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DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR FESTIVAL-BASED FOOD TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Many countries of the world celebrate their culture and heritage through events and festivals. Often, one of the themes highlighted in a cultural celebration is food. The relationship that exists between food and tourism may have an extremely significant impact on a regional level. Gastronomy with regional characteristics is just one of the elements that could contribute to creating an effective representation of a region that is exotically different from all other regions in the mind of a tourist. The Republic of Serbia also sees the potential of promoting gastronomic tourism by its healthy prepared food. The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibilities for valorisation of local food events and festivals through tourist offer.

Keywords: food tourism; tourism strategy; events; festivals; Serbia.

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СТРАТЕГІЯ РОЗВИТКУ ФЕСТИВАЛЬНОГО ГАСТРОТУРИЗМУ В РЕСПУБЛІЦІ СЕРБІЯ

У статті показано, що досить часто фестивалі мають гастрономічний характер. На регіональному рівні взаємозв'язок національної кухні та туризму є особливо помітним. Регіональна кухня — один із ключових елементів успішного представлення регіону на туристичному ринку. У сфері просування гостротуризму Республіка Сербія має значний потенціал. Зокрема, у статті описано можливості валоризації місцевої кухні та гастрофестивалів у контексті розвитку туризму.

Ключові слова: гостротуризм; стратегія розвитку туризму; події; фестивалі; Сербія.

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СТРАТЕГИЯ РАЗВИТИЯ ФЕСТИВАЛЬНОГО ГАСТРОТУРИЗМА В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ СЕРБИЯ

В статье показано, что довольно часто фестивали носят гастрономический характер. На региональном уровне взаимосвязь национальной кухни и туризма особенно заметна. Региональная кухня — один из ключевых элементов успешного представления региона на туристическом рынке. В сфере продвижения гостротуризма Республика Сербия имеет значительный потенциал. В частности, в статье описаны возможности валоризации местной кухни и гастрофестивалей в контексте развития туризма.

Ключевые слова: гостротуризм; стратегия развития туризма; события; фестивали; Сербия.

Introduction. Eating is an acknowledged part of tourist experience, and food has become an important element of tourism promotion. Many regions use traditional technologies in food production to promote their distinctive local culture and as a means of attracting tourists. Thus, advertising and marketing materials for tradition-

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al local cuisines and gastronomy authenticity in many countries focus on cultural, entertaintive and romantic images.

Food festivals are tourist events closely related to maintenance and celebration of community values, and have an important role in promoting a region or consumption of specific food products, but also have economic and commercial motives. The use of food events and festivals for development of tourist destinations are important for renewed public and private investments in local food events, because they bring direct and indirect benefits for a community. But support and involvement from a community is important for success of any food-based destination. Successful food festivals must incorporate the needs of residents and tourists with short and long-term effects of local resources to sustain tourism development.

As other countries, the Republic of Serbia also understands the potential of promoting gastronomy as tourist attraction and is trying to market regions on the basis of their locally branded products. Events and festival-based culinary specialities could make the visit to these regions an unforgettable experience. Serbia should be included into the map of food tourism through selective and promotion-based strategic developments in the upcoming period.

1. Justification of the research methodology. Key areas of research in this paper should include events related to food tourism (except those related to wine), analyses of main objectives of tourism development of Serbia, and the importance of food festivals in attracting tourists, as well as the list of the most important festivals and events in the country. The paper uses the methods of theoretical and empirical research supported by the studies based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of the collected material, SWOT analysis, Internet information sources and relevant literature.

2. Food as a tourism motivator. Food is an integral part of everyday life, thus, as far as tourism is concerned, food is a strong motive for tourist travel. For a tourist whose main reason for visiting some destination is the local cuisine, local dishes and tastes become an unforgettable experience and the highlight of a travel. According to Ferguson, food of every country is a direct reflection of everything else about a country – its geography, history, culture, people and hence provides a special sensory window into the culture of a country for tourists who are willing to taste (Hall et al., 2003, p. 159). Food tourism is defined as a visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production region are the primary motivating factors for travel (Hall et al, 2003, p. 10).

Events have long been synonymous with food festivals, and they are a celebration of something a local community wishes to share and which involves wider public as participants in an experience (Hall and Sharples, 2008, p. 10-11).

There are numerous categories and classifications of events with each category having its own typical features. Therefore, these general guidelines to attract potential tourists' interest can be presented through (TSRS, 2005, p. 85):

- Multiple event goals – economic and social, advertising and development motives (increasing employment opportunities, infrastructure, etc);
- Festival/celebratory spirit – events to create a sense of festival spirit and joy among people;

- Meeting basic needs – except for the main reason of a visit, other aspects of a journey need to be covered (board and lodging etc.);
- Uniqueness – in order to successfully attract tourists' attention, big events must rely on "must see" and "once in a life time" experiences;
- Quality – high-quality events will exceed tourists' expectations and generate a high level of satisfaction;
- Authenticity – is based on expressed cultural values and tourists are involved into authentic local community events;
- Tradition – numerous events became traditional; their attraction is related to a certain amount of mystique;
- Flexibility – events can be developed with minimal infrastructure; they can be moved from place to place: they can adapt to variable characteristics of a market, that is, to different organizational needs;
- Hospitality – the key to success – local population provides visitors with special treatment;
- Symbolism – application of rituals and symbols helps raising the event above average;
- Availability – events that provide relaxation, educational, sociological and cultural experiences are available to a great number of potential tourists;
- Appropriateness – events can be special occasions for a spontaneous, unplanned activity.

By participating in various manifestations, gastro/ethnofestivals, days of food tourism and other events, visitors can actually enjoy the natural beauties of a destination and authenticity of local life and work and taste specialties of traditional cuisine.

3. The Tourism Development Strategy of Serbia. Tourism is of great importance for the global economy, particularly for the economies of developing countries. Analysis of tourist circulation trends points to a significant change in tourism trends, increased diversification of tourism products and destinations, major shift in travel motivation and demographic characteristics of tourists, length of stay and frequency of travel, holiday booking methods, as well as the emergence of new product segments and promotion methods and activities. New markets are characterized by the high growth potential, primarily because they are perceived as a new destination. The chances of Serbia in relation to global developments, as a potentially new tourist destination, can be characterized as fair, particularly since Serbia (TSRS, 2005, p. 49):

- can learn from the experiences of other countries;
- can create tourism products and tailor its market position in line with modern trends;
- can quickly respond to tourism challenges, given the inherited organizational infrastructure of tourism;
- has a good geographical position, sufficient knowledge and capacity for faster entry into the world tourism market.

Vision of tourism development in the Republic of Serbia, defined by the Government and the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development (Sector for Tourism), is actually Serbia as a European and Balkan country that appreciates its natural and cultural resources which also stand for the country's identity and its cultural and historical values and uniqueness, which are an integral part of sustainable development.

The mission of Serbian tourism is to continue the development all of its potentials, to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations and to satisfy the needs of tourists, investors and citizens.

Tourism Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 91/2006) sets out the opportunities and recommendations for tourism development in relation to the trends in world tourism, with tourist strategic positioning and increased competitiveness. The main objectives of tourism development for the period 2006-2015 are (www.turizam.merr.gov.rs/, 2011):

- encouraging economic growth and increase in total income from tourism;
- increase the degree of utilization of existing and construction of new accommodation facilities (with 46,349 available rooms in 2008 of the projected 70,000 rooms in 2015 and increase from 116,182 beds to 150,000 beds);
- increase the number of directly employed workers in tourism;
- increase the number of tourist arrivals and tourist overnight stays;
- improve the quality of tourist services and tourism products;
- security and application of international quality standards and tourist consumer protection according to European practices.

Implementation of the Law on Tourism (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 36/2009) and Tourism Development Strategy are the primary tasks in the process of transformation of Serbia into the competitive tourist destination.

4. Tourist products, clusters and foreign currency inflow. Tourism product includes total experience that meets its expectations. The Republic of Serbia has possibilities for development of several tourist products, which can be divided into (www.turizam.merr.gov.rs/, 2011):

- successful short-term ("quick win"): city break; roundtrips; business tourism + MICE; events; and special interests;
- long-term success ("long-run"): health tourism, spa & wellness; mountain and lake holidays; nautical tourism and rural tourism.

The importance of these products to Serbia as a tourist destination comes from the fact that it features are of a world scale and of constant demand.

Events and food festivals as tourist products are extremely attractive because of multiple benefits they bring to the local community, especially in (TSRS, 2005, p. 84):

- spreading positive attitudes about the country;
- increasing knowledge of investment opportunities;
- improvement of local infrastructure and establishing new projects;
- increasing traditional regional values and customs;
- developing sense of local pride, community spirit, raising the level of tolerance and spreading friendship.

For tourists, event or food festival usually represents the third or fourth voyage during the year and lasts from 1 to 7 days on average. The main channels of distribution are the Internet, travel agencies, brochures and recommendations.

Tourism Strategy of the Republic of Serbia by 2015 based on the National Strategy for Tourism 2005-2015 foresees the establishment of a tourism cluster for successful positioning at the international tourist market. This strategy is defined by the following clusters (TSRS, 2005, p. 117): Vojvodina; Belgrade; South-Western Serbia; South-Eastern Serbia. However, these clusters are not based on administra-

tive boundaries, but on rational strongholds in various forms of economic experience, which in some parts of the country can develop and indicate the products mainly for international markets. The food producers understood their role in tourism development as an important strength for their region in all 4 clusters. In many ways the problems which a particular destination within one of the 4 aforementioned clusters comes across are different, however, there are certain similarities that are the drivers for closer cooperation, exchange of experience and more efficient management. The institutional framework for the development of the mentioned clusters is currently being formed with the support from the tourist organizations. Further development of these clusters should be harmonized with the process of regionalization in Serbia. The positioning of the clusters includes the following key elements (www.turizam.merr.gov.rs/, 2011):

- emphasize the geographical term which will instantly create image or idea of Serbia in the minds of tourists;
- identify the products that can be successfully placed at the international tourism market;
- recommend a direct link with Europe;
- recommend establishing of a connection with spiritual and cultural values of the country and the people who created the particular tourist offer, in the widest sense of the word.

The SWOT-analyses of all 4 clusters identify common strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Table 1. SWOT analyses – common themes in the clusters related to food tourism in Serbia

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high quality and diversity of food products • unique attractive environment, natural beauties • number of events and festivals • regional character of food • availability and accessibility of other tourist attractions • traditional cooking skills • special traditional cookware and bakeware • affordable prices • hospitable people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of facilities for tourism • no regional branding • lack of strategy • lack of support infrastructure • lack of government support at all levels • lack of investment • poor integration among important stakeholders • lack of food tourism signage and food festival map
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive reaction of world market towards a new destination • developing cuisine and food events to complement a visitor's experience • increase external awareness on destination and product • increase in number of events as a catalyst for food tourism • marketing opportunities • employment • global competition niche • increase of government support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult economic conditions • drop in quality standards and services • loss of image related to health and cleanliness • absence of domestic and foreign investments • political instability • terrorism and travel risks • epidemics

Source: Authors' own research.

One of the goals of the Tourism Development Strategy of Serbia is the increase in tourist arrivals from 5.8 mln. to 15.5 mln. overnight stays. The increase of the total income from tourism in the amount of 1.3 bln. has also been planned. These are very demanding goals, given that, according to data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia in 2010 the total number of tourist arrivals decreased, as well as the number of the overnight stays, compared to the previous year.

Table 2. Tourist arrivals, overnight stays, average length of tourist stay in Serbia and foreign currency inflow

Year	Tourist arrivals	Overnight stays	Average length of tourist stay	Foreign currency inflow from tourism in € 000
2008				
Total	2,266,166	7,334,106	3,20	639,900
Domestic	1,619,672	5,935,219	3,66	
Foreign	645,494	1,398,887	2,16	
2009				
Total	2,021,166	6,776,763	3,35	617,177
Domestic	1,375,865	5,307,112	3,86	
Foreign	645,301	1,469,651	2,28	
2010				
Total	2,000,597	6,413,515	3,20	604,856
Domestic	1,317,916	4,961,359	3,76	
Foreign	682,261	1,452,156	2,13	
2011				
Total	983,628	3,178,955	3,21	221,300
Domestic	645,454	2,452,089	3,73	
Foreign	338,174	726,866	2,17	

Source: RZS data, 2011 and NBS data, 2011.

The largest number of tourists arrived to Serbia in the first half of 2011 from Montenegro, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy and Germany, and the most visited destinations were: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis, Zlatibor, Kopaonik and Vrnjacka Banja.

5. Events and food festivals as a potential for tourism development in Serbia.

Organized events and festivals offer great opportunities for attracting tourists, as well as for economic effects for each country. According to the study of the Tourism Organization of Serbia (TOS), festivals are the first on the list of tourist attractions for the tourists who visit or plan to travel to Serbia. The largest percentage of the events takes place in Vojvodina (38.9%), then in Sumadija and Western Serbia (27.3%), while in Eastern and Southern Serbia this percentage is smaller (17.7%); Belgrade hosts 13.5% of the festivals and events, and Kosovo only 2.5% (SEEcult.org, 2011).

Food and drink festivals are held throughout the country and they attract great attention of tourists. The uniqueness of tourist offer includes thematic gastronomic tours (ham, crackling (crisp rind of roasted pork) dairy products etc.), special events (barbecue festival, cabbage festival, pumpkin festival etc.) or regional (local) festivals usually named after particular region (Srem, Zlatibor, Sumadija, etc.) (Todorovic and Stetic, 2009, p. 48).

Table 3. Most important food festivals in Serbia

Name	Date	Place, cluster	Type	Signifi-cance	Number of visitors
Rostiljada (Leskovac Grill Festival, Barbecue week)	31 August – 6 September	Leskovac, South-East Serbia	gastronomic entertainment	national	up to 500,000
Kupusijada (Cabbage festival)	Middle of September	Mrcajevci, South-West Serbia	gastronomic cultural entertainment	national	up to 150,000
Prsutijada (Festival of ham)	15-17 January	Mackat, South-West Serbia	gastronomic fair delicatessen	national	up to 100,000
Sunka fest (Ham Fest)	9-12 June	Stojic salas in Srem, Vojvodina	gastronomic entertainment	international	5,000
Festival riblje corbe (Fish stew festival)	24-26 June	Belgrade	gastronomic	international	up to 20,000
Pasuljijada (Bean festival)	4-5 June	Temerin, Vojvodina	gastronomic	international	30,000
Sremska kulenijada (Srem's paprika flavoured dry cured sausage festival)	May/June	Erdevik, Vojvodina	gastronomic cultural entertainment	national	4,000
Turijaska kobasicijada (Sausage festival in Turija)	February	Turija, Vojvodina	gastronomic cultural entertainment	international	200,000
Slaninijada (Bacon fest)	February	Kacarevo, Vojvodina	gastronomic cultural economic	international	90,000
Festival duvan cvaraka (Festival of smoked pork rinds)	9 October	Valjevo, South-West Serbia	gastronomic cultural entertainment	international	up to 6,000
Dani gibanice (Days of Serbian cheese pie)	16 August	Bela Palanka, South-West Serbia	gastronomic traditional	national	2,500
Burekdzjijada (Days of "Burek"- traditional cheese pie)	August/Septembe	Nis, South-West Serbia	gastronomic traditions	international	4,000
Dani pogace (Days of "Pogaca"- a traditional homemade round bread)	5-8 August	Azanja, South-West Serbia	gastronomic ethno cultural	national	4,000
Festival hleba (Bread festival)	September	Novi Sad, Vojvodina	gastronomic exhibition	international	9,000
Golubacki kotlic (Golubac cauldron)	30 July	Golubac, Belgrade	gastronomic fish dishes cultural	national	4,000
Dani ludaje-bundeve (The Pumpkin Days)	Mid-October	Kikinda, Vojvodina	gastronomic cultural entertainment	internations	15,000

Source: Authors' own research.

Food festivals in Serbia are visited by up to 500,000 people. Together with the events that are attractive for the audience, the organizers are trying to promote and bring to a more sophisticated level the domestic food production and preparation of traditional dishes and delicatessen by organizing accompanying activities such as seminars, competitions (professional and amateur), roundtables, panel discussions, lectures and professional symposiums. Throughout its history Serbia has been recognized for its fruit, vegetable, wine, plum brandy and meat products, as well as for the knowledge and patience in preparing healthy and tasteful meals. In addition, Serbia has what to offer when it comes to particular food which is being prepared according to the traditional recipes tied to narrow geographic areas – "eco-foods". Traditional folk technology contributes to achieving top quality and authentic attributes to our national dishes and beverages. Serbs are great masters in preparing pies. Serbian pies are made of several layers of phyllo dough which are usually home-made, and the layers between sheets of phyllo dough are filled with cabbage, pumpkin, herbs, nettle, potatoes, rice, apples, dried plums, cherries, or walnuts. The best known Serbian cheese pie is "gibanica". Roasted pork or roasted lamb have become almost a mandatory part when food is being served during Easter and Christmas holidays, celebration of a family's patron saint, or other religious events such as christening or weddings. Festive food is the part of local traditions and customs. Usually, roasted meat is accompanied with Serbian soda bread which is baked in a special ceramic dish that is put directly in the fireplace and covered with hot coals (crepulja), sour cabbage cooked in special ceramic pots (zemljani lonac), sour cabbage rolls (sarma), sauerkraut usually stewed with meat and bacon pieces (podvarak), cornbread, beans, and unavoidable creamy dairy product with a high percentage of milk fat – Serbian unripened cheese spread (kajmak), cheeses and various kinds of cakes. Simply put, you will eat fairly well and healthy in Serbia. The national cuisine, especially, in rural areas of Serbia is characterized by healthy food prepared by a smallholder using traditional cooking skills to prepare tasteful meal in the crockery. Traditionally, cooking skills have been passed down the female line of the family – from a mother to her daughter and then on to the daughter's daughter. Such cuisine has a romantic and distinctive local charm.

Traditional cuisine of Serbia can be integrated into tourist offer as [Djukic, 1992, p. 65]:

- framework for marketing of various cultural and art events;
- fulfilling the need of promoting local foods through tasting, so that tourists can get acquainted with the local cuisine;
- factor for raising attractiveness of lodging houses;
- educational framework through numerous courses;
- adequate content for presenting various graphic and visual sets of information – monographs, posters, calendars, cook books etc.;
- offering of additional services.

By visiting events and festivals which are dedicated to food and culinary skills, tourists have an opportunity to enjoy tasting specialties and gourmands prepared by hosts. By participating in food festivals and events, by visiting and eating at restaurants which feature local foods dishes on their menu, tourists connect closely with the local food culture, start to understand the landscape, that provides it and directly supports the regional or local economy.

Given the importance of the food tourism, it is important to make a culinary map of the region or the whole country which would show the diversity of national, regional and local dishes, as well as information on food festivals in Serbia that would be also included on a map.

Conclusion. Food events and festivals are important not only for the development of the regions with established tourist profile, but also for the development of those regions which do not have developed tourism, but have a potential to do so. As a tourist product, aforementioned events and festivals are very attractive, because of their multiple benefits, which contribute to local community, especially in dissemination of positive image, affirmation of traditional values and strengthening local pride and community spirit. Food represents a very important element of destination attractiveness and can be a major motivating factor for visitors. Healthy and region-specific cooking, such as Serbian culinary specialities, can make a visit unforgettable. Wealth of experience in preparing foods makes Serbian cuisine very attractive in terms of a tourist demand. Culinary knowledge contains several hundreds of different dishes of various and sometimes unusual names, prepared in traditional ways. All meals are being prepared in special pans/dishes heated on low heat open hardwood fire, while produce such as "kajmak" (Serbian unripened cheese spread), cheese, plum brandy and wine are being stored in wooden containers ("zastrug" – firkin, "kaca" – cask, "bacva" – barrel, "bure" – small barrel). Potential that exists in terms of food and national gastronomy should be carefully examined and taken into consideration when developing tourism in the Republic of Serbia. The growth and development of food tourism throughout Serbia will be driven by the private sector through enterprises knowledge and gastronomic skills. European business activities related to tourism are dynamic, sophisticated, complex, and rapidly changing, thus, it is important for Serbia to be able to respond to new challenges and increase the competitiveness of its tourism.

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