

Review of the Specific Development Factors of Gastro-Tourism in the Republic of Croatia

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Abstract In the world of globalization, a modern tourist, as a traveller with all the information available, dictates and develops the growth and development of tourism supply. Given the lifestyle and growth of the tourist segment whose motive of arrival is gastronomy, the ever increasing role of attracting tourists to the destination has its gastronomic supply. Croatia as a rich country with indigenous food should definitely use it as an advantage to segment and attract new tourists looking for quality food and authentic tourism experience. The main aim of this paper is to show specific factors that have or will have a certain contribution to the development of gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Croatia. Another purpose of the paper is to present a list of current trends that contribute to the development of gastro-tourism in the world.

Keywords Trends, Gastronomy, Catering, Food, Tourists

1. Introduction

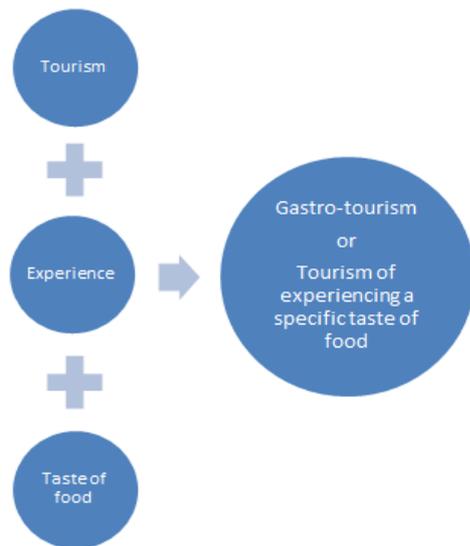
The developments of gastronomy and new gastronomic trends, according to Bakan & Salopek (2015), have become an increasingly important factor in shaping special experiences in a tourist destination. According to UNWTO (2017), gastronomy is ranked among the top reasons for visitors in choosing their destination. Since tourism is one of the most economically important and essential activities in Croatia, the authors consider it desirable to analyse gastronomy in particular as a specific segment of tourism, which is also the main subject of this paper. The main aim of this paper is to show the importance of certain specific development factors that will contribute to the present and future development of gastro-tourism in the Republic of Croatia. The following methods were used in this paper:

analysis and synthesis method, induction and deduction method, compilation method, descriptive method, concretization method, specification method and classification method. The expected outcome of this paper is a review of specific theoretical factors in gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Croatia and their brief description as a basis for future empirical research.

2. A Brief Summary of Research on Gastro-Tourism in Croatia and the World

As the beginning of the word gastronomy, Scarpato (2002) states that it first appeared in a published French poem by Jacques Berchoux in 1804, which is about the Berchoux song where he describes gastronomy as enjoying food and drink at best (Ab Karim, 2006). It was not until 1835 that in French language the gastronomy as a word was included and defined as "the art of good food" (Ab Karim, 2006). The research carried out by Pesonen et al. (2011) showed that food and nutrition habits could attract tourists to the destination. Furthermore, López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares (2011) argue that a new, special type of tourist was created, who is primarily interested in tasting local food products, so Banjac et al., (2016) state that many of the world's countries base their food industry on degustation and specialised menus in restaurants. Wolf (2002) emphasizes the importance of tourist who is primary motivated by gastronomic tourism and enjoys unforgettable experiences of food and thus gastronomy by Presenza & Del Chiappa (2013) becomes the driving force for increasing the competitiveness of the destination. The combination tourism and food for Halkier (2012) has been increasingly frequent in recent years, and visitors are offered a variety of local specialties and culinary traditions, and Richards (2015) rightly emphasizes the importance

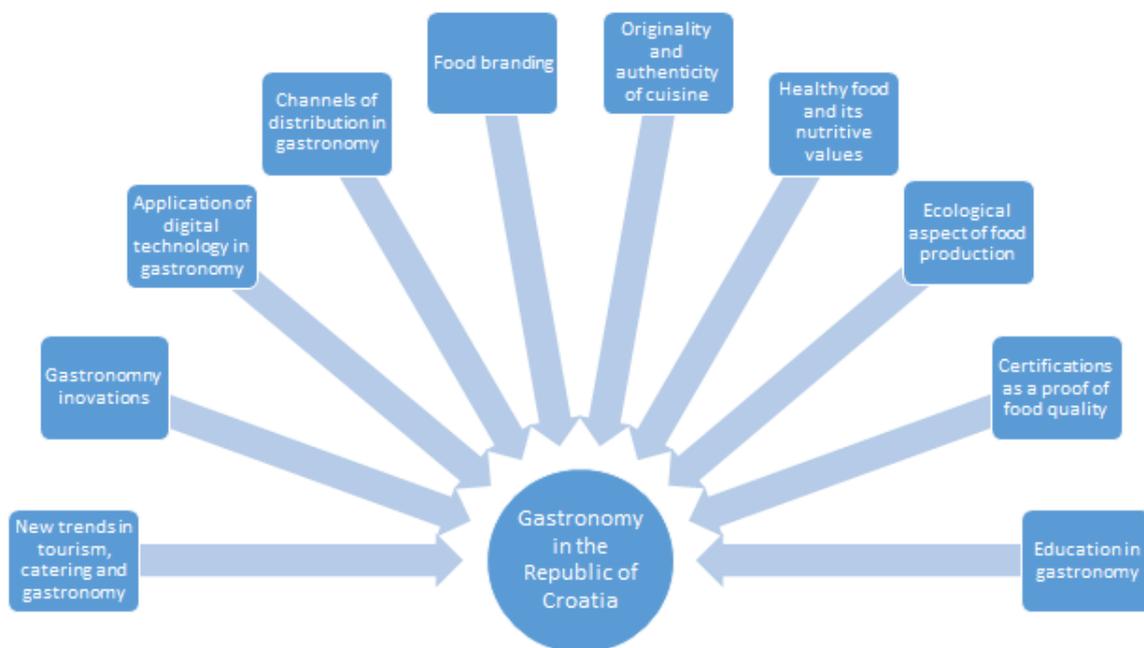
that food has on the positioning and branding of a tourist destination. The following illustration shows how to explain in the simplest way the term gastro-tourism. By looking at the illustration we can give a general definition that gastro-tourism is a specific form of tourism created by combining the experiences and flavours of food through tourism as an activity. While Sormaz et al., (2016) state that gastro-tourism can be defined as “being in search of a unique eating and drinking experience”, Hall & Mitchell (2005) consider that it includes visits to food producers, festivals, restaurants and certain special places with the possibility of tasting specific dishes. Therefore, Hall & Sharples (2003) rightly emphasize that food, from the aspect of tourists' experience, is one of the essential elements and gastro-tourism is also referred to as tasting tourism. It can be concluded that different foods and flavours can be experienced through tourism (Quan & Wang, 2004).



Source: Originally designed by the authors

Figure 1. An illustration of the merger of tourism experiences and taste of food

Figure No.1 shows us a combination of tourism and a specific experience of tourists after consuming food in the destination. This is actually the simplest way to explain the term of the peculiarity of gastronomic tourism as a strong and increasingly popular form of tourism in the world. Research has shown that food and nutrition habits of destinations can attract tourists (Pesonen et al., 2011). Leko Šimić & Pap (2016) further claim that food stands out as the competitive advantage of Croatian tourism. Pranić (2012) points out that the food and drink in the context of gastronomy in Croatia are still insufficiently presented in the tourism strategy itself. Golob et al., (2014) were focused on exploring the satisfaction of tourists with the variety of gastronomy, quality of food in restaurants and the supply of food in stores. Gastro-tourism is a relatively new, growing branch of tourism from the scientific point of view, and just little has been said about specific gastro-branding and gastro-marketing strategies in tourism and hotel industry. In search of good food, "modern tourists", especially younger generations born in the digital age, use all modern and accessible technology tools to find places where they can experience new flavours through food consumption. Much has been influenced by the global movement and the growth trend aimed at entire experience of traveling manifested through the consumption of traditional dishes of a certain region. Mak et al. (2012) have developed a conceptual model trying to illustrate the influence of globalization on local culinary supply and consumption of food in the destination itself. Su (2015) states that gastronomic tourism plays a very important role in changing our way of life, because modern living and fast tempo leave us less time to prepare quality meals. Meanwhile, the trend of eating out and attending food festivals is becoming more interesting and attractive for tourists. Consequently, we can say that gastro-tourism has become popular and important and is beginning to be more scientifically studied. The following graph tells us about some theoretical factors that authors believe to contribute to the development of gastro-tourism.



Source: Originally designed by the authors

Figure 2. An illustration of theoretical factors that have or will have a contribution to the development of gastronomy in the Republic of Croatia

The following table gives a brief overview of some of the authors who have explored certain factors of gastronomy. This paper selects the order and the list of such factors and their authors. By demonstrating the factors, the importance and complexity of the study of the phenomenon of gastronomy is presented as a specific segment of tourism, which is increasingly attracting the interest of all stakeholders in managing tourist destinations.

Table 1. A brief overview of authors who have explored the factors of gastronomy

FACTORS	AUTHORS
New trends in tourism, catering and gastronomy	Gheorghe et al. (2014), Ćirić et al. (2014), Meštrić-Molnar et al. (2007)
Innovations in gastronomy	Garibaldi et al. (2016), Costa (2013) Vega & Ubbink (2008)
Application of digital technology in gastronomy	Görgényi Hegyes et al. (2017), Rubino de Oliveira et al. (2013), Kempiak et al. (2016)
Channels of distribution in gastronomy	Spencer & Kneebone (2007)
Food branding	Mirtaghiyan et al. (2013), Tellström (2011)
Originality and authenticity of cuisine	Kalenjuk et al. (2015), Beer (2008), Groves (2008)
Healthy food and its nutritive values	Szponar et al. (2017), Petrescu & Petrescu-Mag (2015), Navarro et al. (2012)
Ecological aspect of food production	Chiru et al. (2011)
Certifications as a proof of food quality	Botonaki et al. (2006)
Education in gastronomy	Ekincek et al. (2017)

Source: Originally designed by the authors

Food, i.e. a specific type of cuisine has, according to Gheorghe et al. (2014), become an indispensable element in the knowledge of a particular culture and lifestyle of an area, hence Ćirić et al. (2014) emphasize the need for innovation in hospitality, with special emphasis on culinary innovations. Therefore, we can say that food innovation has an impact on food quality, including the gastronomic component of value (Geyzena et al., 2012) while Meštrić et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of increasing communication skills and abilities and gastronomic trends in the future, molecular gastronomy and alternative nutrition with the main goal of focusing on the guest.

3. Some Specific Development Factors in Gastro-Tourism - The Possibility for Attracting Specific Segments of Guests to the Republic of Croatia

Since gastro-tourism as a specific branch of tourism has begun to become more scientifically and professionally studied, it is important to point out the research conducted by the Institute of Tourism in Zagreb, 2017 (Table 2), which points to a significant percentage of tourists who go to restaurants, cafes and pastry shops. It also implies the need for more attention to this specific segment of guests by examining how much the food image attracts tourists to the destination, motivates them to go to restaurants, their expectations, how they rate the quality of food, service, and offer.

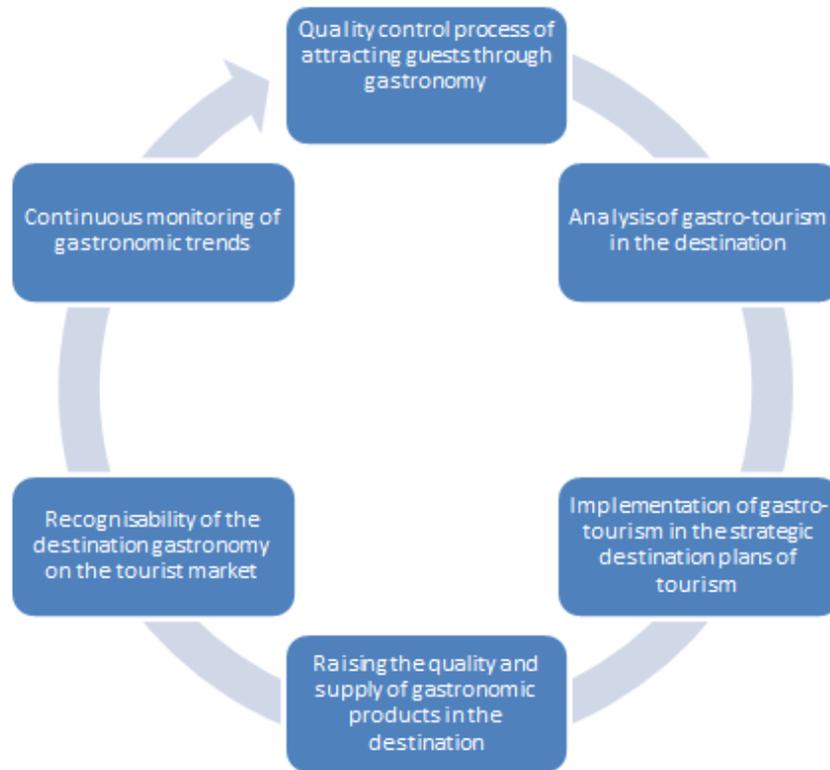
Table 2. The overview of three largest tourist activities in the Republic of Croatia

TOP 3 ACTIVITIES IN THE TOURIST DESTINATION	PERCENTAGE (%) 2017
1. Swimming and bathing	78.3
2. Eating out in restaurants	46.9
3. Visiting pastry shops, cafes, etc.	45.5

Source: Marušić, Z., Čorak, S. & Sever, I. (2018). TOMAS 2017, Stavovi i potrošnja turista u Hrvatskoj. Zagreb: Institut za turizam.

Since food and drink is an essential component and the need for every visitor staying at a destination, it is important to analyse the state of gastronomic supply in the

destination so that we can begin with the quality process of introducing gastronomy as an inevitable element of the strategic tourism plan in the destination. Defining and positioning in strategic plans should also be done in lower order plans, such as operational plans, in which we will specify the pace and dynamics of the implementation of the strategic plan items. Furthermore, their application will raise the quality and variety of gastronomic supply in the destination, while significantly increasing the recognisability of gastronomy on the tourist market, with obligatory and continuous monitoring of all trends related to gastronomy as shown in the Figure 3.



Source: Originally designed by the authors

Figure 3. Overview of the general quality control process of attracting guests through gastronomy

After a general overview of the quality control process of attracting guests through gastro-tourism, below are, according to the authors, some of significant specific development factors and proposals that contribute to or will in the future contribute to the development of gastro-tourism in the Republic of Croatia:

1. **Recognition of the diversity of Croatian culinary culture as a national brand** - The Republic of Croatia is rich and unique in its diversity of food and drink. The main and general geographical division can include the list of dishes deriving from insular, littoral and continental part of Croatia. Each of them has its own specificity and authenticity in many recipes that can be a key specific factor for the development of gastro-tourism in the Republic of Croatia in different seasons.
2. **Implementation of already forgotten local recipes of "our grannies"** in the gastronomic offer of local restaurants - It is necessary to revive "old" and almost forgotten recipes and revive their way of preparation in order to enrich the local tourist offer. Dishes such as "Poljicki soparnik", "Smokvenjak", "Kaštradina", "Štrukli" and many others need not be forgotten.
3. **Presentation of local recipes through the so-called food festivals** - In this way, tourists will be directly confronted with the local way of cooking by people who have grown up with a particular kind of meal. In this respect, the "Croatia food festival" stands out, which organizes its events all over Croatia.
4. **Revival of specific food and beverage tasting facilities in Croatia** - Old "Konoba" inns as unavoidable places for socializing of local people in the regions of Dalmatia and Istria, and "Kleti" in Zagorje's hills of continental Croatia, where local people used to for grape harvesting and specific wine and brandy tasting in Slavonia can be a great potential for the development of gastro-tourism in Croatia through various gastronomic tours.
5. **Participation of guests in the process of picking olives and tangerines as a type of active holiday** - As part of the tourist offer along the Croatian coast, in some places tourists can participate freely, while in others with an extra charge up to 100 Euros, in picking olives and riding tractors on the way from olive groves to a local oil mill where olives are processed and where they can immediately taste the quality of the oil. In the valley of the Neretva River, tourists collect tangerines, which is currently an absolute hit in low season. In this way, tourists have an active vacation and at the same time help owners in the process of picking their products, which is quite a demanding activity.
6. **Eco-food establishments** - The development of catering establishments where the owners grow their products and make indigenous meals for their guests should be encouraged, which represents a new value

in the quality of the offer for the guest. In this way, we will encourage domestic production that is environmentally friendly and less dependent on imports.

4. Conclusions and Proposals for Future Research

Food, if taken from the tourism perspective, has always played an important role in the tourist destination, as while staying away from their home, tourists have to eat something and eat somewhere to meet their biological needs for survival. In the last few years, food is the focus of one of the main components of the tourism supply, mainly because of global trends that change from year to year and shape changes in the behaviour and demands of tourists. Simply put, gastronomy is much more than a delicious meal served in a restaurant or a hotel. It is a combination of feeling and taste of food that inspires new guests' experience as well as the desire to try something they have not tried yet. Given the importance of the gastronomic offer on the tourist market which is attracting more and more tourists looking for this particular segment of tourism, it is necessary to pay much more attention to the constant monitoring of trends in tourism, innovations in gastronomy, the way of promoting gastronomy through digital technologies, the efficiency of distribution channels, the importance of branding the destination through gastronomy, originality and authenticity of the cuisine, nutritional values of the food, ecological aspects of food production, certification as a proof of food quality and better education in making and serving meals for guests. This paper presents the theoretical background for some future researches that will be needed to better understand the contribution of these factors to the gastronomic supply in the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out empirical research in accordance with these theoretical assumptions and to see the importance, significance and contribution of each particular factor for gastronomy.

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