
ECONOMICS, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, TOURISM AND
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GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Gastronomy, a fundamental component of culture, has become a significant criterion in choosing a tourist destination, playing a crucial role in the development of local economies. By exploring the gastronomy of a region or a country, one can travel through time and space, uncovering the cultural identity of the place. Thus, there is increasing talk of gastronomic destinations that offer tourists dishes with authentic and traditional flavors. Usually, each dish has its own story, describing both the traditional cooking techniques passed down through generations and the use of local ingredients that have defined a community's cuisine over centuries. These gastronomic experiences are not just about tasting delicious food but also about understanding the history, traditions, and values of a community through its dishes. The connection between tourism and gastronomy is becoming increasingly evident, with tourists eager to taste traditional dishes that provide an authentic perspective on the culture of a tourist destination. Thus, gastronomic tourism involves exploring local cuisine, culinary traditions, markets, and local restaurants to discover and appreciate the diversity and authenticity of the foods and drinks of a region or country. Additionally, culinary tourism may include participating in cooking classes, tastings, culinary festivals, and other gastronomy-related activities, offering travelers the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a community's culture and identity through its food.*

Keywords: *gastronomy, gastronomic tourism, gastronomic experiences*

JEL Classification: Q1, Z32

1. Introduction

The proverb "The culture of a people can be known through the partially opened window of its kitchen" presents a world full of aromas and experiences that reflect the diversity and cultural richness of peoples. Changes in tourist behavior are evident, with tourist demand being influenced by the increasingly widespread use of digital services and new technologies, the search for personalized travel experiences, and the desire to interact more deeply with communities and local culture (Badulescu, 2022). Food represents a distinctive element of a region's culture, wealth, and heritage. In each area, the history and gastronomic traditions are reflected in the diversity of local products.

2. Literature review

The word "gastronomy" comes from two Ancient Greek words "gastér" and "nómos," which forms the basis definition "the laws or rules governing the stomach," or more appropriately "the rules of good eating" (Lee, 2023). While the term can be found in Ancient Greek texts, it was neither prominent nor common until 1801, when it was adopted by a French poet,

Joseph Berchoux, in the poem titled "La Gastronomie ou L'Homme des champs à table" ("Gastronomy or The Man of the Fields at the Table"). This terminology, along with the word "gastronome," became widely known worldwide due to the work of Jean-Anthelm Brillat-Savarin, "Physiologie du goût" ("The Physiology of Taste"), published in 1825 (Călinescu, 2023). Léon Brisse distinguished himself as a gastronomic journalist, presenting readers with a different menu for each day in his work "Les Trois Cent soixante-six menus du Baron Brisse" ("The Three Hundred Sixty-Six Menus of Baron Brisse"), published in 1867. From 1921 to 1928, Maurice Edmond Sailland, together with Marcel Rouff, wrote a series of regional travel guides published under the collective title "La France Gastronomique: Guide des merveilles culinaires et des bonnes auberges françaises" ("Gastronomic France: Guide to culinary wonders and good French inns"), describing over 5,000 culinary recipes. Gastronomic experimentation is an important attraction alongside other tourist activities that could influence the choice of a destination (Kim et al., 2013). Local cuisine has become a fundamental aspect of the tourist experience, being an essential part of the culture of any destination (Tsai, 2016). Local food represents intangible customs and heritages that highlight the unique characteristics of the destination (Chang et al., 2018, and Kozak et al., 2007, cited by Carpio et al., 2020). According to Morales and Cordova (2019), destinations that are aware of the role of local cuisine in their tourism success have begun to use their gastronomic potential in promoting and positioning themselves in the tourism market as a national identity element (Carpio et al., 2020). Recent studies focus on the importance of local gastronomy in strengthening identity, promoting freshness, authenticity, and taste, supporting local producers, and ecological concerns. Thus, traditional dishes have become an integral part of the tourism segment, creating a link between local agriculture and the tourism industry (Richards, 2002; Scarpato, 2002; Rachão et al., 2019; Timothy, 2016; Kuznesof et al., 1997; Bessi re, 2013, cited by Woyesa and Kumar 2021).

3. Research methodology

The research methodology consists of bibliographic documentation, analysis of local gastronomic resources and their role in local and national tourism development. Information was selected from specialized sources (WFTA, UNWTO, CTC), scholarly articles focused on gastronomic tourism research, and various blogs (Hotel Marea Neagr , Restaurant Vatra, Via Profi), describing gastronomic experiences encountered in different regions of Romania.

4. Conceptual delimitations

Differences in language and culture have led to the emergence of several concepts that define food-based tourism, such as gastronomic tourism, culinary tourism, tasting tourism and food tourism (C. M. Hall and L. Sharples, 2003, cited by Ningsih and Nuraeni, 2019). According to WFTA, food tourism represents "*The act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place.*" For Europeans, "gastronomy" is the term used to explain an area's culinary culture, and for them, it follows that "gastronomy tourism" makes the most sense. For them, the term "food travel" sounds too simple and mundane – almost as if people in ancient times were looking for food or shopping for groceries (according to WFTA). Some authors consider gastronomic tourism as a part of cultural tourism because food and drinks are part of local cultures (Richards, 2003, cited by Nistor and Dezsi, 2022), while others refer to this type of tourism as "tasting tourism" (Vinerean, 2013, cited by Nistor and Dezsi, 2022). The Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC) of the United Nations World Tourism Organization defines gastronomic tourism "*as a type of tourism activity which is characterized by the visitor's experience linked with food and related products and activities while travelling*". The term "culinary tourism" was first introduced by Long (1998) in the work "Culinary Tourism" to describe the meanings, motivations, and implications of seeking

culinary experiences different from the usual ones (Long, 1998). For Long, culinary tourism is not just a source of food for tourists, but rather intentional participation in exploring gastronomic cultures through consumption, preparation, and presentation of culinary products, traditional cuisine, eating style, all belonging to a different culinary system, other regions, or countries (Long, 2004). Various forms of gastronomic tourism have gained popularity over the years, attracting curious tourists eager to explore the culinary culture of other countries. These forms include visiting food producers, participating in gastronomic festivals, exploring restaurants and places special to certain dishes, tasting special culinary products, observing production and preparation processes, taking part in cooking classes for specific dishes, and other culinary attractions such as fairs, exhibitions, and culinary tours (Hall & Mitchell, 2005, cited by Privitera et al., 2018).

5. Gastronomic experiences in Romania

Gastronomic experiences offer tourists a journey through varied aromas, tastes, and culinary traditions from around the world. From tasting street food in Asia to savoring wines in Europe's wine regions, such as Italy, France, Spain, and exploring local cuisine for example Crete, Tuscany, Sicily, Java, Normandy etc., on organized culinary trips, each experience provides an insight into the culture and history of a destination. These experiences not only delight the taste buds but also create unforgettable memories and authentic connections with the places and people we encounter.

Examples of gastronomic experiences around the world:

- "Discover Italy: The gastronomic journey through Rome, Florence, and Bologna"
- "Exotic Asian Cuisine: From Bangkok to Tokyo";
- "Mediterranean Flavors: From Barcelona to Athens";
- "Journey through South American Cuisine: From Buenos Aires to Lima";
- "Middle Eastern Aromas: From Istanbul to Marrakech";
- "Nordic Cuisine: From Copenhagen to Stockholm";
- "Authentic Tastes of the Far East: From Shanghai to Seoul";
- "Traditional African Cuisine: From Cape Town to Marrakech".

In the article "Hidden gems: hidden restaurants in villages, where you rediscover traditional Romanian cuisine," seven hidden restaurants in villages are described, where dishes are made according to ancient recipes based on ingredients used only from local producers (Udrea, 2023).

In Romania, the most well-known regions for their traditional products are Muntenia, Moldova, Oltenia, Transylvania, and Dobrogea, each having distinct geographical and cultural characteristics that contribute to the diversity of Romanian traditional cuisine

- Muntenia has left its mark on traditional Romanian cuisine through artisanal cheeses, smoked "caș" cheese from Rucăr, the famous Pleșcoi sausages, and the "magiun" from Topoloveni (a product with protected geographical indication), as well as traditional Romanian beverages.
- Moldova cuisine is renowned for its meat products (smoked ham and pastrami, homemade sausages, and traditional "toba" sausage) but also for its variety of preserves (especially green walnut jam and cherry jam with Socola honey).
- Oltenia, one of Romania's regions with unmistakable aromas, stands out with a rich variety of authentic traditional products, such as Oltenian sausages, pickles, authentic sheep pastrami, fir bark cheese, bakery products like wholemeal bread, and traditional Romanian beverages like wine and plum brandy ("țuică"). Additionally, Oltenians are known for their delicious "potroace" soup and pork jelly ("piftie"), considered two of the most important culinary traditions around the holidays.

- Transylvania is one of the regions in Romania where traditional products are true culinary treasures. Transylvanian cuisine stands out not only thanks to authentic traditional products but also due to some of the most popular Romanian recipes. Many of these traditional products from Transylvania (smoked "novac" from Țara Bârsei, "telemea" cheese from Ibănești, and the popular "salam" from Sibiu) also benefit from European recognition, being protected by geographical indications.
- Dobrogea, the region in Romania with fishy aromas, is known for its culinary richness focused on traditional fish products (such as the traditional specialty with carp roe or carp pastrami) and authentic fish-based recipes. Smoked Danube herring, recognized as a product with protected geographical indication, and the variety of wines from local producers in the Dobrogea area are just a few examples that reflect the gastronomic richness of the region.

Each region in Romania has its own culinary treasures and traditional products, each with unique characteristics and flavors. This gastronomic diversity is one of Romania's remarkable treasures, with each region contributing to the country's culinary mosaic, offering a variety of authentic tastes and memorable gastronomic experiences.

5. In conclusion

Gastronomic experiences provide travelers with the opportunity to connect with local cultures through food, drinks, and culinary traditions. Around the world, tourists discover new dishes, exotic flavors, and traditional cooking techniques, enriching their travel experiences. From visits to local markets and authentic restaurants to participating in gastronomic festivals and culinary tours, gastronomic experiences offer travelers a way to explore and understand the culture and identity of a destination more deeply. By engaging in gastronomic tourism, travelers not only enjoy delicious food but can also contribute to supporting the local economy and preserving unique culinary traditions. Thus, gastronomic experiences are not just about taste but also about discovering and sharing stories, values, and cultural richness from around the world.

Gastronomic tourism in Romania is growing, representing a vast source of unique experiences for visitors seeking the country's culinary diversity. By integrating local gastronomy into the tourism offer, Romania can attract travelers from around the world, offering them the opportunity to explore authentic Romanian traditions, products, and dishes. From traditional delights from different regions of the country to exceptional wines and gastronomic festivals, gastronomic tourism contributes to promoting cultural identity and sustainable development of local communities. With an increased focus on its potential, gastronomic tourism can become an essential pillar of Romania's tourism industry, offering travelers authentic and memorable experiences.

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