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# MARKETING SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL TRADITIONAL FOOD IN THE TOURIST HOSPITALITY OFFER

Banožić, Mario, Polytechnic "Lavoslav Ružička" in Vukovar, Vukovar, Croatia,mario.banozic@gmail.com Ružić, Tomislav, ruzict23@gmail.com

#### Abstract:

The global population is projected to reach nearly 10 billion by 2050, increasing the need for food from a variety of sources, and the preservation and sustainability of food crops and feed is more important than ever before. However, today sufficient food supply is limited to existing resources. Additionally, the food expected to be needed by 2050 is only discussed in the context of quantity needed, not the quality and types that such increased demand will require. This will put enormous pressure on global economic systems, especially given the economic shift in consumption patterns that are slowly but surely moving towards the mass market. It is a fact that global requirements for food quality and hygiene, as well as technological advances, have helped in the distribution of a larger amount of food - from basic food components to quality meat, fish and poultry, to the convenience of snacks and drinks. The growing shift towards healthy, functional and/or organic foods consumed by consumers in many countries, and the increasing demand for traditional and ethnic foods outside their region, may be the driving force for innovating new approaches to feeding the growing world population in the future. In this context, governments, research institutions and the global food industry, especially those focused on ethnic and traditional food gathering and food production, are likely to develop strategies that will target more people.

Key words: gastronomy, culinary arts, tourism, food marketing

### 1. Introduction

The subject of research in this paper is food and nutrition in a broader sense as a basis for a later focus in the work on traditional local nutrition.

The paper tried to indicate the answers to several questions. The main question relates to the significance of local traditional food in general and theoretically in modern society and in the context of tourism, and this is also the main question to be answered in the primary survey research. In addition to the answer to that fundamental question, the hypothesis was put forward that local traditional food has more importance among the more educated group of respondents and also that the influence on decisions about choosing a tourist destination is greater among older respondents.

In the theoretical part of the work, the data was collected from various sources, which mainly refer to the literature, reports of competent institutions, articles, data obtained via the Internet and statistical analysis. The description method was used, which simply describes relationships, facts and

phenomena, and the deductive method, which is based on gradual reasoning from the general to the individual.

In order to answer the basic research questions, an online survey was conducted through available e-mail addresses and through a request to fill out surveys on social networks. The data collected does not have the necessary representativeness, so this primary research can only be treated as a scouting pilot research. The goal of the research is to present relevant sources of information, both domestic and foreign, about the importance of local traditional food in the modern life of people, especially in the context of tourism.

## 2. Trends in consumer preferences and trust in the food supply chain

The desire for food is not simply the satisfaction of basic nutritional needs, but a part of the social discourse in which personal and collective identities are defined and represented. Food is thus thoroughly transformed into a symbol, icon, sign, and status. Food has become a source of entertainment and pleasure. It could be argued that since the beginnings of the European restaurant in the seventeenth century, food has always been more about entertainment and fashion than just food. (Finkelstein, 2004: 78) Regardless of the economic organization of society as agrarian, feudal, capitalist, or socialist, food is always a system of symbols that conveys cultural messages. Down-to-earth personal attributes such as status, gender, age, sexuality, and ethnic identity become visible in the food that is selected and served.

Consumer preferences for food and drink depend on a wide range of factors, including:<sup>1</sup>

- Biological determinants (including hunger, appetite and taste);
- Economic determinants (such as costs, income, availability);
- Physical determinants (access, education, skills-for example cooking, and time);
- Social determinants (e.g. culture, family, peers and type of diet);
- Psychological determinants that may include mood, stress, guilt, etc.;
- Attitudes, beliefs and knowledge about food.

Price remains the most important factor that determines the choice of food. However, for consumers with higher disposable income, factors other than price may influence their consumption pattern. The wealthier a person is, the more factors such as food safety, quality, shelf life, non-GMO and expected health benefits influence consumer behavior (Hockmann, Levkovych, and Grau, 2013) Besides price, consumer preferences are shaped by factors related to health (allergies and intolerances, healthy lifestyle, food safety), social responsibility (local products, animal welfare) and convenience.

Food practices and gastronomic personal heritage play an important role in the creation of human identity. Nostalgia has received considerable attention in the scientific literature regarding the connection between food and personal heritage, and nostalgia often determines one's favorite food. (Baker et al. 2005).

# 2.1. Characteristics of traditional and local food

We usually see cuisines and food culture rooted in a certain place (space). The recognizable environment, history and characteristics of the place are a combination in providing authenticity and originality. Two examples illustrate this well. The first takes place around the Mediterranean, an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> European Food Information Council (2005). Determinants of food choice. EUFIC REVIEW 04/2005.

environment where olives thrive and accordingly become the main ingredient in various Mediterranean cuisines. Moving north, the climate becomes too cold for olives, and they have historically had little place in Northern European cooking. Another example is rice. In Southeast Asia and southern China, paddy rice is a major part of agriculture and cuisine. In the north, far from the tropics, the environment is unsuitable for rice and its role as food decreases.

An exception to this connection between place and food is the diaspora. Diaspora - born of migration and separation - develops its own cuisines in new environments. Complex and fluid processes affected by tensions between old and new countries and their cultures. Far from home (origin), these cuisines function as permanent markers of cultural identity and evolve in new hybridized forms and characteristics. Following on from the latter examples of olives and rice, diaspora communities take olives and rice with them to their new homes, valuing them as essential components of their heritage and introducing their new neighbors to this unknown food, creating a new identity contributing to the heritage and culture in the new space. Migrations are caused by the interaction of push and pull factors. Conditions at home push some to think about leaving. Stories of better opportunities elsewhere provide the appeal. Once settled in a new place, successful migrants send news and subsidies to family and friends in their former homes, encouraging others to follow - a process known as "chain migration". Although not all migrants follow this path, these factors lead to the tendency of migrants to cherish traditions and traditional food, especially if they are an ethnic minority in their new place (Simon 1989).

Food preservation, food culture and rituals were important to these diaspora communities. Food was a means of social bonding, maintaining identity and dealing with nostalgia (Timothy and Ron 2013a). The first generation of some migrant population was dominated by single men. Cut off from established relationships and networks, they quickly sought to develop new connections. Even if they considered themselves newcomers, simply making a quick buck with the goal of returning home, they tend to seek the company of others from their homeland. At the end of the working day, they would gather, looking for company, news and acquaintances. Food was important to this gathering. Some migrants saw entrepreneurial opportunities in providing food using recipes from home for their compatriots. For example, for post-war Italian migrants in Australia, nostalgia was fed by small cafes serving espresso coffee and pasta (Frost et al. 2010; Pricolo and Swan 2013).

Very quickly, keeping and nurturing the cuisine became the main indicator of diaspora culture. As migrants have assimilated over time, this may be one of their few remaining differences. However, it should be noted that the conceptions of cuisine in the diaspora are strongly shaped by mythology. It is easy - and comforting - to imagine and romanticize the image of simple folk traditions and rituals of generations after they had left the old country. However, cuisines and customs in the diaspora are often examples of what Hobsbawm (1983: 1) has called "invented traditions", where "traditions that appear or claim to be old are very often only in origin and are sometimes invented".

# 2.2. The significance of traditional local food for tourism

All the local sourcing and heritage of ingredients, traditions and meanings associated with food preparation and consumption and the preservation of certain food-based heritages often lead to the use of food and cuisine in heritage and cultural tourism. As Hall and Sharples (2003) suggest, food and cuisine are expressions of regional culture and environment, so they are natural links to heritage identity and marketing for heritage tourism. Indeed, food and cuisine can be a powerful producer and signifier of a place and can be a source of differentiation and uniqueness in a globally competitive tourism environment (Hall and Sharples 2003). Contrary to that, culinary heritage tourism, especially the one involving extreme foods (such as insects), can also be seen less as a means of experiencing

other cultures and nationalities and more as a way of expressing personal identity and acquiring capital (Molz 2007). At a national level, distinctive cuisine can be one of the main ways destinations attract tourists and are often some of the most memorable parts of a trip for tourists. The fact that many of the most prominent countries in terms of international tourist arrivals, such as France, Italy and Spain, also have well-known and significant culinary heritages, is surely no coincidence.

Although an "authentic" regional or national dish is almost always an essential part of the wider leisure tourism experience, the fact that many destinations have focused specifically on food and culinary heritage as a means of developing new and innovative products shows the potential of culinary heritage in tourism development (Alonso 2013; Febriani 2015; Metro-Roland 2013; Timothy and Ron 2013) The development of food-based routes is also seen as a sustainable strategy for cultural tourism as well as for enhancing rural tourism development (Timothy and Boyd 2015). According to Boyne, Hall and Williams (2003), food-based legacies can offer positive economic and social benefits to regions, including strengthening tourism products in a given area, improving the visitor experience and helping to maintain and improve the sustainability of local food production and processing sectors. The construction of place identity is another important relationship between tourism and culinary heritage. In addition to creating "real" and "authentic" experiences through culinary experiences, food is one of the mechanisms for creating distinctive heritage-based place identities. In the global race between places for tourism, investment and attention, heritage is one of the ways in which all homogeneous communities differ from their competitors (Morley and Robins 1995) and is the reason why regional or national cuisines become a particularly sensual and memorable heritage experience, they play a vital role in place-building and competition.

In contemporary cooking, the trend of heritagization (presenting food as inherited) and fusion (combining different things) is noticeable.

Heritagization, as described by Poria (2010), is a way and procedure by which the past is presented and interpreted in the present. All heritage, in some aspects, goes through the process of heritagization, because the past needs to be consciously maintained and used in the present for various reasons and circumstances. However, one of the consequences of the process of heritagization is that a particular past can become a backbone and inflexible for innovation, which is especially challenging when culture (seen as the present) and heritage (seen as the past) are often created and consumed simultaneously (Roberts 2014).

Fusion cuisines are now common, and the fusion of past and present in food preparation is in line with the expectations of many consumers. But the tension between keeping the cuisine "traditional", regardless of how complex or non-traditional the "traditional" cuisine may be (Pilcher 2014), and the desire to create "newness" from the heritage template is a problem. Of course, this issue is complex when considering the significant role that food plays in the creation of regional and national identities.

## 3. Primary research

For the purposes of creating this final paper, primary online research was done using a Google form and via direct e-mail and a Facebook profile. The research sample does not have the characteristics of representativeness, because it does not represent the whole population or a particular segment of the population, so the research can only be characterized as a reconnaissance pilot study.

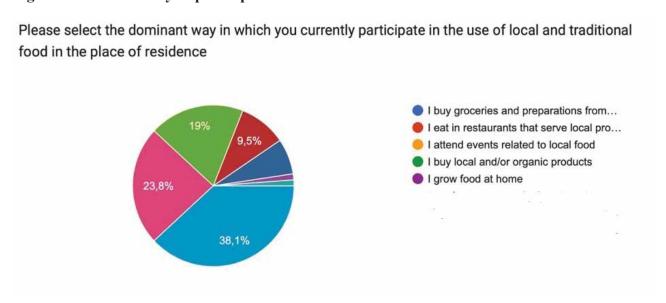
## 3.1. Descriptive data analysis

The research ultimately included 80 respondents. According to demographic characteristics, 55% of respondents were men and 45% were women.

The educational structure of the respondents is dominated by respondents who completed postgraduate studies (48.7%) and those who completed college (34.6%), while only (11.5%) of them completed secondary school (4.9%) or elementary school (0.3%). Respondents between the ages of 30 and 50 dominate the sample of respondents. That is, between the ages of 30 and 39 (30.4%), and between 40 and 49 (35.4%). 21.5% of respondents are over 50 years old, and 12.7% are 20-29 years old, while the rest are 17 years old or younger. The fundamental question that was asked to the respondents was their level of agreement with the statement about the extent to which local traditional dishes are important to them at the tourist destination. The majority of the respondents (40%) stated that they strongly agree with the positive statement or to a lesser extent - that they agree (31.3%). Thus, for almost two thirds of all respondents, local traditional dishes are important or very important.

The next question that was asked to the respondents related to the qualitative significance of the importance of local traditional food in choosing a tourist destination (scale from 1 to 10). The results of the research show considerable dispersion on the scale of importance, although it is observed that for over 50% of all respondents, local traditional dishes are of great importance. Given that a tourist stay is connected with a change of place of permanent residence where the food offer is unknown and subject to research, respondents were offered a list of potential local traditional food offers and they were asked to name an association with that offer. It is evident from the answers that eight out of ten respondents associate local traditional food with family tourism farms. When it comes to the dominant way in which the respondents participate in the use of local traditional food in the place of residence, it is noticeable that almost 40% of the respondents buy groceries and preparations from small local food growers (Figure 1).

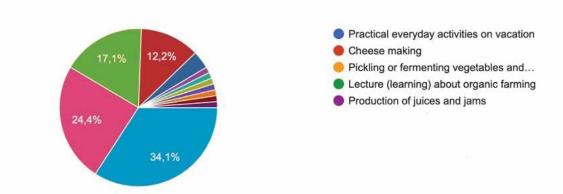
Figure 1 Dominant way of participation in the use of local traditional food



A third of the respondents do not have a defined opinion on the preference for activities with local food producers (32.1%), and the rest of the respondents show quite a dispersion of interests (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Interest in activities at a local producer of traditional food

Which of the following activities would you be happy to participate in if you were included in a trip to a local food producer?



On the question about proactive interest in a one-day trip, significant interest was expressed (somewhat interested and very interested, almost 80%).

## 3.2. Statistical data analysis

The analysis carried out includes variables q1 (question 1 - Local traditional dishes are important to me at a tourist destination) and variables q2 (question 2 - The place of local traditional food in terms of the importance of choosing a tourist destination) according to 3 demographic variables: gender, age, and level of education. Regarding the age structure, the initial groups are grouped into 1) younger (up to 39 years of age) and 2) older (40 and older). Regarding the level of education, and considering the size of each segment, the respondents were grouped into two groups: 1) university educated and below, and 2) those with post-graduate and higher education (other categorizations were not suitable due to the small percentages of all but university and post-graduate study).

**Table 1 Gender (T-test use)** 

<b>Group Statistics</b>					
	What gender do you identify with?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Local traditional dishes are important to me in a tourist destination (indicate the level of agreement with the statement)	Female	37	3.54	1.386	.228
,	Male	43	3.86	1.537	.234
The place of local traditional food according to the importance of choosing a tourist destination - on	Female	37	6.14	2.699	.444
a scale of 1-10	Male	43	7.42	1.776	.271

Table 2 Independent sample test

Independent	Samples Te	st								
		Levene for Equa Varia	ality of			t-test f	or Equality o	f Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Interva Diffe	onfidence al of the erence
									Lower	Upper
Local traditional dishes are	Equal variances assumed	.741	.392	971	78	.334	320	.329	976	.336
important to me in a tourist destination (indicate the level of agreement with the statement)	Equal variances not assumed			979	77.811	.331	320	.327	971	.331
The place of local traditional	Equal variances assumed	11.683	.001	-2.544	78	.013	-1.283	.504	-2.288	279
food according to the importance of choosing a tourist destination - on a scale of 1-10	Equal variances not assumed			-2.469	60.603	.016	-1.283	.520	-2.323	244

The T-test (at a confidence level of 95%) shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of the importance of local traditional dishes at the tourist destination according to gender (x1f=3.54, sd=1.386 and x1m=3.86, sd=1.537; p=0.334). However, the t-test indicates statistically significant differences according to gender in the perception of local traditional food places for choosing a tourist destination (x2f=6.14, sd=2.699 and x2m=7.42, sd=1.776; p=0.016, t=-2.469, df=60.603). In other words, for men, local traditional food is more important for choosing a tourist destination compared to women.

Table 3 Age (T-test)

<b>Group Statistics</b>					
	Younger and older group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Local traditional dishes are important to me in a tourist destination (indicate the level of	Younger (up to 40)	35	3.57	1.481	.250
agreement with the statement)	Older (40+)	45	3.82	1.466	.219
The place of local traditional food according		35	6.34	2.612	.441
to the importance of choosing a tourist destination - on a scale of 1-10	Older (40+)	45	7.20	2.029	.303

Table 4 Independent sample test

Independen	t Samples T	est										
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Means							
		F Sig.		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
									Lower	Upper		
Local traditional dishes are	Equal variances assumed	.118	.732	756	78	.452	251	.332	912	.410		
important to me in a tourist destination (indicate the level of agreement with the statement)	Equal variances not assumed			755	72.871	.453	251	.332	913	.412		
The place of local traditional	Equal variances assumed	3.209	.077	-1.653	78	.102	857	.519	-1.890	.175		
traditional food according to the importance of choosing a tourist destination - on a scale of 1-10	Equal variances not assumed			-1.602	62.741	.114	857	.535	-1.927	.212		

The T-test (at a confidence level of 95%) shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of the importance of local traditional dishes at the tourist destination according to the formed age groups (x1yng=3.57, sd=1.481 and x1old=3.82, sd=1.466; p=0.452). Also, the t-test shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of local traditional food places for choosing a tourist destination according to the same age groups (x2yng=6.34, sd=2.612 and x2old=7.20, sd=2.029; p=0.102)).

**Table 5 Level of education (T-test)** 

Group Statistics									
	University and post- graduate+	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Local traditional dishes are important to me in a tourist destination	University and below	41	3.85	1.276	.199				
(indicate the level of agreement with the statement)	Post-graduate and higher	38	3.55	1.672	.271				
The place of local traditional food according to the importance of	University and below	41	6.22	2.660	.415				
choosing a tourist destination - on a scale of 1-10	Post-graduate and higher	38	7.47	1.751	.284				

The T-test (at a confidence level of 95%) shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of the importance of local traditional dishes at the tourist destination according to the proposed categorization of the level of education (x1f=3.85, sd=1.276 and x1p=3.55, sd=1.672; p=0.374).

Table 6 Independent sample test

Independen	t Samples T	est								
		Levene for Equa Varia	ality of			t-test	for Equality	of Means		
		F Sig.		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Local traditional dishes are	Equal variances assumed	8.542	.005	.904	77	.369	.301	.333	362	.964
important to me in a tourist destination (indicate the level of agreement with the statement)	Equal variances not assumed			.895	69.108	.374	.301	.337	370	.972
The place of local traditional	Equal variances assumed	6.530	.013	-2.454	77	.016	-1.254	.511	-2.272	237
food according to the importance of choosing a tourist destination - on a scale of 1-10	Equal variances not assumed			-2.492	69.685	.015	-1.254	.503	-2.258	250

However, the t-test indicates statistically significant differences according to the proposed categorization of the level of education in the perception of local traditional food places for choosing a tourist destination (x2f=6.22, sd=2.660 and x2p=7.47, sd=1.751; p=0.015, t=-2.492, df=69.685). In other words, respondents with post-graduate and higher education levels find local traditional food more important for choosing a tourist destination in comparison to respondents with university and lower education levels.

#### 4. Conclusion

Culinary tourism has an increasing importance in modern tourism as a motivating factor for travel. It can be defined as a visit to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific places where they will taste food and/or experience the characteristics of the region of special food production.

It is possible to find a relationship between different types of tourism in which food has a different position - from the main factor for choosing a destination (gourmet tourism) to basic services together with accommodation (rural tourism). When food is the main factor in choosing a destination, food tourism can be considered an example of culinary, gastronomic, gourmet or kitchen tourism that reflects consumers for whom an interest in food and wine is a form of "serious leisure". The range between "high interest" and "low interest" describes the main tourist motive of the trip.

Culinary tourism can be described as part of rural tourism when traditional food and regional specialties are offered to tourists, and as part of cultural tourism when tourists discover a destination through food, wine, and cultural heritage. The increased demand for rural tourism with an emphasis on traditional food is the result of many factors, but the most common are demographics and household changes; increased requirements for food quality, including aspects of health and health revaluation of food as a cultural heritage destination; awareness of sustainability, etc. The aging of the population and changes in the way of life increase the possibilities of food tourism. Gastronomy enables tourists to access the cultural and historical heritage of destinations through tasting, experience, and purchase. Travelers want to experience authentic dishes, so they are looking for a local food experience.

The exploratory pilot research mostly confirmed the assumption that the importance of local traditional food in general, theoretically, but also practically, in modern society and in the context of tourism is great. For men, local traditional food is more important for choosing a tourist destination compared to women. Respondents with a postgraduate and higher level of education consider local traditional food to be more important for choosing a tourist destination in comparison to respondents with a university and lower level of education, which partly confirms the hypothesis that local traditional food is more important for a more educated group of respondents and also that this influence on decisions about choice tourist destination would be higher among older respondents.

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