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THE GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE OF SIBIU, A HIGHER CAPITALIZATION FORM OF CULTURAL TOURISM

Abstract: *Traditional knowledge as a concept is supported and protected by UNESCO as a part of the immaterial cultural heritage. Traditional knowledge lies at the heart of the development of traditional local cuisine and is an actual source of inspiration for the future of gastronomic tourism. With the award of the 2019 European Region of Gastronomy title, Sibiu gains added value as an exceptional tourist attraction from the gastronomic events. The material cultural offer is complemented by the immaterial cultural one, contributing to the diversification of tourist products. The analysis of the questionnaires applied in the field investigation has highlighted the catalyst role that gastronomic tourism has to ensure the*

sustainability of the Sibiu region, by reviving regional micro-economy processes and by raising the awareness of the traditional knowledge associated with local gastronomy for raising living standards. Gastronomy is thus defined as a tourist destination with side effects on the entire regional economy through the four categories: recreational, existential, gastronomic reorientation and experimentation. Thus, gastronomic tourism may be a higher form of exploitation and access to the entire immaterial and material built or natural cultural heritage.

Key words: *immaterial heritage, cultural tourism, local gastronomy, sustainable development, cultural diversity*

Introduction

Cultural diversity, together with geo-diversity and biodiversity, is the basis for sustainable socio-economic development in general and for the micro-regions of Sibiu County in particular. Reviving traditional activities (wood processing, weaving, glass painting), stopping the migration of the rural population, improving the quality of life are based on the preservation and the capitalization of these traditions. The capitalization of local identity is the key and solution for attracting people to projects, developing local initiatives, forming associations and partnerships.

The micro-regions of Sibiu County, called "lands", "counties" and "valleys" are

territories that provide the landmarks for community definition, but also for the promotion of energies and initiatives able to contribute to the strengthening and affirmation of local identity in a multicultural Europe and in increasingly globalized society.

The European and national context of the higher capitalization of the cultural and gastronomic heritage

Knowledge of natural resources for their sustainable and rational exploitation is a pre-requisite for the economic future of countries globally and at European level in particular (Jones, 2005; Tilford and Whyte, 2010). Based on Jones' research published in

2005, one can infer that the European Summit in Lisbon was both an end and a start of the economic development of the European Union.

Culture is increasingly seen globally not only as a good to be protected, but also as a resource that contributes to economic growth through job creation, diversification of entrepreneurial initiatives and sources of income.

Politically, culture has been recognized as a pillar of sustainable development at local and regional levels through Agenda 21 on Culture (2004), as a United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Committee on Culture. From the perspective of territorial development, Agenda 21 on culture states that “cultural diversity is necessary for humanity, as biodiversity is necessary for the natural environment”.

The European Council conclusions of 21 May, 2014, on Cultural Heritage as a Strategic Resource for a Sustainable Europe underline its role as a “strong local and regional development factor for inclusion and a generator of significant outsourcing, notably through the development of sustainable cultural tourism”.

If 2017 was the International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2018 has been declared by the European Commission as the “European Year of Cultural Heritage”, an initiative that can help to highlight local peculiarities, the specificity of regional and national cultural heritage, as a part of the European cultural diversity.

Our scientific approach is in line with the Strategy on National Culture and Heritage for the period 2016-2022, in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, but also in the compliance with the fundamental human rights, including cultural rights, which consider creativity to be the essence of the cultural ecosystem. The new strategy underlines the contribution of cultural and cultural heritage to territorial vitality through the enhancement of local and regional identity elements and a better protection of cultural heritage. In the same context, the work

is part of the Program European Region of Gastronomy, to which Sibiu County has joined and for which it has received the title of *Sibiu Gastronomic Region 2019*.

The National Strategy on Sustainable Development of Romania Horizons 2013-2020-2030 takes over the general developments registered at the international and European levels with regard to the protection of the heritage, achieving a correlation of these objectives with those identified in the *Strategy on the National Cultural Heritage 2008-2013* (regarding the preservation and the capitalization of the national cultural heritage) and in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (in the fields of contemporary creation and of cultural diversity). However, although in most cases the strategic and legislative framework exists, the implementation is deficient, the Romanian cultural heritage still facing a number of problems.

Culture, seen as a sustainable development factor, restates the importance of local and regional identity and specificity, which implies the need to protect the cultural heritage and raise awareness of its value within the community. These objectives converge towards the positioning of culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development along with the economy, the social field and the environmental issues.

The Strategy on the Development of Sibiu County for the Period 2010 - 2013 and the Development directions of the County for the period 2014 - 2020 point out that Sibiu County benefits from great potential in terms of cultural tourism, being a destination based on the uniqueness of culture, as an essential component of the tourist experience.

The local context of the cultural and gastronomic heritage revival

Sibiu is located in an area rich in traditions. The fact that the city is surrounded by localities belonging to the five micro-regions (Mărginimea Sibiului, Țara Secașelor, Țara Oltului, Valea Hârtibaciului and Valea Târ-

navelor) with a pronounced multicultural nature, has contributed to the development of a special personality of the city and Sibiu County, European Region of Gastronomy for 2019. Thus, the inhabitants of Sibiu have the opportunity to realize the value of the traditions for the preservation of intangible heritage in general, and for the development of values in gastronomy in particular.

Traditions and gastronomy influence each other in their development along the human evolution, their preservation and perpetuation being essential for ensuring food security and economic mechanisms specific to regional or county development. Sibiu's life, the Sibiu gastronomy culture are built on the values of the county's traditions, which in turn contribute to the expression of their own spirituality, as we perceive it today and which we have not yet been able to define in the spirit of gastronomic cultural events. In this regard, we can see the interconnectivity between the natural resources, the Christian calendar, the cuisine and eating habits of the residents of Sibiu. The constant association between the Christian calendar, cuisine and activities of the residents of Sibiu is obvious - it is a triad that merges and completes the intangible cultural heritage of Sibiu.

Research methods and means

In order to have a picture of the cultural and gastronomic motivations of the tourists who visit Sibiu, we designed a questionnaire which was applied to a number of 234 randomly selected respondents at the Romanian Tourism Fair, whose autumn edition took place during the period 16-19 November 2017. During the 3 days of the fair, responses were received from tourism consumers from all over the country (from Ilfov, Prahova, Dâmbovița, Vâlcea, Dolj, Timiș, Cluj, Bistrița-Năsăud, Mureș, Brașov, Vrancea, Iași, Neamț counties), but also from Romanians settled in the UK, Italy, Canada, the USA.

The questions in the questionnaire were chosen to allow an analysis of the place that the cultural and gastronomic interest fills in the tourist's motivation to visit Sibiu.

Based on the statistical data, it is certain that the number of tourists who choose Sibiu as a holiday destination or as a city break is steadily increasing (Table 1).

Table 1. Arrivals of Tourists in Tourist Accommodation Structures in Sibiu County and in Sibiu, 2014-2016 (no. of persons)

	2014	2015	2016
Sibiu County	355,698	438,611	503,620
Sibiu	258,834	320,664	371,295

Source: insse.ro, 2018

The increase in the number of tourists is linked to a series of events that attract visitors annually to the city that was the European Capital of Culture in 2007 and which will be the centre of the European Region of Gastronomy in 2019.

The questionnaire used in the field survey comprised 20 questions, out of which 74% were multiple choice questions and 26% were open questions or combined with the multiple choice ones. The questionnaire was developed in partnership between the University of Catania, the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești and "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu.

Results and discussions

To the question regarding the main motivation for visiting Sibiu, 52.99% of the tourists affirmed that they came for the beauty of the landscape, 45.73% of the respondents chose the cultural heritage and 38.03% came for pleasure, recreation and rest (Fig. 1). More than 25% of the respondents said they came to Sibiu for the local gastronomy.

Figure 1. *Share of Tourists According to Main Motivation that Attracts Them to Sibiu County*

Source: Personal Survey, 2017

Out of those who are attracted to the wealth of cultural heritage, 2/3 are women, the share also preserved in the case of the motivation related to the beauty of landscape or recreation and rest. In the case of local gastronomy, 3/5 of the female and 2/5 of the male respondents chose this motivation. It can be stated that 20.94% of the

women and only 1.71% of the men come for knowledge and education.

The reason why tourists choose Sibiu as a holiday destination has highlighted the place filled by the unique location with the specific architecture that has established the reputation of the “little Vienna” given to Sibiu (Table 2).

Table 2. *The Reason Why Tourists Choose Sibiu as a Holiday Destination*

No.	The Reason for Choosing a Holiday Destination	%		
		Total	Male	Female
1	Rest	32.91	10.68	22.22
2	Location novelty, specific architecture	46.15	12.82	33.33
3	Leisure, recreation and rest	39.74	15.81	23.93
4	Local cuisine	26.92	6.41	20.51
5	Leisure activities and atmosphere	14.53	5.13	9.40
6	Traditions	26.92	9.40	17.52
7	Medical reasons	4.70	4.27	0.43
8	Possibility to practise various sports	3.85	2.14	1.71
9	Visiting religious, cultural objectives	24.79	5.13	19.66
10	Business	4.27	2.14	2.14
11	Visits to relatives and friends	11.54	5.56	5.98
12	Others	0.43	0.43	0.00

As for the defining element of the gastronomy of the Sibiu region, including Mărginimea Sibiului, the potential tourists chose with an overwhelming proportion (80.34%) is the existence of traditional gastronomy in the menu of the food units, followed by the quality of the services and the hospitality (33.33%), the quality of the menus (11.97%) and the pleasant atmosphere of the restaurants (10.26%).

Out of the respondents who chose traditional gastronomy as the main motivation

(80.34%), 75.31% of the 81 male respondents chose this motivation. Out of the 153 female respondents, 83.01% said that it was traditional gastronomy that attracted them to visit the Sibiu region.

The situation on age groups regarding the defining element for the gastronomy of the Sibiu region that attracts tourists in the area highlights the important role of traditional gastronomy, services and hospitality of the Sibiu region.

Figure 2. Types of Gastronomic Events in Which Respondents Would Like to Participate in the Next 4 Years - Total Share and Gender Breakdown (%)

When asked about the gastronomic events that would attract potential tourists to the Sibiu region in the next four years, the respondents' answers highlighted the desire to participate in traditional dinners in the fortified cities of Sibiu, Mediaș and Hârtibaci Valley, in traditional festivals (the

Cheese Festival and the Rășinari Brandy Festival, the Peony Festival at Gura Râului) and the presence of the Transylvanian cuisine elements in the menu (Fig. 2). The brunches with gastronomic specialties taking place in rural areas are also increasingly popular.

Table no. 3. *Types of Gastronomic Events in Which Respondents Would Like to Participate in the Next 4 Years, by Age Groups*

No.	Types of Gastronomic Events / Age Group	20-29 years	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	over 60 years old
1	Picnic in the mountainous area	20.51	5.98	1.71	2.99	0.43
2	Cheese tasting	6.84	6.84	4.70	1.71	0.43
3	Transylvanian cuisine	24.36	3.85	3.85	1.28	0.85
4	Saxon cuisine	6.84	7.69	5.13	0.85	0.85
5	Brunch with rural specialties	13.25	4.70	1.28	0.85	0.85
6	Dinner in the fortresses	26.07	6.41	2.99	0.00	1.28
7	Pork alms	5.98	4.27	2.56	0.43	0.85
8	Traditional menus within a circuit of fortified churches	5.56	1.71	1.28	1.28	0.85
9	Participation in traditional festivals	23.50	5.98	3.85	1.71	1.28
10	Other events	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.43

By age group, the situation with the respondents regarding the gastronomic events in which they would like to participate in the next four years within the Gastronomic Region of Sibiu demonstrates the increased interest in the Transylvanian gastronomic culture among young people (Table 3). It is true that they also represented the largest share of the respondents, but it is obvious that Sibiu attracts tourists from all age groups who are keen on interesting experiences.

Conclusions

Cultural diversity, including gastronomy, is the basis for sustainable socio-economic development in general and for the micro-regions of Sibiu County in particular.

Traditional knowledge as a concept is supported and protected by UNESCO as part of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Under UNESCO's umbrella, and taking into account the importance of intangible cultural heritage for the genesis, perpetuation and continuous development of cultural diversity as well as the role of guarantor of sustainable development, as

outlined in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional and Popular Culture from 1989, UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity from 2001 and the Istanbul Declaration from 2002, adopted at the Third Roundtable of Ministers of Culture, the *Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* was adopted, aiming at:

- safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage;
- complying with the intangible cultural heritage of communities, groups and individuals belonging to them;
- raising awareness at local, national and international levels of the importance of intangible cultural heritage and its mutual acknowledgement;
- international cooperation and assistance.

In the Sibiu area, a new feature is added to the current tourism trends, i.e. gastronomy, customizing the notion of gastronomic tourism integrated into the sustainable regional development. The tangible cultural offer is complemented by the intangible cultural one, helping to diversify the range of attractive offers.

In 2002 Long defined “culinary tourism” as *the experience of knowing other regions through a good meal*. In the same year, Wolf defined “gastronomic tourism” as similar to the culinary one, i.e.: *to explore and enjoy the food and the beverages at the destination and to enjoy unique gastronomic experiences* (quoted by Kivela, J., and Crofts, J.C. in 2005 in the paper “Gastronomy tourism: A meaningful travel market segment”). In addition, the idea of promoting it online at international, national and regional levels, especially regarding the awareness of interested communities of its value and valences is also supported. Here, in order to ensure the sustainability of gastronomic tourism, new cultural valences are taken, such as collecting and testing of local or innovative recipes originating in the local ones as well

as identifying, characterizing and ensuring the sustainable use of the original food resources that underpin the local taste of recipes and highlighting the natural values associated with accessing local gastronomy. In other words, gastronomic tourism becomes a catalyst for the revival of local microeconomic processes, the awareness of the value of traditional knowledge associated with local gastronomy in order to increase living standards. Gastronomy is thus defined as a tourist destination with beneficial effects in the whole regional economy through the four categories: recreational, existential, reorientation and gastronomic experimentation. The one that best captures the pleasure of tasting and knowing new culinary experiences is considered to be the existential type.

Figure. 3. Satisfaction of Tourists According to the Main Tourist Motivation of the County of Sibiu (%)

The questionnaire applied to 234 respondents ended with the question on the degree of satisfaction that tourists had in Sibiu (Fig. 3). The satisfied tourists hold the share, followed by the very satisfied ones.

The task of tourism actors is to turn the percentage of satisfied tourists into very satisfied tourists and the percentage of not very satisfied tourists or even dissatisfied ones into satisfied tourists. It is a challenge, but

also a chance for Sibiu to prove that this selection to be a European Region of Gastronomy for 2019 was not a coincidence.

The category of tourists who practises gastronomic tourism and wants to discover gastronomic products with local tastes, traditional recipes, production ways, thus becomes the catalyst for reviving the connection between rural and urban areas.

Therefore, gastronomic tourism may constitute a higher form of exploitation and access to the entire intangible and tangible built or natural cultural heritage with beneficial effects on Sibiu and its inhabitants.

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