

Gastronomic Tourism as a Resource for Managing the Hospitality of the North Caucasus Territory

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ABSTRACT

The study is devoted to identifying the resource potential of gastronomic tourism as a tool for managing the hospitality of the North Caucasus territory and promoting tourist destinations in the region. The objectives of the study were to consider the phenomenon of gastronomic tourism in terms of the territory geocultural branding. The article presents a systematic analysis of scientific research devoted to the problem of gastronomic tourism as a resource for managing the hospitality of the territory. The structural-system approach, functional analysis, activity approach and other methods are the methodological basis of the research. Scientific novelty is determined by identifying the specifics of gastronomic tourism in the North Caucasus. It is determined that according to the type of the tourist destination, gastronomic tours can be both a rural tour and a city tour; according to the target setting, it can be a cultural, educational, health-related tour, ecotours, etc. In practice, in the North Caucasian Federal District, combined tours that combine all the above-mentioned features are often offered. A gastronomic monotour is defined by the authors of the study as a special type of tours associated with visiting production (or cultivation) facilities and tasting one type of product (wine, beer, cheese, melons and gourds, etc.). The analysis of practices demonstrating effective event marketing in the field of gastronomic tourism in the North Caucasus is of practical value. The authors of the study come to the conclusion that a common communicative failure in the field of Russian culinary tourism is the practice of highlighting only one or several national dishes of a particular cuisine, while the fact that a unique characteristic of Russian culinary identity is, first of all, the variety of cuisines of the peoples inhabiting the country territory is not taken into account. In the conclusion of the article, the criteria of efficiency and prospects for the development of gastronomic tourism as a tool for managing the hospitality of the North Caucasus territory are determined.

Keywords: *territory hospitality management, gastronomic tourism, geocultural branding, event-marketing, North Caucasus*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the modern world globalization and, as its consequence, the integration and unification of all spheres of human life, the problem of realizing the uniqueness of some or another ethnic group, some or another territory, inevitably arises. In this situation, geocultural branding becomes the most important communication strategy of our time, which we consider as a resource for the territory hospitality management, aimed at the formation and promotion of a territorial image based on the

specifics of its regional identity, cultural landscape, architectural and spatial environment, local myths as stable narratives about significant places in the region.

Increasing the territory socio-economic sustainability by promoting tourist and recreational destinations and increasing the investment flows is considered as a super task of geocultural branding.

The most important trend in the territory geocultural branding is gastronomic tourism, which today performs not only an entertaining and cultural

function, but also the function of the territory brand management, since it provides tourists with the opportunity to get acquainted with the specifics of the national cuisine and hospitality rituals, with peoples' traditions and customs. In this regard, travelers of the past can also be called the first "gastronomic tourists". For example, the peoples' culinary traditions, among other impressions, were described by the Russian traveler Afanasy Nikitin. Merchants went "to overseas countries" to find, taste and bring unprecedented viands: wondrous fruits, wines, spices.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of the study was to identify the resource potential of gastronomic tourism as a tool for managing the hospitality of the North Caucasus territory. The study solved the following tasks:

- 1) to consider the gastronomic tourism phenomenon in the system of the territory geocultural branding;
- 2) to systematize scientific research devoted to the problem of gastronomic tourism as a resource for the territory hospitality management;
- 3) to identify the specifics and types of gastronomic tourism in the North Caucasus;
- 4) to consider cases demonstrating effective event marketing in the field of gastronomic tourism in the North Caucasus;
- 5) to determine the criteria of efficiency and prospects for the development of gastronomic tourism as a tool for managing the hospitality of the North Caucasus territory.

The following tools have been used as a methodological basis for the study:

- 1) a structural-system approach, which has made it possible to consider gastronomic tourism as a cultural phenomenon in the system of a complex of technologies for the territory geocultural branding;
- 2) a functional analysis related to identifying differential and integral parameters of various types of gastronomic tourism based on comparing their functions;
- 3) an activity approach, which involved considering the gastronomic event marketing technology as a kind of activities aimed at the territory hospitality management and other methods.

3. RESULTS

The "culinary tourism" term was introduced by the American culturologist Lucy Long in 1998 for the first time.

Gastronomic tourism has become widespread in European countries, where there is a large number of travel agencies specializing in gastronomic tourism. For example, in France, where the culture of food and drinks has deep traditions, gastronomy has been raised to the rank of science and art. In 2005, the first gastronomic university was opened in Champagne, the activities of which are aimed at preserving and enhancing the traditions of French cuisine, declared to be a national treasure; developing scientific research in the field of culinary technologies; promoting the values of national culinary and winemaking in the international space.

In Russia, the gastronomic tourism technologies are going through a formation stage today. A common communication failure in the field of Russian culinary tourism is the practice of highlighting only one or several national dishes of a particular cuisine. At the same time, the fact that a unique characteristic of Russian culinary identity is, first of all, the variety of cuisines of the peoples inhabiting the country territory is not taken into account.

This is mostly applied to the North Caucasus – the most multicultural region of Russia, where tourism is becoming not only a resource for the development of destinations, but also a way to promote ideas that consolidate the peoples of the North Caucasus – greatheartedness and hospitality, deep acceptance of traditional values, respect for the older generation, etc. Gastronomic tourism, like any other type of tourism, should help to overcome negative stereotypes about the North Caucasus and form its renewed image as a beautiful, safe and comfortable for tourists region with a rich historical and cultural heritage and unique natural and cultural landscapes. The conditions for the development of many types of tourism, including ecological and health-improving, ethnic and historical, ski and extreme, beach and water, etc. have been formed here. In the general context of the tourism industry, gastronomic tourism can be considered as an important resource for the development of the domestic economy, its profitability and the region brand formation.

However, among travelers the modern image of the North Caucasus is still characterized by a number of negative signs that impede tourism development:

- 1) The North Caucasus is associated with a territory of extremism, crime and impunity;
- 2) in tourist locations, the modern material basis of the tourist industry is insufficiently developed, since most of the tourist infrastructure was created in Soviet times;
- 3) there is a shortage of professional personnel in the field of service and tourism, etc. in the region.

That is why one of the first tasks of promoting tourist destinations in the North Caucasus is to neutralize these partially justified negative stereotypes. Effectively organized gastronomic tourism is able to change the structure of the region image, positioning it as a safe, tourist-friendly and hospitable region with the richest nature, history, culture, age-old traditions and customs.

It should be noted that, in general, elements of a wide variety of gastronomic tours began to appear with insufficient tourism industry development in the North Caucasus.

According to the type of tourist destination, a rural tour is distinguished, involving a visit to the countryside, where, as a rule, environmentally friendly products symbolizing this area are produced; city tour associated with visiting factories, plants that produce food, with tasting their products.

According to the target setting, these can be cultural, educational, health-related tours, ecotours, etc. A cultural and educational tour, as a rule, includes visiting the most famous enterprises associated with producing food products, popular restaurants with national cuisine, distinguished by high culinary excellence and service quality. The purpose of such a gastronomic tour is tasting and, in most cases, the opportunity to purchase unique products. The educational tour involves visiting well-known gastronomic educational institutions by professionally oriented tourists (chefs, sommeliers, baristas, etc.) in order to gain practical skills in cooking national and exotic dishes and undergo internships at food production facilities and catering facilities. The health-related tour includes health improvement programs (anti-aging wellness programs, anti-stress programs, etc.) and health food. Ecotour is focused on getting acquainted with farms and industries that produce environmentally friendly products. In practice, in the North Caucasian Federal District, combined tours that combine all the above-mentioned features are often offered.

A special type of tours is a gastronomic monotour associated with visiting production (or cultivation) facilities and tasting one type of product (wine, beer, cheese, melons and gourds, etc.). For example, the “Wine List of Stavropol Region” gastronomic tour is very popular, its route which includes the best wine productions of the Stavropol Territory: the Stavropolvinogradprom enterprise, where the museum exposition “History of the viticulture and wine industry of the Stavropol Territory” is presented; the “Strizhament” plant of strong alcoholic drinks with a 140-year history; Praskoveysky winery with a 120-year history, which has its own tasting room-shop; The Stavropol Brewery, which is famous for the fact that it was founded at the end of the 19th century by a brewer from the Czech Republic Anton Grubi and others.

In recent years, a gastronomic tour to the Ponomarevo farm, which became the first agricultural shopping and entertainment center in the Stavropol Territory, has gained popularity. The Ponomarevs’ melon field is especially famous, it has become a testing ground for Russian and foreign producers of melons and gourds. The gastronomic tour program includes tasting of all varieties of melons and gourds and vegetables, a visit to a unique open-air amusement park with straw figures, a petting zoo, a recreation area with hammocks, sports grounds for straw football, etc.

Today, event marketing is one of the most popular ways of promoting culinary tourism in the North Caucasus, today it has spread to all territories of the North Caucasus. For example, there are the “Narthor” big food festival in North Ossetia; the “Shashlyk-Mashlyk” international festival in the Flower Park of Grozny (Chechen Republic); Gastronomic festival of barbecue in the most ancient Russian city – Derbent (Dagestan); the “Ayrn Holiday” folklore and ethnographic festival of the Karachay-Balkar culture in the area of Medovye vodopady [Honey waterfalls]; the “Chapilg” confectionery festival of flatbread in Nazran (Ingushetia); the “Taste of Stavropol” agricultural holiday-carnival in the districts of the Stavropol Territory, etc.

In addition to local gastronomic tours in the North Caucasus, in recent years, projects that unite all territories of the region have been implemented. In 2017, the Tasty Expedition project was launched along the North Caucasian section of the Great Silk Road. “Culinary” travelers visited all the capitals of the republics of the Caucasus and the Stavropol Territory, where the culinary arts masters revealed

the secrets of cooking unique national cuisine dishes to the guests. The publication of the “Culinary Journey to the North Caucasus” gastronomic guide was the result of the project.

The “Discover the Taste of the North Caucasus” Interregional Tourism Forum, focused primarily on professional tourists (culinary specialists, cooks, restaurateurs, specialists in the tourism industry, has become most large-scale project of recent years.

4. DISCUSSION

The study of modern technologies for managing the hospitality of territories and promoting tourist destinations is becoming an urgent problem of scientific research today. The focus is on considering the relationship between the unique mental space, images of cultural landscapes and local representations associated with a particular territory.

The works of such scientists as O.E. Afanasiev [1], L.D. Matveeva, T.P. Kotova, A.I. Lebedev [2], C.-F. Chen, P.-C. Chen [3], K.-H. Lee, J. Packer, N. Scott [4] are of particular interest. Their works present a study of various communication products aimed at forming and promoting the territory brand in the context of the society life globalization and digitalization.

The phenomenon of gastronomic tourism as a resource for a territory geocultural branding is also becoming the subject of attention of scientists around the world. Gastronomy as a tool for the nation identity and the promotion of the territory brand is explored in the works of C. Hirst, R. Tresidder [5], Y.-C. Lin, P.T. Pearson, L. Cai [6]. Global trends and prospects for the development of the gastronomic tourism industry have become the subject of research conducted by D.M. Diaconescu, P. Nistoreanu [7], L.M. Long [8], G. Richards [9], C.S. Su, J.S. Horng [10]. The specificity of the gastronomic tourism development in Russia and its regions is considered in the works of such scientists as Yu.M. Lagusev, B.K. Alekseevich [11], R.G. Mudarisov, A.D. Kobitev [12], N.M. Ohotina [13], M.Yu. Sheresheva [14], I.A. Suslova, T.N. Lustina, AG. Panova [15], E.M. Zelenskaya [16] and others.

Today, based on the research results, depending on the purpose and objectives of the gastronomic tourism promotion strategy in some or other territory, the features of the target audience and the budget, researchers and marketers select the most optimal set of channels and means of promotion. All integrated communications tools can be used as

such: advertising, BTL-technologies, sales promotion, direct marketing, event marketing, sponsorship, product placement, etc. In the system of strategic communications, each geocultural branding component can perform a specific function associated with the effective solution of specific marketing tasks: advertising is aimed at ensuring the geo-brand awareness, public relations – on the image and reputation formation, stimulating actions – on encouraging the consumer to purchase the tour; event marketing, sponsorship – on establishing loyalty to the geo-brand, etc.

5. CONCLUSION

As the analysis of the best practices in the field of gastronomic tourism shows, the most important basis for its effectiveness is identifying the territory gastronomic uniqueness.

The main tools to promote the territory tourist destinations should be the popularization of gastronomic brands and national cuisines through media projects involving opinion leaders and experts; organization of gastronomic tours of various content; gastronomic event marketing.

From our point of view, today a promising area for researching technologies for promoting tourist destinations in the North Caucasus should be the development of a strategy and comprehensive programs for managing the hospitality of territories, including both traditional and the latest communication management tools. First of all, these tools are associated with digital technologies: the development of mobile applications in the field of tourism providing the ability to carry out online tours, take virtual participation in food fairs and festivals, receive information about various cuisines, recipes, etc. Through the prism of national cuisine, the latest technologies will allow us to feel the region uniqueness through looking into its history, legends, myths, customs and traditions.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Natalya Yu. Omarova has considered the phenomenon of gastronomic tourism in the system of territory geocultural branding and systematized scientific research devoted to the problem of gastronomic tourism as a resource for managing the territory hospitality. Elena N. Yezhova has identified the specifics and types of gastronomic tourism in the North Caucasus. Oksana A. Dvoenko has considered cases demonstrating effective event marketing in the field of gastronomic tourism in the North Caucasus

and identified efficiency criteria and prospects for the gastronomic tourism development as a tool for managing hospitality in the North Caucasus.

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