

Gastronomic culture as a factor of intercultural communication in tourism

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze gastronomic culture as part of ethnographic tourism and its impact on the development of regional tourism. The article substantiates the relevance and expediency of the development of gastronomic culture as a component of intercultural communication in tourism. The purpose of the study is to consider the concept of "gastronomic culture", its impact on ethnic and national identity and the development of a tourist destination. The purpose of the study is to build a general configuration of the problem field associated with "gastronomic culture", included in tourist practices and influencing the formation of ethnic identity and intercultural communication of various ethnic groups. The paper compares the results of the analysis of current historical, historiographical and culturological scientific works on gastronomic culture, the study of representations of gastronomic culture in the tourist and socio-cultural spheres, a pilot survey (N = 149) of respondents to reconstruct ideas about gastronomic culture, ethnographic tourism.

1 Introduction

Currently, the gastronomic component of people's lives has a full scientific interpretation as a gastronomic culture. Gastronomic culture is "a set of features of cooking, serving and consuming food inherent in a particular ethnic group or historical epoch" [1]. The formation of the gastronomic culture of a particular people is influenced by a unique combination of various factors: natural and climatic conditions that determine the composition of flora and fauna in the region, and hence the resources suitable for human consumption, as well as human energy costs that cause the need for light or heavier and high-calorie food; religious prescriptions, including prohibitions on certain types of food, daily, weekly, annual cycles of dietary characteristics, prescriptions of certain products as symbolic; features of the development of technologies in culture and as a result – the emergence of specific ways of cooking; the intensity of cultural contacts, as a result of which international cuisines were formed or absolute identity was preserved in isolated cultures and the uniqueness of the ways of cooking and eating food.

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Gastronomic culture, which is formed under the influence of all these factors, is now considered as an important aspect of ethnic and national identity. In multiethnic regions, preference for one or another national cuisine is not just a matter of taste, but an indicator of loyalty to official culture and a factor of ethnic identity [2].

It is no coincidence and conceptually justified that heated debates arise regarding the issues of belonging of certain dishes to national cuisines: is Borscht a Russian or Ukrainian dish? [3] Is Kimchi a traditional Korean or Chinese snack? [4] Such issues are especially aggravated in the case of political confrontation between related peoples or neighboring regions. This is precisely due to the fact that ethnic or national cuisine is perceived as an important symbol and translator of identity, as a sign of ethnic or national culture, the appropriation of which by other cultures is perceived extremely painfully.

The problem reaches an even higher level of tension if it affects economic interests that are directly related to the export of national culture, including in the form of gastronomic know-how. Thus, gastronomic identity not only defines cultural identity, but also its value in the truest sense of the word – value as an object of purchase and sale.

Of course, the legislative consolidation of gastronomic identity has an economic background, for example, in Europe, where specific food brands are associated with certain territories, and similar products produced in other territories cannot be attributed to a well-known brand. The most famous example is champagne, which can only be produced in Champagne.

The gastronomic identity of the region is considered not only as a socio-cultural phenomenon, but also as a method of promoting tourist territories. The creation of a gastronomic regional brand attracts tourists within the framework of "taste" and "tactile" tours who want to taste unique dishes and try to learn how to cook them. The success of this method directly depends on the involvement of various stakeholders in the process: representatives of ethnic communities, catering businesses, representatives of local administration.

For example, viticulture and its complementary industries are developed differently in different parts of the world. But the predisposition to further development of the industry is also significantly influenced by the positions of various identification reference groups that they have in relation to the use of wine and the further development of the industry. Based on the study of the points of view of the mayors of the Republic of Slovenia, the researchers argue that officials with their attitude to wine and activities based on this attitude significantly influence the use of local wine for the tourist promotion of the destination. Thus, representatives of local authorities play an important role in the implementation of "state policy" at the regional level. When forming positions regarding the use of wine for promotion, direct experience is important, as well as the environment from which officials come, and such elements that affect their identity as cultural heritage, traditions and ideas about the development of the industry [5].

When the authorities maintain the unique status of the area, purposefully forming tourist interest in it, this contributes to the development of local rural tourism, which plays an important role in improving the status of the village, increasing the income of the population, strengthening the sense of attachment to the small homeland and satisfaction of local residents. The pride of the inhabitants, in turn, makes them take care of the history of their settlement. Their pride becomes the capital and incentive to maintain the viability and cultural identity of the region [6].

Gastronomic tourism is defined as a type of tourism that deals with the relationship between food and drink and culture in the context of local culinary culture. Local dishes, recipes and culinary culture that express the lifestyle of a particular area are an important part of tourists' choice of destinations.

The line between the historical model and the ethnographic model is very thin. Often, what the organizers are trying to position as an ethnographic gastronomic event, in which authentic food and dishes of a certain ethnic group are presented, is actually a historical reconstruction, since the presented food has not been consumed by representatives of the ethnic group in everyday life for a long time. Such an attempt at substitution generally indicates a desire to create certain conditions for the formation of the identity of a non-existent community. This can be quite dangerous and have more negative consequences, focusing the attention of participants on the fact that they, being representatives of the community, have never dealt with the culinary objects and phenomena offered. In this case, shouldn't a person consider that he is not part of the represented community? It is more correct and honest to call historical reconstructions historical reconstructions. Thus, the organizers immediately mark the boundaries of the action: there is a revival of the historical memory of the ethnic group, and not the forgery of memory and the displacement of those members of the ethnic group who do not experience and do not know anything like this.

In the context of the intensification of cultural and educational tourism, the culture of the visiting region becomes a product. This is the basis for the implementation of the function of intercultural communication by cultural and educational tourism. Moreover, researchers consider cultural tourism as a tool of geopolitical integration at different levels.

Cultural and educational tourism also contributes to the formation of a sense of unity. Researchers show that even monuments reflecting painful and conflictual moments of history continue to carry certain values and attitudes of peoples. Familiarization with these values, awareness of oneself as their heir contributes to deepening the sense of belonging to the common culture of the people, the nation and humanity.

In the process of getting acquainted with cultural heritage in its various forms and manifestations, people form and strengthen their ideas about norms and values, about the traditions of their people, about common goals and a common path of development. Cultural and educational tourism, thus acting as a guide to the knowledge of the cultural heritage of the peoples of the country, contributes to the education of patriotic feelings, the formation of an understanding of a person's place in the mosaic of ethnic cultures. That is, cultural and educational tourism contributes to the formation of a person's identity.

Familiarity with the cultures of the destination places helps to overcome the rejection of norms, values, behaviors of other peoples, contributes to the formation of the "cultural competence" of tourists. But this effect extends far beyond the group of tourists themselves, which is greatly facilitated by the widespread use of the Internet and other means of telecommunications. The modern norm of leaving reviews about any event in your life on network platforms, blogging and diaries, leads to the fact that the journey of one person opens up the culture of the place he visited to dozens, and sometimes thousands of users who look at the people, at the territory through the eyes of a traveler. One positive review or a positively colored story about a trip to another region can, if not break all stereotypes, then seriously shake them.

Another amazing consequence of the expansion of the use of cultural and educational tourism is the creative rethinking of cultures of different peoples, a creative approach to the creation of tourist products, the search for new forms of interaction between business, government, local cultures, as well as tourists. New challenges stimulate the search for new solutions, which contributes to the development of the industry.

Interest in gastronomic topics stimulates the development of tourism, supports the economy, and allows local producers to preserve and maintain farms and industries [7]. At the same time, familiarity with the cuisine helps to better understand the culture of the people, including the representatives of the ethnic group themselves.

In this regard, only one question arises: how to use the gastronomic potential of the region to reveal its cultural identity and organize truly cultural leisure?

2 Materials and methods

In the last few years, there have been many publications devoted to the study of the tourism industry and its potential, existing tourism practices, problems and prospects for the development of tourism in the region.

The whole direction was the study of ethnographic tourism as a factor in the development of the region's economy, tourism in the region, support for the region and preservation of its cultural identity E.I. Okhrimenko [7], I.V. Sohan [8], E.A. Cooper, M. Spinei, A. Varnajot [9], M. F. Fontefrancesco, D. M. Zocchi [10], M., Zibert, S. Rozman, M. Rangus [11]. Considerable attention is also paid by researchers to the problems of the gastronomic originality of the regions: what exactly attracts tourists in the cuisines of different places and peoples, how they differ, what are similar to M. Heldak, S. S. K. Konakoglu, Kurtyka-Marcak I. [12], R. C. Jubilado [13]. It is possible to single out works devoted to individual ethnographic events, the study of their role, cultural and leisure significance G.A. Gomilevskaya, V.G. Den [14], E.G. Gordin, L.M. Alushkin [15].

Many scientific papers are devoted to individual gastronomic events, the study of their role, cultural and leisure significance and [Gomilevskaya; Gordin; Fontefrancesco]. The whole direction was the study of gastronomic events as a factor in the development of the region's economy, tourism in the region, support for the region and the preservation of its cultural identity [7; 8; 9; 10; 11]. Considerable attention is also paid by researchers to the problems of the gastronomic originality of the regions: what exactly attracts tourists in the cuisines of different places and peoples, how they differ, how they are similar [12].

In general, researchers positively assess the public's interest in the tourism theme. Such interest stimulates the development of tourism, supports the economy, and allows local producers to preserve and maintain farms and industries. At the same time, familiarity with the customs and traditions of peoples through tourism allows for a deeper understanding of the culture of the people, including the representatives of the ethnic group themselves G.V. Kulichkina, N.S. Melnikova [16], M.S. Lyubchenkov [17].

The gastronomic direction in tourism and cultural and leisure activities is extremely popular today. Of course, this phenomenon of popularization could not be bypassed by researchers. Many scientific papers are devoted to individual gastronomic events, the study of their role, cultural and leisure significance [10]. The whole direction was the study of gastronomic events as a factor in the development of the region's economy, tourism in the region, support for the region and the preservation of its cultural identity [2; 12; 9; 10; 11]. Considerable attention is also paid by researchers to the problems of the gastronomic originality of the regions: what exactly attracts tourists in the cuisines of different places and peoples, how they differ, how they are similar [9;12; 13].

This study is also based on a questionnaire designed to collect socio-demographic data of respondents and information about their interest in other cultures, the possibility of immersion in it, visiting and participating in gastronomic events for the purpose of intercultural communication. The respondents were representatives of various cultures and ethnic groups currently living in the Rostov region (including temporarily, due to work or study). The study involved 149 people aged 18 to 65 years. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The objectivity and impartiality of data collection was ensured using a double-blind method.

3 Results and discussion

According to the "National Tourism Rating – 2023" compiled by the magazine "Rest in Russia" together with the Center for Information Communications, the Rostov region

entered the "golden" rating group called "Leaders" and took the honorable 19th place out of 30, scoring 84.2 points.

The rating is based on statistical data, various publications in the media, and comments from federal and regional experts to assess the development of tourism both in the country as a whole and in all regions of Russia [6].

The following criteria were used to assess the development of the tourism industry in Russian regions:

- the level of development of the tourism industry and hotel infrastructure;
- profitability of the tourism and hospitality industry, its contribution to the economy of the region;
- development of the sanatorium and resort industry in the region;
- the popularity of the region among tourists;
- the popularity of the region among foreigners;
- the tourist uniqueness and attractiveness of the region;
- crime rate in the region;
- interest in the region on the Internet as a vacation destination;
- promotion of the tourism potential of the region in the information space.

According to official statistics, within the framework of the national project "Tourism and the Hospitality Industry" in 2022, the Rostov region, following the results of competitive selections of Rostourism, became one of the winners in the following areas of state support:

implementation of state support for the development of tourism infrastructure – 32.8 million rubles;

implementation of support for the implementation of public initiatives aimed at the development of tourism infrastructure – 44.3 million rubles;

state support for regional programs for the design of the tourist code of the city center (the winner is the city of Taganrog, the amount is 22.9 million rubles);

support and promotion of event events, the implementation of which is planned in 2023 (the winner is the Taganrog Defense Festival, the amount is 3.7 million rubles).

From the above data, it can be concluded that Rostov and the Rostov region is a popular tourist destination.

As noted in official sources, an important step in the development of tourism in Rostov and the Rostov region was the development of a marketing strategy for the tourist attractiveness of the Rostov region, thanks to which the tourist brand "Volny Don" appeared.

As part of the implementation of the marketing strategy, 7 tourist zones (territories) have been allocated in the region:

"Bolshoy Rostov" (the cities of Rostov-on-Don, Azov and Novocherkassk, Aksai and Myasnikovsky districts);

Donskoye Priazovye (Taganrog city, Azov and Neklinovsky districts);

"Free M-4 Don" (Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, Belokalitvinsky, Krasnosulinsky and Kamensky districts);

"Valley of the Don" (Volgodonsk, Martynovsky and Tsimlyansky districts);

"The Heart of the Don" (Oktyabrsky and Ust-Donetsk districts);

"Don Steppe" (Oryol, Proletarian and Salsky districts);

"Upper Don" (Bokovsky, Verkhnedonskoy and Sholokhovskiy districts).

These tourist destinations are proven sites for the organization and holding of ethnographic and gastronomic festivals, which corresponds to the priorities of tourism development in the Rostov region. These are organizations of rural recreation, ethnographic, wine and gastronomic tourism in the tourist territories of Verkhny Don (Bokovsky, Verkhnedonskoy and Sholokhovskiy districts), Don Valley (Volgodonsk city,

Martynovsky and Tsimlyansky districts), Bolshoy Rostov (Rostov–on–Don, Azov, Novocherkassk; districts – Aksai and Myasnikovsky), as well as Volgodonsk, Konstantinovsky and other municipalities of the region.

The direction of gastronomic tourism is actively developing in Russia now.

Based on the quantitative analysis of the survey data, socio-demographic data were compared with data on the respondents' interest in gastronomic events containing ethnocultural components, as well as on the respondents' willingness to participate (attend) gastronomic, ethnographic and folklore events. When analyzing the respondents' responses, the following socio-demographic characteristics were taken into account: gender, age, place of residence, marital status, social status (unemployed, student, worker, entrepreneur).

The respondents were asked the following questions: are they interested in gastronomic events/events/environmental objects in principle? Do they want to attend similar events in the future? The questionnaire also contains questions about the most interesting cultures and those aspects that attract in a particular culture. In these questions, a short list of ready-made answers was provided as an example. Choosing only from this list was considered by us as a passive interest. An indication of specific cultures or their aspects in the "Other" clause specifically provided for this purpose was considered an expression of active interest. Figure 1 provides general information about the number of respondents who expressed certain preferences and interests in relation to gastronomic culture.

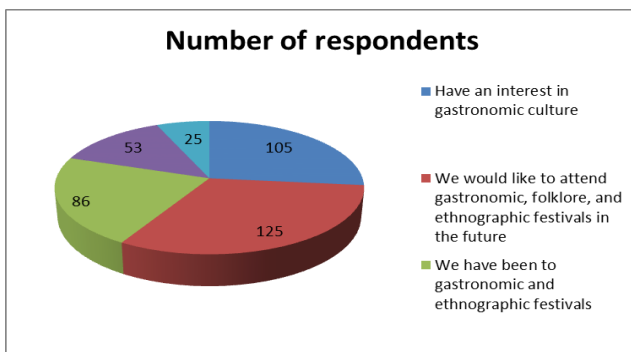


Fig. 1. Respondents' interest and preferences regarding gastronomic culture

Figure 2 shows the ratio in numerical terms of the number of respondents who have an interest and experience in visiting gastronomic events and festivals.

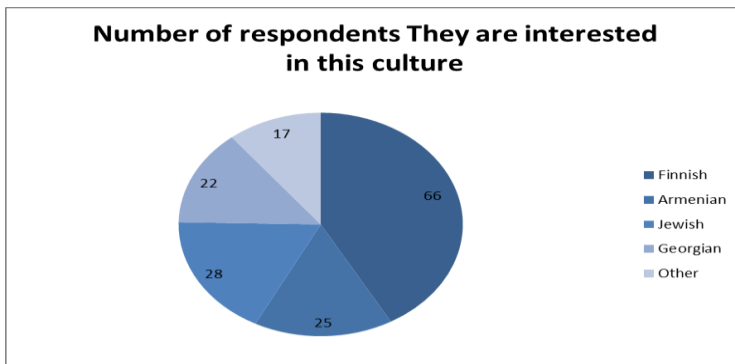


Fig. 2. Numerical ratio of the number of respondents who have an interest and experience in visiting gastronomic events and festivals

Figure 3 shows the ratio of respondents who would like to see certain aspects of cultures

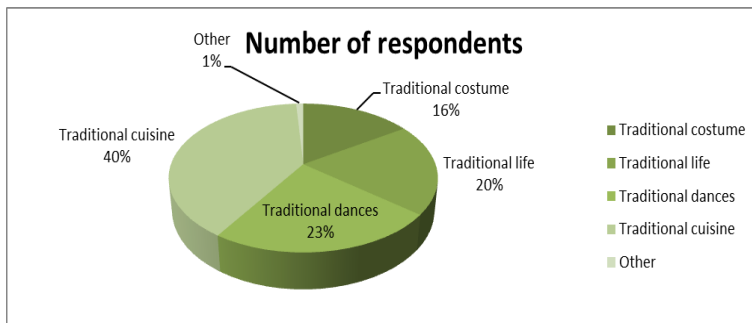


Fig. 3. The ratio of respondents who would like to see certain aspects of cultures

Answering the question about the interest in the cultures of certain peoples, the respondents, in addition to the proposed ones, also mentioned Korean (4 respondents), Greek (3), Italian (2), Scandinavian (2), Japanese (2), Turkish (2), Tatar (1), Ukrainian (1), European (1), Indian (1). Also, 5 respondents stated that they are interested in all cultures and/or they would like to attend events related to the cultures of any peoples.

As for the various aspects of cultures that respondents would like to get to know within the framework of gastronomic festivals (holidays, reconstructions), here most of the respondents took the initiative and offered their own options, which were not among the ready answers. These options included: crafts, arts, objects of material culture, for example, home improvement, as well as various workshops.

4 Discussion

After analyzing the respondents' answers, it can be concluded that the interest in gastronomic culture in the sample under study is quite high (about 90%).

The analysis of correlations between socio-demographic parameters and interest in gastronomic culture showed significantly fewer connections than could be expected. Social status affects the willingness to spend, other characteristics to some extent correlate with the specific interests of the respondents. But there is no fundamental difference in interest in gastronomic culture, depending on status and age.

As a result of the survey, the interest of the majority of respondents to get acquainted with the traditional cuisine of some people is clearly expressed. Among the suggested answers, traditional cuisine was the only aspect that is associated with direct sensory perception and the experience of new sensations. Not with contemplation, listening, observation, but with tactile and gustatory perception, touch, activity. More than 85% of respondents expressed interest in this aspect.

5 Conclusions

The conducted research showed that the respondents, having an interest in gastronomic culture and, accordingly, in ethnographic tourism and festivals of this subject. In this regard, a number of factors can be identified that influence the formation of this trend in tourism and contribute to the development of gastronomic tourism.

The growing popularity of domestic tourism.

The increasing risks of epidemics, the instability of the geopolitical situation and the associated restrictions on outbound tourism, the huge tourist potential of Russia, as well as an active state tourism policy have become key factors in the formation of a stable trend in the growth of demand for domestic tourism.

The growth of segmentation of tourist products.

The development of domestic and inbound (international) tourism increases the demand for a variety of its types, which leads to the formation of tourist products based on a combination of several types of tourism. Such a trend should become a fundamental factor in determining the priority profile types of tourism in each tourist territory of the Rostov region, and for tour operators – a guideline in the formation of new competitive products that meet the demand for recreation in the following areas: cultural and educational tourism; gastronomic tourism; wine tourism; event tourism; business tourism; eco-tourism; family and children's tourism; cruise and yacht tourism and others.

The growth of the share of self-organized tourism for recreation and entertainment.

The development of modern information technologies, tourist and supporting infrastructure contributes to the growth of the share of tourists who prefer to organize their own holidays. In particular, this method of tourism is popular in those areas where, given the tourist potential, there is no competitive offer from tour operators and travel agents.

Digital transformation in the field of tourism.

The opportunity to be always in touch has significantly increased the number of travelers combining leisure and work, the so-called "digital nomads". At the same time, the development of promising technological solutions (contactless technologies, VR/AR solutions for creating tourist routes or exploring infrastructure facilities, digital guides and solutions for selling excursions and impressions) in the near future will lead to "smart travel", implying the management of travel and tourist flows using new information technologies.

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