

Gastronomic Heritage for Regional Tourism Development

Subjects: Anthropology

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Gastronomy, as a part of cultural heritage, has exceptional potential in tourism, and its key representatives and conservationists/guardians are hospitality facilities that provide food services.

Keywords: sustainability ; gastronomical heritage ; cultural heritage ; gastronomy

1. Introduction

Gastronomic heritage (GH), as a part of cultural heritage, represents an important segment of tourism development, which has been the focus of numerous studies in recent years ^{[1][2][3][4][5][6][7]}. This was demonstrated when its importance was recognized by UNESCO in 2010 as a part of intangible heritage, which should be nurtured and promoted in tourism ^{[8][9]}.

Some elements of tourism gained special importance in 2015 when 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) were defined and adopted by all members of the UN. The twelfth goal refers to the provision of sustainable forms of consumption and production, with sub-goal 12b highlighting the development and implementation of tools for monitoring the impact of the sustainable development of sustainable tourism that not only creates jobs, but also promotes local culture and products ^[10]. Accordingly, Scheyvens and Laeis ^[11] point out certain possibilities in connecting food producers with the tourism industry, with the idea that both local food systems and the tourism industry could be improved by increasing the local food offered in hospitality facilities from the aspect of sustainable development.

GH serves as a means for attracting tourists and represents a territorial capital that brings great social, ecological, and economic benefits ^[12]. This has been confirmed by numerous studies, including that of Barientos-Báez et al. ^[13]. Dominguez et al. ^[14], in particular, point out the significance of tourism development from the aspect of local and regional development. Many tourism localities and hospitality facilities have recognized the importance of gastronomic potential for tourism development and have started to promote and offer their own authentic and traditional products ^{[15][16]}. In the search for authentic and traditional cultural experiences, gastronomy has become one of the primary motives for tourists to visit authentic ethnic restaurants ^[17], which, in turn, receive an additional value in tourism ^[18]. The conceptualization of authenticity from the perspectives of different authors was dealt with by Lu et al. ^[16]. They explained it from several perspectives, starting with the original and the staged and other forms and approaches. It is most important to emphasize that authenticity is widely conceptualized as a universal value and the driving force of the tourist movement.

Metro-Roland ^[19] states that certain foodstuffs, regardless of their true origin, become easily associated with certain gastronomic cultures and start to function metonymically. Thus, in some cuisines, they become dominant foods and representatives of the gastronomic culture.

2. Gastronomic Heritage

GH has, to a considerable extent, started to attract the attention of European researchers, which is confirmed by the study conducted by Lin et al. ^[5]. Their study points to the increased significance of GH, along with activities for preserving cultural heritage ^[5]. Accordingly, Romagnoli ^[8] explains in his paper that GH includes a wide range of knowledge about food and culinary skills that communities consider to be common heritage and common social practices.

GH includes a large number of sociocultural components that affected its formation and differentiation and, therefore, it includes various kinds of agricultural and food products, different types of dishes, spices, food preparation methods, equipment, and appliances for food preparation, and modes of consumption, all of which can be found on the tourist

market [20][21][22]. In this way, GH represents a marker of regional identity and highlights the complexity of this research field, which is receiving increasing attention [22][23].

GH represents the main factor in the differentiation of tourist destinations due to increased visitor interest in authentic food, which then becomes a primary motive for visiting a tourist area and region [22]. In this manner, based on the GH of local residents, tourists affect the formation of the destination image, whereby a symbolic relationship with local residents and gastronomy in tourism is created [24].

3. Hospitality Facilities as Places for Gastronomic Heritage Preservation and Nurturing in the Function of Tourism

Over the last 20 years, research on the impact of food-inspired tourism has shown significant progress in its development. All research focused on localities that offer unique, authentic gastronomic experiences, their marketing activities, and the sustainability of all the mentioned elements [25]. Okumus [25] points out gaps in the literature on certain topics, such as data on specific cuisines and cultures, impacts on the global food system, food waste, food safety, sustainability, workforce challenges, supply and demand, food authenticity, management, marketing, etc.

Research conducted in Vojvodina has so far focused on the food offered (domestic, national, international) in authentic catering facilities, which represent places for the preservation and nurturing of GH. In Vojvodina, in addition to ethnic and traditional restaurants, there are also hospitality facilities:

- ‘Salashes’ (messuages): traditional dwelling houses with associated buildings and land, where people live permanently or temporarily, which are basically directed toward agricultural production [26][27][28]. Dishes offered in these hospitality facilities are authentic/traditional dishes prepared with local foodstuffs, and include pheasant soup, goose soup, hen soup, different kinds of roasts, breaded and stewed meat combined with salads and side dishes made with potatoes, tomato soup, beef soup, goulash, paprikas, cooked beans, stuffed peppers and cabbage rolls, and desserts such as yeast dough strudels with poppy seeds, walnuts and cherries, fruit pies with pulled dough, rolls with lard, noodles with poppy seeds, and the like [28];
- ‘Chardas’: hospitality facilities near rivers, which provide food and beverage services [29][30]. In Vojvodina, the chardas offer specialties made from river fish, and local foods such as fish broth, fish paprikas with dumplings or homemade noodles, smoked fish, fish pate, porkolt with pike and sterlet, drunken carp, and many other specialties [30] combined with red seasoning pepper.

Particular attention should be paid to the perspective and limitations of the development of tourism aimed at authentic food with a focus on sustainable development [31]. They are the main factors that can improve or hinder this process of implementing and preserving gastronomic heritage through catering and tourism [11][32].

4. Gastronomic Heritage in Vojvodina (North Serbia)

Vojvodina is an agricultural region occupying an area of 21,614 km² and 40% of it is arable land. Its population structure has changed throughout history as did habits related to preparing and enjoying food. In the past, gastronomy in Vojvodina was influenced to a considerable extent by Austrian, German, and Hungarian cuisine. In addition to these cultures and cuisines, the influence of Turkey was also significant, along with the impact of the migrations of Slovaks, Russians, Ukrainians, Rusyns, and other ethnic groups that brought their food preparation habits [33]. The area comprises three regions (Srem, Banat, Bačka) and seven administrative areas.

4.1. The Region of Srem

The hilly winegrowing and forested region of Srem (Syrmia) is located between the Sava and the Danube rivers. This region has very significant and varied gastronomic products that contribute to the authenticity of gastronomy in this district. Traditional regional products, created before the cultivation of autochthonous breeds of animals and plants, have significant potential for both gastronomy and tourism development. Among the valued traditional products is the dessert wine ‘Bermet’, but there are also many other kinds of wine and fruit brandies, linden honey from the Fruška Gora mountain, Syrmian kulen, Syrmian homemade sausage and Syrmian salami, plenty of meat specialties (mangalica products), dishes made with dough, and cakes [34].

4.2. The Region of Bačka

The region of Bačka is characterized by products that people living in this region have traditionally been producing for years ^[35]. Trends in tourism development increasingly involve the food industry as one of the crucial actors in the overall process. Bačka is an important region of Vojvodina because of its position, relief, and cultural heritage. It represents an environment rich in gastronomic specialties suitable for attracting tourists. A study conducted by Ivanović et al. ^[34] on the hospitality facilities in the South Bačka region showed that the most frequently used traditional products are various kinds of sausages, cheese, along with ajvar, bacon, and ham ^[34].

4.3. The Region of Banat

The Banat region, located, in part, on the border with Romania, is characterized by a rich cultural heritage manifested through different customs, multiculturalism, and rich gastronomy ^[36]. The Banat cuisine is characterized by delicious, fatty, and nutritious dishes. Various types of soups and stews with homemade pasta, pork, beef, and chicken dishes are consumed, while fish is slightly less common. Dishes are mostly fried and stewed in fat or oil, served with various flour sauces, seasoned with pepper, thyme, paprika, and caraway seeds ^[37].

5. The Gastronomy of Ethnic Groups in Vojvodina

Gastronomy in Vojvodina is characterized by a mix of dishes of almost all the ethnic groups that inhabit the area, among whom Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Croatians, Montenegrins, the Roma, etc. prevail. Under their influence, the production and consumption of various dried meat products, smoked meat, and various kinds of sausages over time came to dominate the local diet. Many traditional vegetable and fruit dishes, various dough products, sweet dishes, and highly significant preserves, are also a part of that diet ^[23]. The similarity between dishes originating from various ethnic groups is frequent. Differences can usually only be found in the name, the preparation phase, an ingredient, or a spice ^[29].

5.1. Hungarian Gastronomy in Vojvodina

Hungarian cuisine is often described as very spicy and hot. In a study that incorporated tourists in Budapest, Hungarian gastronomy is recognized as a cuisine that uses a lot of paprika, and their most famous dish, which also symbolizes their cuisine, is goulash. This confirms the rich array of cultural and historical influences on gastronomy, especially since paprika travelled a long way through the Ottoman Empire ^[19]. The basic ingredients of the dishes of Vojvodina Hungarians are pork, veal, beef, and poultry. Pork fat and goose fat, and garlic, onion, curdled cream, mature cheese, walnuts, and poppy seeds are widely used. A combination of meat dishes with sweet flavors is very common ^[33]. A study conducted among the Hungarian population in Vojvodina shows traditional methods of food preparation are well preserved in their homes and the homes of their descendants ^[38].

5.2. Slovaks Gastronomy in Vojvodina

The cuisine of Vojvodina Slovaks is characterized by strong, hot, and very spicy dishes, with a lot of pork, various kinds of dishes made of dough, and sweets ^[6]. A study conducted among representatives of this ethnic group showed that they mostly independently produce certain kinds of food products, among which sausages (Slovakian kulen—a piquant sausage) hold a significant place. The greatest preservation of traditional dishes can be seen in the preparation of sweet dishes and pastry dishes ^[39].

5.3. Croatian Gastronomy in Vojvodina

Croatian cuisine is often described as a mix of neighboring cuisines with a large assimilation with Serbian cuisine. However, their dishes contain authentic segments that differentiate them from others, including different kinds of meat specialties, yeast dough dishes, pies, and cakes ^[33].

5.4. Romanian Gastronomy in Vojvodina

Romanian gastronomy is characterized by a simple cuisine, highlighting habits in preparing and consuming meat and vegetable soups, tripe or veal seasoned with lemon juice, sour cream, and vinegar. All these elements are also preserved in Vojvodina. Cornmeal porridge is eaten as a main dish or a side dish, or instead of bread. Pork and chicken are most commonly used, but beef, fish, bacon, ham, and various dried meat products are also present ^{[6][39]}.

5.5. Montenegrin Gastronomy in Vojvodina

Montenegrin gastronomy is difficult to define because of the diversity of available foodstuffs in its region of origin. Like all other ethnic groups, the Montenegrin people tried to preserve as much of their gastronomic identity as possible. Integral parts of the cuisine in Vojvodina are dairy products, dried meat, and meat products. Various types of dough and porridge, different types of meat, lamb, and veal, and dishes based on sea and river fish are included [33][40].

5.6. Roma Gastronomy in Vojvodina

Roma cuisine is characterized by its simplicity. In Roma cuisine, dishes made of vegetables, combined with cooked or stewed meat, dominate. Paprika is the main spice, but pepper, salt, and garlic are also used. Roma cuisine is considered to be medium hot to very hot [6][39].

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