

LOCAL GASTRONOMIC BUSINESS - PREMISE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN GASTRONOMIC TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Currently, most tourist destinations in the world are establishing strategies to develop the culinary identity of their territories and to promote local cuisine, based on the fact that gastronomy can greatly influence the decisions of tourists regarding their choice of destination. Therefore, the gastronomic specificity of a destination can attract tourists interested in authenticity, specificity and new experiences from a gastronomic point of view.

The gastronomic businesses are among the most successful ones, and this is due to a constant demand, which is based on ensuring the need for food.

In Romania, the concept of local gastronomic point was recently introduced. The purpose of the local gastronomic points is the integration of gastronomy and tourism in order to support the local economy. The local gastronomic points can be seen as an invitation to discover the local products, prepared in the Romanian rural kitchens. The local gastronomic points meet the gourmets, the people interested in gastronomic experiences, eager to know and enjoy the specific dishes of the local cuisine, the traditions and customs of the locals, the culture of food preparation.

The gastronomic heritage on the Romanian territory is rich and varied, and represents an element of the Romanian cultural identity. Gastronomy, as part of the national cultural profile can be an engine in the development of the local economy, through local gastronomic points, and involves the practice of gastronomic tourism.

In this article, the authors aim to present the current situation of local gastronomic points in Romania and their importance in the development of gastronomic tourism.

Keywords: business, local, gastronomy, tourism

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy is an important component of tourism, for plenty of destinations, gastronomy is a part of history and identity and even a symbol for some nations. (GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMY TOURISM; POLAT AND AKTAŞ-POLAT, 2020) For many destinations gastronomy is an opportunity to revitalize, diversify and reinforce tourism, promote and involve local businesses and actors. Therefore, gastronomic tourism has a strong contribution in promoting destinations, being a vector in maintaining and preserving traditions, local diversity and authenticity. (GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMY TOURISM)

According to The Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC) of UNWTO gastronomic tourism is defined as a type of tourism activity characterized by the visitor's experience with food and related products and activities while travelling. Beside authentic, traditional, and/or innovative culinary experiences, gastronomic tourism can also involve activities like visits to local producers, participation on food festivals and even to cooking classes. (UNWTO)

Gastronomic tourism involves visiting places related to food production and consumption, including cultural events related to the processes of preparing or eating a particular dish, as

well as observing how a particular dish is prepared. (HALL ET AL., 2003; VISKOVIĆ AND KOMAC, 2021)

Numerous articles highlight the relationship between gastronomy and tourism and argue that local cuisine brings value to tourism by selling local products to tourists and by preserving landscapes. (HALL ET AL., 2003; NESTERCHUK ET AL., 2021; SORMAZ ET AL., 2016; ZEČEVIĆ-STANOJEVIĆ ET AL., 2021)

According to some authors, gastronomic tourism offers development opportunities for poor or less known areas, in this way local producers are supported and can strengthen their position on the market. (HJALAGER, 2010; KOMILOVA ET AL., 2021; LOPEZ-GUZMAN ET AL., 2014) Local gastronomy has become an important tourist resource and is a component part of the cultural heritage of the areas visited by tourists. (BJÖRK AND KAUPPINEN-RÄISÄNEN, 2016; PRIVITERA ET AL., 2018)

The development of a destination from a gastronomic point of view improves the tourists' experience. Lately gastronomic experiences have become a tourism attraction for more destinations. In this context gastronomic tourism tends to become an important element in destination management strategies. (BĂLTESCU, 2016)

Romania has a high gastronomic potential due its gastronomic heritage determined in a great measure by the influence of multiple foreign nations, ethnic groups over the time.

Romanian traditional cuisine is distinguished through many components as culinary techniques, tools, used raw materials and the dishes. The development of tourism in a sustainable way can also be done by promoting the consumption of local foods, promoting specific Romanian cuisine, and this can be done through local gastronomic businesses. (TEODOROIU, 2015)

Local gastronomic businesses can thus be an important point in the development of gastronomic tourism.

The integration of tourism with local food systems can determine an economic growth of communities, implicitly offering a positive response to people's requirements regarding the quality of food products and even a "construction" on the cultural heritage of Romania. In this way local products can be better promoted. (TEODOROIU, 2015; TOMESCU AND BOTEZAT, 2014)

At present, the integration of local gastronomy and tourism is a "cornerstone" of destinations marketing strategies. (BĂDIC AND ISPAS, 2021)

The purpose of the article is to present the current situation of local gastronomic points in Romania in order to emphasize their importance in the development of Romanian gastronomic tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to achieve the purpose of the article the authors have made some methodological steps. Methodological steps are presented in *Figure 1*.

As research methods, observation and document analysis were used. The statistical data related to LGP from Romania, presented in the article, were collected by consulting the websites of the Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Directorates existing at each county level. Graphical representation was used to emphasize the number of LGP and also their distribution on Romanian counties.

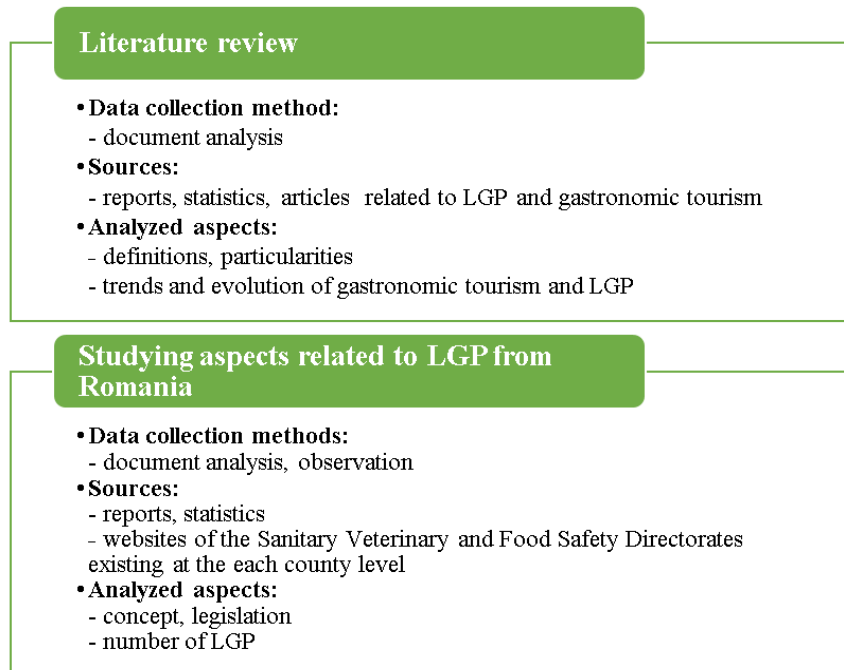


Figure 1. Methodological steps

RESULTS

In Romania, the concept of local gastronomic point was introduced at the initiative of the Ivan Patzaichin - Mila 23 Association starting with 2016, with the support of the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (ANSVSA) which defined the sanitary-veterinary and food safety regulatory framework for this type of activity.

Close collaboration between the National Agency for Mountain Areas (ANZM), the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (ANSVSA), the National Office of the Trade Register (ONRC), the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSSE), the Ministry of Finance (MF), The National Agency for Fiscal Administration (ANAF), the Association „Ivan Patzaichin - Mila 23” Tulcea and the Association „Gastro Local” Vama Buzăului gave birth to the regulatory framework of the Local Gastronomic Points (LPG), the framework completed by framing the activities carried out by them at CAEN code 5610-Restaurants.

Since 2021, as a result of the decision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the approach of the National Agency for Mountain Areas regarding the promotion of LPG has emerged in a new dimension. Thus, from 2021 began to be organized professional training courses where participants have access to useful information for registration and operation of LPG. The professional training courses are free and are addressed to the persons interested in setting up / administering PGL, and the certificates can be used as a document in the registration process at ONRC, as PFA, II or IF, according to the provisions of GEO no. 44/2008 on the development of economic activities by authorized individuals, individual enterprises and family enterprises, with subsequent amendments and completions, approved with amendments and completions by Law no. 182/2016.

The local gastronomic point represents a concept developed in accordance with the increased requirements in Romania for family-type public catering units that offer to interested persons products and foods specific to the regions of Romania. Features of local gastronomic points are presented in *Figure 2*.

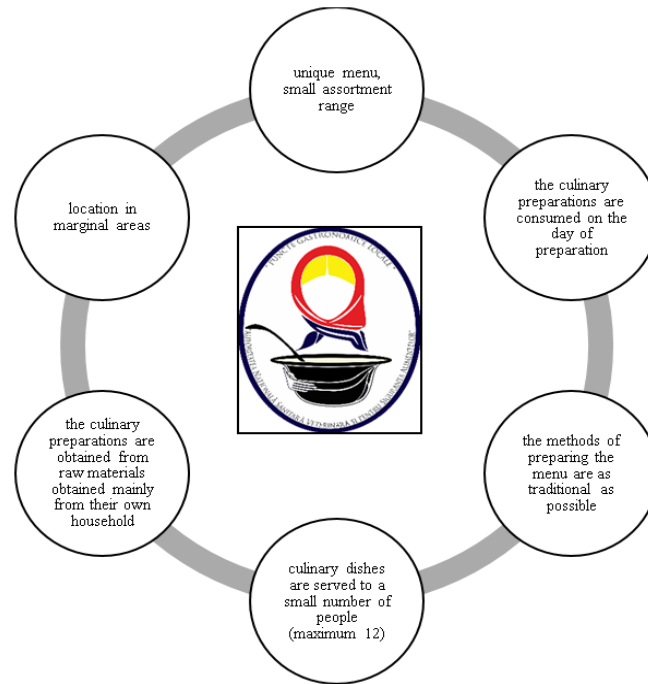


Figure 2. Features of local gastronomic points

Source: information retrieved and processed from <http://www.ansvsa.ro/comunicare/campanii-ansvsa/puncte-gastronomice-locale/>

The possibility of organizing in the form of local gastronomic points meets those who produce basic food and want to provide catering services, but without having tourist structures (tourist pensions, other forms of organized tourism). The opening of local gastronomic points can be seen as a facility for family-type units, which are interested in small-scale tourism.

According to the information found on the websites of the Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Directorates existing at the level of each county, at national level over 130 LPG are registered. The highest number of LPG is registered in Tulcea county (33), followed by Sibiu (17), Braşov counties (14) and Maramures (11).

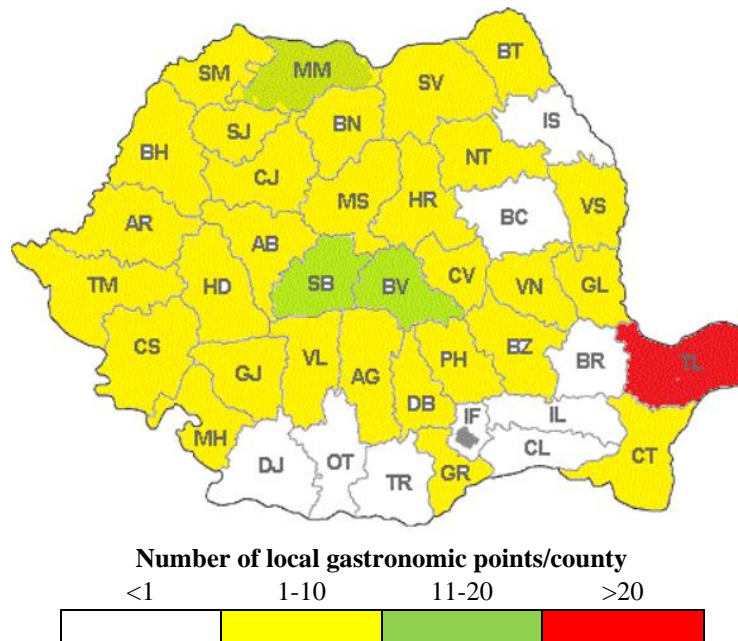


Figure 3. Distribution of local gastronomic points at county level

Source: information taken and processed from the websites of the Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Directorates

The distribution of PGL at county level can be observed in *Figure 3*. It should be mentioned that the number of local gastronomic points is in a continuous dynamic, and the PGL map "undergoes" changes in almost every month.

As we have already stated, the gastronomic heritage on the Romanian territory is rich and varied, and represents an element of the Romanian cultural identity. Gastronomy, as part of the national cultural profile can be an engine in the development of the local economy, through local gastronomic points, and involves the practice of gastronomic tourism.

DISCUSSION

The concept of local gastronomic point was introduced to capitalize on the connection between gastronomy and tourism. In order for this initiative to be successful, close collaboration between the public and private sectors is needed, as well as educating people to join and get involved in supporting these activities. It is necessary to undertake research in order to analyse the capacity and availability for collaboration, as well as to identify ways to promote LGP networks. (BĂDIC AND ISPAS, 2021)

The LGP are small businesses through which the locals can obtain income by "revealing the gastronomic treasures from their own kitchens" and offering those interested in unique gastronomic experiences. LGP gastronomic points can also represent a way to support the local economy, and implicitly to promote the local gastronomy and development of gastronomic tourism.

Currently, in Romania, gastronomic tourism is not yet very well developed, local and regional gastronomy is an important resource in promoting lesser-known tourist destinations, which can thus be highlighted by LGP.

The network of LGP is in a wide development process, with over 130 LGPs being registered in Romania, their number being in a continuous increase. Most LGPs are registered in the counties of Tulcea, Braşov and Sibiu. LGP promotion has shortcomings, many of the LGPs are not known, as well as the concept of LGP. In this sense, it is necessary a strategy to promote LGP, and the development of applications accessible on mobile phones, through which tourists have access to information about location, availability, etc.

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