No 6).

   b) Photomapping food services storefronts to visually map their route through the city and to understand how tourist attitudes influenced how tourists navigated the city.

   c) Blogging about each gastronomic service they visited to express how they experienced food services.
To begin with, the first Walk was pre-scheduled, based on the top reviews of the analysis I have conducted on trip Advisor, regarding restaurants, street food and dessert shops. The visited areas were Koukos, the best coffee and breakfast shop (koulouri of Thessaloniki) in Thessaloniki, as reviewed, then a fresh juice from Join the juice, street food-lunch at Dia xoiros, trying a traditional pita-gyros, and dinner at Extravaganza.

The second Walk was pre-organized by tourists, meeting them and asking for recommendations. The visited areas this time were, Terkenlis for breakfast, advised to try “tsoureki” a kind of sweet bread with chestnuts’ cream. Then, by asking where to have lunch, tourists have sent the team to Ladadika district, an area full of restaurants. “Full tou Meze” was the place we sat and following the guidance we ate different traditional Greek tapas accompanied with Greek grappa. Lastly, “Be”, the bistro of Excelsior hotel was the place we tried pancakes stuffed with bougatsa cream (sweet dish from Thessaloniki).

Moreover, the third walk was improvised, as the group asked locals between 25-40 years old to guide them through the city, so as to get local’s recommendations. First stop was to “Estrella” for brunch. Then, we had lunch to “Sebriko”, an old restaurant at the courthouse. As dessert we tried ice cream, in Italian way, from “Fregio” and cocktails to “Vogatsikou 3”.

Last Walk was unplanned. The group began from the White Tour, the trademark of Thesaloniki and act as though they are lost and try to find food. First stop was at “Paradosiako” for breakfast and coffee. Second stop was at “Tria gourounakia”, in Valaoritou district, it was packed and smelled amazing. Next step was Plaisir, at Aristotelous square for traditional Greek dessert, named “siropiasta”. Lastly, we ate a pizza in “pizza please”, finding it by luck around the church of St Sofia and smelled the truffle.

The results of the tours were satisfying. In general, the group had nice time and were amused. Angela, the Belgian student (21 years old) appreciated the pizza and was amazed from the ice cream. So, the random Walk was her favorite, she persuaded the group to try ice cream, as she is an ice cream lover. For George, the tourist from Athens (46 years old) the best Walk was the one following the Trip Advisor reviews. He felt more secure by knowing where going and what to expect. His favorite place was “Dia xoiros”. Hugo, the employee from Portugal, (33 years old), liked the third Walk, as he concerned that with following recommendations of locals, he is in the beat of the city and breath in their souls by being part of their everyday life. The place he got passionate with was “Sebriko”, amazing klima in the restaurant. Lastly, Katerina (60 years old) got little tired walking around the town and preferred the random Walk as being able to choose places near one to the other. The sweet “baklava” (traditional Greek dessert- “siropiasta”) she tried from “Plaisir” reminded her the sweets she used to cook with her mother, as a child.
To conclude, tourists have different mentality depending their age, nationality, background and gastronomic knowledge, and as a result their choices regarding food are different. A dish that is tasty, smells nice and probably has a good reputation will attract tourists. So, good food branding makes everybody happier, entrepreneurs, tourists and locals.

V. Conclusions from Interviews

In this part of my research, I am going to quote the important topics that came out from my interviews. As I can see from the answers I got, broad transformation in social life – changing attitudes towards religion, the role of women in the work force, the blurring of gender roles, the globalization of the food industry and the wide availability of convenience and fast foods – also influence how people see themselves in relation to food and what it means to participate in a “Greek” food culture.

I. Interviewing random people

Interviews serve as a strategy to collect information in a more relaxed atmosphere, where the researchers and the interviewers have more of a conversation (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

Despite having interviewed stakeholders and entrepreneurs, I have spoken with people in order to see how everyday life deals with food. To begin with, Maria, which is a bank accountant (45 years old), told me that food in Greece is the connection with the family. The members of the family work hard, study, etc., but every Sunday they are going to have a family lunch all together. In every host, celebration or holy, the family meets at the table and enjoys tastes. Food has become part of the ritual.

Moreover, Eleni, a householder (70 years old), believes that there is a generational difference in cooking food. In her generation, women used to bake bread and prepare pies, etc., by themselves, homemade. Nowadays, women do not have enough time, as well as they are able to find many ingredients or products outsourced. Nonetheless, Greek cuisine can still be considered traditional, but “alternatively”, differently.

Furthermore, part of the gastronomic identity for most families is the expectation that women are the cooks. Dimitris (32 years old) said that even if he likes cooking and as a student used to cook for himself, now in his family, his wife is responsible for the food. He grew up in a family where his father used to be a cook, but still the preparation of the food in the family was woman’s role.

Lastly, before the crisis, there was a tendency to other types of cuisine, Italian, French, Chinese, Mexican, etc., for Greeks. Evelina, a PhD student (28 years old), used to eat younger, in different types of restaurant with her family. In the crisis now, she prefers to find a recipe via internet and prepare food at home. Lukas, a personal trainer (27 years old), prefers eating only in street food places once per week or less, and do not choose expensive restaurants. Antonis, a travel agent (45 years old), is visiting a nice restaurant only to celebrate something big, occasionally.
To sum up, food habits have changed from the past. Still cooking has a more female identity, but men help more and more into families, as women are working too. Food slightly changed during generations, but still tradition exists. The crisis has altered our food mentality, by eating out less often and to more affordable restaurants. Nevertheless, the gastronomic identities of Greeks and specifically Thessalonians, are formed from their childhood, are maintained during adulthood with personal experiences and are influenced from everyday life and global changes.

II. Interviewing a Stakeholder

Furthermore, I have interviewed Mr Bantis, a stakeholder with important history for Thessaloniki. Mr Filippos is the third generation of a traditional pastry shop in Panagia Faneromeni, a district not very central. As he explained me, it is a shop with almost 50 years of history. The recipe of the “Bougatsa” that he is following is from Cappadocia, from his elderly grandfather. Mr. Philippos had nothing to do with Social media, until one day an Italian tourist got lost, trying to find the older part of the city. He asked information about how to find his way back to the bougatsa store, and Mr Filippos treated him a dessert as explaining the path. The tourist did the first comment to Trip Advisor about the friendly and delicious store and from this moment the pastry shop won illustriousness. Since then, the fortune of “Bandi” has changed over the Internet, and tourists are arriving in a not touristic neighborhood, that of Panagia Faneromeni, with maps and mobiles in hand to find the bougatsa that broke in Tripadvisor. Even Rick Stein, the famous chef, visited the store and cooked bougatsa with mr. Philpitos, which launched the success in whole Europe. Simultaneously, Mr. Filippos won the Guinness Record for the biggest cheese pie, in 2009.

The pie weight 862 kilograms. 60 kilograms of butter, 350 kilograms of cheese, 140 eggs, 50 kilos of semolina and 150 kilos of flour were used in order to prepare the special dish. To conclude, Mr. Filippos helps a lot Thessaloniki to promote its gastronomic identity and...
advocate the Food festival, by keeping the authenticity of recipes and interact to tourists the sense of hospitality.

III. Interviewing Mr. Pengas

To continue, a special attachment should be done to my interview to the Deputy Mayor of Tourism and International Relations, Mr Spyros Pengas. In his opinion, Thessaloniki has a strong Gastronomic culture, based on the local cuisine and a blend of influences from Italy, French, Turkey and Asia Minor. When the Food Festival began in 2011, many events took place outdoors. People had the opportunity to try gastronomic products of Thessaloniki and dishes for free. But those events started taking a beneficent, philanthropic dimension, as homeless people were visiting in order to eat. Then the role of entrepreneurs was important, as they hospitalized the events to their restaurants, etc. and the Festival took its nowadays shape.

Moreover, a significant point of the interview was the reference to the problem of Thessaloniki’s Gastronomic Branding. The cost of the Food Festival per year is 30,000 euros, which is part from 150,000 euros, that is the total amount for all the actions of the city per year. This means that there is not enough money to brand the events and to make Thessaloniki’s Food Festival and Basket even more known to the rest of the country. Due to the low budget, the Municipality of Thessaloniki decided to bring the event to Athens and promote the Food Festival and basket of Thessaloniki at 9th and 10th of October 2017. Kotzia square was transformed for 2 days in a food village with signature products, traditional recipes and modern cuisines of Thessaloniki’s top dining companies, music from famous DJs’ in the city, work-shops and interactive games from 11am to 11am at night. With this way, the event would get known to the Athenians (capital), so as the press and the media would advertise it more. The ambassador chefs created an amazing menu, based on the traditional products the basket contains, such as Makvel pasta, combined with traditional gastronomic products such as koulouri, baklava, etc.

In the other hand, the Gastronomic Branding of the city is recognized abroad, and the efforts are familiar with many countries. In 2017, Poland and Cyprus requested to have special tours in specific dates, so as tourists to get know the Gastronomy of Thessaloniki.

In addition, the participation of Thessaloniki to the Urban Food Policy Pact is of extremely high importance. Based on the principles of sustainability and social justice, Milan advocated an international protocol, captivating the largest number of world cities for the development of food systems. This commitment for the coordination of international food policies, dedicated to two of the most severe emergencies of the third millennium: food security and sustainable development (Milan Urban Policies Pact).
In 2015, the European Year for Development, the EU Commission decided to finance the Food Smart Cities for Development project, which involves 12 urban areas over three continents that will coordinate their food policy and their international cooperation activities (Milan Urban Food Policy Pact).

Food Smart Cities for Development is part of EU DEAR (Development, Education and Awareness Raising) program. Its aims are to encourage the role of the cities in changing the urban food production and consumption paradigm. Reduction of food waste, promotion of healthy eating and encouragement of the purchase of food production by respecting the rights of people and environment, are local actions that would provoke a global change.

To conclude, the purpose is to help cities and civil societies to transform food strategies into action. Since European citizens and civil society organizations are key actors of Food Smart Cities for Development, they will be actively involved in drafting and implementing the Food Guidelines. In October 2017 the Pact was launched in Valentia. Thessaloniki tried to hospitalize the event for 2018, but Tel Aviv will, so there are plans for 2019.

IV. Interviewing a Chef

Lastly, I have spoken with an interesting personality, Mr. Sofoklis Maragoudakis, chef of Danai Resort and Villas, a 5* hotel in Sithonia of Halkidiki, and professor in culinary at IEK AKMI. Sofokli’s origin is from Athens, but he has been working several years in Thessaloniki and Halkidiki. He has helped me by providing me information about recipes and their history, as well as giving me his opinion about Thessaloniki’s Gastronomy. He strongly believes that Thessaloniki, makes a crucial effort pendant the last years to improve its gastronomic branding. Events such as certificated chefs introducing their recipes to tasters during degustation ceremonies or special-theme nights (meeting Chinese cuisine, romantic St. Valentines dinner, etc.), or large super-market companies, such as Masoutis, (local chain), organizing TV shows with honored Chefs providing cooking lessons in local distributors, promoting local cuisine and Thessaloniki’s products, constitute serious efforts of Thessaloniki’s Food Branding.

In his opinion, in order to excel these efforts, better collaboration of private companies with Municipality should be contrived. Stakeholders should realize that by promoting the Gastronomy of Thessaloniki, the percentage of visitors is going to augment, and this is positive for everybody. A critical example is the local milk company of Mevgal, that asked by itself to involve the logo of Food Festival on its products, so as to guarantee the local certification and the good quality of raw materials being used.
6. Conclusion/Recommendations

I. Conclusion

After having studied the gastronomy of Thessaloniki, interviewed people regarding food (stakeholders, operators, tourists and locals) and compassed a research with different methods (questionnaires, blogging, phenomenon mapping, photovoice, etc.), I came up with analysis that show the handicaps of Thessaloniki’s gastronomy.

There do exist excellent events, that promote the gastronomic identity of the city and simultaneously attract visitors as well as hard work and ideas endure to provoke Thessaloniki as a Gastronomic Capital. In the other hand, unfortunately, there is a gap between local cuisine and stakeholders. There is not enough communication between them and as a result, good proposals are not notified. Moreover, due to low budget of Thessaloniki’s Municipality, there is a shortage in food branding policies.

II. Recommendations

Concerning the conclusion, after having perused some case studies worldwide and take them as examples to improve the food branding of the town, I came up with the following recommendations:

a) Copenhagen’s Case Study

I strongly believe that Copenhagen does an excellent effort to promote its gastronomy, showing its culture insight the food. The Festival is a major tourist attraction. It is not only an opportunity for parties and food consumption, but provides the chance for all visitors to try new products, taste traditional cuisine combined with alternative ones, enjoy gourmet dishes and attend workshops, seminars simultaneously by initiating healthier food habits in everyday life. In order to make it known in the public, an amazing site, including information, videos and pictures, does exist (https://www.copenhagencooking.com/).
Moreover, more than 80 businesses cooperate with Food Organization of Denmark. This requires good communication between operators, Municipality and locals. Food Organization of Denmark challenges organic and biological cultivators to provide their products at the Food Festival, instead of mutated or imported.

Regarding Thessaloniki now, by attending a Food Festival as Copenhagen’s, comprised of nutritional advices, alternative cuisines and promoting differently the local one, people could adopt new habits, such as healthier snacks in schools, organic meals in kindergartens, street food could be conformed into alternative, nutritional food, advocating products of the region (olive oil of Halkidiki, rice from Halastra, milk company of Mevgal, cheeses, etc.). Thessaloniki has the background history and the strong character to promote its cuisine and Gastronomy globally. Its Food Festival involves interesting events all over the year. Collaboration, advertising and financing is missing. Lastly, a more compelling website could be launched, informing tourists and locals about the events taking place all year around the city.

b) Los Angeles’ Case Study

I quoted another case study of Los Angeles’ Food Policy Council (LAFPC).

Taking into consideration the example of LA, a Food Council would be a solution to many subjects, regarding Thessaloniki’s Gastronomy. Firstly, outsources would fund, which means that the Municipality could focus to a “Good Food System”, but without investing entirely. Individuals and organizations would undertake the issue of distribution of the Food Festival and its events. Moreover, an alternative Gastronomic consciousness would be adopted by following the “Good Food System”. Positive aspects of the strategic priorities would be sustainability, prevention of poverty, healthy habits, environmental stewardship and wellness of residents. The purpose of the food policy council will be to bring together food system leaders from across sectors, geographies, and socio-economic communities, to build new relationships and to strengthen, facilitate and coordinate systemic change (LAFPC). This collaboration would launch Thessaloniki considered a Gastronomic city worldwide.

c) Participation in Forums, Events and Congresses
Thessaloniki, in order to increase its Food Tourism should improve its Gastronomic Branding. By participating at the International Food Forum, for example, could exchange experiences and ideas on how to manage the growing phenomenon of gastronomic tourism throughout the world, by following consulting of other counties such as San Sebastian, Barcelona, etc., which are eminent. So, by engaging in happenings and events with reference food, that take place around the world, Thessaloniki would get known and succeed in attracting more visitors for its Gastronomy.

To conclude, strong roots, a historic background, countless recipes and years of tradition correlate with Thessaloniki. By organizing a Food Policy Council, which means funds and collaboration of locals and stakeholders, adopting different food habits (alternative boost of Gastronomic issues, such as biological products, nutritional diets, etc.) as Copenhagen promotes and focusing in the Branding of its Gastronomy, magnificent results could come of, and Thessaloniki win the title of the Gastronomic capital of Greece and why not Globally.
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8. Appendices

**Appendix No1**
Reviews of trip Advisor’s Restaurants

- **Δίον Χορός**
  - Rating: 4.3
  - Reviews: 1
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Great food, great service. Highly recommended." 15/02/2017

- **Η Ρούζα**
  - Rating: 4.1
  - Reviews: 114
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Excellent Greek food. Highly recommended." 15/02/2017

- **Extravaganza**
  - Rating: 4.2
  - Reviews: 169
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Great restaurant, highly recommended." 21/02/2017

- **Μπαζάριά**
  - Rating: 4.0
  - Reviews: 191
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Excellent Greek food. Highly recommended." 18/03/2017

- **Το Τριώ Γορμανικα**
  - Rating: 4.1
  - Reviews: 161

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**Appendix No2**
Reviews of trip Advisor’s Street Food

- **Κόλας**
  - Rating: 4.3
  - Reviews: 1
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Great street food. Highly recommended." 15/02/2017

- **The List Site**
  - Rating: 4.2
  - Reviews: 114
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Great street food. Highly recommended." 15/02/2017

- **Brothers In Law**
  - Rating: 4.1
  - Reviews: 169
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Great street food. Highly recommended." 21/02/2017

- **Pallai Pizza**
  - Rating: 4.0
  - Reviews: 191
  - Location: Athens
  - Comments: "Great street food. Highly recommended." 18/03/2017

- **Μπεγγα Γάμπης**
  - Rating: 4.1
  - Reviews: 161

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Appendix No 3

Reviews of trip Advisor’s Dessert Shops

Appendix No 4

Statistics from Photovoice

Total: 50 people

1. Bougatsa = 17 people
2. Koulouri of Thessaloniki = 13 people
3. Trigona Panoramatos Elenidi = 7 people
4. Pita-gyros = 5 people
5. Tsoureki Terkenlis = 5 people
6. Bougatsa with Chocolate from Sakis = 1 people
7. Frape, instant coffee = 1 people
8. Souvlaki = 1 people
Appendix No 5
Results from Photovoice
Appendix No 6
Collage from Phenomenon Mapping
Appendix No 7

Questionnaire

Thessaloniki's Visitor Survey

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes.

WPI's Qualtrics software has been directed not to collect the e-mail and IP addresses of survey participants, and the survey does not ask for identifying information beyond basic demographics.

The purpose of this survey is to gain information on how tourists view and perceive the gastronomy of Thessaloniki.

I will use the information in order to complete my research for my dissertation in Tourism Management and Hospitality MSc, at IHU, with subject: "Promoting Thessaloniki as a gastronomic city".

Thank you for your time.

1. What is your sex?
   - Male
   - Female

2. Please enter your age
   - 18-25
   - 26-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-45
   - 46-50

3. When did you stay at Thessaloniki?
   [Multiple options available]

4. For how long?
   [Multiple options available]

5. Why did you visit the city?
   - business
   - academic
   - vacation
   - other
6. What was your opinion about Thessaloniki’s Gastronomy before your visit? *
   - Did not think much about the gastronomy of Thessaloniki
   - Expected a rich culinary aspect for Thessaloniki by word of mouth/social media
   - Did not find much via Internet

7. What has major importance for you regarding food: *
   - Low cost food
   - Tasty food regardless the price

8. Please rate the importance of the following, when choosing to eat at
   Thessaloniki’s Greek Traditional cuisine Restaurant

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Not very Important</th>
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<th>Important</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
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<td>Rates at social media and Trip Advisor</td>
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<td>Popularity/Crowded</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

9. How did you choose the places you have eaten at Thessaloniki? *
   - Trip Advisor/Four Square
   - Social Media/Blogs
   - Friends’ recommendation
   - By luck
10. How many times in a week you used to eat out, on average while your stay?
   - More than 5
   - 2-4
   - One time
   - None

11. On average, how much did you spend on food daily, during your stay?
   - More than 100 euros
   - 50-100 euros
   - 20-50 euros
   - Less than 20 euros

12. Did your perception on the gastronomy of Thessaloniki change during your visit?
   - Yes
   - No

13. If yes, was it:
   - Positive
   - Negative

14. After your visit, which is the “Gastronomic Product” of Thessaloniki, in your opinion?
   Καθορισμός σύντομης απάντησης

15. Did you have the chance to hear about the Food Festival of Thessaloniki and the Food Basket?
   - Yes
   - No