

SERBIA AS A GASTRONOMIC AND TOURIST DESTINATION

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Abstract: Food is increasingly becoming the main attraction for tourists who want to taste something new, as well as an important motivating factor that increasingly attracts new tourists to visit new destinations. Each region in Serbia has a specific dish or agricultural product that makes it recognizable and unique. The gastronomic picture of Serbia is made up of tourist destinations with an offer of authentic dishes, the top quality and uniqueness of which are guaranteed by the designation of geographical origin. The potential of gastronomic tourism in Serbia exists, but it is necessary to involve and motivate all those involved in food production and tourism at all levels, from local communities to the highest authorities. Food is an economic and cultural resource that offers very tangible benefits when used to promote tourism. Serbia is building a brand as a tourist destination based on its food and beverage offerings. The chance for Serbia is to position itself with the quality of food and drinks.

Keywords: food, gastronomy, origin, tradition, tourism

INTRODUCTION

A large part of tourism spending goes on food, and the desire of tourists is to travel miles in order to try the local and traditional specialties of a region. For the quality of the vacation, that is, the tourist experience, food and drinks are of great importance because the tourist is looking for “value for money”. The connection between food and tourism can provide a platform for local economic development, and experiences of consuming local food and drinks help shape destination branding and support the local culture attractive to tourists (Hjalager and Richards, 2002; OECD, 2009). Along with food, the visitor gets to know the region, often different food producers, and some of them go to gastro festivals, food fairs, agricultural product markets, culinary demonstrations, tastings of quality food products and all other events in the field of tourism activities that are related to food (Hall and Sharples, 2003). Zrnčić et al. (2021) point out that food and beverage fairs and wine events are just some of the many ways that help visitors explore tourist destinations, allowing them to discover something specific during the parade of gastronomic events. Serbia is almost always considered a country where you can eat and drink well, but above all, a country that has a very diverse offer of food and drinks from domestic production. However, if you look at the protected products from Serbia on the world lists, this could not be claimed. While in European Union countries such as Italy and France, which have hundreds of protected products and product branding is nothing new, the protection of Serbian products started recently and for now the list of internationally recognized products includes 85 from Serbia. The last in the series is Leskovac ljutenica, which is made by pasteurizing tomatoes and hot peppers, and the designation of geographical origin guarantees that it is produced in an exclusively traditional way (<http://www.zis.gov.rs>). The south and southeast of Serbia, up to now, with the designation of geographical origin has protected the Niš burek (filo pastry pies), various products from the region of Leskovac: the homemade “ajvar” (Figure 1) and the “ljutenica” (roast pepper sauces), barbecue mince meat mixture for burgers and kebabs and “sprža” (pork cracklings); herbal tea mixture and honey from the region of Rtanj; the woven rugs, the “ironed” sausage and the cow’s cheese from Pirot (Figure 1); dairy products from the region of Svrljig: “belmuž” (cornmeal and cheese dish), cow’s cheese, “kačkavalj” (hard cow’s cheese); the cheese from the region of Stara planina; the “vrtka” peppers from the region of Bela Palanka; “sukana banica” (filo pastry cheese pie); “vurda” (cottage cheese) from Lužnica; the honey, and the dairy products from the region of Vlasina (<http://www.zis.gov.rs>). Elaborations of designations of geographical origin registered in the name of domestic people (<http://www.zis.gov.rs>) from the region of Srem are: the linden honey from Fruška Gora, the “Bermet” wine (Figure 1), the “kulen” sausage, the homemade sausage

and the salami from Srem (Rankov, 2017). The sheep's cheese, the goat's cheese, the cow's cheese, all from the region of Homolje, as well as the Homolje honey promote this region as products with a designation of geographical origin (Figure 1). The Užice beef prosciutto, as well as the pork prosciutto and the bacon from Užice are on the list and promote in the best possible way not only the region of Užice, but also the entire Western Serbia. The list also includes specific products such as the sheep's cheese and the lamb from the region of Sjenica (Figure 1), the Požarevac sausage, the "tobacco" pork cracklings from the region of Valjevo, as well as the cabbage and the sauerkraut from Futog. Leskovac can now boast of four certified products: the "Leskovac barbecue mince meat", the "Leskovac homemade ajvar", the "Leskovac sprža", as well as the "Leskovac ljutenica". This is particularly important because Serbia is among the signatories of the Lisbon Convention, which enables products with protected geographical origin to be recognized in 25 other European countries, that is, to be exported there directly. Goods with protected geographical origin, according to the Lisbon Convention, are not subject to customs barriers, there are no prescribed quotas for their export to the European Union market, and on the domestic and foreign markets they are sold more expensively than products that do not have this feature. For food manufacturers, this label is an important marketing tool that enables manufacturers to gain an advantage in the race on the market because they have the opportunity to highlight their product, for which they have proven quality, "in a sea" of similar products (but not similar in quality). By registering the designation of geographical origin, the product acquires legal protection against misuse of the name and counterfeiting (Rilakovic, 2013). At the international level, in the register maintained by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in accordance with the Lisbon Agreement for the protection of designations of origin, Serbia has three agricultural and food products – the "Homolje honey", the "Leskovac domestic ajvar" and the "Leskovac ljutenica", while there is no protected product from this category in the EU register. Successful protection of geographical origin at the level of the European Union requires a strong association of producers, the involvement of all interested parties in the process, especially those within the area of geographical indication protection, as well as a well-designed marketing strategy. Wine stands out as the most important food product in tourism (Pivac, 2012; Pivac, Dragin, Dragičević, and Vasiljević, 2016). When it comes to protected wines, more than 400 of them are produced in Serbia with designations of geographical origin "Knjaževac", "Negotinska Krajina", "Šumadija", "Subotica/Subotičko-Horgoška Peščara", "Toplički rejon/Toplica", "Sremski region/Srem", "Tri Morave", "Belgrade" and "Vojvodina". However, at the EU level, there are no protected designations of geographical origin for wines from Serbia, while the geographical designation for flavored wine "Bermet" is protected at the international level through the Lisbon Agreement.

In Serbia, only one geographical indication is registered in the sector of strong alcoholic beverages - "Šumadijska šljivovica" (Figure 2), and the number of users of the geographical indication is 18 producers (<http://www.minpolj.gov.rs/ministarstvo/sektori/poljoprivredni-i-prehrambeni-proizvodi-sa-zasticenim-geografskim-poreklom/>).

The aim of the work is to emphasize the importance of food as an economic and cultural resource of Serbia and to point out once again the existence of the potential of gastronomic tourism in Serbia, which should be used to a greater extent.

GASTRONOMY AS A COUNTRY BRAND

Branding of a tourist destination occurs at the level of the country and individual regions or locations. In the case of branding a tourist destination, it becomes a product characterized by a wide range of factors and associations: tourist attractions, natural and anthropogenic resources, local products and services, history, culture, language, political and economic systems, social institutions, infrastructure, famous people, events and others (Fan, 2010), which are offered on the global tourist market. Gastronomy is often a central part of the tourist experience. In recent years, movement for the sake of food consumption has become an increasingly mass activity (Bessière, 1998). Typical products, mainly local food and wine, have been given the appropriate function to characterize the tourist offer of the country or part of it as a tourist destination and in many cases, they are the main attraction in the territory. Hall and Mitchell made a typology of gastro tourists as follows (Hall, Mitchell, 2005): – Gourmet tourists - visit expensive and highly ranked restaurants

or wineries; – Gastronomic/culinary tourists² - express an interest in culture and the area where food and wine are produced and – Food tourists - are interested in specific cuisines in the world or region. Society's values have changed and, today, products such as wine or food are associated with rest and relaxation. They are no longer viewed only from an existential point of view, but as a cultural, educational, hedonistic element. In the vineyards in Serbia, apart from the already recognizable French ones, there are more and more old, autochthonous, but also newly created grape varieties, thus following the desires of hedonists and tourists for new smells and tastes of wine. The Balkans are the real center of Europe's diversity, because in a very small area there are a lot of different varieties of vines and climatic conditions, because the Balkans literally stretches and touches the Adriatic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Carpathians.

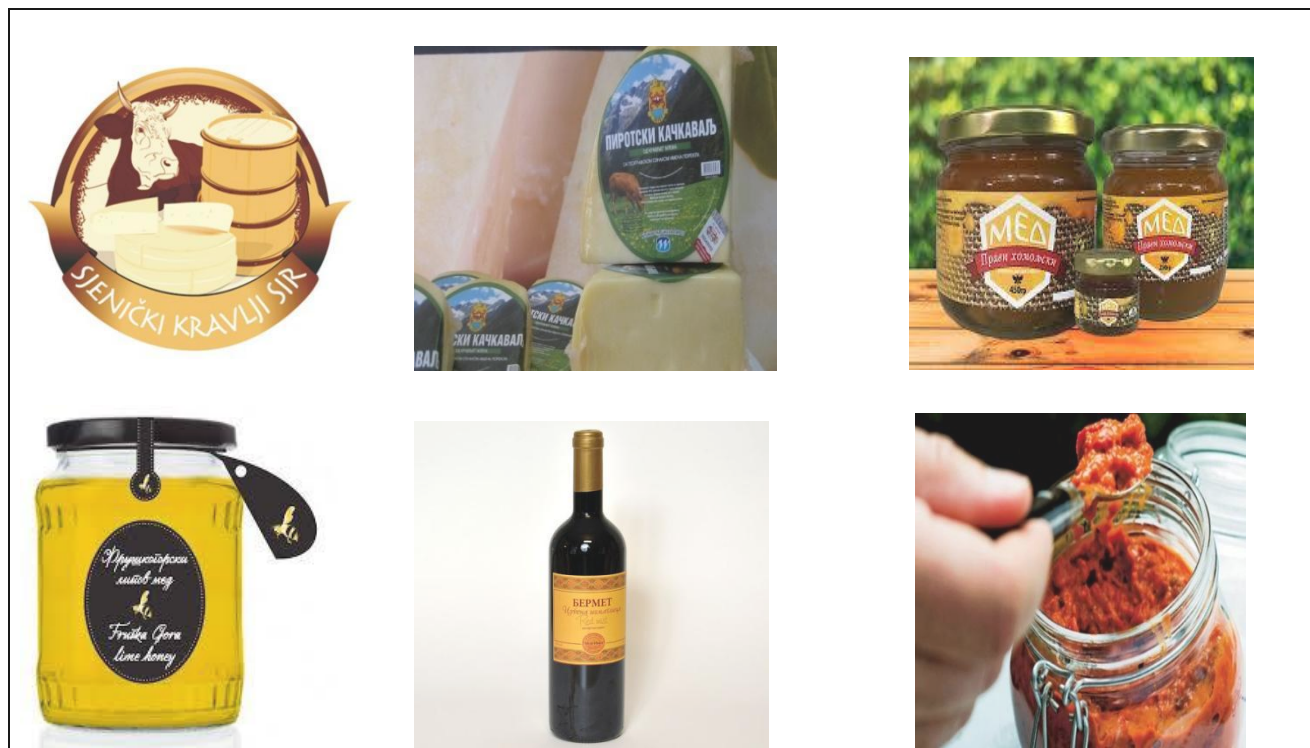


Figure 1: Traditional food products



Figure 2: Šumadija šljivovica

There is great potential in the production of different wines. Serbia, like the entire Balkans, follows world trends because authentic wines are currently on the rise in the world, so there is a great demand for wines made from autochthonous grape varieties, which for Serbia means - prokupac, tamjanika, skadrka, bagrina and other varieties that have been cultivated for centuries. Šljivovica is mostly produced in western Serbia, from autochthonous varieties of požegača and red ranka plums, and lately also from Čačan varieties. What sets Šumadija šljivovica brandy apart from other fruit brandies, above all other šljivovica, are the local brandy varieties of plums grown in Šumadija (Figure 2). This primarily refers to the old, domestic and rare variety of plum “Crvena ranka” (Šumadinka, Darosavka, Ranica, Crvenjača), which has its own characteristic aromatic complex as the most famous autochthonous variety of plum for brandy production. “Crvena ranka” must have at least 20 percent of the mass of plums in the production of “Šumadija šljivovice”. In addition to this variety, plum varieties with combined properties such as “Čačanska rodna” and “Čačanska lepotica” are used, which are very common in Šumadija region, that is, they come from some of the municipalities - Kragujevac, Topola, Arandjelovac, Knić, Lapovo, Batočina and Rača. The rural areas of Western Serbia and Šumadija together with their natural and anthropogenic and ecological values can play a significant role in attracting tourists looking for authentic experiences and products. Fruit brandies, such as travarica, nanovaca, and mint, are prevalent in eastern Serbia, while quince and apricot brandies, as well as grape brandies, are increasingly being produced in Vojvodina. In recent years, the production volume of quince, pear, apricot and raspberry brandy has been increasing. Užice beef prosciutto has long been synonymous with Zlatibor's table and represents an important part of the overall gastronomic offer of this region. Homolje, as a unique ecological region, and Žagubica, as its center, are counting on tourism in the future because this area has remained true untouched nature, but here they also base their economy on clean technologies.

GASTRO TOURISM IN THE WORLD AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The image of France has always been linked to food and wine. The reputation of their agricultural and food products is used by French regions to position themselves as a traditional, rural, authentic region and to stand out on the global market (Bessiere, 1998; Frochot, 2003). Food From Britain (FFB), which is supported by the government, includes as part of its mission the promotion of the development of the British specialty food and drink sector (Boyne et al., 2003). Research shows that 86% of Britons would enjoy local food abroad and would avoid a hotel meal in favor of a local restaurant (Rabotić, 2013). Typical products (wine, cheese, olive oil, salami or preserved products) in Italy have become souvenirs, bought by tourists (as much as 69%). This advantage of gastronomic souvenirs is superior to all other alternatives such as craft souvenirs (ceramics, wooden or fabric items) which were purchased by only 18% of tourists, or commercial products (such as

postcards, magnets and T-shirts) which were chosen by only 6% of tourists (Lanfranchi et al., 2013). Among the reasons for visiting Spain, enogastronomy is one of the fastest growing reasons for tourist arrivals in recent years. In terms of the number of protected products, Italy leads the way, followed by France, Spain, Portugal and Greece. The largest number of protected products are agricultural and food products such as meat, cheese, cereals, fruit, vegetables and oil (Giovannucci et al., 2009). The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC - Canadian Tourism Commission) became aware that many tourists perceive food as part of the atmosphere of the trip, so in 2002 it began to develop cuisine as part of a new tourism product by presenting Canada's diverse cultures and communities (Hashimoto, Telfer, 2006; Ignatov, Smith, 2006). Hong Kong's gastronomy proved to be a significant factor that positively contributed to tourists' desire to return to this city again. Therefore, gastronomy is of increasing importance for the entire range of tourist products and services offered there (Kivela, Crotts, 2009). In Singapore, the government developed the concept of "New Asian - Singapore Cuisine", a marketing move to attract visitors to enjoy their cuisine (Scarpato, 2002). In addition, since 1997, Singapore has started organizing the Singapore Food Festival and the World Gourmet Summit. In Australia, the development of food and wine tourism is closely related to the growth of small producers (Hall, Mitchell, 2001). Production includes special wines, cheeses, chocolates, oils, fruits and vegetables. It is present in the life and work of a large part of the Australian immigrant population, which has made the country a culinary destination of international profile (Crispin, Reiser, 2008). According to research by the British magazine "Restaurant", the city with the best restaurants is Copenhagen. In most restaurants, the offer is based on local dishes, but even those international dishes are prepared in a unique but traditional way, which has led many tourists to choose gastronomy as the motive of their trip to that city. Bosnia and Herzegovina, like Serbia, registered three agricultural and food products in the WIPO register. These are "Herzegovinian honey", "Cazin honey from chestnuts" and "Romanian crust - cream". In the EU register, BiH registered only one product - "Livanjski sir". As for North Macedonia, they have also protected three products in the WIPO register, namely "Macedonian ajvar", "Krivopalana med" and "Kočan rice", while they have no protected products at the EU level. According to the current data from the WIPO website, Montenegro does not have a single product of this type under protection, and the situation is the same in the EU. Croatia has as many as 50 of them, from "Dalmatian honey", "Slavonian sausage", "Lica lamb" to "Pag cheese". Gastronomy and oenology, as a tourist product, developed the most in the area of Istria, followed by Dalmatia and Slavonia (Vlada republike Hrvatske, 2017). In this register, Slovenia has 25 products such as "Kranjska kobasica" and "Piranska salt". For tourist destinations, gastronomic and wine events are an opportunity to gain awareness of regional brands and promote the region to which a certain type of gastronomic product refers, but also a reason for revisiting a certain region (Marković et al., 2019). The list of foods produced in different parts of Serbia is long - from cheese, meat products, honey, to raspberries and plums. Food has become a focal point of festivals and events that attract tourists as well as locals.

CONCLUSION

The success of tourist destinations is no longer measured by the quality and quantity of cultural and natural resources, but by the ability to stand out as something completely "new and different" on the increasingly demanding tourist market. It is important for the destination to use the opportunity presented by local gastronomic products to define the strategy needed to build the image and brand. Serbia is building a brand as a tourist destination based on its food and beverage offerings. The chance for Serbia is to position itself with quality. The connection between wine, food and tourism, at the regional level, i.e. at the level of a tourist destination, is very important, since it is the geographical origin that provides the possibility of branding and promoting the destination, and through that, the economic development of local communities. The potential of gastronomic tourism in Serbia exists and, most importantly, it has been recognized.

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