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## THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITION AND FOLK CUSTOMS IN CULINARY TOURISM

**Abstract.** Culinary tourism enjoys a growing popularity worldwide. In each country, the gastronomy culture affects the whole society, because national traditions and culinary customs are independent from the level of income. The so-called “international cuisine” is also based on, and consists of, the distinctive dishes of separate and easily recognizable national gastronomy traditions. As a result, the general taste of people worldwide is also affected by local traditions, culinary heritage and region-specific recipes. In global tourism, there is a growing need for novelty, and culinary tourism has a huge potential to address that demand. Similarly to other types of tourism, culinary tourists seek unique experiences and custom-made services. With regard to the aspects of gastronomy, until now, mass tourism has mainly focused on universal solutions like international “fast food” franchise systems or – as an opposite – international “fine dining” catering. The participants of culinary tourism have their own preferences that are clearly distinctive from the processes of mass tourism and may also be impacted by other forms of tourism. In countries with a developed tourism industry, culinary tourism plays an important role in complementing heritage and rural tourism, offering an enhanced experience to visitors. In countries with developing tourism, unique gastronomy offerings can contribute to a deliberate introduction of local customs and traditions, and – with targeted marketing – can easily be developed into independent tourism offerings.

**Keywords:** culinary tourism, tradition, customer behavior, tourism marketing

### INTRODUCTION

Tourist motivation is defined as the travelers’ drive to seek new experiences, a motivation that is constantly widening the area of the tourism industry. Beyond the preservation of culture and traditions, new culinary experiences and fashionable gastronomy trends provide an infinite resource of opportunities in tourism. Millions of tourists are willing to travel to return to their roots,

experience their traditions and re-discover their family values and gastronomy heritage (UNWTO, 2012).

The stakeholders of the tourism industry need to take into account that, in accordance with the new trends, tourists seek experiences that stimulate all of their five senses. Beyond acquiring knowledge, seeking new experiences has become the key incentive for tourists. In the past decades, within the frameworks of classic mass tourism, tourists mainly used their sight, hearing

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and touch whilst sightseeing; their smell and taste were used rarely. However, modern tourists enjoy using all of their five senses, which enhances the importance of gastronomy in tourism.

Given that the international standards ensure safety of local gastronomy offers, global tourists like to try local food and drink specialties. Of the different dimensions of culinary tourism, uniqueness and specificity are the basic requirements which can be determinant for the tourists' decision making process. As a matter of fact, the number of culinary tourists follows a downward trend within the tourism industry (Hall and Sharples, 2008). The main reason for this can be traced back to the general lack of trust in the non-transparent processes of global tourism. In tourism, the question of trust is of crucial importance; without trust, there can be no real relationship between the offer and demand side of the industry. The general human interest in food and beverages is a basic stimulus that can largely contribute to gaining new experiences while getting to know the local culture of a given destination.

Culinary tourism is focused on discovering the gastronomy values of a given destination whilst traveling. Culinary tourists get acquainted with local traditions, folk customs, folk art and craftsmanship. This type of tourism takes many forms; ethnographic tourism focuses on different traditions of geographically distinctive regions. Unlike in the case of geographic regions, urban and rural tourism areas have different characteristics. Together, the spaces of rural and urban regions create a rich tourism market that can provide a permanent tourism offer and at the same time, is able to address specific individual gastronomy needs of tourists. Providing a clear definition of the demand side of culinary tourism is not easy because basically every individual interested in gastronomy can fit the culinary tourist category. Of course, there are huge differences between fashionable trendsetting urban places and traditional rural catering facilities; based on their purpose and environment, they provide their visitors with a totally different experience.

The role of local producers becomes increasingly important in the culinary tourism market. Buyers are not necessarily choosing specific products because of their freshness or health properties, but rather out of a sense of trust. Buyers know the origin of the product, which is a kind of quality guarantee for them; they find it even more important than freshness and healthiness (Tóth-Kaszás et al., 2017).

Urban gastronomy trends are in constant development including pubs, Michelin-starred restaurants, street food bistros, artisan cafés and apartment restaurants. In rural areas, the most recent trends are thematic gastronomy festivals organized in authentic rustic environments far from urbanized centers. Culinary tourism – and its contribution to the perception of local people and culture – is predicted to gain an increased importance in global tourism. Its significance should not be overlooked: the visitors' culinary experience is a key component of the overall image of the whole nation.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Culinary tourism provides huge opportunities within the global tourism industry. The uniqueness of different local and national gastronomies in each destination lies in the fact that local people live together with their gastronomy traditions, use their specific ingredients and consume their own traditional meals and drinks. Beyond the enjoyment of local specialties, tourists are often attracted by getting to know the different lifestyle of the local people who live at the destination, and gastronomy is an integral part of this experience. It is the philosophy of slow tourism as well; in this case, the tourist becomes a quasi-resident of the destination and can sense the atmosphere of the place (Ernszt, 2016; Ernszt and Lőrincz, 2017).

The author's current research aims to introduce the factors that affect culinary tourism, and their mutual relationships, through a questionnaire survey among tourists and few interviews with professionals working in the field. Gastronomy, the key influence factor in culinary tourism, is continuously changing (mainly because of the global trends), and therefore the results will probably suggest the need for further research. The research hypothesis was based on the diversity of culinary tourism and of services available to culinary tourists. The analysis emphasized the tradition-impacted special features of consumer behavior and resulted in an interesting finding that domestic and international tourists often have different preferences towards the same gastronomy tourism offer. Therefore, this research aims to explore the demands of domestic and international tourists from a new perspective, because the perception of culinary tourism offerings is not only impacted by service quality but also by the values, traditions and expectations of culinary tourists.

### **The importance of culinary tourism in domestic tourism**

There are several different approaches to defining culinary tourism. One commonly used terminology describes it as studying the cuisine and the eating, drinking and wine tasting habits of other nations and cultures (Long, 1998). Another widely acknowledged definition focuses on the consumption of gastronomy products of other regions' destinations, and includes travel motivation into the term. Culinary tourism is closely related to gastronomy experiences and travel motivation. According to the author's professional experience, culinary tourism means changing one's location based on a gastronomy-related motivation, which results in traveling to another destination.

As a process, culinary tourism is a holistic activity which, due to its characteristics, can affect other types of tourism, such as cultural, rural or health tourism (Zsarnoczky, 2016). The cultural traditions related to eating and drinking vary in their importance to the tourism industry of different nations. In some countries, gastronomy traditions are closely related to other social habits, which the tourists are recommended to familiarize with. These customs diversify the spectrum of culinary tourism and can provide a wide range of experiences for those interested.

When developing the tourism systems of regions of national or ethnographic significance, special attention needs to be paid to the quality of the destination's gastronomy offerings. Tradition-based gastronomy offerings should be organized carefully. When professionally designed and implemented, culinary tourism goes beyond the gastronomy traditions of the given destination. Thematic routes, gastronomy events, exhibitions and international gastronomy competitions, gastronomy tourism attractions (restaurants and culinary places) and unique gastronomy-related events are all parts of the culinary tourism sector. In modern museums, folklore exhibitions are often paired with gastronomy traditions, and in many cases, they have display kitchens where traditional meals and culinary products are prepared for the visitors.

Gastronomy is especially important in the case of national minorities; as of today, more and more ethnic groups put themselves on the national tourism map thanks to their gastronomy and local traditions. These gastronomy destinations all have their own distinctive offers, based on their location and characteristics. Just

like the permanent gastronomy events organized in large cities enjoy a continuous popularity, these rural festivals can also attract a large number of tourists because of their special features. In urban areas, the most important gastronomy destinations are fine restaurants, gastronomy museums and exhibitions, farm markets, gastronomy weeks and festivals. Other popular culinary tourism attractions include thematic gastronomy offers of fashionable quarters in large cities, or the gastronomy events at international music festivals, where people can try local and artisan products. Unlike in large cities, the most popular forms of rural culinary tourism are thematic local festivals, religious festivities, traditional holidays or thematic travels to different gastronomy destinations.

An emerging trend in culinary tourism is the growing popularity of high-quality rural restaurants that offer seasonal specialties<sup>1</sup> made from local ingredients. The fact that such restaurants work exclusively with local ingredients represents an important paradigm shift in the culinary tourism: the materials guarantee the local origin and authenticity<sup>2</sup> of meals served in these facilities.

### **The system of tradition-based gastronomy events**

Gastronomy events held by ethnic minorities usually focus on traditional characteristics, folk arts, folk customs and local traditions. These events are often complemented with performances of local folklore groups and exhibitions of traditional craftsmanship. Also, they are usually organized by local and regional stakeholders who make sure local characteristics are taken into account during the event (e.g. village days).

Large-scale gastronomy events of national importance are usually organized by professional event planners or governmental bodies, and in most cases consist of a so-called product mix, including a wide variety of themes and various other elements that can be connected to the event. These events often have uniform characteristics, and in some cases, a series of the same event is held at different locations in the country.

Based on the above, a clear distinction can be made between different types of events with regard to the aspects of culinary tourism. It is also important to note

<sup>1</sup> A good example for that are harvesting events, e.g.: asparagus, tomato or watermelon harvest.

<sup>2</sup> Note: in this context, authenticity refers to the fact that the ingredients come from trustworthy resources.

that the themes of public national events and government-funded events are not necessarily interrelated.

As clearly shown in Table 1, governmental funding can be available for almost any type of events. Using the opportunities shown in the Table, governmental bodies can even have an impact on the popular taste of the public. From this aspect, maintaining the quality of gastronomy and culinary tourism can be regarded as a public affair where the monitoring process and the analysis of results are important professional duties.

**Table 1.** Hungarian gastronomy events classified by financing scheme

Type of event	Governmental funding	Private funding
Type A Public national event	X	-
Type B Municipal event	X	-
Type C Open audience event	X	X
Type D Events with compulsory registration and attendance fee	X	X
Type E Private event	X	X

Source: own elaboration.

Romantic ideals are an important part of folk customs and traditions. In many cultures, “traditional life” is closely associated with a lifestyle where everyday objects, goods and products were developed to perfection by generations, and are manufactured locally in accordance with the region’s historic traditions. Beyond their functionality, these objects were often associated with the ideals of legends and folk tales, and the social status of their owner was reflected by their decoration.

By reflecting the local traditions, history and ideals of the region, folk art has always been a way of expressing the identity and passing on the history of a distinctive group of people, and thus, a way of communication between different groups. Of course, gastronomy is also an integral part of every cultural community; when they

meet and mix, the ‘competition’ between different cultures and folk arts often result in improved quality of products, including the cuisine of each ethnicity.

Today’s tradition-based gastronomy offerings reflect the roots of traditions, local folklore, history and culture of the country or region. The “culinary essence of a nation” attracts tourist both from the domestic and the international market. Ideally, the tourists, the tourism professionals and the local population should be equally satisfied with the local culinary culture. The success of a local culinary culture is evident when – mostly in rural destinations – the local population consumes the same gastronomy products that it offers to the visitors. Such a conscious use of products guarantees a balanced quality and the “homemade” taste that are expected in global culinary tourism, and serve as a regional “brand” of the ethnic group.

### Culinary marketing and brands

Advertising and branding are of key importance in culinary tourism. Generally, advertising is effective when its mechanism works well in all four phases during the processes of attracting attention, awakening the interest and desire of the consumers and motivating them to action (Sándorné, 1991).

In tourism advertising, potential travelers are receiving an enormous load of stimuli simultaneously, hence it is crucial to be able to capture their attention in a targeted way. Another important challenge for the tourism advertising industry is to be able to provide content that will stand out and create a true motivation.

Products with strong brands enjoy a huge advantage in the culinary tourism industry. Creating a good brand is closely connected to the planning and design processes of culinary tourism products: the most common examples are brand-like events and regional brands attached to the product’s geographical location. Map brands (Bauer and Berács, 2002) or destination brands (i.e.: New York, Serrano, Tokaji etc.) can give the product an easily identifiable geo-brand. There are many theories and methods for brand development based on the product’s place of origin, all of them focusing on the distinctive function of the geographical location.

The geographical branding of gastronomy events and festivals works quite similarly: these events offer the visitors the opportunity to get to know the local values and traditions by experiencing the local gastronomy. It is important to note that tourism entrepreneurs who

offer local specialties are also responsible for the image of the traditions and gastronomy habits of the destination. With the right and professional approach, the personal interaction between demand and supply can create a deeper attachment to local values, traditions and culture of the destination. The interaction is successful when the tourist becomes emotionally attached to the destination and its 'brand'.

## RESULTS

The system of gastronomy consumption differs from country to country across the world. In accordance with traditions and culinary habits, food and alcoholic beverages can play a different role in each nation's gastronomy. In countries like Hungary or Belarus, the consumption of alcoholic drinks is traditionally important (Economist, 2013), while in other European countries – or in the case of nations of different religions – a gastronomy festival focusing on alcoholic drinks might not be a successful tourism motivation.

The various forms of culinary tourism represent a huge growth potential for national tourism, because these gastronomy products can be easily attached to different existing local tourism attractions. With regard to tourism marketing, government bodies and local stakeholders both play an important role in redefining the national gastronomy image. When the image of local gastronomy is created in line with other development activities taken by tourism destination management organizations, the various elements of local traditions beyond food and drinks can also become a part of culinary tourism.

The most common spaces of culinary tourism are usually national-level events, programs and festivals. During this research, the author conducted a survey at a national festival which took place in Budapest and was visited both by domestic and international tourists. According to the author's hypothesis, domestic and international tourists have a different image of culinary tourism because of their different knowledge about local traditions and history. In general, both domestic and international tourists prefer events that offer local gastronomy products, and it is important that the 'local' characteristics be clearly marked on the products.

In the vast majority of the examined programs, products sold at the event were manufactured locally, with the use of traditional tools and methods. It is clear that in the case of these 'local' events, there is always a close

connection between producers and consumers, and that this closeness is a unique feature of culinary tourism which plays a significant role among the positive effects of tourism (Zsarnoczky, 2017b).

Culinary tourism harmonizes the unique characteristics and the simplicity of national and local cuisines. Sometimes, other nations' cuisines are also introduced at some events. Popular culinary tourism programs not only offer a great opportunity for local businesses to introduce the local characteristics to visitors (Zsarnoczky, 2017a); these events also represent long-term opportunities for all local stakeholders in terms of economic, social, health sector, infrastructural and environmental protection development (Buck et al., 2007).

Although the direct impacts of culinary tourism are difficult to measure, there are different abstract aspects that need to be taken into account. According to a certain definition, the image of a landscape and its habitat is created by historical, geographical, ethical, socio-psychological, religious, cultural, economic and individual factors. Combined together, they induce the consumers to make a rational and emotional judgment (Dávid et al., 2016).

This research was based on the results of a questionnaire survey taken at the 2017 Gourmet Festival in Budapest, with particular attention paid to the special characteristics of international gastronomy and culinary tourism. Out of a total of 117, the results of 100 completed questionnaires were analyzed. Due to a small number of questionnaires, the research results are not representative. Whilst choosing the respondents, efforts were made to keep the 50–50% ratio between domestic and international visitors.

Facts and figures:

- There were 100 properly completed questionnaires (85.5% of the total number). The ratio between domestic and international tourists was 50–50%. Local citizens were excluded from the sample.
- Gender ratio of respondents: 63% were female and 37% were male.
- Place of origin of respondents by ranking (1–5):
- International tourists: Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Serbia.
- Domestic tourists: Debrecen, Szeged, Kecskemét, Békéscsaba, Nagykanizsa.
- Age: most respondents were from the 51–61 age bracket (51%), followed by the age brackets of 36–50 (26%), 21–35 (13%), 6–20 (4%) and 65+(6%).



- Education: 1% of the respondents had a Ph.D. or equivalent degree, 18% had a tertiary education degree, 46% had a secondary education degree, 19% were holders of VAT certification and 16% had finished primary education.
- Marital status: 52% were married, 20% were divorced and in a relationship, 13% were not married in a relationship, 11% were single and 4% were widowed.

### Analysis of the results

The research focused on different aspects of domestic and international tourists. The results are shown in the tables below.

The results shown in Table 2 indicate a significant difference in the number of gastronomy events visited in Budapest: while international tourists usually participate in one or two programs a year, domestic tourists tend to visit the programs more frequently (three or four times a year).

**Table 2.** Number of gastronomy events visited per year by domestic and international tourists

Gastronomy event visited per year	International tourists %	Domestic tourists %
<b>One</b>	<b>40</b>	5
<b>Two</b>	<b>28</b>	10
<b>Three</b>	15	<b>48</b>
<b>Four</b>	15	<b>31</b>
Five or more	2	6

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3 indicates that there is no significant difference between the eating and drinking habits of domestic and international tourists as long as they stay in their home countries. However, international tourists tend to try more of the local drinks than local food when traveling abroad. It is interesting that based on the answers, when traveling internationally, Hungarian tourists also seem to try more of the local drinks than local food of their destination.

In light of the results, it seems that the Hungarians' own cultural traditions (i.e. the popularity of alcoholic drinks in Hungary) impact the culinary habits

**Table 3.** Consumption preferences of international and domestic tourists at international and domestic gastronomy events (%)

Consuming traditional local food and drinks / travel	International tourists	Domestic tourists
Prefers eating during domestic travel	71	62
Prefers drinking during domestic travel	29	38
Total	100	100
Prefers eating during international travel	20	39
<b>Prefers drinking during international travel</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>61</b>
Total	100	100

Source: own elaboration.

of Hungarian tourists at international destinations, and they are likely to consume alcoholic beverages in other countries, too. As for international tourists, instead of food, they tend to consume more alcohol during their stay in Hungary at gastronomy programs that are also visited by domestic tourists.

To refine the results, some additional questions were asked to get a clearer understanding of this phenomenon and to find out if the drinking/eating ratio can be balanced. When answering these additional questions, there were no significant differences between the replies from domestic and international tourists. All of them claimed that when visiting a place abroad for the first time, they tend to be more cautious about local meals and prefer trying the local drinks instead. The ratio of local drinks and food consumed will be balanced at the second visit because of the trust that had been built towards the local hospitality services at the first time.

### CONCLUSIONS

Culinary tourism is an emerging type of tourism. While all tourists like to eat and drink, there are differences depending on whether the gastronomy event takes place at home or abroad. Together with local stakeholders, governmental incentives also play an important role in redefining the culinary tourism image of national-level gastronomy events.

Trust is a crucial factor in culinary tourism; beyond a uniform cultural background, adequate legislation is also required to guarantee that the tourists have

a positive experience during their culinary tourism interactions. The two most important elements of successful culinary tourism are gastronomy marketing and sufficient local and/or regional branding.

Having new experiences and getting to know novel gastronomy products are of key importance for the tourists' motivation; thus, local traditions and gastronomy products represent excellent opportunities for tourism service providers.

With the emergence of culinary tourism, there is a dynamic expansion of local trademarks in the EU, including local product labeling. According to the global culinary tourism trends, it is important to note that during their first travel, tourists are usually cautious about local products. However, once their trust is gained, they tend to consume more of the local meals during their subsequent visits.

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## ZNACZENIE TRADYCJI I OBYCZAJÓW LUDOWYCH W GASTROTURYSTYCE

**Abstrakt.** Gastroturystyka cieszy się rosnącą popularnością na całym świecie. Kultura gastronomiczna danego kraju oddziałuje na całe społeczeństwo, ponieważ tradycje narodowe i obyczaje kulinarne są niezależne od poziomu dochodów. Nawet tak zwana kuchnia międzynarodowa stanowi zbiór charakterystycznych dań wywodzących się z odrębnych, łatwo rozpoznawalnych narodowych tradycji gastronomicznych. W efekcie ogólne upodobania smakowe mieszkańców całego świata kształtują się pod wpływem lokalnych tradycji, dziedzictwa kulinarnego i regionalnych przepisów. Obecnie na światowym rynku turystycznym wzrasta zapotrzebowanie na nowości, a w gastroturystyce tkwi ogromny potencjał w zakresie zaspokajania tego popytu. Podobnie jak w przypadku innych rodzajów turystyki, gastroturysty poszukują niepowtarzalnych wrażeń oraz usług dostosowanych do ich potrzeb. Jeśli chodzi o ofertę gastronomiczną sektora turystyki masowej, dotąd wykorzystano przede wszystkim z rozwiązań uniwersalnych, takich jak oparte na franczyzie międzynarodowe

sieci fast food lub stanowiące ich przeciwieństwo wykwintne dania kuchni międzynarodowej. Tymczasem preferencje gastroturystów po pierwsze wyraźnie odbiegają od wzorców znanych z turystyki masowej, a po drugie mogą się kształtować pod wpływem innych form turystyki. W krajach z rozwiniętym sektorem turystycznym gastroturystyka odgrywa ważną rolę jako uzupełnienie agroturystyki i turystyki ukierunkowanej na dziedzictwo, oferując zwiedzającym szerszy zakres wrażeń. Z kolei w krajach, gdzie turystyka jest sektorem rozwijającym się, niepowtarzalna oferta gastronomiczna może służyć dobrze przemyślanemu zapoznawaniu zwiedzających z lokalnymi zwyczajami i tradycjami. Ponadto dzięki ukierunkowanym działaniom marketingowym atuty kulinarne można łatwo przekształcić w niezależne oferty turystyczne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** gastroturystyka, tradycja, zachowanie klienta, marketing w turystyce