

## **GASTRONOMIC TOURISM - OPTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

**Diaconescu Mihnea Dan, PhD Candidate**

**Nistoreanu Puiu, PhD, Scientific Coordinator**

By choosing this topic, I tried to make a plea for individualization of services through the development of new forms of tourism that would suit perfectly the personalities, passions and principles of tourists. In the last half century tourism has become, for many of us, just a race to check experiences and trophy destinations that only provide us with a collection of stamps on the passport and countless digital pictures. The purpose of this thesis is to recover the authenticity of travel experiences by drafting a future that will provide us, as tourists, with a more personal and expressive relationship with the places we visit and a better understanding of the individual motivations that determine the trip.

The study will highlight the importance and necessity of statistical and mathematical methods for the analysis of gastronomic tourism. The study also will present the indicators of the gastronomic tourism evolution and development. These indicators should reflect the size of the economic, environmental and human capital, and the degree to which the population has access to these types of capital. Based on the results of the analysis in main components, it is recommended a typological analysis which will aim to group variables in a restricted number of homogeneous classes. Classes are obtained using formal algorithms rather than using visual methods that rely on analyst's intuition.

Gastronomic tourism is a new form of niche tourism that attempts to achieve the perfect balance between helpful and pleasant, between daily needs of food and a culinary experience that can leave an extraordinary mark on a tourist. Consumption is in fact an integral part of the tourist experience, this being equally consumption of places, customs and traditions, as well as consumption of local flavor through specific dishes.

This thesis will provide a broader picture regarding the phenomenon of culinary tourism. The goal is to conduct a review of the most important moments in the history of culinary tourism and highlight the most relevant definitions, and to profile the tourist who shows interest in and chooses culinary tourism. To further define the concept, this study will specify the institutions dealing with the promotion of culinary tourism, and will identify its forms of manifestation.

The research project aims to cover the following topics:

- presentation of concepts and defining types of niche tourism as required in the XXI century;
- outline of economic, social and psychological implications of the niche tourism on countries receiving tourists, and on tourists themselves;
- highlight specifics pertaining to demand for various forms of niche tourism, and study the clientele and its behavior for certain types of niche tourism;
- analysis of current niche tourism market by examining its challenges and trends.

**Proposed bibliography**

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